

Home Church Herald

"...To the church in thy house:" Philemon 1:2 "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!" Psalms 133:1

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Understanding Prophecy

Part I — Private Interpretation

by Thomas Akens

"Knowing this first, that no prophecy of scripture is of any private interpretation." 2 Peter 1:20

The *first*and *greatest*rule of prophetic interpretation is that given us in the above passage. Said the apostle, "knowing this *first*," that is, this knowledge is *paramountor first*in importance. What knowledge is to be first? That "no prophecy of scripture is of private interpretation." The phrase *private interpretation* the original (idias epiluseos) literally signified *of one's own interpretation.* the reason for this is given us in verse 21, "For the prophecy came (lit. originated) not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." It is not "private," because it does not originate with man, neither is it "by the will of man," but was spoken by "holy men of God" "as they were moved by the Holy Ghost."

Of that spirit which moved the prophets, it is written, "The Spirit of the LORD spake by me, and his word was in my tongue" (2 Samuel 23:2). The apostle Peter, speaking of the prophets, says that it was "the Spirit of Christ which was in them . . ." (1 Peter 1:11). Christ is thus revealed as the one whose spirit moved these "holy men of God", and must therefore be the one by whom we receive their interpretation. This truth is brought out in the very first verse of the book of Revelation, which tells us that it is "The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, . . ." (Revelation 1:1); and again in the fifth & sixth chapters we find that Jesus alone is able to open the book with seven seals (Rev. 5:5; 6:1, 3, 5, 7, 9, 12; 8:1), of which no man could open (Rev. 5:2, 3).

Why was there found no man who could open this book? The answer will be readily seen once we understand *what* is. The original sense of the word is defined by Noah Webster as "A foretelling; pre-



diction; a declaration of something to come." And this agrees with the words of Scripture, which declare prophecy to be, "The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to shew unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass; . . ." (Revelation 1:1). Thus prophecy is simply the events of history foretold or predicted by God. And to this the spirit of prophecy testifies, saying,

> Hundreds of years before certain nations came upon the stage of action, the Omniscient One looked down the ages and predicted the rise and fall of the universal kingdoms....

In the history of nations the student of God's word may behold the literal fulfillment of divine prophecy (Prophets & Kings, p. 501).

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God himself has declared, "Remember the former things of old: for I am God, and there is none else: I am God, and there is none like me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure" (Isaiah 46:9. 10). God alone knows the future, and God alone can declare the things which are to "come to pass". Prophecy, therefore, is God's declaration of what shall be; and history is the outworking or fulfilling of that word among the nations of men, as the prophet Isaiah declares, saying, "So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it" (Isaiah 55:11). Hence it is that no man can open that sealed book.

To the carnal man, the records of history are a mystery, at which he can only guess as to their meaning or purpose; but to the one enlightened by the spirit of Christ, they are no mystery, but the divine purposes are opened to his eyes by the spirit of truth: as it is written, "Surely the Lord GOD will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets" (Amos 3:7). And as stated by another,

He [God] unscales the prophet's eye, and opens to his view coming events. The historian sits to record them as they occur (James White, Review & Herald, August 1850).

Another author reveals the reason behind much of the ignorance regarding prophecy:

History is the key to Prophecy, but Prophecy is no less a key to the philosophy of History. . . . The study of history without the aid of prophecy, is as superficial as the study of prophecy without a thorough acquaintance with the records of history is visionary and vain (Isaac T. Hinton).

As is seen in the above quote, the 'mystery' of prophecy is not wholly due to its cryptic figures, but in large part is due to a lack on the part of many Bible students of "a thorough acquaintance with the records of history". For as the careless student of history fails to comprehend the import of God's prophecies, by a "superficial" reading of them, even so some Christians today make the mistake of studying the great prophecies of Daniel & John with a "visionary" (imaginary) mindset; and are thus led to spiritualize away their historical significance.

There can be no "private interpretation" of any prophecy of Scripture; for God has declared before-

hand the things which shall be, and the historian (as the unwitting instrument of God) simply pens their fulfillment as a matter of course; and such writings shall forever stand as a testimony to all generations of the immutability of God's word.

> All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

What shall we say to all this? Only let the humble student of prophecy, who seeks to be "thoroughly furnished unto all good works," take in one hand the word of God reverently and prayerfully, and in the other, the records of the historians in the same spirit, and the once cryptic figures of the ancient prophets will begin to unfold to his mind the history of this world. Thus shall he "study to shew himself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (2 Timothy 2:15). Thus also shall his work be found in perfect harmony with all who have gone before in the spirit and power of Elias. And God shall be glorified by it all. ~

Ponder...

"For your soul's sake, for Christ's sake, who gave Himself to save you from ruin, pause on the threshold of your life, and weigh well your responsibilities, your opportunities, your possibilities. God has given you an opportunity to fill a high destiny. Your influence may tell for the truth of God; you may be a co-laborer with God in the great work of human redemption..." ~Messages to Young People p. 21

"Your talents will increase as you use them for the Master, and they will be esteemed precious by Him who has bought them with an infinite price."

~ Messages to Young People p. 24

The Parable of the Medical Missionary Part 1

(Please do not miss understand the meaning of the author to imply that the help of a knowledgeable professional should not be sought when needed.)

By David Sims

Jesus tells us that we are to love our neighbor as ourselves. But many of us try to excuse ourselves from duty like the lawyer who asked Jesus, "who is my neighbor?" Jesus has forever clarified this ques-

tion in his parable of the "Medical Missionary," otherwise known as "The Good Samaritan."

Often, Christians show a lack of trust in God's remedies, and instead choose to use prescriptions to burn, cut, drug, and treat the symptoms alone, instead of learning the cause of their illness, and assisting nature to do its work of healing by using God's prescriptions. Thus many Christians go to the god of Ekron. I believe this is because they have failed to see genuine success in the use of God's natural remedies. Why is this? Is this the fault of God's prescriptions? No! Often, it is a

failure on the part of the Christian, whom God has brought into contact with the sick person, to be a genuine and successful medical missionary. What causes these Christians' failure?

Firstly, most people have failed to educate themselves to know what to do in case of illness or injury. Sometimes this is due to a lack of opportunity, but in developed nations this is usually a lame excuse. Most people find that medical missionary work is uncomfortable, inconvenient, and not very pleasant. It makes them squeamish to see blood or bodily fluids, and it makes them uncomfortable to even talk about it. They don't like to see someone in pain; not that someone in pain is so much the problem, but the reality is they just don't like to see it. They would rather someone else care for the sick, so they don't bother to learn how to care for someone themselves.

When the need arises to help someone, to have to plead ignorance even when opportunities to learn



were available is not excusable. No one likes to see bodily fluids, no one likes to see someone in pain; but the true Christian will educate himself to care for his family and friends for the times when they

might be in need, even if he finds it a disagreeable duty. The true Christian will then be willing to help when needed, rather than leave the person to get well on his own, or pass the buck to strangers and their prescriptions.

In Jesus' parable of the Good Samaritan, the priest found that caring for the injured man was a disagreeable duty, so he ignored the man, and passed by on the other side. Let's not be like the priest.

Secondly, many fail because that, while they are willing to make a start, they fail to follow through. They have an intellectual knowledge of God's methods, and mentally assent to them, but they fail to follow through completely, because they have failed to some extent of assimilating the unself-

ish love of God in their own character. Chronic illness sometimes takes a long period of treatment, and so they become weary of well doing. They thought that it should not have taken so long, and so give up, or simply become lax and haphazard in their treatments; doing them one day and missing the next, or doing some treatments, and missing others. Perhaps their laxness is simply a lack of genuine interest. They think it is not really their business, or have other things to do, and cannot be bothered. They are willing to help when it doesn't inconvenience them too much, or distract them from their personal agenda.

In Jesus' parable, the Levite, realizing his duty, made a feeble attempt. He approached the man to get a closer view, but seeing that helping the hurt man was going to take some effort, he decided not to help, and continued on his way.

To be continued...

Practically and Honestly Speaking

By Angela Zujic

I sent a forward to some friends. It was an article by Ellen White called "Looking for that Blessed Hope." I don't know if they read it. They did send a reply. It was, "Live each day as if Jesus were to return today."

Expressions can be understood in different ways, so I am not sure what that means to them. I actually suspect that they wrote that without truly thinking about what it meant. You know, like a good cliché, something that somehow sounds right, while at the same time a surface reading of it may seem to be refuting what my original article was saying? Something that any self respecting Christian wouldn't disagree with. It is the sort of statement that we bandy around, to which everybody murmurs assent. Who hasn't done that?

But I would suggest that statements like this need to be understood in a sense, not contrary to sense.

If I were to accept the philosophy of living each day as if Jesus were to return *that day*, in the most literal sense, I would not work for a living, bother with my garden, or even with cooking food. I might eat lightly of some fruit, if there were any. I wouldn't bother warning anyone, because probation would have closed, and there would be no point. I would spend my day surveying the sky, and not be able to think about anything else. I would be totally distracted with the thought of His soon return. I would be alternately praying, and talking to those with me about the alorious event we were expecting. My heart would be filled with joyful anticipation; and I would probably be weeping at the same time over those that I love, who didn't care; for it would be too late for anything else.

Please don't misunderstand me! I very much want Jesus to come. I long for that! and those that know me well, know that I frequently talk about how much I want Jesus to come soon; and by God's grace I am trying to hasten that wonderful day.

I don't believe Jesus will come today, unless of course I die, and my first waking moment be His return; yet that too is not very likely in my present circumstances, unless it were a fluke accident. I don't have a terminal illness; I don't practise dangerous living; I follow health principles, that I may live to a ripe old age, if life is to continue as it is now; and I stay home on the farm at least 90% of the time. Therefore I find it difficult to live as though I were to die *today*, in the most literal sense.

So how should I live, if I believe that I might die today, or that Jesus would return today? Appropri-

ate to the time we live in. That's why I believe that Jesus gave us a sequence of events in the Bible.

We are living in the time of probation; in the time when the final events are still to be seen. This is the time for faithfulness in my daily living; for overcoming all my sins, and developing a Christlike character; the time to trust Jesus more everyday; to use every opportunity to share Jesus with those I come in contact with; to pray earnestly for those who have not made a firm decision for Jesus; the time to live thoughtfully and deliberately. You know what I mean: making our decisions with an imminent heaven as our yardstick.

Ellen White has made a similar statement to the one quoted at the beginning of this article. She says: "All God expects of us is to live each day as if it were our last on earth, surrendering ourselves to Him to do His will" (Manuscript Release 18, p. 176). She however, explains what she means by living as if it were to be our last on earth, in the rest of her statement, "surrendering ourselves to Him to do His will".

Recently my husband was suggesting we make an investment purchase, not of land, or shares, or anything like that; he was talking about expanding our bee-keeping operation. The amount of money involved was not extravagant; and I saw the wisdom in it. The only question that gave me uncertainty was – Should we do this if probation were to close in a year? I am not suggesting that it will, neither am I suggesting that it won't. I honestly don't know. Only heaven knows the day when my case and yours will be closed in the sanctuary, and that is something else I don't want to forget.

My children need some of the things of this life: from buying a property to owning a car. The only thing that bothers me is, What will happen to bank loans when probation closes? What about extended study? Is that what I should encourage, if this is our last year of probation? Only God know the absolute answers to these questions.

If we aren't asking Him, He may not warn us. If it isn't our concern, will we be ready for this time?

Many of us know the stories of conscientious believers who wouldn't marry or have children, because of these very concerns, and now they are old. Somehow I can't see how marriage to a godly Christian could be a problem, even if this was the last year of probation.

And if this is the last year of probation, I will still grow a garden; I will continue to work my little busi-*Continued on page* 7

God's Ways to Wellness Part 4 – End

by Todd Brown

It is not always for us to know which method God will use to answer our prayers: whether immediate healing, natural remedies, grace to endure our affliction, or for us to sleep until Jesus' return; but what ever the case, there are some things we need to consider when dealing with illness. God hears the prayer of faith. Christ has said, "If ye shall ask anything in My name, I will do it" (John 14:14).

> But only as we live in obedience to His word can we claim the fulfillment of His promises. The psalmist says, "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me." Psalm 66:18. If we render to Him only a partial, halfhearted obedience, His promises will not be fulfilled to us (Ministry of Healing p. 227).

There are some prerequisites. In James 5 we have the famous admonition on prayer for the sick, but let us read the passage in context:

Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord: and the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be for-given him. Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much (James 5:14-16).

Before healing and forgiveness come, there must be confession of sin, and fervent prayer (see also 1 John 1:9). Forgiveness and healing are connected in the following passage as well:

> Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits: who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases; (Psalms 103:2, 3).

Reading again from the Ministry of Healing:

In the word of God we have instruction relative to special prayer for the recovery of the sick. But the offering of such prayer is a most solemn act, and should not be entered upon without careful consideration. In many cases of prayer for the healing of the sick, that



which is called faith is nothing less than presumption.

To those who desire prayer for their restoration to health, it should be made plain that the violation of God's law, either natural or spiritual, is sin, and that in order for them to receive His blessing, sin must be confessed and forsaken (Ministry of Healing p. 227, 228).

Did you notice it mentioned that any violation of God's law, whether natural or spiritual is SIN? That means (regarding our sickness and health) that the breaking of natural laws is as equally dangerous as the breaking of God's ten commandments, and that any sin which violates natural law must be confessed, as well as any sin which violates spiritual law, *before* we can expect God to answer our prayers in regard to sickness.

And once more from *Ministry of Healing*:

The greater number, however, suffer because of their own wrong course of action. They disregard the principles of health by their habits of eating, drinking, dressing, and working. Their transgression of nature's laws produces the sure result; and when sickness comes upon them, many do not credit their suffering to the true cause, but murmur against God because of their afflictions. But God is not responsible for the suffering that follows disregard of natural law (Ministry of Healing p. 234.2).

Now with this understanding of God's view of sickness and healing we can claim God's promises for healing; knowing now the necessity of having



Gardening For True Education

"And the LORD God took the man, and

put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it" (Genesis 2:15). Before sin entered the world, man's first classroom was the garden of Eden. It was a work that God gave him in the beginning, to dress and keep the ground. After the unfortunate event of man's disobedience, and sin entered the world, man's classroom was no longer the garden of Eden, but his lesson book was still to be found in the work of gardening. His work was now to be laborious. "the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread," for the ground was cursed: "cursed [is] the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat [of] it all the days of thy life; thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee." Why was the ground cursed? It says, "for thy sake." It was for Adam's sake, and therefore our sakes also. I believe that God cursed the ground, not out of spite for man, but for a good purpose - to benefit us.

How can this be? In his infinite wisdom, God

saw that the nature of man was changed after sin; it was now a sinful nature, with evil tendencies. It was only because Christ had stepped in, to be our Redeemer (the Lamb of God slain from the foundation of the world), that Adam and Eve were still alive after eating of the forbidden fruit. The human race was given a probationary time, a second chance to make their election sure. Those who choose Christ must not waste time; for it is in this life time that we are to pre-

pare ourselves for the Heavenly Kingdom.

How do we prepare? We must be re-educated, we must experience true education. After sin, God has used the thorns and thistles to educate Adam's race. They are to us constant reminders of the results and ugliness of sin; the object lessons from which we ourselves are to learn, and teach our children. The garden is full of Christ's object lessons, and in its diverse duties and labors we are we to find our classroom.

Why is this? I don't believe I can state the reasons better than has this Christian author:

In the cultivation of the soil the thoughtful worker will find that treasures little dreamed of are

By Raquel Akens

opening up before him. No one can succeed in aqriculture or gardening without attention to the laws involved. The special needs of every variety of plant must be studied . . . the care of the young plants, the pruning and watering, the shielding from frost at night and sun by day, keeping out weeds, disease, and insect pests, the training and arranging, not only teach important lessons concerning the development of character, but the work itself is a means of development. In cultivating carefulness, patience, attention to detail, obedience to law, it imparts a most essential training. The constant contact with the mystery of life and the loveliness of nature, as well as the tenderness called forth in ministering to these beautiful objects of God's creation, tends to guicken the mind and refine and elevate the character. (Adventist Home, page 142)

"During the 1990s, the number of U.S. children participating in organized gardening programs increased dramatically. The trend is continuing in the new millennium. Why all the interest in youth gar-

dening? Because more and more public and private organizations that work with young people are discovering the power of gardening to grow positive and productive people."¹ This quote is from a secular article regarding gardening and the youth. Even the world today, with its rising number of troubled and rebellious children, is realizing the positive influence that the youth receive from contact with God's creation. Many

communities and facilities for youth have found gardening very helpful in the training and healing of troubled children. I've read several cases where many teenagers and youth have been transformed through these gardening programs. One out of many examples is *The Children's Hospital at Saint Peter's University Hospital, New Brunswick.* Their *For KEEPS* program added a vegetable and flower garden to their curriculum. One article states that, "The children love it," says Chris Farrell, a mental health counselor at "For KEEPS". "We began the project three years ago planting sunflowers, and each year we've added a little more. This year we're growing green beans, yellow squash, pep-



pers, pumpkin, sunflowers and zinnias." Farrell explains that the children become focused and thoroughly engaged while they're in the garden. "They are responsible for everything - from turning the soil, erecting the wire fence, and planting the seeds, to weeding, watering and, finally, reaping the rewards. One of our students told us his grandmother cooked the squash he grew," said Farrell. "He was very happy about that."²

As Christians, we have vantage ground in using gardening to instruct our children and ourselves. To us this truth is plain and clear in God's Word. When our children ask of his work of creation, we can point them to his love for us. Let us not neglect this God given tool to educate and prepare ourselves and our children for his kingdom and family. "The cultivation of the soil will prove an education to the soul."³

He who causes the seed to spring up, who tends it day and night, who gives it power to develop, is the Author of our being, the King of heaven, and He exercises still greater care and interest in behalf of His children. While the human sower is planting the seed to sustain our earthly life, the Divine Sower will plant in the soul the seed that will bring forth fruit unto life everlasting. (Christ's Object Lessons, page 89)

1. The Samuel Roberts Noble Foundation. Youth Garden Projects 'Growing' in Popularity, by Steve Upson. December 2002. <u>http://www.noble.org/ag/</u> <u>Horticulture/YouthGardens/index.htm</u>

2. Health & Fitness. *Garden Teaches Troubled* Youth Valuable Lessons. September 15, 2006 <u>http://</u> health.gmnews.com/news/2006-09-15/Medical_Info/ 060.html

3. Christ's Object Lessons, page 88.

Practically and Honestly Speaking Continued from page 4

ness of making and selling goat's milk soaps, and skin creams, and honey sales; to home-school my children that are still at home; and to exhort, encourage, and reprove my children that aren't. If this is the last year of probation, I will be more earnest to share Jesus with those whose day of opportunity is fast running out. I would know my Bible better too.

I am resolved to pray – Jesus guide me, that I may live appropriate to this time. Please do not allow me to be caught by surprise. I want to love you more.

And this is still the time to send inspiring email forwards. \thicksim

God's Ways to Wellness

Continued from page 5

pure hands and a clean heart when we come to God for healing, and understanding our bodies to be the temple of God, and our responsibility to God for stewardship of these temples.

And said, If thou wilt diligently hearken to the voice of the LORD thy God, and wilt do that which is right in his sight, and wilt give ear to his commandments, and keep all his statutes, I will put none of these diseases upon thee, which I have brought upon the Egyptians: for I am the LORD that healeth thee (Exodus 15:26).

Amen! Do you see some of those key prerequisites mentioned in this verse? and do you also see the promise? Let me shed a little more light on the above verse.

Do you know what the primary causes of death were among the Egyptians back in Moses day? numerous autopsies and imaging studies (like MRI's) of mummified remains, the main causes of death were heart disease, cancer, and diabetes; and the life span was 50 to 60 years of age. When God says that He will protect us from the Egyptian diseases, if we are faithful to Him, that's a promise! God says:

Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth (3 John 2).

One last question, Why do God's children get sick and suffer? Remember Jesus' words in John 9:1-3:

And as Jesus passed by, he saw a man which was blind from his birth. And his disciples asked him, saying, Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind? Jesus answered, Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him.

Friends, God always answers our effectual, fervent prayers for healing. Sometimes instantly, sometimes through natural remedies, sometimes to manifest His grace, and sometimes by allowing us to die for His honor; but it is always that we may glorify Him. ~

2012 California Camp Meeting

Pacific Virtual Fellowship will be holding its annual camp meeting Tuesday evening, July 24 through Sunday noon, July 29, 2012 at the Sims home in Lookout California. We anticipate that it will be a real blessing for those that attend.

> Our camp-meetings are arranged and held at great expense. God's ministers who advocate unpopular truth, labor excessively at these large gatherings to bear the message of mercy from a crucified Redeemer to poor fallen sinners. To neglect or treat these messages with indifference, is to slight the mercy of God and His voice of warning and entreaty. Your absence from these meetings has been very detrimental to your spiritual welfare. You have missed the strength that you might have gained there by listening to the preached word of God, and mingling with the believers of the truth.--Testimonies, vol. 4, p. 115.

> Let all who possibly can, attend these yearly gatherings. All should feel that God requires this of them. If they do not avail themselves of the privileges which He has provided that they may become strong in Him and in the power of His grace, they will grow weaker and weaker, and have less and less desire to consecrate all to God.

Come, brethren and sisters, to these sacred convocation meetings, to find Jesus. He will come up to the feast. He will be present, and He will do for you that which you most need to have done. ... Testimonies, vol. 2, pp. 575, 576. (ChS 197- 198.1)

Brothers and sisters, won't you plan to join us for healthful vegan meals, nature outings, inspiring messages, and fellowship with one another? With the blessing of your presence, this could be the best camp meeting yet!

Watch our website for details www.seventhdayhomechurchfellowships.org, or Contact: david@historyinfo.net or 530-294-1115

Waldensian Center

A class in Bible prophecy began online, on January 23. If you hurry, you may still be able to

join the class. This class meets Monday, Tuesday and Thursday at 5 pm Pacific Time, for 12 weeks.

Youth Camping Trip Summer 2012!

Smyrna Gospel Ministries and Seventh Day Home Church Fellowships are planning a youth camping trip possibly in Yosemite. Tentative dates are the week following Pacific Virtual Fellowships camp meeting. If you have an interest in attending please contact us soon.

God's Best Gifts - Tract

In our last issue of this newsletter, we included a tract that we recently reprinted called, "God's Best Gifts". This tract is a wonderful way to share the truth. It is written in a devotional and non confrontational manner, and yet it contains a wealth of present truth especially applicable in our time. It includes such subjects as: the love of God, hellfire - not without end, forgiveness, conversion, justification, sanctification, state of the dead, perpetuity of the law, sabbath, second coming, etc. If you would like a quantity of these to pass out, we will be happy to send some to you. We would suggest a minimum donation of about .12 per tract. (eq: 100

would be \$12.00). We would also suggest you include a gift to help with shipping. You can place an order on-line, or by contacting us. \sim

Seventh Day Home Church Fellowships is an association of Sabbath-keeping groups. Through teleconferencing, it provides possibility for study, fellowship, and jointly organizing missionary projects.

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