



Bible Student's Notebook™

The Herald of His Grace

Presenting **every man** perfect in Christ Jesus. Colossians 1:28

Volume XV
Issue 365

Paul's Relation to John

by — A.E. Knoch (1874-1965)

John has largely displaced Paul in the preaching of most modern evangelists. John 3:16 has almost done away with the evangel for today.

God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life (AV).

It has almost completely blotted out the *secret* evangel for this administration, which offers not merely a negative salvation from destruction and the promise of eonian life, but a positive peace and a divine righteousness in Christ.

God now goes much further than *loving* the world and *giving* His Son; He is *entreating* on the ground of *sacrifice*. We should be beseeching for Christ:

*Be **conciliated** to God! For the One not knowing sin He makes a **sin offering** for our sakes, that we may become **God's** righteousness in Him (II Corinthians 5:20).*

God is not reckoning offenses to the world today. That is the evangel of the conciliation which He has placed in us. It brings not only salvation and life, but reconciliation and eonian glory.

MODERN GOSPEL PREACHING

For a month or so recently, I have read the daily gospel appeal of the top ranking evangelist in the United States, who has had, I am told, the largest crowds and the greatest number of converts any evangelist



ever had. I have a great deal of sympathy for him, for he does quote the Bible, and probably follows faithfully the teaching of the leading Bible institutes. However, not a word seems to have been said of the secret conciliation.

God is presented as *angry* with men's sins, rather than *conciliated* and *not* reckoning their offenses against them. I do not remember reading of Christ presented as the *Sin Offering*. Justification was never mentioned. All is brought down to the level of John's evangel and even lower. I was especially interested as I had sent him a copy of my book on *The Mystery of the Gospel*, in which these truths are set forth at length.

GRACE IN JOHN

Most Bible lovers have felt the grace in the writings of the apostle John, despite the fact that he was dubbed a Boanerges, "*son of thunder*" (Mark 3:17), by our Lord Himself. His given name, *John*, presents the milder side of his ministry. Perhaps he approaches nearer to the grace and love of Paul's epistles than any other writer of God's revelation. The name John is a condensed form. In German, *Iohannas* is nearer the Greek *Ioannes*. In Hebrew this splits into two, the first being the beginning of the name *Yahweh*, that is, *Ie-*, meaning WILL-BE, the second part, *chn-n*, meaning GRACIOUS.

We must remember that the most marvelous of John's writings, the *Unveiling of Jesus Christ*, commonly known as *The Book of Revelation*, is *entirely concerned with the future*. Although it is not gener-

(see **RELATION**, page 3283)

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This free weekly electronic publication (52 times a year) is dedicated to:

- the proclamation of the riches of God's abundant, exceeding grace (Romans 5:20; 11:6; Ephesians 1:7);
- the affirmation of God's purpose to save all mankind through the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ (1 Timothy 2:3, 4; 4:10; Titus 2:11);
- the "preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began" (Romans 16:25);
- true freedom and liberty apart from law (Galatians 5:1);
- the organic nature of the church, the Body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12);
- the distinct message and ministry of Paul, the apostle to the nations (Romans 11:13);
- the importance of receiving all whom Christ has received (Romans 14-15);
- the recovery of rich Biblical truth that has too long remained hidden under the veils of traditionalism, prejudice, misunderstanding, and fear (Mark 7:7, 13);
- the completeness of the believer in Christ (Colossians 2:10), with:
 - total freedom from sins (Colossians 1:14);
 - identity in His death, burial, and resurrection (Romans 6);
 - adult sonship position (Galatians 4).

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RELATION (continued from front page)

ally recognized, his so-called “gospel” also is concerned with the coming kingdom. For example, **the so-called “new birth” is a national occurrence foretold in the Hebrew Scriptures (Isaiah 66:8).** Although the incidents related in his account of our Lord’s life occurred in the past, they usually, like the wedding at Cana, portrayed the future fortunes of Israel. Christ said to Nicodemus “*You* (plural, Israel) *must be begotten anew*” (John 3:3), not “*You* (singular, Nicodemus) *must be born again*.” John refers to the *future* of the favored nation, not to Nicodemus individually, or the seeking sinner.

The remarkable feature of John’s name is that *it foretells the grace of the future*. The *tetragrammaton*, or four-letter name, *Yhwh* (“Yahweh,” WILL-BE-ING-WAS) includes the future, present, and past. It is interpreted in the Unveiling as “*Him Who is, and Who was and Who is coming*” (Revelation 1:4). John’s name *omits* the last two letters, which express the present and past. The first two point only to the *future*. John refers to *much* grace previously *foretold*, in flesh, on the *earth*, in the thousand years of Christ’s reign and in the *future new creation* beyond it.

TRANSCENDENT GRACE

Paul reveals much *more*, previously *hidden*, in *spirit* in the *heavens*, especially in the *present new creation*. **Paul’s grace ascends above and transcends all the grace revealed by John.**

Very few immature believers realize how little is said of grace by John in comparison with Paul. The word “*grace*” occurs only *seven* times altogether in John’s writings, whereas Paul uses it over *ninety* times. John never hints at grace for the *Uncircumcision*, let alone *transcendent* grace. He mentions it three times in the first chapter of his account regarding the life of our Lord as God’s Son, but never again. In contrast, Paul never omits it in a single epistle, and it is found twice in the shortest. II Corinthians, right after the new creation appears, has it eighteen times. Ephesians, short as it is, begins this administration studded with a full dozen occurrences.

TO COMPLETE THE WORD OF GOD

Because the Circumcision epistles¹ and the Unveiling² come last in the canon of Scripture (which they should, to balance the “gospels” and the Acts), and because tradition puts John’s writings last, I was kept from believing Paul when he wrote that *he* was granted the administration to *complete* the Word of God (Colossians 1:25).

I tried to “explain” it by saying that he had the *highest* and the *culminating* revelation, which is true; but why not take it as it stands? There is no record *in the Scriptures* to contradict it. We know that Paul was a *young* man when the twelve apostles were in their prime (Acts 7:58), and he was “*Paul the aged*” (Philemon 9) before he closed his career, so that it is most likely that he outlived them. Moreover, Peter put off his tabernacle swiftly after writing his second epistle, and evidently did not live out his days, but suffered martyrdom (John 21:19). John certainly did not remain until our Lord’s return, as some supposed (:22), except in *spirit*, in his epistles and the Unveiling.

The fact that Paul completed the Word of God also shows that *all* subsequent revelations which claim to be divine are superfluous and false. I have been rebuked because I would not even consider the writings of a celebrated “seeress,” and denounced as bigoted and prejudiced. I plead guilty to the last charge, because Paul’s claim to have completed God’s Word judges all such efforts beforehand.

Paul’s teaching, moreover, actually does round out divine revelation, so *no one who has a grasp of his unfoldings will look for more*. If he does consider them he must, perforce, condemn them, which is an unpleasant and unprofitable task. If those who wish us to study other “revelations” would only master the Pauline secrets, then they also would see the futility of seeking further.

THE SCOPE OF JOHN’S ACCOUNT

Christ, as the Son of David, has a limited sphere as the King of Israel. As the Son of Abraham this is enlarged to include all of the Circumcision. As the ►

1. Hebrews, James, I & II Peter, I, II, & III John, and Jude.

2. The Book of Revelation.

Son of Adam His influence is much wider, and takes in all humanity, as in Luke's account, so that this evangel is not confined to the Covenant nation, but repentance for the pardon of sins is to be heralded to *all nations, beginning* from Jerusalem (Luke 24:47).

However, in John's account it is expanded still further. As God's Son, His allotment includes *all* (Hebrews 1:2), hence God's love is not limited to Israel, or to humanity, but reaches to all the *world*.

Nevertheless as Luke's evangel can come to all mankind *only through Israel*, so, in John, He came to *His Own* (John 1:11), and *salvation is of the Jews* (John 4:22). *Although the scope is so much greater, the channel remains the same.* Hence it falls far short of the evangel for today, when there is no such channel, based on the fleshly precedence of Abraham's literal seed. It is now conveyed by means of his *spiritual* seed, including the *uncircumcision*.

JOHN'S ACCOUNT – TIME

A special feature of John's account might be called its *preview*. In the other accounts we must wait until the central climax to discover that the evangel will be rejected. In John, however, we are informed of its failure *in advance*.

To His Own He came, and those who are His Own accepted Him not (John 1:11).

It is evidently not a chronological narrative merely. It is *not*, like Adam, Abraham, David and humanity, *under the sun*, and dependent on it to place events in their proper sequence; but, like the Son of God, *independent* of the solar timepiece, *above the sun*, revealing the *truth* long *before* the confirmatory *event*. It is a step beyond the others, and nearer the timelessness which characterizes Paul's celestial revelations.

LOCATIONS

For us, sinners of the nations, the spot where the principal apostles were called is most significant, when considered in connection with the non-Jewish nations. Peter and John were called in Galilee *of the nations*, where the centurion lived whose faith exceeded that of all in Israel. Paul was called as he was

crossing over the boundary out of the land of Israel *on his way to the nations*. Is not this in exquisite accord with their fields of ministry? Peter was the one who objected to netting fish in the lake (Luke 5:5). Later he refused to defile himself by fishing where our Lord had caught the Roman centurion! Still later he refused to fish for Cornelius who lived by the seaside, and, along with the rest, refused to go to the nations, turning it over to Paul.

THE CALL OF JOHN

The message and ministry of the various apostles is marvelously foreshadowed by the circumstances of their call. The minutest features are in accord with their careers. This is most impressive when we compare them with one another. Let us consider carefully the circumstances of John's call and compare it with that of Peter's, who was called at the same time, and contrast both with that of Paul on the Damascus road. We will see that our Lord knew, from the beginning of His contact with them, just what lay ahead of each of them, and enacts a condensed preview, in figurative fashion, of the form and fate of their ministry. First we will consider the location.

When I lived in Tiberias, on the shore of Lake Galilee, I tried to locate the spots and visualize the incidents which were enacted there. If I remember correctly, there was one place, not far north of Tiberias, where the hills came down close to the sea, which would be an ideal spot to address a crowd if the speaker could stand a little away from the land. It was not far from His own city, where the shore must have been more level. Now if the reader will turn to the fifth chapter of Luke, we will survey the scene together. There are several accounts, differing in detail according to the context, one in each gospel (Matthew 4:18; Mark 1:16; Luke 5:1). These vary in details, but agree in the vital facts. As Luke's record is the fullest, we will use his story in the main.

TWO SHIPS – LIGHT

First of all we see our Lord speaking, importuned by a throng, so that few could come close to Him. Then we see *two* ships. Why two? Because there were two ministries, Peter's and John's, yet John's was not used at first. It came later, when Peter's "net" broke.

In Acts Peter's ministry failed, but in the future John will bring the fish safe to land.

In the call of Paul there was no such division; there were others with him who saw the light, but heard nothing. It was a *secret* call, notwithstanding the fact that there was so much light that Saul was blinded. When Peter and John were called, there was no added light from heaven. Their evangel had already been foretold in the Hebrew Scriptures.

WORK

Perhaps the most important point concerns *work*. Peter was rinsing the nets. He had been toiling all night, but without catching a single fish. In the *day-time*, however, *at the Lord's request*, he got so many that the net tore.

Was this not a good picture of his ministry? At Pentecost he made a big haul, but then he failed to establish the kingdom. In contrast to him, John did not do anything at first, yet helped Peter out later. Does not this agree with the career of the kingdom? Peter failed in the past, but John will fulfill it in the future. Yet both of them are based on *doing*. They and their converts must repent, be baptized, do deeds which these demand, and many must be overcomers in the end time.

Nothing was done by Paul. He *asked* what he should *do*, but he was in no condition to work at anything. He had fallen flat on the ground, a picture of utter helplessness which was most fit for the foremost of sinners. All he was told to do was to *rise*, the position which corresponded to his spiritual position before God, that of uprightness due to God's Word, a fine figure of justification.

Did Peter preach "*God so loved the world*" (John 3:16) on the day of Pentecost? Why did not John also speak? Is John's name ever mentioned alone in the book of Acts? Even then, why does it drop out after the fourth chapter, except as the brother of James in the eighth? Nowhere in the Acts account is there any trace of it. Peter exercised a part of his commission before he died, but John did not and could not. Our Lord refused to say that he would die, like Peter, because He was associating these two, the foremost of His apostles, with

their *ministries*. John's ministry was not fulfilled in the past, but is remaining until Christ is coming back to Israel. Then it will be heralded to the whole *world*, through Israel. The present grace transcends his evangel, so was hidden from the kingdom saints.

As the course of Peter's commission is portrayed for us by a fishing experience when our Lord called him, so John's ministry is set forth symbolically, in accord with its higher plane, by another fishing episode, in which the likenesses and contrasts give us a good idea of their differences.

Beginning, then, with our Lord's first appearance to His disciples *after His resurrection*, let us note the setting in which it occurred. It all suggests the time of His coming, to which era John was to remain in spirit. Not only had our Lord been raised and ascended (John 20:17), but it was the *sabbath evening*, which points to the dark epoch which precedes the day of Yahweh, commonly called the millennium, or the "*Lord's day*." The disciples were in *fear* because of the persecution of the Jews (John 20:19). Before His coming in that future day they will be in the great affliction (Revelation 7:14).

His first word is "*Peace!*" Is not this most suggestive of that day when Christ will be the Prince of Peace? Then there will be joy as never before. This surely can be fulfilled only in that still distant day. Then He exhaled the holy spirit on them, and commissioned them with a commission which has never yet been fulfilled. Only imposters now ever claim the authority to forgive or fasten sins. Yet this will no doubt be done in the kingdom. This was followed by the case of doubting Thomas. A failure of faith such as his could never be accommodated today, but in the kingdom, when our Lord is physically present, *feeling* will convince many with little *faith*. We are among those more blessed ones who have not perceived His physical form, yet God has furnished us with unfeigned, unfounded faith.

In this setting we are ready to perceive the first great contrast between the previous fishing adventure and this one after the resurrection. Although it is the same lake, the name is changed. Then it was called *Gennesaret* (PROTECT-WITHDRAW), in accord with the fact that Christ sought *protection* there, ►

from the slayer of John, the Baptist, at that time. That is not in point in this connection, for it pictures the kingdom, when He is the King of kings and Lord of lords. The name *Tiberius*, on the contrary, suggests that He is Head of all worldly power, as the Roman emperor of that name was in his day.

The names of those present are, no doubt, all significant, even if we may not see all of the connections. The double name Simon Peter, the first given to him by his earthly parents, the other by Christ as the head of the kingdom ecclesia, show that the kingdom will be a compound of flesh and spirit. Thomas seems strange in this select company, especially in such a prominent place; but this is amply justified when we see that it also indicates a combination (his name means “Twin”) of the spiritual with the physical, faith and feeling, for the kingdom is largely based on signs, quite unlike the present. Nathanael gives us a more exalted view of the kingdom, for his name is literally GIFT-OF-SUBJECTOR. It is associated with Cana, of Galilee, where we have a preview of the marriage feast of the kingdom. When the wine, the source of the joy, failed, then it was, indeed, the gift of God. So will it be in that day (John 2:1-11).

One of the most peculiar points in this whole passage, and, indeed, in John’s whole account of our Lord’s life, is the *absence of John’s name*. I used to think it was due to his modesty, but he seems to take needless pains to avoid mentioning it. Here he is included in “*those of Zebedee*” which includes his older brother, James. Several times he is called the one whom Jesus loved (13:23; 19:26; 21:7, 20). In contrast to this he emphatically connects his name, I, *John*, with the Unveiling, in which he appears to be present in the future. Can we not take this as another indication that his ministry belongs to the future? Physically, he was present in this fishing party, but spiritually he belongs in the future fulfillment, in accord with his name (Grace-will-be). There is much more grace here than at John’s call, for then the net broke. Physically, he teams with Peter, but spiritually he goes beyond him.

Coming right after Cana, where Israel’s marriage was celebrated, the name of John’s and James’ father seems appropriate. “*Zebedee*” denotes DOWER, which is usually the special portion which comes by means of marriage. Then Jacob will be changed to

Israel, UPRIGHTNESS-OF-THE-SUBJECTOR, and John is GRACE, two rich dower gifts from the Bridegroom. Then there were two unnamed disciples, making seven in all. In Hebrew seven is from the stem SATISFY which may well suggest the satisfactory issue of this fishing compared with the former one, when the net broke. The catch was much greater, as the gospel catch in the future presence of Christ, and the net did *not* break.

We know that, as on the previous occasion, there were *two* boats, but nothing is said of this here at first. It seems that the first time, the Lord was in *Peter’s* boat, and *he* had so heavy a haul of fishes that the net broke, and John’s boat came to the rescue. This time, however, those in *John’s* boat dragged in the net full of fishes. What could better portray the initial success of Peter’s ministry, with its breakdown as recorded in the book of Acts, and John’s great ingathering in the future day of Yahweh, or “*the Lord*”? Does this not clearly show that John’s ministry belongs to that future day?

Impulsive Peter craved action. Instead of waiting for word from the Lord, he went fishing on his own. His friends followed his lead, but he went at the wrong time. It may be that literal fish may be caught at night by using human flares; but spiritual fishing must be done in the light of day, or the still brighter light which enlightens the sinner now. So, as before, he caught nothing. Not only that, but Peter did not recognize the Lord when He appeared and asked them for some of the reward of the night’s work. When our Lord told John to cast on the right side of the ship it seems that they were almost over a whole shoal of large food fishes. Even then *John* had to call Peter’s attention to the fact that it was the Lord. Nothing like this has yet occurred in the spiritual realm, but it will be fulfilled in connection with John’s future kingdom ministry.

Now impulsive Peter fails again. On the former occasion, John went to his help when the net broke, but now he puts on his overcoat and casts himself into the sea instead of helping the others drag in the net. They were evidently very different nets. The evangel of God’s Son is much stronger than that of Israel’s Messiah. Even though many were caught during the ministry of our Lord and His disciples in the past, a

much greater catch will come in the future, for then our Lord will not only enable them to succeed, but will also Himself provide them the means of subsistence quite apart from their efforts.

JOHN'S FUTURE MINISTRY

After Simon Peter's shepherd commission and his death were foretold by our Lord, Peter asked Him, "What of this man?" (John 21:21) meaning John. The enigmatic reply is exceedingly significant and helpful, when we compare their two ministries from then on. He said, "If I should be wanting him to be remaining till I am coming, what is it to you? You be following Me!" (:22).

The early disciples took it literally, as is usually done, and spread a report that John is not dying, but John himself denies that. What is the solution? It is very simple, although it seems practically unknown to this day, even though it was enacted and recorded in the later Scriptures. The Lord spoke of Peter's *ministry*, which will *end* with his death, and He referred to John's *ministry*, which will not *commence* until Christ's *coming*.

THE CALL OF SAUL

The call of Paul did not reveal his destiny. He was told nothing of the secrets concerning the present administration and its celestial mission when he met our Lord on the way to Damascus. Indeed, he did his best to join the Circumcision saints until he was *severed* with Barnabas, and called to a special work (Acts 13:2). He made no distinction between his disciples and other saints until he *severed* the disciples in Ephesus (Acts 19:9). The first severance made his *ministry* different from the other apostles. The second distinguished his *ecclesia*, and *fulfilled* his previous course (Acts 19:21). About this time it was that he began writing his *transition epistles*. It was not until *after the Acts era* that he revealed the present *secret administration* in his *perfection epistles*. All of this was *concealed*, not revealed at his call.

JOHN'S ACCOUNT

The four accounts of our Lord's earthly career have much in common. As is shown by their skeletons

(page 365-366 of the CLNT), they all deal with the same subjects in the same order in the first half, and then in reverse order to the end, except that Mark, the Servant, presents no credentials. All deal with the kingdom as heralded by others, then with His baptisms, His trials, His kingdom, and the King Himself at the center, except that John omits His trials.

All of these themes are treated in a different way in each account, *corresponding to His credentials or character*. There is a vast difference between Matthew's *King* and Mark's *Servant*, and between Luke's *Son of Mankind*, and John's *Son of God*. From the aspect of *Divine Sonship*, all events are viewed in a far more *spiritual* light than in the preceding accounts.

Millions upon millions of John's account of our Lord's life have been published and circulated, in many languages. About fifty years ago I figured out a cheap way of binding it, two at a time, so we were given the contract for printing a hundred thousand copies, for a local Bible house. Then it was that I made up my mind to print as many as possible of the book of Romans which contains what is really needed now, and explains much of the evangel in force today.

Finally I managed to do so, but the response has not warranted a second edition. The Adversary sees to it, even when an attempt is made to spread our special evangel, that an untimely and inadequate one is palmed off as genuine instead. That is why believers begin in a fog and seldom find their way to the *transcendent* truth of the *secret* evangel for this administration. Ignorant of their own riches, they seek to rob others with far less wealth. The Circumcision, to whom John actually wrote, would never allow them the place of privilege that is reserved for the fleshly disciples of our Lord in the millennium.

THE DEATHS OF THE APOSTLES

The prime point in the evangel of the kingdom was that it was *near*, or impending. Had Israel responded, neither Messiah nor His apostles, or any believers would have died. The crucifixion of Christ was a death-blow to its heralding, but His resurrection revived the hope of immortality.



Moreover, thereafter, none of the apostles would have died, had the nation repented. The most striking sign that it was *not* coming soon was the assassination of James Zebedee (Acts 12:2). Later Peter's tabernacle was put off *swiftly*, as the Lord had foretold (II Peter 1:14; John 21:19). That ended all hope of its speedy appearance to this day. However, *there is no record of the death of John*. In fact, not long after, we hear that he writes the messages to the seven ecclesias of the province of Asia in the Lord's day, which is *still future*. In spirit, he lives on into that era.

PREDICTION OF PETER'S DEATH

John's account not only *foretells* the rejection of the King, as chronicled in the other records of His life, but also *intimates* the rejection of the kingdom ecclesia in the later heralding in the book of Acts, by predicting Peter's death, when he was given his *shepherd* commission, after Christ's resurrection.

Impetuous Peter had boasted that he would lay down his soul for his Lord (John 13:37). Soon afterward Peter disowned Him (John 18:25). Nevertheless, Christ commissioned him to *shepherd His sheep* (John 21:16), but not to sit on his throne, which he would have done if the kingdom was imminent. He said,

*Verily, verily, I am saying to you, when you were younger, you girded yourself and walked where you would, yet whenever you may be growing decrepit, you will stretch out your hands and another shall be girding you and carrying you where you would not. Now this He said signifying by what **death** he will be glorifying God (John 21:18-19).*

This could not have come true if the kingdom was imminent.

It will help us to distinguish the two kingdom eras and the present if we note that *both* kingdom ministries were closed by *death*, the first one by the crucifixion of Christ, the second by that of Peter. This was probably near the time that Jerusalem and the temple were destroyed, so that there could be no kingdom. The believing Christians were either killed or dispersed, though many, if not all, may have received Paul's evangel. The present ecclesia will be closed,

not merely by life, but by a superabundant vitality that will put us beyond death, not only on the earth, but in the whole universe.

JOHN'S APPARENT IMMUNITY

After Peter is told that he would die, he asks about John, whom Jesus especially loved, "*Lord, what of this man?*" Then Jesus said to him, "*If I should be wanting him to be remaining till I am coming, what is it to you? You be following Me!*" When this word came out they inferred that John would not die, but live until the Lord's coming. Our Lord would not ask a question such as this unless there was some truth implied.

There are other statements in this account like this. For instance, our Lord told Nicodemus that the Son of Mankind *is in heaven* (John 3:13). This was not true in *flesh*, but it was in *spirit*. So here, the tremendous truth is that John would enter the day of the Lord *in spirit* (which he did, Revelation 1:10) before his flesh would return to the soil. Therefore *nothing is said of his death in the Scriptures*, and the less we say of it the better. In spirit he skips the present interval entirely. *He should never be brought into it.*

BABYLON

Not only is Peter's *death* a clear index of the failure of the kingdom proclamation, but the *place* of his exile bears eloquent witness to the same fact.

Israel will yet be both political and religious head of the earth. When they lost the political headship of their own land, they were deported to Babylon. This name denotes "In-disintegration," which describes its condition perfectly. The kingdom disintegrated politically. In Acts the same thing occurred in the religious realm. The last kingdom ecclesia is deported, with Peter, its head, to Babylon, and is in disintegration. Spiritually, that is their condition wherever they are, and will remain so until the King comes and restores both their kingly and priestly preeminence in the earth.

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