

***The
New
Hermeneutic:***

*The Devil's Modernistic Device
To Destroy The Church*

*by
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INTRODUCTION

How critically needed is the study of the timely subject of digression, of the "new hermeneutic," and of how this false teaching encourages apostasy from "the faith." The "New Hermeneutic" does support digression, which is to stray from the truth of God, to turn aside from the faith once for all time delivered (Jude 3).

The "New Hermeneutic" is nothing more nor less than the old neo-orthodoxy liberalism which rejects the authority of the Holy Scriptures. It is infidelity, a lack of loyalty to God and His Word, and constitutes spiritual adultery. With advocates among "churches of Christ," it is an outgrowth of some preachers and educators feeding at the troughs of sectarian "scholars," attending denominational seminaries, and reading liberal works. They have become so well "educated" that they no longer understand the meaning of the words "one," "know," "truth," "church," "kingdom," and "pattern. They no longer understand the nature of the Scriptures, nor do they have a high regard for inspiration (as defined by the Bible). They are saying "Lo here" and "Lo there" as they try to finalize and systematize their epistemology and to work out their "liturgy," as they term it.

They affirm that one **cannot know** the truth, and yet they blast the "legalists" who still hold to the "old hermeneutic," those who are

keeping the "church," they say, from being in the mainstream and from meeting the great needs of society and the world. They are able to **know**, strangely enough, that those teaching the oneness of the church and that one can know the truth, et al., are wrong! What are some averments of the "New Hermeneutic?"

THE CANON WAS NOT COMPLETE

The "New Hermeneutic" holds that the canon of Scripture was not complete and recognized until the last of the fourth century A.D. The church councils [Hippo (A.D. 393) and Carthage (A.D. 397)] first recognized the twenty-seven New Testament books as inspired, they say. This argument tries to do away with the recognition of the Scriptures' verbal inspiration, and supports the idea of theistic evolutionary origin of the Scriptures. It tries to do away with the Scriptures as pattern, since the early church supposedly did not have or recognize the whole truth. It tries to do away with "proof texting," a "thus saith the Lord."

This averment is wrong on many counts. The whole truth was revealed in the first century and did not evolve (II Peter 1:20,21; 1:3; Jude 3; Galatians 1:6-9; II John 9-11). The spoken Word was as much the truth (John 8:32; 17:17) as was/is the written Word (II Thessalonians 2:15). The Word was spoken by inspiration by both the

apostles and those on whom their hands were laid; and the Word was confirmed by miracles (Hebrews 2:1-2; Ephesians 4:1ff; I Corinthians 13:8ff, et al).

The Word was a pattern, a law even before it was written; it was not to be added to, taken from, or substituted for (II Thessalonians 2:13; Galatians 1:6-9). The inspired letters were read in the churches having been copied repeatedly and circulated widely (II Peter 3:15-17; Colossians 4:16). Furthermore, they were understood (Ephesians 3:4; cf. John 7:17). Not only were they immediately recognized as inspired (just as the Old Testament books when they were written and assembled with the others of the canon), but they were listed in various "canons" and were translated into other languages in the second and third centuries, hundreds of years before the so-called councils supposedly acknowledged them as canon and thus inspired. [Please note that recognizing New Testament books as canon and thus inspired is just exactly backward; they are in the canon **because** they are inspired. One position is atheistic modernism, the other reverence for verbal, plenary, inerrant inspiration]. The writings of the early church fathers also belie this contention of the "new hermeneutics."

SCRIPTURE IS NOT LAW

The "New Hermeneutic" holds that

Scripture is not law. The letters were simply written as one would write a "love letter," they say. Christ loved us very much, and His Word is more for our encouragement than for legislating to us. And, it certainly is not to be thought of as objective, absolute truth, they aver.

The Bible makes it clear that we are under law to the Lord. He is the Law-giver having all authority (Matthew 28:18-20), being "Lord of heaven and earth" (Acts 17:24).

Has anyone ever heard of a kingdom without a law? Christ is Lord (Acts 2:36).

"...the law is good" (I Timothy 1:8); Christ is "Kings of kings" (6:15). We are "heirs of the kingdom" and thus under the "law of liberty" (James 2:8; 1:25); indeed, we "...shall be judged by the law of liberty" (2:12). "...we walk after his commandments" (II John 6), for "...sin is the transgression of the law" (I John 3:4).

Being saved by grace has never ruled out being under God's law. Noah was saved by grace through faith when he obeyed God's commands (Genesis 6:8,14,22)--Note the grace (8), law (14), works (22), and faith (Hebrews 11:7). Abraham was saved by grace (James 2:23) through faith (Hebrews 11:8) when he worked [obeyed] (11:8; James 2:21,22) God's law [command]. Abraham's obedience to God's command was "...of faith, that it may be according to grace [that God's grace might flow to him]"; we are saved the same way

(Romans 4:16).

Observe some other passages which affirm that we are under law. "...where there is no law, there is no transgression" (Romans 4:15). "so then I of myself with the mind, indeed, serve the law of God" (Romans 7:25). For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus made me free from the law of sin and death" (Romans 8:2). We are "...under law to Christ" (I Corinthians 9:22). "Bear ye one another's burdens and so fulfil the law of Christ" (Galatians 6:2). In prophecy concerning the kingdom, Isaiah affirmed, "...for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of Jehovah from Jerusalem" (Isaiah 2:3); Jeremiah affirmed, "I will put my law in their inward parts, and in their hearts will I write it" (Jeremiah 31:33; cf. Hebrews 8:10). "I will put my laws on their heart" (Hebrews 10:16). "Sin is the transgression of the law" (I John 3:4); which law???

THERE IS NO PATTERN

The "New Hermeneutic" avers that there is no pattern for the church, its organization, its worship, its steps of obedience, its manner of life [morality, ethics], et al. There is no blueprint for the church/kingdom, they teach. The Bible is not propositional revelation. God never intended to give legislation, codified law (as mentioned above). This would include ruling out a pattern, ridiculing

the ideas that one has to go to the New Testament as a pattern for one's life, worship, and service. Of course, this allows a person to conduct his life however he pleases, and it permits religionists to organize, establish their own churches [called "fellowships" by liberals], and so-called "serve" God however they wish, in blatant disregard for and contradiction of such stern warnings as Matthew 15:9,13; I Peter 4:11; II John 9-11; Galatians 1:6-9; et al.

The New Testament is a pattern. It is the apostles' doctrine, in which the early church continued (Acts 2:42). The doctrine of Christ, the one faith, the gospel of God [all speaking of the same pattern of doctrine] is the rule of faith and practice. "And as many as walk by this **rule** [**kanon**], peace be upon them..." (Galatians 6:16), defined by Thayer, "a definitely bounded or fixed space within the limits of which one's power or influence is confined; the province assigned one; one's sphere of activity...any rule or standard, a principle or law of investigating, judging, living, acting." Note the same word in Philippians 3:16, "...only, whereunto we have attained, by that same **rule** let us walk."

The church has a pattern. The "pattern" of the tabernacle was a type of the "pattern" for the church (Hebrews 8:4-6); it is to be followed. The word is **tupos**, pattern, defined by Thayer as, "the pattern in conformity to which a thing must be

made; Acts 7:44; Hebrews 8:5 (Exodus 25:40)." Arndt and Gingrich define **tupos** as "form, figure, pattern...pattern of teaching." Vine stated, "The gospel is the mold." The "New Hermeneutic" heretics fly into the face of such clear commands as, "Hold the pattern of sound words" (II Timothy 1:13).

EXAMPLES OF THE EARLY CHURCH, CHRISTIANS ARE NOT TO BE FOLLOWED

The "New Hermeneutic" denies that one is to follow examples of early Christians and of the primitive church. The lives, organizations, works, and worship of the early church were never meant to be followed, they say. One should imitate Christ, not the apostles and early Christians. One must go to the gospel records [Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John] for inspiration and direction, NOT to Acts and the epistles. Only Christ is our example, they say.

However, the Bible contradicts this man-made presumption and supposition designed to undermine the Bible's authority. If we are not to follow Paul, Paul did not know it, because he wrote, "Be ye followers of me, even as I am of Christ" (I Corinthians 11:1). [Note:being human, Paul was subject to temptation; he realized that and thus stated, "as I follow Christ." This is understood by all objective minds--the individuals

and churches were to be imitated as they were faithful, not in their shortcomings. However, that did not/does not take away from the fact that they were/are our examples.] Paul was "a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting" (I Timothy 1:16). Timothy was an example to us; "Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers..." (I Timothy 4:12). Are Paul and Timothy, et al., our examples? Is the church at Thessalonica our example? "So that ye [the church at Thessalonica] were examples to all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia" (I Thessalonians 1:7). Did Paul err in this averment? Do you think he was a student of the "New Hermeneutic"? Would God rebuke Paul for showing himself as an example to the Thessalonians for their sake and the Thessalonians for becoming "imitators" of Paul (I Thessalonians 1:5,6)? Did Macedonia and Achaia err when they served as an example for Corinth and when Paul used them as an example (II Corinthians 8:9)? What a contrast is the "New Hermeneutic" to the New Testament!

***SUBJECTIVISM, FEELINGS, AND THE
INDIVIDUAL ARE THE STANDARD***

The "New Hermeneutic" makes subjectivism, feelings, and the individual the standard and not God's absolute law. It is the

existential, situation ethics philosophy of neo-orthodoxy. Neo-orthodoxy opposes reason and logic and, certainly, any mention of absolutes. "Inspiration" involves "what inspires me," "what is right for me," "what is right for a particular person in a particular situation." It may be one thing for older people, and another thing for younger people; what is right for one generation or one location or one background may be wrong for another. Who is to say? The emphasis, they say, should be on "the man," rather than on "the plan" [the gospel, or doctrine, of Christ]. It is reminiscent of atheistic, secular humanism's amorality [no morality, no objective standard of ethics], situation ethics, and emphasis upon the individual [who is autonomous].

By what standard do they say and "prove" that we are not governed by a standard, the absolute standard which is God's Word? Neo-orthodoxy (denominational liberalism) says that one cannot know there is a God, that one cannot know the truth; the "new hermeneutic" parrots this agnosticism. God's truth, though, is absolute and knowable; it is objective truth. Faith and knowledge are not mutually exclusive. Rather, faith is based upon testimony (Romans 10:17), not on a leap in the dark, mere guesswork or wishful thinking. Christ said, "And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32).

John's readers are praised because they "know it

[the truth], and because no lie is of the truth" (I John 2:21). Was Paul correct when he affirmed that the Thessalonians **received** and **understood** the Word of truth? "...ye received from us the Word of the message, even the word of God, ye accepted it not as the word of men, but, as it is truth, the word of God, which also worketh in you that believe" (I Thessalonians 2:13). How did the Thessalonians know how to walk? Was it by subjective surmising, or by understandable instruction from inspired Paul (I Thessalonians 4:1; et al.)? Is it just for God to punish those who "**know** not God, and...obey not the gospel" if such is not possible (II Thessalonians 1:6-9)? Did all who appreciated the elect lady and her children really "**know** the truth" (II John 1)? Did Paul at the same time believe and **know** (II Corinthians 4:13,14; I Thessalonians 4:14)? Paul assured Timothy, "...I **know** him whom I have believed" (II Timothy 1:12); in the following verse, he charged, "Hold the pattern of sound words" (1:13). If truth is subjective, unknowable and unattainable, was that a reasonable, accomplishable command?

The standard is the inspired Word-not the individual. We are to walk "in the truth" (III John 3; II John 4:9-11). God's people are to "withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the [inspired] tradition which he received from us" (II Thessalonians 3:6). Now, notice the following verse, "For yourselves

know how ye ought to follow us; for we behaved not ourselves disorderly among you" (3:7). It sounds like Paul **expected** to be followed as an example, does it not? Those who reject the words of the Lord will by them be condemned (John 12:48; Revelation 20:12). Could the Bereans understand the Scriptures (Acts 17:11), Timothy (II Timothy 2:15), the Thessalonians (I Thessalonians 5:21), the Corinthians (I Corinthians 16:13; II Corinthians 13:11; I Corinthians 1:10), the Ephesians (Ephesians 4:20-25, 6:10-17), the Philippians (Philippians 3:16-18). et al.?

If the Holy Scripture is not the standard, then perhaps someone will inform us as to what it is. If the Word is not the standard, why: "Speak as the oracles of God" (I Peter 4:16)? "Speak the truth in love" (Ephesians 4:15)? "Preach the word" (II Timothy 4:2)? Obey the truth (Hebrews 2:8-9, Matthew 7:24-29)? Believe the truth (II Thessalonians 2:10-12)? Be called by the gospel (II Thessalonians 2:14)? Is it pernicious heresy to speak evil of the way of truth (II Peter 2:2)? Does not judge himself unworthy of salvation by refusing to obey it (Acts 13:46)? Is one condemned by establishing his own righteousness (Romans 10:3)? Is one accursed to depart from it (Galatians 1:6-9)? Is one causing divisions contrary to the truth to be marked and avoided (Romans 16:17)? Is the obedient person promised everlasting life (John 3:36 ASV; Rev. 2:10; II Tim. 4:6-8; Rev. 22:14)?

THE BIBLE CANNOT BE UNDERSTOOD ALIKE

The "New Hermeneutic" teaches that people cannot understand the Bible alike. Since, they say, truth is subjective and situational, then the vagueness of the Scriptures makes it impossible to understand the truth. Thus, one person's interpretation is just as good and "authoritative" as another, especially as relates to oneself.

But, truth is harmonious. The truth is revealed from the God of truth; by Christ, the truth; through the Holy Spirit of truth. Deity is able to speak so that man can understand; "The Spirit speaketh expressly" (I Timothy 4:1). We can "hear [understand] what the Spirit saith to the churches" (Revelation 2:7, et al.). The church at Sardis had "received and didst hear; and keep it" (Revelation 3:3). What they did, others/we can do, if they/we will have an honest, good heart (Luke 8:15).

God "would have **all men** to be saved, and come to the **knowledge** [understanding] of the truth" (I Timothy 2:4); does the fault lie in God's lack of ability to speak/write clearly or in man's lack of ability to perceive the pure gospel, or does it not rather depend upon the type heart in the individual, his prejudice, his being misled by errorists, etc? To ask the question is to answer it! The Word enables the obedient believers to be perfected in one (John 17:23); the antithesis of that is severely rebuked by Paul (I Corinthians 1:10ff).

Through Paul's writings, it could be **known** "how men ought to behave themselves in the house of God, which is the church..." (I Timothy 3:15). Those who are "ever learning, and never able to come to the **knowledge** of the truth" are condemned; from such, Christians are to "turn away" (II Timothy 3:5-7), for they subvert the truth and lead silly folks into error. "For yourselves **know perfectly** that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night" (I Thessalonians 5:2). One escapes the defilement of the world by knowledge; to return to the world is terrible. "For it were better for them not to have **known** the way of righteousness, than, after knowing it, to turn back..." (II Peter 2:20-22). By the same affirmation that one cannot know the way of righteousness, the errorist denies that one can escape the pollutions of the world; if not, why not?

One can understand, indeed, must understand God's will, and those who through knowledge obey God's will and persist in it will be automatically united in Christ with all others who do likewise (I John 17:17ff; Ephesians 4:13,14; et al.), understanding the Bible alike (Ephesians 3:3). Unity [not union] is not just possible; it is commanded (I Corinthians 1:10ff).

THE BIBLE IS AN IMPERFECT BOOK

The "New Hermeneutic" attacks the Bible

as being an imperfect book, certainly not a united volume of "the truth." They desire to leave the impression that the Word is just an unorganized hodgepodge of dissimilar writings, devoid of unity. One must not, they say, get the idea that God speaks only through the Scriptures. And, the idea that a person can investigate all the Bible says on a certain subject and have the truth on that particular theme is foreign, they affirm, from the original intention of the Bible. Those who take such a position are ridiculed as "literalists" and "biblicists," as if such a stance is bad. And, those who adhere to the truth of plenary, verbal inspiration are assailed as believing in mechanical dictation, as a stenographer would merely and by rote write down without thought the words of the executive.

The Bible, though being constituted of sixty-six books, is **one book**, often termed "THE BOOK." Why is it called "the Book"? Is it not because of its amazing, perfect unity?

Without a single contradiction, the Word was written over more than 1,600 years, in three continents, in several different languages, by a great variety of authors (forty in number), under many different circumstances, addressed to varied immediate audiences, about various themes, and yet, having one fundamental, overall theme--the redemption of the lost through Christ, the only begotten Son of God (John 3:16). How was this

possible? The Word had one author--Jehovah God; it was recorded by divinely inspired writers.

Thousands of times, the writers use such phrases as: "Thus saith Jehovah," or "God spake," or "the Spirit saith," or "the Lord testifieth," et al. The very words are God's, not man's (I Corinthians 2:10-13). The holy men of God spoke as guided by the Holy Spirit; they themselves were inspired, and their words were/are inspired (II Peter 1:21; II Timothy 3:16,17). And, the true, humble, obedient servant will receive them as did the Thessalonians--"...ye accepted it not as the word of men, but, as it is in truth, the word of God, which also worketh in you that believe" (I Thessalonians 2:13). What a **contrast** is this reverence toward God's Word to the irreverence of modernists, liberals today!

Hear the affirmation of the Psalmist on whether the Word is complete revelation. "The sum of thy word is truth" (Psalm 119:160 ASV). "How precious also are thy thoughts unto me, O God! How great is the sum of them!" (Psalm 139:17). "...the scripture cannot be broken" (John 10:35). No wonder the warning is given not to add to nor take from the Word (Deuteronomy 4:2; Proverbs 30:5,6; Revelation 22:18,19)!

Connected with the charge that the Bible is not one book is also the false charge that so-called "proof-texting" is invalid. The Bible, the liberals say, was not designed to be used as Scripture in investigating and proving a fact of

truth. They would have problems with the Lord, who answered the Devil with Scriptures, proof-texts; with Peter, who proved Christ to be reigning as Lord and Christ at God's right hand on David's throne, with proof-texts; with James, who proved that Gentiles were fit subjects for the kingdom and the kingdom had been established with proof-texts; with Paul, who proved that the Gentiles obeyed and provoked the Jews to jealousy, with proof-texts (Matthew 4:1-11; Acts 2:22-36; 15:13-21; Romans 10:16-21). When did the Scriptures become such as could not be used as proof-texts? When the "New Hermeneutic" came along!

Christ held the Old Testament Scriptures to be complete, and He quoted often from them. "And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted unto them in **all** the scriptures the things concerning himself" (Luke 24:27). Was this proof-texting?"These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me. Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures" (Luke 24:44-45).

The apostles were guided into all truth (John 14:26; 16:13). They revealed and wrote the "apostles' doctrine" (Acts 2:42), binding and loosing as judges over the church/kingdom (Matthew 19:28; cf. Matthew 16:18,19; 18:18; John 20:21-23; Luke

22:28-30). The apostles received and revealed to man "**all things** that pertain unto life and godliness" (II Peter 1:3).

They delivered once for all time the unified, full body of truth (Jude 3).

LOGIC IS OPPOSED

The "New Hermeneutic" is vehemently opposed to logic, valid reasoning; "logophobia" is the term which describes this opposition to logic. For many years, sectarians and modernists have opposed objective truth--and logic. Very correct is the affirmation that "a person does not turn against logic until logic turns against him." God has always demanded valid reasoning, from Eve in the Garden of Eden to the present day. Note the emphasis in Isaiah 1:18; "Come now, and let us **reason** together." God charged, "Produce your cause, saith Jehovah; bring forth your strong **reasons**" (Isaiah 41:21); in other words, use logic!

Did Jesus err when He by implication proved His virgin birth (Matthew 22:24-26)?

Paul commanded, "...prove all things; hold fast that which is good" (I Thessalonians 5:21).

Did Paul err when he was "...opening and alleging that it behoved the Christ to suffer, and to rise again"? He was fulfilling God's will when he "...reasoned with them from the scriptures" (Acts 17:2,3). The Christian life is "reasonable,"

"belonging to the reason" (Romans 12:1, ASV margin). The Greek translated reasonable is **logikos**, defined by Vine as, "pertaining to the reasoning faculty, reasonable, rational." Priscilla and Aquilla "expounded unto him [Apollos] the way of God more accurately"; Apollos then "...powerfully confuted the Jews, and that publicly, showing by the scriptures that Jesus was the Christ" (Acts 18:26-28). Note how Paul reasoned before Agrippa, giving evidence about Christ (Acts 26:22-25). "New Hermeneutic" defenders have real problems with the fact that "The seed is the word of God" (Luke 8:11), that the gospel is God's power to save (Romans 1:16), that the Word is the sword of the Spirit (Ephesians 6:17), for it undermines their false averment that "truth" is subjective and comes through a kind of "enlightenment" separate from the Word; they abhor the idea that truth is objective and is knowable only through the propositional truth of the Word. This is too restrictive, keeping them from following their own whims and desires.

ONE IS SAVED BY GRACE ALONE

The "New Hermeneutic" attempts to affirm that one is saved by grace without any works of obedience. Many deny that one must be baptized for the remission of sins; just for the purpose of "obeying God" is adequate, they say. Many

sectarian groups "baptize" to obey God, but not for the remission of sins; their baptism is also into manmade sectarian churches [these are naturally and inevitably in competition with the Lord's church Matthew 16:18; Ephesians 4:4]. Like the sectarians, the liberal tries to say God's grace rules out adherence to law and the necessity of obeying the commandments.

When this writer started preaching over thirty-five years ago, he could not imagine the time when such heresy would be found among God's people. Without question, one is saved through God's grace (Ephesians 2:8-10), not by one's own meritorious deeds or by works of the law of Moses. Salvation by grace does not rule out but rather necessitates, requires obedience (Luke 6:46; Matthew 7:21-23; Hebrews 5:8,9; Romans 4:16). It is by works of obedience to the law of Christ that faith is demonstrated and perfected (James 2:19-26). A dead faith has never saved! Man must save himself (Acts 2:40), work out his own salvation (Philippians 2:12); this he does by the obedience of faith, motivated by love, enabling God's grace to flow.

SCRIPTURES MUST BE APPROACHED IN A NEW WAY

The "New Hermeneutic" argues that the Scriptures must be approached in a new way, not

according to the "Old Hermeneutic." They try to say that brethren have not exegeted the Word historically, lexically, syntactically, contextually, and analytically in the past. They accuse the pioneers, and all who followed, of failing to interpret, of simply adding up the "facts" and setting them forth as "law." They accuse the brethren of "atomizing," pulling various facts out of their contexts and coming up with a "neat blueprint." Such led, they aver, to making of equal importance all the commands and facts of the Bible and to demanding certain knowledge and performance by mankind (as if the Bible does not demand obedience).

This writer does not remember, on the other hand, when he was not taught to ask the questions: Who is speaking? to whom is the person speaking? why is the person speaking? when is the person speaking? etc. To charge the brethren with not exegeting properly is a false charge! In fact, the principles of Bible study and reverence for the Word and for God's authority (including the proper recognition for the various dispensations of God's dealings with man) have rightly distinguished God's people from the sectarians--which principles are required by and taught in the Word [the principles in the (so-called by the liberals) "old hermeneutics" were not from men but from God]. One can see these principles exhibited by the Lord, the apostles, and the evangelists and in **what the Bible itself demands** in interpreting it [the Bible is its own best

interpreter].

CONCLUSION

The "New Hermeneutic" contradicts the clear teaching of God's Word, which is our sole rule of faith and practice. This is simply a ploy designed to encourage and defend a person's desire to "do that which is right in his own eyes." It is another way of saying, when charged by the Lord to, "Stand ye in the ways and see, and ask for the **old paths**, where is the good way, and walk therein" (Jeremiah 6:16), "**We will not walk therein!**"

The inevitable result of such rejection of truth is digression. "...they are blind guides. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch" (Matthew 15:14). "Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them that are causing the divisions and occasions of stumbling, contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned: and turn away from them" (Romans 16:17). "...from among your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them" (Acts 20:30). Their "mouths must be stopped" (Titus 1:11).

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