

THE EPISTLE

Saint James' Episcopal Church
Livingston, Alabama



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January 2018

This Month's Cover

Our cover this month is an icon in the modern Eastern Orthodox style. It is Alexey Pismenny's *The Confession of St. Peter* (January 18), reproduced with his permission. It shows Christ recognizing Peter as the Rock on which he will build his Church, and giving him the Keys of the Kingdom (Matt. 16:18f). At their feet is the Paschal Lamb, representing Christ as the Passover Sacrifice. At the top are ten Apostles (Peter is in the main part, and Judas is missing). At the very top is the Hand of God in the two-fingered configuration of a patriarchal blessing. Immediately after Peter's confession Jesus said that the gates of Hell would not prevail against his Church, and he then prophesied that he would go to Jerusalem, die, and be three days in the tomb. At the bottom right is St. Michael the Archangel imprisoning Lucifer in Hell, and at the bottom left is Jonah, whose three days in the belly of the fish are prophetic of Christ's three days in the tomb.

Alexey Pismenny (1955-) was born in Saint Petersburg, Russia. His mother was a professional artist. Recognizing his talent she hoped that he would follow in her footsteps, and as an adolescent he studied art. However, he went on to study applied mathematics, and became a computer scientist. In recent years he returned to the arts and specialized in religious art, especially Eastern icons. He now lives and works in the Kansas City area with his wife and children. His work can be seen at <http://www.easternprom.com/pismenny.shtml>.

In early Christianity there was a dispute (the "Iconoclastic Controversy") as to whether the commandment against graven images included Christian art. The Eastern Church finally banned them, allowing only paintings, and in only two dimensions. A beautiful art form developed, producing what we

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call icons (from the Greek word for image). Icons are spiritually quite different from other religious art. In the Western tradition, the artist tries to express to the viewer his own spiritual feelings, or (a more modern concept) tries to evoke some spiritual feeling from the viewer. The maker of an icon, on the other hand, does not paint an icon, he “prays an icon.” He endeavors to turn his eyes and hands over to the Holy Spirit, and produces his work as an act of prayer. Preparation for this involves much prayer and meditation. He then starts his work with only a very general image in mind, leaving the final specific details up to the guidance of the Holy Spirit. In many respects, therefore, the production of an icon is an act of faith.

Richard R. Losch+

A Word From the Editor

In the Garden of Gethsemane on the night of his arrest, Jesus prayed “that they may be one even as we are one.” This prayer for unity was not only for the Church, which began to see division even in apostolic times, but also for the unity of all mankind. This is not a call for everyone to think alike, either in the Church or in the world. As anyone in business knows, conflict and disagreement can be healthy. They instigate thought, clarify ideas and inspire action. They become unhealthy only when they are accompanied by closed-mindedness, anger or hatred, at which point they become counterproductive and divisive. We see this today in both the Church and society, and it should be a matter of great concern for both. Unchecked, it will lead to disaster.

The modern trend toward “identity politics” is divisive. It is devolution into a tribalism that leads only to barbarism and violence. Civilization conquered barbarism, and through an increasing recognition of commonality rather than differences, tribes united to form nations, and eventually international communication made peace and progress possible. One of the things that for all her problems made America one of the greatest nations in history is that she offered an opportunity to people of every racial, ethnic and religious background

to work with what they had in common rather than embracing their differences. This led to the possibility of prosperity for all. While not all achieved it, there were no automatic barriers to it such as caste, dynastic rank or tribal interests.

We are now drifting back into a tribal culture that celebrates diversity and difference rather than community, and that honors victimhood rather than working to beat down the barriers that divide us. We have to turn this back, and each one of us can work toward that goal. Whenever we find conflict we must work toward resolving it with reason and justice rather than with anger. Pray for peace in your own relationships and those of others. Never underestimate the power of prayer—it can open your eyes and hearts and minds in extraordinary ways, and the ripple effect can be vast.

Father Rick Losch

Annual Parish Meeting

At the Annual Parish Meeting held on Sunday, December 3rd, the parish agreed to change the terms of office of vestry members from three years to two years beginning with those elected for the upcoming year. This will result in a four person vestry beginning January 1, 2020. Roy Underwood and Ethel Scott were elected to the Vestry for terms expiring on December 31, 2019, replacing Hiram Patrenos and Madelyn Mack whose terms expired December 31st, 2017. Other members of the Vestry are Rosalie Dew and Jim Rankin whose terms expire on December 31, 2018, and Joe Moore and Mary Helen Jones whose terms expire on December 31, 2019. Year to date financials were distributed by the Treasurer, Mr. Underwood, and reports were made for the Episcopal Church Women and the Altar Guild. The Vestry met following the Annual Meeting and elected the following officers for 2018: Roy Underwood, Senior Warden; Jim Rankin, Junior Warden; Hiram Patrenos, Treasurer; and Fr. Losch, Clerk. Thank you to Ms. Mack and Mr. Patrenos for their dedicated service to the Vestry and St. James'.

Hiram Patrenos

Wilmer Hall Christmas Contribution

Thank you to everyone who contributed towards our special gift to Wilmer Hall for its Christmas needs this year. Through your generosity St. James' contributed \$1,225.00 for the Christmas needs of the children.

Hiram Patrenos

Parish Directory Update

We will be updating the Parish Directory during January. Please review it for an errors and/or omissions and give any additions or corrections in writing to Hiram Patrenos or e-mail them to him at patrenoj@bellsouth.net. The updated directory will be available on the first Sunday of February.

Hiram Patrenos

Every Member Canvass

Thank you to everyone who has returned their pledge cards. If you have not yet completed your pledge card, it is not too late. Pledge cards are available on the table at the rear of the church. Please prayerfully consider your commitment to St. James'. Cards may be placed in the alms basins or mailed to St. James' Church, Post Office Box 446, Livingston, Alabama 35470.

Hiram Patrenos

Be Wordly Wise

Water

Water is a word that we tend to take as much for granted as water itself, but it has some very interesting uses and roots. Because water is essential to life, the word has many uses in our language as a both a noun and a verb. It is also used in countless phrases and idioms, such as "like water" (very plentiful), "under water" (as a mortgage that is more than the house's value), "of the first water" (the best), "pass water" (relieve oneself), "water over the dam" and "water under the

bridge” (past and irretrievable), “like water off a duck’s back” (extremely easy) and many more.

The word comes to us from the Middle English *waeter* or *weter*, which come from the Old English *wæter* (noun), and *wæterian* (verb). That came from the Old German *Wasser* via the Saxon *watter*. This in turn came from the Sanskrit *uddn* that produced a number of words from the Russian *voda* (cf. *vodka*, “little water”) to the Latin *unda* and the Greek *hudor*, all meaning water. Appropriately, the words winter and wet also derive from the Sanskrit *uddn*.

Richard R. Losch+

The Lord’s Prayer

The Lord’s Prayer is one of the most universal prayers in Christianity in that it is used in almost every worship service in almost every Christian denomination.¹ It is, of course, the prayer that Jesus gave us when the Apostles asked him to teach them to pray. Although in one sense it is universal, in fact its history and use are very complicated and varied.

The Bible has two versions of the Lord’s Prayer, Matthew 6:9-13 and Luke 11:2-4. Luke’s version omits several phrases that are found in Matthew’s, which is by far the more familiar. I do not know of any denomination that uses Luke’s form in worship, although there may be some. Most biblical scholars agree that the doxology, “For thine is the kingdom... etc.,” is a later addition to Matthew’s gospel. This is why the Roman Catholic Church, although it uses it, separates it from the main prayer with an additional intercession.²

In the English-speaking Christian world including the

¹ I do not know of any Christian group that does not use it, but with 43,000 Protestant denominations it is likely that there are at least some.

² Most Anglican and some Lutheran bodies omit the doxology in some services, such as Noonday Prayer and the Burial Office. Also, while the Roman Church uses the traditional English translation of the Lord’s Prayer, it uses a contemporary translation of the Doxology: “For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours, now and forever.”

Roman Catholic Church, regardless of the translation used for the lessons, the most common translation of the Lord's Prayer is that of the 1611 King James Version. This was taken from the 1549 Book of Common Prayer, which in turn took it (with minor variations) from the 1532 Coverdale Bible.¹

There is only one non-pronominal adjective in the prayer—"daily"—but it gives us significant trouble. The Greek is *epiousion* (ἑπιουσιον). This is a word that is found only twice in all known Classic or Koine Greek literature, and that is in Matthew's and Luke's versions of the Lord's Prayer. We do not know what Aramaic word Jesus used, because there is no Aramaic equivalent to *epiousion*. *Epi-* is a prefix that means upon or above, and *ousion* means being, essence or (philosophically) substance.² When Saint Jerome translated the Greek into Latin in the late 4th century, he translated *epiousion* literally as *supersubstantialem*, supersubstantial, in translating Matthew. For some reason he translated the same word as *quotidianum*, daily, in Luke. The word supersubstantial is a clear reference to Christ's presence in the Holy Eucharist through transubstantiation. Why he used daily in Luke is unknown. When Jerome's translation was revised in 1592 the word was changed to *quotidianum*, daily, in both Matthew and Luke.³ With very few exceptions that is the translation used today, even though it is very likely not what *epiousion* originally was intended to mean.⁴

¹ The King James Version was not an entirely new translation from the Greek and Hebrew. Most of it was taken from earlier translations, from which they updated the English and corrected errors. While it did not produce a new text, it was a brilliant piece of scholarship for its time.

² In philosophy and theology substance does not mean something tangible, but just the opposite. It is the indescribable essence of something. The describable aspects of something are called its accidents.

³ In Ecclesiastical ("Church") Latin the *qu* becomes a *c* and the word becomes *cotidianum*. This is what is used in most Latin prayer books today.

⁴ Latin, and no longer Greek, was the *lingua franca* of the late 4th century western world. That is why Jerome translated the Bible into Latin. However, Greek was still widely spoken, so even though *epiousion* is not

The translation of another word is also a matter of controversy today, and that is whether “trespasses” or “debts” should be used. Among the mainstream Protestant denominations, most Presbyterian and Reform groups use “debts,” while the majority of English-speaking Christians use “trespasses.” The confusion goes back 2000 years, because Jesus would have taught the prayer in Aramaic, not Greek. The Aramaic word he undoubtedly used is *choba* (ܫܘܒܐ). This can mean either financial debts, failed obligations, or actual sins. The Greek is *opheilemata* (ὀφειλήματα), which means the same as *choba*. Jesus was obviously not referring to financial debts, but rather to shortfalls in our duties to God and to one another—i.e., sins. Jerome translated this *debita*, which in Latin also means the same as *choba*. When John Wycliffe translated the Bible from Latin into English in about 1380 he translated *debita* as “debts” (the word he used was “*dettis*”). When William Tyndale translated from the Greek in 1524 he used “trespasses.” By his time the word debts meant primarily financial obligations, and he undoubtedly wanted to avoid that implication. During the Reformation Calvin preferred “debts” because Wycliffe had used it, and so the Calvinist traditions (Presbyterian and Reform) still use that.

A phrase that troubles many people is “lead us not into temptation.” A loving God would not lead us into temptation—that is Satan’s work. This has been a matter of discussion among theologians for centuries. The New Revised Standard Version translates it, “Do not bring us to the time of trial.” That is not a precisely accurate translation, but it is the consensus that it is the intent of the phrase. The Greek (*eisenenkes*, εἰσενεγκης) clearly means “lead” or “bring out;” the word we translate “temptation” (*peirasmon*, πειρασμον) means “trial” or “ordeal.” The King James Version is so embedded in Western tradition that almost all Protestants and even the Roman Catholic Church use the KJV (Matthew)

found today in any other known Greek literature, the word may well have been familiar to philosophers and theologians in Jerome’s time.

translation, “lead us not into temptation,” even though they are aware that while it is an accurate translation literally, that is clearly not its intended meaning. God does not lead us to temptation, but he does allow us to be faced with it—at least he took his own medicine in that Christ faced temptation at the beginning of his ministry and frequently thereafter. In *The Last Temptation of Christ* Kazantzakis deals with Jesus’ temptation to use his divine power to come down from the cross. Pope Francis recently suggested that we should change the translation to “Do not let us enter into temptation.” While this is not a literal translation of the Greek, it is almost certainly closer to the intent of what Jesus said in Aramaic.

The King James translation of the Lord’s Prayer is universally loved, and few have any desire or intention to move away from it. Pope Francis’ suggestion is nevertheless well worth considering, even though it is highly unlikely that most Protestant churches will accept it. It would be good from time to time, however, to read a more contemporary translation. This will jar us from the comfortable routine of what we are used to, remind us of its real meaning, and give us excellent food for meditation.

Richard R. Losch+

The Star of David

The Star of David, the standard symbol of Judaism today and the main device on the flag of Israel, is generally assumed to be as ancient as David’s kingdom. It is also sometimes also called the Seal of Solomon, and as such is commonly assumed to have been the symbol on the seal that Solomon pressed into clay bullas to validate documents. Neither of these is really the case. In fact, there is no evidence that the symbol goes back even as far as Old Testament times. The earliest recorded use of it is only a few hundred years old, and it was originally a common device in much Middle Eastern art, not exclusively that of the Jews. It did not become specifically associated with Ju-



daism until some time in the early Middle Ages. The ancient traditional symbol of Judaism was not the Star of David, but the Menorah, the seven-branched candlestick that was in Solomon's Temple.¹ In the 19th century the Zionist Movement (the movement to re-establish a Jewish state in Palestine) began, and the Jewish Council in Palestine decided to design a Zionist flag. They chose the *tallit*, the white blue-striped Jewish prayer shawl, as their flag, and placed the Star of David in its center. When the UN partitioned Palestine in 1948, the Council kept that as the flag of the new State of Israel.

Its name in Hebrew is *Magen David* (מגן דוד). This does not mean Star of David, but Shield of David. Its shape is that of a six-pointed star, but its early symbolism was not that of light, but of the protection of God. When God made his covenant with Abram he said, "Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield (*magen*)" (Gen. 15:1). In David's Song of Praise (2 Sam. 22:2ff) he says, "You make your saving help my shield (*magen*)" (36). In the Psalms there are 22 uses of the *magen* referring to God as a shield and protector. The Star of David, then, is a symbol of security to both Jews and Christians in the knowledge that God is our shield and protection.

Richard R. Losch+

Not a Gentile, Slave or Woman

Traditionally for millennia male Jews in their daily prayers have said, "Blessed are you, O LORD God, King of the Universe, who has not made me a Gentile, a slave or a woman." This has often been misunderstood as a rather arrogant, xenophobic and misogynistic statement of a Jewish man's superiority over Gentiles and women. In fact, it is not at all so, and it has an important application to Christian theology as we shall see below.

¹ The Menorah with which most people (especially Gentiles) are familiar today is the nine-branched Hanukkah Menorah, because it is so commonly seen during that feast in December. It commemorates the eight days of the feast (plus one candle denoting the Eternal Light, from which the other eight are lit). The candlesticks in Solomon's Temple were all seven-branched, denoting the six days of creation and the Sabbath.

Contrary to the common impression, not every one of the 613 commandments in Torah (the Jewish Law) is expected to be obeyed by every person. Many apply only to specific groups of people—men, women, children, priests, slaves, rulers, Levites, etc. By far the largest number of commandments, however, applies to adult Jewish males. Far fewer apply to Gentiles, slaves or women.

To a devout Jew one of the greatest joys is the study of Torah. This seems strange to many Gentiles, but dedication and obedience to God is so integral a part of the ancient Jewish religious culture that devout Jews find great pleasure in studying his Law. The fact that more commandments apply to Jewish males than to any other group is taken by them to be a special blessing. It is an honor and a blessing to have greater responsibility to God than is demanded of others, including Gentiles, slaves or women. They see it not as an elitist or privileged superiority, but as a humbling and loving duty, indicating a joyful willingness to obey a greater number of commandments. This is a concept very like that of being the Chosen People. The Jews see themselves as chosen not in the sense that they are God's favorites, but in that God has honored them by entrusting them with the responsibility of bringing knowledge of him to the rest of the world. This responsibility also often brings with it difficulty, persecution and suffering.¹ As Christians we take that even a step further, seeing the Jews as the people chosen to prepare the way for the Messiah, who is the savior of the whole world.

Saint Paul taught that obedience to Torah was never meant to be a means of justifying oneself before God, but rather is one's response to God's love and concern for us. Circumcision was considered the sign that one was included among God's people. Abraham believed in God, and because of that was declared righteous even though he had been given no commandments through which to merit that status. Only after he was declared righteous were commandments given and he was circumcised (Gen, 15:106, Rom. 4:1-3, Gen. 7). Obedience to God was not what justified him, but faith in God. Obedience resulted from that faith.²

¹ In *Fiddler On the Roof* Tevye says, "Dear God, I know we're the Chosen People ... but couldn't you choose somebody else once in a while?"

² This was the great error of the Pharisees against whom Jesus spoke so often. They had lost sight of their original purpose of studying Torah, and took an arrogant pride in their strict obedience to it.

While Torah recognizes many diverse groups of people who are included in the embrace of God's commandments, Saint Paul emphasizes that in Christ all divisions are dissolved and all are equal. "There is neither Jew nor Greek¹, there is neither slave nor free-man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you belong to Christ then you are Abraham's descendants, heirs according to promise" (Gal. 2:27f). It is significant that Paul, a devout Jewish male, put these in the same order as the daily prayer: Gentile, slave and woman.

Paul, then, was teaching the Christian faith completely within the context of Judaism, and not as a new and separate religion. He spoke from within the Judaic tradition, not from outside of it.

Richard R. Losch+

The Windows of the Soul

We often refer to the eyes as the "windows of the soul," implying that through the eyes we can perceive the condition of a person's soul. I believe that to some extent this is true, in the sense that direct eye contact is not only a strong means of communication, but for some reason often gives us some feelings, perhaps instinctive, about the real person. For the most part, humans are the only animals that value direct eye contact as a sign of honesty.²

By aid of modern science we know how the eye works. It receives light and focuses it on the retina, whose nerves then send a signal to the brain to be interpreted. In ancient times people had a very different understanding of the eye. They believed that it sends out a mystical light, rather like a flashlight, that reflects back and communicates to the mind one's surroundings. The ambient light

¹ In the idiom of first century Judaism, any Gentile—any non-Jew—was called a Greek, whether or not he was actually Hellenic. Remember Marion the Librarian's mother in *The Music Man* talking about "Rabel-aze and Shakespeare and all them other high-falutin' Greeks."

² In most of the animal kingdom direct eye contact is considered a threat, and is otherwise made only in brief intimate situations or as a means of making some kind of request or demand. If you want to try this out, make direct eye contact with your pet and watch the reaction. It is often one of discomfort, and the animal will look away quickly. Similarly, we are generally uncomfortable if we accidentally make direct eye contact with a stranger with whom we did not mean to communicate.

enhances this mystical light, so it is harder to see in the dark. This idea has actually survived into modern times in folk mythology. George du Maurier's Svengali sent power from his eyes to subdue Trilby into total submission. Superman's "X-ray vision" emanates from his eyes, and can probe through solid objects and even generate enough heat to destroy them if he wishes. Many Mediterranean cultures believe in the "evil eye" (*malocchio* in Italian). This is a power possessed by evil people to cast curses and cause harm simply by looking at their victims.

When we read in the Bible about Jesus referring to the eyes, his statements often seem to make no sense, and the general reaction is to ignore those passages and move on. The reason for this discomfort is that most people are thinking about the eyes as we understand them today, not as his hearers would have understood them 2000 years ago. He said, for example, "The eye is the lamp of the body. If your eyes are healthy, your whole body will be full of light. But if your eyes are unhealthy, your whole body will be full of darkness" (Matt. 6:22f). The word that is translated "healthy" (*haplous*, ἀπλούς) would be better translated "simple" or "uncomplicated," and that translated "unhealthy" (*poneros*, πονηρός) would be better rendered as "sly" or "wicked." These are their meanings in both Classic and Modern Greek, and thus most likely in the Koine Greek of the New Testament. What Jesus was talking about then becomes clear. Those who see the world in a simple, uncomplicated way can focus on God's path—"Your word is a lamp unto my feet, a light on my path" (Ps. 119:105). Those who see the world in a devious or wicked way become so distracted with the moral clutter of this world that they fail to see God's path, and thus fail to see the light of the world. Their focusing on themselves cuts off the light, and they live in darkness.

Richard R. Losch+

Headless Toads for Dinner

A 2014 excavation of a 4000-year-old Canaanite grave near Jerusalem revealed a rather surprising find. It was common in pagan cultures to bury items with the dead that they would find useful or necessary in the afterlife. Among these were often generous supplies of food. It is not at all rare to find supplies of grain, wine, and dried fruits and meats in graves. In this grave, however, was found a jar containing the bones of nine toads. The nature of the jar and

the way it was buried indicate that they were intended as food. Many modern cultures include amphibians among their cuisine—frogs' legs are considered a delicacy even in our own culture. The particularly interesting thing, however, is that the heads of all nine toads were absent. We can only conjecture why. Perhaps it had some religious significance, or it may have been purely practical. The skins of many frogs and toads are toxic. In South America there are tree frogs whose skin is so toxic that it is dangerous even to touch it, and it is used to make arrow poison. Even so, like the deadly puffer fish in Japan, many such toads are a culinary delicacy. The skin is easily removed if the heads and toes are cut off. Perhaps in a similar way the ancient Canaanite toads were decapitated in order to skin them in preparation for cooking. Archaeologists hope to answer this question as new discoveries are made.

Richard R. Losch+

Church and Synagogue

In modern terms these two words mean very specific things to us—a church is where Christians meet to worship, and a synagogue is where Jews do the same. In ancient times, however, the equivalent words were not at all as clearly defined.

The Greek word that we translate church is *ekklesia* (ἐκκλησία), from which we get the word ecclesiastical and its many related words. It literally means calling out, or a calling together. It was used to refer to any formal gathering, religious or secular. A worship service, an academic meeting, or even a political rally was an *ekklesia*. A more accurate rendering of this when we are translating the Bible would be assembly or gathering rather than church (Rev. 2:1). After they were expelled from the synagogues the earliest Christians did not have churches, but usually gathered in members' homes.¹

The word synagogue also comes from the Greek, and is just a modern spelling and pronunciation of the original word, *synagoge* (συναγωγή). It also means a gathering together. As

¹ This is why many of the early Protestant reformers preferred to call their gatherings meetings rather than services, and their buildings were known as meeting houses, not churches.

with *ekklesia*, its original use was not specifically a Jewish or even a religious term. In the ancient Greco-Roman world *sunagoge* referred to any formal gathering place, but most especially one for teaching or learning.¹

When we see the words church or synagogue in the Bible, we must remember that they have a much broader meaning than are generally given to them today. When we use Church to mean the Body of Christ, the assembly of all the faithful, it is capitalized. When we use it to refer to a building or an individual congregation, it is not capitalized. In translating the Bible, rendering *ekklesia* as Church is reasonable, although we need to remember that in ancient usage it did not just mean a religious congregation, and it never meant a building. *Sunagoge*, on the other hand, could mean either a learning or a religious assembly, or the building in which it took place. We must be careful, therefore in translating it, to catch its true meaning in context. The following three passages all use *sunagoge*: “[Moses] has had those who proclaim him, for he has been read aloud every Sabbath in the *synagogues*” (Acts 15:21); “If a person with gold rings and in fine clothes comes into your *assembly*...” (James 2:2); and “Those of the *congregation* of Satan who say that they are Jews and are not, but are lying...” (Rev. 3:9).

Richard R. Losch+

The greatest TV comeback of the year, from *Downton Abbey*: When Mrs. Crowley said to the Dowager Countess of Grantham, “Oh, how you hate to be wrong!” she replied sedately, “I wouldn’t know. I’m not familiar with the experience.”

¹ In Yiddish, synagogue is *shul* from the German *Schul*, school. In the Babylonian Exile the Jews were not allowed to worship God, but the Babylonians encouraged education. The Jews organized what looked like schools, but in them they secretly taught Torah and worshiped God. This was the origin of the synagogue. The word *rabbi* means teacher.

A Touch of Trivia

The last Monday in January, the 29th this year, is the official Bubble Wrap Appreciation Day. Bubble wrap was invented in 1957 when Alfred Fielding and Marc Chavannes sealed two plastic shower curtains together in an attempt to create a new style of 3-D wallpaper. It was a failure as wallpaper, but they saw its potential as packing material and made a fortune.

Richard R. Losch+

JAMIE

by Richard R. Losch



*“Eat your broccoli or
I’ll change the Wi-Fi
password!”*



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