

Practical Devastation of Our Old Humanity

by T. Austin-Sparks

The sermon explores the critical transition from our old humanity to the new humanity in Christ, emphasizing the need for practical devastation of the former to embrace the latter.

Duration: 1:09:52

Scripture: 1 Samuel 3:10, Luke 24:27, Luke 24:30

Topics: "Christianity"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the deep-rooted failure of humanity in relation to God. He emphasizes the betrayal of Judas and how it exposed the sinful nature within all of mankind. The speaker then highlights the intervention of God in the New Testament to bring about a culmination and climax of humanity's history. The sermon concludes by emphasizing the importance of understanding the human heart and the need for redemption through the cross.

Transcript

Practical Devastation of Our Old Humanity, July 10, 1968, morning. Lord, we know that we have just used the words which one of old, long time ago, used, but did not understand that it was the Lord speaking. He thought it was a man, though a man of God, until he was brought face-to-face with the fact, no, it is not man that speaks.

It is God, and then directly with thyself, he said, speak, Lord. Thy servant heareth. We pray that we may have that enablement to discern when the Lord is speaking, when it is not just a man, but the Lord.

And oh, how much hangs upon the Lord speaking to us, as it did with Samuel. We would be, like Samuel, that mighty power amongst the people of God. We ask thee that we may truly hear thee through any other voice that may speak.

We may hear inwardly the voice of the Lord. We may go down before thee and receive whatever instructions or commission thou wouldst have us receive. So help us, Lord, this morning, for thy name's sake.

Amen. There is a hymn in one of our hymn books. Some of you will know it, others may not.

And it runs like this. My goal is God himself. Not joy, nor even blessing, but himself, my God.

Tis his to lead me there, not mine, but his. At any cost, dear Lord, by any road. Young Christians without much experience sing that with a good deal of enthusiasm.

Older, more mature Christians sing it holding their heart. I wonder if you would commit yourself to those last lines. At any cost, dear Lord, by any road.

You say yes? If you do, then you are prepared for what's coming. For on that very ground I'm quite sure we're going to meet a challenge this morning. It will be the challenge of a real crisis, upon which so very much for us all will hang, far more than we are aware of.

Well now, having said that, let us get on. You know that in this hour of our sessions we are occupied with the two humanities, and especially with the great transition from one humanity to another. The humanity of the first Adam, an inclusive word and term, collective as well as individual.

To the last Adam, who also is individual but collective. Later in the week we may have something more to say about the collective aspect of the new humanity but we've a lot of ground to cover before we get there. The place where I think a very big adjustment has got to be made in our mentality and conception of that corporate aspect.

We call it the church. Certain that we've got to make some mental changes over this church conception. However, we leave that.

And this morning we come back to this transition, this passing from one humanity to another, with which the whole Bible is occupied, and particularly the New Testament. I weigh my words. I'm very careful.

I'm not a bit concerned with or interested in just passing to you a lot of teaching and information. I'm too old for that. Everything has got to contain something upon which destiny hangs.

So I weigh my words and I want to repeat this. The New Testament in its entirety is occupied with one thing. It has many things about the one thing or contained in it, but this is the one thing.

The transition from that one humanity, kind of being, mankind, to another. The other being Christ. The first of this new race and order of mankind upon which God's heart has been set from the beginning.

Of far greater importance, as we said and pointed out yesterday, than even angels. A bit of children, we used to sing a little hymn, I want to be an angel. Do you? Our God has far, far greater destiny for you than that of angels.

Angels desire to look into these things, it says. They desire to look into this. Not unto angels, but unto man.

The supreme conception of God's heart in this creation, of which Christ, his son, is the first, the beginning. Everything, therefore, that you will find in your New Testament, in one way or another, has to do with this changeover. And everything that we shall find in our own spiritual experience, if we are really in the hand of the Holy Spirit, has to do with this.

Oh, I'm going through this experience. I'm having this difficulty. I'm passing this way of sorrow, of perplexity, whatever it is.

It's all in the control of the Holy Spirit related to this transition. Movement from one ground to another. From one personal kind to another personal kind.

Is that clear? Focus is right now upon the situation that you are in, whether it be a good one or a bad one. By any road, at any cost. And here it is that we begin what is not going to be, in the first place, pleasant to contemplate.

What is it? The absolute necessity for the practical devastation of one kind of humanity. I underline the word practical, not doctrinal, not theoretical, not theological, not philosophical, but practical. Devastation of our old humanity.

I wonder if you have recognized that the Old Testament throughout is occupied on one side with this. The exposure of the inability of that humanity under the most favorable conditions to satisfy God. God took out a people, related them, attached them to himself.

While they remained on his ground, blessed them with every, not spiritual, but temporal blessing in the earthly. They had only got to be obedient to the commandment and blessed was their barn and their store and their basket and their family and their business and everything prospered on this earth. He gave them a marvelous economy under his sovereignty, right through from the garden, through Israel.

And what have we, when we close our New Testament? The failure of that kind of humanity under every condition, under every favorable condition that God could give temporally. It's a tragic story. The Old Testament has to close.

No, it has not attained. It has failed. You have to write on that side the big word failure over that whole history of mankind in relation to God.

You come into your New Testament and you find now what is happening. This whole issue is being headed up to its climax in the New Testament. God has stepped in with an intervention and along one line saying we are going to definitely and positively bring this thing to a culmination and a climax.

But to do it, we must let people see and know and all history and all time will recognize why it's necessary for us to bring about this culmination and climax of that humanity. I'll note this. While we're not interested just in fascination, there's something quite fascinating about this.

It's gripping when once you begin to see. So, not in the order of time or chronology, we have our four Gospels as they are called. And what are these four Gospels? They are two things.

Of course, they are the introduction of God's kind of man. He's put there. Then alongside of God's kind of man, the other kind of man is arranged.

You cannot read these Gospels from that standpoint without being shocked. It's the only word for it. Shocked.

At the exposure of man alongside of this other man. This man that God has put down in the midst. Read your Gospels again in this light.

The reactions of men to this man. Are they not terrible? You wonder sometimes how on earth they've got the cleverness to note some of the things that they bring up against this man. Steadily moving on.

Moving on in that way and uncovering exposure, manifestation of that kind of man. Intensifying. Note the point where it seems a new intensification comes in, in this malice, this hatred, this prejudice, this wickedness.

Against whom? Why? What has my Lord done? What means this rage and spite? Intensifying. Until you come right up to the days of the cross. Remember, of course, he has been moving on the ground of the crucified man from his baptism onward.

And that's significant fact when you carry it into the unseen realm where the forces of antagonism are at work. However, and by the way, but now we come actually up to the time of the cross. The hours before the crucifixion and the hour itself.

And you have gathered around that cross a representation of every aspect of the human race. Caiaphas, the high priest of Israel, in whom the race is officially centered and gathered up. He is representative of the nation.

You read the story put together from these accounts where Caiaphas is the chief actor, the chief actor on the stage of this drama. No words of mine or of man can describe really. He is the chief actor on the stage of this drama.

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You read the story put together from these accounts where Caiaphas is the chief actor on the stage of this drama. Make their ears heavy and shut their eyes, lest they see with their eyes, hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and turn again and be healed. That sounds terrible.

Lest, lest, lest they turn again. Make it impossible for them to do so. Take away their ability to go back upon their cross.

Isn't that terrible? But what are you dealing with? You are dealing with a hard mess of heart, which has been hardened and hardened and hardened again, against the word, against the prophet, against all the revelation that God has given. Hardening, hardening, until they've gone beyond the point of no return. God has said, you have so hardened your heart and said so positively, no, to my way, that it's beyond now remedied.

That's Caiaphas and Israel at the cross. The heart which says no to God. What a heart.

What an exposure. What a revelation of human capacity in the presence of the highest privilege. Yes, it's coming out now.

What has gone on? What has gone on? It had perhaps a very simple beginning, but it grew and grew. There was no turning back when it was possible, until it reached the point where God said, take away their capacity for hearing and seeing. The judgment of the hard heart of man, even under all those appeals and pleadings and sobs and tears of God.

Come out at the cross. What the cross reveals about what is possible in our heart. You saying that's Caiaphas, that's not me.

Oh, you don't know the human heart, if you say that. You don't know the human heart if you've never had any rebellion in your heart. Have you never had the capacity for saying no to the Lord and had to have a battle over it? It's there.

It's not Caiaphas. It's Adam. Adam.

See, following through by coming to development. We may not stay with all these. We stop there.

In the high place of religion, you come from Caiaphas, move over to Pilate, Pontius Pilate. What an opportunity this man had. Oh, what has history said about Pilate? You do not think of Pilate without some feeling of disgust.

Pilate who has the opportunity of humanity in his hand. What is he doing? What is he doing? Well, you say he is vacillating. He is moving from one foot to the other.

He may at times seem to be rocking. But all that speaks of weakness. Weakness.

Inability to come right down 100% on one foot. To make his full and final decision. Trying to pass it over to someone else to make the decision.

Trying to shed responsibility. But why? Why? A time server. If you let this man go, you are not Caesar's friend.

That is it. Caesar's favour. Caesar's ability to further my worldly interests.

If I take this line, then all my worldly interests are in jeopardy. My prosperity in business. My good standing with the authorities.

Those that have it in their power to further my interests. Time server. Alright.

And Pilate goes down in history as the man who handed Jesus over from his own ability to make a decision in his favour. To be crucified. Take him.

You take him. I have said I find no fault with him. But you take him and crucify him.

The weakness of what? The weakness and the awful tragedy of a divided heart. The main feature and factor in which is how this is going to affect me and my interests. That finds us out all the way along.

See that was the battle that Jesus himself fought in the wilderness with the devil. The devil was saying how it would affect you if you go the way that you have decided to go. How it would affect you? You want the kingdoms of this world, you take the line of compromise.

But what an exposure of what is in man. We hurry on. Come nearer.

Nearer. The centre of the circle. We come to Judas Iscariot.

Judas. You can't use that word, that name now, can you? Without frown, almost a smear. Judas.

You want to say the worst thing that you can say about anybody, you say he's a Judas. It started somewhere in a very simple way. It started the day when either the Lord himself who knew what he was doing after you or the other disciples said to Judas look here people will give us gifts to help us along.

We'll have to have somebody to look after the gift. Judas, you have the bag. Simple beginning.

But what happened? Being in that position drew out something that was deep down in that humanity. Perhaps deeper than even Judas knew. Drew it out, drew it out, drew it out.

You know the end. Man who again goes beyond the point of return and recognises at last that he has in betraying the Lord forfeited everything that was put in his way. Of glory.

Of heavenly order. And there's nothing else to do but to take his own life. But what has been exposed? What has been exposed? What is it in this humanity that's down there in the root of things and comes up and up and up? It's only given an opportunity.

I heard Dr. Campbell Morgan once say in preaching, we are capable of anything if only we have the opportunity for it. That's searching. What has come out? Covetousness.

Covetousness. That's all. Wanting to have.

To have. And my friends, while you shrink from the name Judas, be careful. This is in us all.

Even in the work of the Lord. Covetousness to be recognised. To be given opportunities of service.

Going about feeling wherever we can for someone to give us an open door. A ministry. See? Drawing to ourselves, even in the things of God.

Disciple. The root may be there. This wanting to have.

To make ourselves something. Covetousness, which the word says is idolatry. The cross will discover what's in us.

It will bring it out. That's Judas. And come nearer still, come nearer still, perhaps to the innermost circle, Simon Peter.

Simon Peter whom? Man who did not know himself and thought so differently about himself from what was true. I will never forsake thee. I will go with thee even unto death, though all men forsake thee, yet will I not.

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I will not. I will not. I will not.

I will not. I will not. I will you with a special message.

Go to my disciples and to Peter. I know what's happening there. I know where he is and what's happening.

Poor, poor Simon Peter. What has happened? Well, the Lord told Simon Peter what would happen. Simon didn't understand it or grasp it.

Simon, Simon, Satan hath desired to have thee, that he may sift thee as wheat. Strip off that false, that false covering of selfhood which covers really what is there and you don't know. Sift you as wheat.

Well, Simon found that the cross is a very, very searching and a very devastating thing to any kind of self-confidence, self-sufficiency, self-interest or anything of self. It's going to simply desolate that kind of humanity. And I take just one other, one other instance.

After he is crucified, after that part of the drama is completed, two of them, two of them went on that day to Emmaus, a village. You know the story? Luke 24. As they talked, sadly talked, this stranger, stranger drew up with them.

Their eyes were holding that they should not recognize him. And he said, what manner of conversation is this that you have as you walk? Sad? Comes out, are you only a visitor to our city? Have you only just arrived? Have you not known what's been happening in the last few days? What things? He's drawing them out. What? He's drawing them out.

What things? They said, the things concerning Jesus of Nazareth. What a prophet, mighty in word and in deed. We hoped, we, we hoped that it had been he that should redeem Israel.

But our ruler's crucified. In other words, our hope is all gone. All our expectation is destroyed.

We're men without anything left. All right. Then this stranger took the Old Testament.

They knew it. I don't think he had it in his hand. They had it in their head.

And he started from the beginning and worked his way all through the scriptures. Marvelous thing to do. In the course of perhaps of an hour, we have difficulty getting a little bit out.

And as he opened to them the scripture, their, their mouths opened, their eyes opened. And then they arrived, know the end, sat down to meal, took the bread. Eyes were open.

They knew him. He disappeared on their side. What has been disclosed? What has been exposed? This.

You can have your head absolutely full of the scriptures and know them up here. And they never save you in the day of crisis. The very thing that is there written by God for our salvation doesn't save us when the cross is planted right at the heart of our lives.

It's a crisis in which we collapse. That's a terrible thing, isn't it? Searching? Know all the scriptures? Yes. Know all the scriptures.

And yet when it comes to the test of some tremendous experience, some devastating experience, all that we have read and heard and thought we knew is no good to us. It's no good to us. Of course there's a lot more in the is my point.

What a disclosure of the human heart. What an exposure of this other man. How he can be a disciple.

How he can go about with the Lord for years. How he can know all that the Lord has said and seen what the Lord has done. And how he can have the teaching in his head.

And then when it comes to it, real test of the man. The real test of the man. He cannot stand up to it.

He collapses. We had hoped. With our Bible in our hands, we had hoped and are in despair.

Isn't that certain? Well, these are only cases to prove the case. The devastation of that one humanity under every kind of test is essential. Listen, is essential to the other humanity.

Which Christ is. How different he is. How different he is.

Another humanity altogether. Another kind of man in whom there is nothing of this at all. Nothing of this.

An apostle once said to believers, you have not so learned Christ. In other words, if you had learned Christ, you would not be doing that. You would not be like that.

Now, get hold of the issue before we go further. What is it? Oh, it may not all come at once. It may not all come at once.

It could not. This devastation may be spread over a whole lifetime. But it has a beginning, Marcus.

A beginning. And this is the course of a truly spiritual life. You'll mark spiritual progress and spiritual growth and spiritual maturity by this one thing.

How little the individual thinks of themselves. How little they are in the picture, their own picture and other people's picture, as themselves. Or shall I put it the other way, how much of Christ you meet in them and

not themselves.

That's the test. How much the cross has in their own selfhood. It's the essential and inevitable way to spiritual fullness, to Christ and the fullness of Christ, which is something altogether different from what we are.

Well now, having said that, we're going further with this for a little while this morning. I want to take you over to that part of the New Testament which focuses this whole issue more than any other part, I think. Which brings on the one side the exposure into view and on the other side what it is, that Christ is.

I've often been asked a question. Say, Romans 7. Is that the history of a born-again man or an unborn-again man? I've had a question asked me since I've been here and I've postponed the answer until now. The first man is of the earth, earthy, so on.

Is that an unconverted man? Man before he's born again. Or is that a born-again man? That's a born-again man. Make no mistake about it.

Paul is writing to born-again people in Corinth. He opens his letters with an address to the saints which are in Christ Jesus. Saints by standing through faith in Jesus Christ.

And all that is in those letters is addressed to Christians. But it's a horrible exposure of something about Christians, isn't it? I confess to you I've more than once in my life, reading the first letters of the Corinthians, asked myself, were these men, these people really born again? Can we classify them as Christians? Yes, yes. To the saints, by standing through faith it is, that are in Corinth.

And all I'm going to say to the apostles, which I say is to you, to such. The tragedy in Corinth was the tragedy of the carryover of relics and remnants of the other humanity. There is something here, Mark you.

There is something here of the new humanity. But there's been a carryover of the old in the Christian life. The result? Confusion.

Confusion in judgment. Confusion in behavior. Confusion in relationships.

And if you think that word is not justified, I want to remind you that they wrote to the apostle Paul on one occasion asking him ten, ten elementary questions about the Christian life. About what Christianity is. And confusion about the elementary things of Christianity.

I'm not going to stay this week, I think, with all those questions. But there they are. There's confusion.

Terrible complications in Corinth. There is weakness. Weakness in life, in a living testimony.

There's shame, reproach. The apostle has to say some very strong and some very hard things to Christians. Because of a carryover of the old humanity into a relationship with the new without the clean cut.

Is that, is that why the apostle after his introduction in the first letter says, I made up my mind. I determined. I resolved.

No nothing among you save Jesus Christ and him crucified. We're going to meet Christ crucified repeatedly through these two letters. At Christic points in their spiritual life.

Christ crucified. That's the foundation on which we're going to build, you Corinthians. You who have carried over some of the old humanity into the realm of the new and find that two things won't go together.

Immediately there is confusion and defeat. Well here we are in this letter. These letters to the Corinthians and I have said that these more than any other in the New Testament represent the battle ground of the two humanities.

Right there at the beginning of the first letter as a heading. Carry it right through. The battle ground of the two humanities.

That's with the Corinthians. May I mark one thing before I go further and I'll keep carefully to my time. When Paul came to this situation to deal with it in Corinth and said, in doing so, in coming to you, I made a definite, positive, conclusive result.

No nothing among you save Jesus Christ and him crucified. What did he do? What did he do when he said that? What does that mean? I am not coming to you people who are philosophically minded and are so interested in philosophy. I'm not coming with a new philosophy.

I'm not coming to you with a new religion. I am not coming to you with a new system of teaching. I'm not coming to you with a new order and form and technique.

I am coming with everything gathered up and focused in a person. A person. A man.

A man. A person. You see the force of that? It is forceful.

No, I'm not interested in any of these other things that you may be interested in. For me, it's this man, Christ Jesus. This different kind of man.

And this man who is crucified to all the other kind of man. Crucified to this world. Crucified to old humanity.

Crucified to all these things that you think so much of, that are so important to you. Crucified to the whole realm. It's a man and a man only and a kind of man that is the point, the focus, gathered into a man.

Now from that point onward, the whole thing develops on the one side, that man that they've tried to bring over, still nursing here at Corinth. The other side, this other man. You'll lead right on, won't you? It's in Corinth.

And if any man be in Christ, there is a new creation. The old things have passed away. The whole old has become new.

The great divide of the cross. Well, this is Corinth and the old and new humanity. The real battleground and what a battleground it is.

If you're thinking objectively and historically, stop. Stop at once. Come over your 2,000 years.

Bridge that gap. Get away from geographical Corinth or historical Corinth. Come right here.

Right here. We belong to that same humanity by nature. By nature.

By grace, we belong to another humanity. But we, dear friends, and this is where Christendom is all in confusion today and in defeat, so that we read in papers that Christianity has had its day. It isn't counting.

Really doesn't matter. There's no impact upon world conditions and situations and so on. That's the conclusion of a natural man because of what he sees in Christendom.

We have to agree to a very large extent, don't we? We do know something else. We do know something else. But Christendom has got into that terrible plight today for this very reason that the complete understanding of the cleavage, the cleavage which the cross of Jesus Christ has made between two humanities, and there's no bridge tolerated by God between those two.

The cross has cut right in between these two humanities. And as I was saying, it may not all happen at once, but through a lifetime, the Holy Spirit will be teaching us if we are teachable, if we are sensitive, if we are walking in the Spirit, the Holy Spirit will be teaching us, that is you, that is not Christ. Putting it in a phrase.

That is you. That's your way of talking. That's your way of thinking.

That's your way of going about. That's just you. It's not Christ.

Oh, it would take a long time, but oh, it would be so profitable to study this other man as he walked in this world and see the principles which governed his life, which were all heavenly and all spiritual and made him absolutely incalculable in this world. Yes, like that. And what belongs to the other? Chapter two.

Chapter two. Oh, the Christendom has really had its eyes opened to chapter two of the first letter of the Corinthians. Two designations here, the two humanities are the natural man.

That's it. The natural man. Let me say again, that is not necessarily the unborn again man.

I'm not going to enter into any argument about perfectionism, except the argument that if I were meant to be sinless, it would have taken far too long to bring it about. No, there's so much yet of what is natural about us, even after a long life seeking to walk with the Lord. Is there not? Why I'm meeting it here and you're meeting it here.

It's here. Meet one another, don't we? Ah yes, meet one another on that other ground. Oh, if only, if only we, everyone met fully, wholly, completely, utterly and finally on the ground of Christ.

Well, we shouldn't stay here in this place or any place on this earth. We'd go to glory. That's how it's going to be there.

It's not like that. There may be more or less of this, but Corinth shows and is used to show, it stands in spiritual history to show the tragedy of a carryover from one humanity to another and not allowing the great transition to be clear cut. What it's here for.

And so we have this dividing the natural man, he that is spiritual. He that is spiritual and the natural man. And then there opens up the characteristics of each.

I'm afraid to launch out into this, so much of it. You will come almost immediately on this. Personality complexes.

Personality complexes, that's the natural man. I am of Paul. I am of Apollos.

I am of Peter. And I do one better than the lot of you. I, still I, am of Christ.

Tell me that we are not capable of that. Making even a servant of God and a greatly used servant of God and a servant of God who is a saintly man, making him the focal point, the pivot around whom we circle. His line of teaching that appeals to me.

His interpretation. His personality. All like that, all like that.

And the Apostle or the Holy Spirit puts that sort of thing in the category of the natural man. Because the effect of that is divisiveness in the body of Christ. That's what the letter opens up.

Divisiveness in the body of Christ. Oh, don't talk about personalities. They may have been used to your help.

You may owe a lot to the Lord because of them. But don't be constantly bringing them into view. Paul will argue back and say, Who is Paul? Who is Apollos? Who is Peter? Only servants of God through whom you believe.

Only servants of God through whom you believe. Let the instrument recede into the background and let Christ come to the fore. Be occupied with him.

Talk about the Lord Jesus. Ah, now we have found out, you know, there's a lot of it here in a conference like this. This man's name and that man's name and this teacher and that teacher and this one's line of things and that one.

We have our preferences, attachments. Drop the whole thing. Paul is saying, Nothing but Jesus Christ.

Him crucified. To all that personality complex business, which in the development only means division in the body of Christ, and division is weakness and defeat. Systematized Christianity has attached names to its various branches.

Dare I? Dare I? Luther? Wesley? I am of Wesley. I am of Luther. That's what's going on in me.

That's my line. That's your Christendom as you have it today. They're trying to get the better of all the complications that result from this sort of thing.

But they're doing it along the wrong lines. They're doing it from the outside. What is called unity.

Instead of dealing with it from the inside. And after all, if only, if only we saw Jesus Christ, and here I'm going ahead, as I said I would not, only we saw Jesus Christ, we'd see what the church is. Dear friends, I'm going to say it now.

The church, the church of Jesus Christ is not an it. It is not a system of teaching. It is not something ecclesiastical.

It is not an institution. Oh I thank God for the day when he showed me this. The church is a person, and that person is Jesus Christ, in corporate expression.

Revise your mentality about it when you talk about the church, the body of Christ. What are you talking about? Not an it, a something as though it were a something in itself, and a teaching in itself. No, it's this man, with a family, children, brothers and sisters, begotten of God.

That's the church. Oh how much ecclesiasticism we can have without the family life. Is that true? Is that true? No, no, no.

Church after all, when you come to the final word, is just the measure of Christ that there is in those who make it up. Till we all attain unto the measure of Christ. Every one of us.

Are you a church member? Is your name on the church roll? Wipe it all out, that mentality. You cannot join the church. There is no role in this sense.

How did my arm come to be part of my body? Well someone said to my arm, would you like to join? It's all up to you now. It's all up to God. It's all up to God.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen. Save us from that.

Save us from that. Lord we are not wanting to impose on thy people any kind of suppression, but we do pray that the Holy Spirit will solemnize our hearts in the presence of such great issues. The greatest issue of all time and eternity.

Give us quiet meditation, prayerful meditation in our hearts to see where we are, where we are in this whole matter.

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