

## A Holistic and Missional Vision of Worship

### Introduction: Biblical Basis for Worship

*“Praise the Lord! Praise God in his sanctuary; praise him in his mighty heavens! Praise him for his mighty deeds; praise him according to his excellent greatness...Let everything that has breath praise the Lord! Praise the Lord!”*

- Psalm 150:1-2,6 (ESV)

*“But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him. God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.”*

- John 4:23-24 (ESV)

The special challenge of discussing a philosophy or theology of worship lies in the diversity of the Church’s various sociocultural contexts, liturgical traditions, and worship options. Although the word *worship* is found in our English Bibles, “for almost any definition of worship there are many passages that have a bearing on this subject that do not use the Hebrew or Greek word that could be rendered by the word *worship* itself.”<sup>1</sup> In other words there is no one-to-one word in Hebrew or Greek for the word *worship*. From the tenth century, onward, the word *worship* has God as it’s object, nevertheless, since the 1200s it has been connected with the “condition of deserving honor or a good reputation or with the source or ground of that honor.” In all uses of the word *worship*, one is concerned with the “worthiness” or the “worthship” of the person or object that is being revered. From the Christian perspective, only God is worthy of worship, hence why our English Bibles bind the word *worship* to the worship of God and prohibitions of worship of other beings.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Mark Ashton. *Worship by the Book*. Zondervan (2002). P.15

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, p. 18

In the Old Testament Worship was centered on feasts days, the temple, and the Levitical system of priest. Under the new covenant, worship is liberated from the systems and traditions of the old covenant. In the New Testament context, worship is prescribed as constant activity that also functions as a source of *mutual edification* when the people of God come together for cooperate fellowship, singing, confession, public prayer, ministry of the Word and so on.<sup>3</sup>

Ashton defines worship as “the proper response of all moral, sentient beings to God, ascribing all honor and worth to their Creator-God precisely because he is worthy, delightfully so.”<sup>4</sup> Ron Man adds that the rhythm of worship should have a pattern of *revelation response*:

“When Christians gather for corporate worship, it is logical that the Word of God should play a central and dominant role. Since worship involves focusing our thoughts and hearts and voices on the praise God which the Word alone gives us if our worship is to be "in truth" (John 4:23-24). Our worship can only duly honor God if it accurately reflects what he reveals about himself in his Word.”<sup>5</sup>

According to Michaels, “worship ‘in Spirit and truth’ does not necessarily mean non-liturgical or noninstitutional worship, nor does it favor ‘inward’ individual worship over ‘outward’ corporate worship. Rather, it is worship appropriate to the nature and character of God, and if God’s nature is revealed only in ‘God the One and Only, the One who is right beside the Father’ (Jn 1:18).”<sup>6</sup>

To worship God in “spirit and in truth” the rhythm of Worship should be framed and informed by Word of God and all parts of our liturgy should be saturated with the Word of God.

Furthermore, our worship must be Christ centered as Jesus mediates the revelation of God and our response to God in worship. The Spirit then uses our worship activities to build us up in Christ.

### **Worship to form a *Holistic* + *Missional* community**

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid, p. 24

<sup>4</sup> Ibid, p.26

<sup>5</sup> Ron Man. “Worship and the Word.” *Reformation and Revival: V. 9 No.3* (Summer 2000). P. 133

<sup>6</sup> J. Ramsey Michaels. *The Gospel of John (The New International Commentary)*. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co. (2015). (p. 253).

*And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate[a] the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.*

- 2 Corinthians 3:18 (NIV)

*Worship is not merely about authentic personal expression but also communal formation. In 2 Corinthians 3:18, we find that worship in community, by the Spirit, forms us in Christ... When Christ is exalted, proclaimed and experienced in our worship as truly glorious, we are changed. Congregational worship is critical.*

- Sandra Maria Van Opstal, *The Next Worship: Glorifying God in a Diverse World*, p. 47<sup>7</sup>

This verse is an interim and powerful summary of the passage on new covenant ministry that began at 2:14. Whereas Paul generally uses the plural "we"/"us" for his ministry, in this verse his "we all" clearly includes all the people of the new covenant, of which he is a minister (v. 6).<sup>8</sup> In v.12-18, Paul comments on Exod. 34:35 where Moses wore the veil over his shiny face until he went into speak with the Lord. Here in v. 18, Paul asserts that all Christians can, like Moses approach the glory of the Lord with unveiled faces and experience the same transformation. According to Garland "the emphatic "we all" refers to the experience of all Christians, not just that of apostles or Christian ministers, because Paul is not simply contrasting himself with Moses.... In contrast to the Israelites who have a veil shrouding their hearts (3:15), Christians have the veil taken away (3:16). Christians are "able to bear the bold, direct revelation of God's glory" because the state of their heart has been changed."<sup>9</sup>

The Greeks told many stories of people who became "metamorphosed" or "transformed," in the likeness of the divine. Paul uses an image of Greek divination, that is culturally relevant to his audience, to demonstrate that like Moses, "those under the new covenant behold God's glory

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<sup>7</sup> Sandra Maria Van Opstal. *The Next Worship: Glorifying God in a Diverse World*. Downers Grove, IL; InterVarsity Press (2016). P. 47

<sup>8</sup> Paul Barnett. *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians (The New International Commentary)*. Grand Rapids, MI. Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co. (1997). p. 204

<sup>9</sup> David E. Garland. *2 Corinthians: 29 (The New American Commentary)*. B&H Publishing Group (1999). (Kindle Locations 4313-4317)

even more plainly than Moses could (Ex 33:20); thus, like Moses, they are transformed to reflect God's glory by the Spirit."<sup>10</sup> Ron Man defines New Testament worship as a:

“life-pervading, non-localized response of the believer to the gracious work of God in the life of the believer (Romans 12:1; John 4:21-23); all of life, all of our activities are to be done for the glory of God (1 Corinthians 10:31) and in the name of the Lord Jesus (Colossians 3:17). In fact, all Christian ministry (including preaching) should have as its ultimate aim the fulfillment of the Great Commandment (Mark 12:28-30), to evoke more and better worship on the part of people to whom that ministry is directed. Only worship is an end in itself, an ultimate end.”<sup>11</sup>

As people of the new covenant our worship experience should be *communal* and *transformative*, in which the God reveals himself in our praise and adoration to him. Moreover, our worship experience should be *holistic*—i.e. pointing to all the ways God relates to us as human beings—and *missional*—i.e. orienting worshipers to go out into the world as ambassadors of God's mission—rooted in scripture context of the worship community.

### Holistic Worship

Mariano Avila describes worship as the vehicle that expresses the church's deepest theological teachings and integrating them to everyday life.<sup>12</sup> The whole epistle of Ephesians provides an in-depth perspective on *holistic* worship; a central idea of Paul's letter is that life is an act of worship. Worship was an essential part of the communities in the region of Ephesus in the New Testament world, as it was a central location of imperial worship under Rome. Paul was conscious of worship culture in Ephesus where the glorification of Caesar was predominant in the everyday life of the Ephesians. In the backdrop of imperial cult worship, Avila asserts that Paul crafted the *Epistle to the Ephesians* with a liturgical structure, providing a worship

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<sup>10</sup> Craig Keener. *The IVP Background Commentary: New Testament, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed.* Downers Grove, IL; InterVarsity Press (2014). P 504-505

<sup>11</sup> Ron Man, P. 135

<sup>12</sup> Mariano Avila. “Calvin Symposium on Worship 2006; Calvin Institute of Christian Worship: D3 Emphasis: A Model of Integral (Holistic) Worship”. <https://worship.calvin.edu/resources/resource-library/ephesians-a-model-of-integral-holistic-worship/>. Published January 1, 2006. Accessed April 30, 2020.

alternative for the church at Ephesus to resist the influence of their idolatrous setting. NT Commentator F.F. Bruce also notes the “liturgical character” of Ephesians. The first three chapters of Ephesians emphasize “worship as a grateful response to the triune God’s redemption.” After addressing the community of believers, in his salutation and benediction (1:1-2), Paul praises God for: (1) *Election and Adoption* (1:3-6); (2) *Redemption and Final Reconciliation* (1:7-10); (3) the *Assurance of the Believers’ Heritage* (1:11-14). He then gives thanksgiving and intercessory prayer extolling the saving grace of God particular to the history and background of his audience of Jews and Gentiles and their new life in Christ.

The second half of the epistle focuses on “everyday communal life as an act of worship to God” (especially 5:1-2).<sup>13</sup> Avila points out that the section 5:18-6:9 teaches us that a “Spirit-filled life is characterized by worship; worship that comprehends all areas of life: Communal worship and everyday life style as a form of worship, especially at home in family relationships.”<sup>14</sup> How believers live out their faith, their commitment to the unity and the edification of Body of Christ, and their demonstration of love to others are acts of worship that makes God’s plan of reconciliation a reality in the world. We experience the fullness of God when we glorify and adore him in all aspects of lives.

How do we make our everyday lives an act of worship? We must be *imitators of God*, secure in our identity with Christ, as *his dear children*; out of love Christ *gave himself up* as an act of worship presenting himself as an *offering and sacrifice to God, yielding a fragrant odor* (5:1-2). As imitators of Christ Paul calls believers, “*in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship*” (Rom 12:1). According to Keener:

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<sup>13</sup> F.F. Bruce. *The Epistle to the Colossians, Philemon and to the Ephesians* (The New International Commentary). Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co. (2013). p. 241

<sup>14</sup> Avila, Calvin Symposium on Worship 2006

“Ancient Judaism and some philosophical schools often used "sacrifice" figuratively for praise or for a lifestyle of worship; hence it would be hard for Paul's readers to miss his point here. When he speaks of "your rational service," his word for "service" alludes to the work of priests in the temple, and "rational" to the proper way to think (as in 12:2-3). The Old Testament called sacrifices that God accepted "pleasing" (NIV, GNT) or "acceptable" (Ezra 6:10; Ps 20:3; Isa 56:7; Jer 6:20; Mal 3:4); people also spoke of sacrifices being "holy" (e.g., Lev 6:17, 25); but "living" sacrifices strains the metaphor in order to present the sacrificial lifestyle as a continual experience.”<sup>15</sup>

The power of God becomes manifest in the life of our church and the family when its members heed Paul's instructions to love and submit to one another (Eph 5:21-6:10). God's true power is not in military might, but in the peace or *Shalom* produced by the vertical love between God and the church and the horizontal love the members of the church share with one another (1 Jn 4:7-8). The highest goal of our salvation is to glorify; therefore, our lives have to be an act of liturgy to live for he praises of God, which is the heart of our liturgy worship.

Worship should also be a liberating reality that frees us of our own idolatry and is also inclusive of our creative gifts and our unique and diverse identities. How, then does the church establish a community where Ministry of the Spirit brings liberty to all? (2 Cor 3:17). The church community must first value the principles of inclusion and cultural and ethnic diversity in ministry. Church Leaders, especially those called to worship ministry, must lead the way in developing a language of inclusion and fostering sociocultural competency among the worship community. In developing a congregational vocabulary of inclusion, the church must view all people as made in the *imago dei* (Gen 1:27). Are we mindful of people in our congregation with physical limitations and disabilities? Inclusion in the church is realized when worship and ministry is accessible to the needs and unique learning profiles of every congregant. Barbara Newman, a Church Services Director and Special Education Consultant for CLC Network, states the following in regard to gospel proclamation and worship to members with special needs:

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<sup>15</sup> Keener, p.448

“While the content is important, how we present that content may require some creativity and prayerful consideration. We may first need to learn to speak that individual’s language, to find out that person’s story and what that individual really enjoys. Perhaps we need to find that person’s “expert” or “guide” so we can better form a safe and productive relationship.”<sup>16</sup> At the “Universal Design for Worship: Symposium 2016 Plenary Address” Newman suggest that worship leaders ask congregations to “rise in spirit” in lieu of “stand up” their call to worship. This is one of many examples, of how a church is intentional about representing one hundred percent of the church community in worship. Ultimately, it is up to churches to create universally designed plans for worship in order to accommodate all levels of ability and disability.

Inclusive worship also includes commitment to cultural, ethnic and linguistic diversity. The Nairobi Statement on Worship Culture (2014) provides key principles for culturally responsive worship: Worship that is 1) Transcultural; 2) Contextual; 3) Counter-cultural; 4) Cross-cultural.<sup>17</sup> The statement points out that "the reality that Christian worship is always celebrated in a given local cultural setting draws our attention to the dynamics between worship and the world's many local cultures." The church in the West still has the tendency to impose its own worship "culture" onto the other culture of the world. "Normal worship" or the normative liturgical ordo for one Christian is likely not normal for Christians live in different cultural contexts. The Nairobi Statement provides a comprehensive template for the global church to bridge gaps in local church and worship cultures. I do believe that be emphasizing the four principles mentioned above that the Twenty-First century church will witness and experience

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<sup>16</sup> Barbara Newman and Betty Grit. *Accessible Gospel, Inclusive Worship*. CLC Network (2015). (Kindle Loc 2560 of 11188)

<sup>17</sup> Nairobi Statement. *Calvin Institute of Christian Worship for the Study of Renewal of Worship*. (2014). Published June 16, 2014. Accessed May 2, 2020: <https://worship.calvin.edu/resources/resource-library/nairobi-statement-on-worship-and-culture-full-text>

new deeper levels of unity or ecumenicism around worship and our collective Gospel witness to the world. One of the statements many strengths is its redemptive position on culture:

- God and his Gospel transcends culture i.e. **God is Transcultural** = core elements and beliefs universal to Christianity that mark our communion with all saints; God can be and is encountered through the local cultures of the world i.e.
- **God is Contextual** = God redeems aspects of human culture into his Gospel plan and for our worship.
- God calls us to critique and shed light on cultural ideas and beliefs that are not align to his will i.e. **God is Counter Cultural**
- God uses the variety of our cultures to bring richness, depth, and solidarity into the church and its worship i.e. **God is Cross cultural**.

### Missional Worship

Along with forming a holistic community of believers, worship should form a community of missional believers. Marva Dawn notes that “the word church does not mean a place one “goes to”; instead, it signifies what God's people are....In the corporate encounter with God that the worship service provides, those participating are formed more thoroughly to be like God and formed more genuinely to be a community. The result will be that all of us reach out to our neighbors in loving care and service and witness (evangelism), with the result that they might perhaps want to come with us to worship the God to whom we have introduced them.”<sup>18</sup>

In their book, *The Missional Church in Perspective: Mapping Trends and Shaping the Conversation* Gelder and Zscheile propose that *missional* displays an inherent “elasticity” proposing multiple definitions:

1. God is a missionary God who sends the church into the world.
2. God’s mission in the world is related to the reign (kingdom) of God.
3. The missional church is an incarnational (versus an attractional) ministry sent to engage a postmodern, post-Christendom, globalized context.
4. The internal life of the missional church focuses on every believer living as a disciple engaging in mission.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Dawn, Marva J. “Worship to form a missional community.” *Direction*, 28 no 2 Fall 1999, p 140

<sup>19</sup> Craig Van Gelder and Dwight J. Zscheile. *The Missional Church in Perspective: Mapping Trends and Shaping the Conversation*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic (2011) p. 3-4

At the heart of understanding *missional* from a biblical and theological perspective is the *embodiment* of theology in our praxis: “This focus on the embodiment of biblical and theological ideas, in which ideas and behaviors are understood as intricately interrelated, is critical to the missional conversation. We behave our way into new thinking, even as we think our way into new behaving.”<sup>20</sup> Being *missional* means we go against traditional and attractional models of worship that often cater to the “churched” and placing the church at the center of its mission and community engagement. However, missional ministry calls the church to decenter itself and decipher how God is already fulfilling his kingdom mission in the world. A missional approach also calls the church to step out of its comfort zone and be responsiveness to profile or background of our hearers or audience; it is mindful of experiences and self-understandings of the churched and the unchurched; it is aware sensitive to needs and challenges of the baby boomer and Gen x generations and the ways of the millennial and gen z generations; it considers the cultural and ethnic profile of the congregation. Ultimately, missional Christians brings the Church of Jesus Christ to where people are and were life is lived at.

For Van Opstal, worship is at the heart of God’s work of reconciliation “God calls all people to himself” and “God calls his people to love one another”: “In worship we celebrate that ‘God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ,’ and we practice reconciliation as “Christ’s” ambassadors” (2 Corinthians 5:19-20). Reconciliation is not something we add to our worship; it is a practice in which we live out our true nature as one new humanity.”<sup>21</sup> As “ambassadors” God’s sends us out to fulfill the reconciliatory work of God the Father.

The following three the principles are relational guideposts for making worship reconciliatory.<sup>22</sup>

- **Hospitality:** “We welcome you.” (e.g. welcoming, inclusive worship services for the underrepresented),

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid, p. 5

<sup>21</sup> Van Opstal, p. 60-61

<sup>22</sup> Ibid, p.74-75

- **Mutuality:** “We stand with you.” (e.g. Prayer and song that affirm unity around major events in community and world)
- **Solidarity:** “We need you.” (e.g. Being led by one another)

Worship shaped and informed by reconciliation gears worship to being both missional and holistic as it calls us to serve one another through intentional relationships.

### **Why and how the Church should embrace a Spiritual Presence view of the Lord’s Supper**

The “breaking of Bread,” “communion,” “The Lord’s Table,” the “Lord’s Supper,” the “love feast,” “*Agape feast*,” and the “Eucharist” are all names given to the meal Christian’s have shared together for two thousand years in celebrating “our *koinōnia* with the blood and body of Christ in the sense of sharing in the benefits of Jesus’ atoning death.”<sup>23</sup> John Calvin, who took exception to the Lutheran doctrine of the “real presence of Christ” and the “Zwinglian concept of the Supper as essentially a memorial meal,” held to *spiritual presence* position believing Christ *mysteriously* manifested his presence when Christians, by faith, partake in the communion feast.<sup>24</sup> Calvin states:

“There is no one, unless he is completely irreligious who does not acknowledge Christ to be the bread of life on which believers are fed to eternal salvation. Not all, however agreed about how we come to partake of him. For there are some who declare that to eat his flesh and to drink his blood is, in a word, to believe in him. It seems to me, however, that he meant something more noble in that memorable discourse in which he encourages us to eat his flesh (John 6:48-58). We are quickened when he allows us to actually partake of him, a partaking signified by the word’s ‘drink’ and ‘eat,’ so that no one should think that mere knowledge is meant. For just as it is not by looking at bread but by eating it that the body is fed, so the soul must truly partake of Christ in order to be sustained to eternal life. Yet we hold that is eating takes place by faith, for no other can be imagined.”

Calvin affirmed “that in a unique way Christ is spiritual present in the Lord’s supper” the also believe if followed that there must be a “*sacramental*; aspect to communion in that the believer is sealed in Jesus Christ as a confirmation of God’s saving promises.” Churches, such as the

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<sup>23</sup> Michael F. Bird. *Evangelical Theology: A Biblical and Systematic Introduction*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan (2013) p. 731.

<sup>24</sup> John Calvin. *Institutes of the Christian Religion, 1541 ed.* Carlisle, PA.: Banner of Truth Trust, 2014 (pp. 631).

traditionally Reformed church, who subscribe to this *Spiritual Presence* view often emphasize the “This is my body” portion of Luke 22:19.

The primary reason why the Church should embrace the *spiritual presence* view of Lord’s Supper is because it is the most scripturally supported position. The memorialist position runs into trouble in the very “remembrance” language it relies upon. “Do this in remembrance of me” is interpreted should be corroborated with Exodus 20:24b “Wherever I cause my name to be honored, I will come to you and bless you” as it echos the idea Christ establishes in the Last Supper. As God was spiritually present in the Passover feast of the Children of Israel, Jesus promises to be present with his followers whenever we join together to break bread in faith and fellowship in His name.

More than just a recollection of what Christ did for us, the Lord’s Supper brings the believer closer to the presence of God as called to beware if we are drinking “unworthily” before His presence; to “examine ourselves” as we will be answerable for the body and blood of the Lord. Such serious warnings on how we are to position ourselves for the communion suggest that communion is beyond a memorial meal. “Holiness” say Stott “is to mark the Christian celebration, for Christ ultimate purpose through the cross is “to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation” (Col 1:22).<sup>25</sup>

Puritan John Willison (1680-1750) provides the church great biblical counsel on how the believer is to partake of the Lord’s Supper:

we should exercise a remembrance of Christ that is full of awe, reverence, brokenhearted mourning over our sins, hatred against ours sins, thankfulness, and trust in Christ for our full justification. Furthermore, he wrote, “Our hearts should even burn with affection to him, when we remember the great floods of wrath that brake in upon Christ’s soul, and yet could not drown his love to us”<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> John Stott, *The Cross of Christ*. Dover Grove, IL.: InterVarsity Press, 1986, 20 (pp. 253)

<sup>26</sup> Joel R Beeke and Mark Jones. *A Puritan Theology: Doctrine for Life*. Grand Rapids, Mich. : Reformation Heritage Books, 2012 (pp. 744)

In order for the Church to become more united and maintain a gospel centered life it must return to the primary purpose and function for Paul's instructions to the Corinthian church in 1 Cor. 11. Seldom do we read Paul institution of the Lord's supper from a community perspective. According to Rosario Rodríguez, Rubén:

Paul recognizes that "The community of believers ("saints") is made up of individuals who belong to Christ and to one another. By employing this image of a body composed of many members (1 Cor 12:12) with Christ as its head, Paul underscores the importance of individual moral responsibility for the preservation of community: "For you were bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body" (1 Cor 6:20). Accordingly, enforcing community discipline is one of the Pauline (and Calvinist!) marks of the new spiritual community in Christ, since our bodies belong to Christ as members of his body and that which we do with our bodies either profanes or glorifies Christ.<sup>27</sup>

In 1 Cor. 11:17-21 we see that the Corinthian church privileged members were abusing lesser privileged members. After admonishing the Corinthian believers for their inappropriate treatment toward each other Paul called each of the believes to "come together" in the communion feast to heal the divisions and bring unit to the church.

Christian worship is a "re-presentation" of the gospel. By our worship we extol, embrace, and share the story of the progress of the gospel in our lives.<sup>28</sup> When we bless the communion feast, we should pray specifically that the spiritual presence of Christ manifest Himself in the bread and wine. We also affirm our belief in the Gospel and the finished work of Christ and reaffirm our need for holiness. But we should also seek the communion feast as means to break bonds of disunity within our local bodies and to forging a stronger community within the church.

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<sup>27</sup> Rubén Rosario Rodríguez. "Calvin and 'communion ecclesiology': an ecumenical conversation" *Theology Today*, 66 no 2 Jul 2009, (pp. 166-167)

<sup>28</sup> Bryan Chapell. *Christ-Centered Worship*. Baker Publishing Group. Kindle Edition. (Location 1871 of 5671)

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