

The SCRIPTURE STANDARD

*Pleading for a complete return to Christianity
as it was in the beginning.*

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1955.

May this year, for all our readers, be one of real spiritual progress; then it will be a truly happy one. To this end, let us do and give
OUR BEST FOR JESUS, WHO GAVE HIS BEST FOR US.

'Expect' - 'Attempt'

WHEN William Carey, 'the consecrated cobbler,' was endeavouring to rouse the interest of his brethren in mission work, he preached a remarkable sermon from a remarkable text: 'Enlarge the place of thy tent, and let them stretch forth the curtains of thine habitations; spare not, lengthen thy cords, and strengthen thy stakes; for thou shalt break forth on the right hand and the left; and thy seed shall inherit the Gentiles, and make the desolate cities to be inhabited' (Isaiah 54 : 2-3).

The two heads of his discourse, 'Expect great things from God; attempt great things for God,' have been the watchword for many a Christian enterprise since.

When Isaiah wrote that prophecy, the Israelites were captives in Babylon, in a state of despondency and despair, and the prophet predicted their revival, return and restoration to their own land. This was fulfilled when, under Ezra and Nehemiah, they returned from exile to their own country. But like some other prophecies it has a wide application. It follows Isaiah 53, where 'the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow, are so marvellously foretold. Paul quotes the first verse of Isaiah 54 with reference to the increase of the true seed of Abraham, those in Christ Jesus: 'For it is written, Rejoice, thou barren that bearest not, break forth and cry, thou that travailest not, for the desolate hath many more children than she which hath a husband' (Gal. 4 : 27).

"The sun that bids us rest is waking
Our brethren 'neath the western sky,
And hour by hour fresh lips are making
Thy wond'rous doings heard on high."

'Expect great things from God'

We have the best of reasons for this. Though we often deplore lack of progress; and attribute this to change of times and circumstances; God has

not changed. He is 'the same God for ever as he was yesterday.' He is 'able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think.' The Lord Jesus is still the only one who can save the people from sin, which has created all the problems of to-day. He is still 'strong to deliver, mighty to save.' The Gospel, glad tidings concerning Jesus the Christ, is still the power of God unto the salvation of all who truly believe it.

That which at the beginning was as a grain of mustard seed has become a mighty tree, under which peoples of all lands and climes have found shade, shelter and security. The small stone, 'cut out without hands,' which Daniel saw, has become a great mountain filling the whole earth. 'This is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes.' 'The Lord's arm is not shortened that it cannot save.' There is no failure on God's part, the failure is in the human element.

Do we expect success?

'Believe ye that I am able to do this?' is the Lord's question. Is not our faith often very weak, and our efforts half-hearted? The atmosphere of many of our meetings is chilling. So few attend, and some of these come in late, and get out before the meeting is well concluded. It has been said that 'Christ attracts, but the Church repels.' Our business is not merely to attract a crowd. If that is all the Church is out for she is easily beaten by a picture show, or football match. Ours is a more serious business. We are out to win souls for Christ and His Church. That requires more than human power. But if we work on God's lines we can expect His presence and power to be with us. If we faithfully do our part we can trust God to do His.

'Attempt great things for God'

To the captive exiles in Babylon talk of deliverance, restoration and increase might seem impracticable, impossible. The prophet's message meant attempt the seeming impossible. Dare to face the difficulties and obstacles, and in God's strength overcome them. But we are so few and feeble, and the opposition is so great and powerful. The Scriptures tell that there may be too many for the Lord to work with, but never too few.

'Faith, mighty faith, the promise sees, and looks to God alone,
Laughs at impossibilities, and cries, It shall be done.'

It is possible to put too much faith in human power, education, organisation, and so-called efficiency. In giving impressions of position of Churches of Christ in 1941, the editor of *The Christian Advocate* said: 'We become more and more efficient and less and less successful.' After naming literature published in recent years which has 'put us on a level with churches much larger than our own,' he asked, 'But what is the good of all this if we are a diminishing community?' (*Christian Advocate*, Sept. 24th, 1941). 'The wisdom of this world is foolishness with God,' said Paul; and he declares that God uses what the world counts foolish, weak, base and despised things for the accomplishment of His work.

We need church members who are members from conviction

If we believe, as so many say they do, that all churches are right; and that Churches of Christ are just a denomination among other denominations, we are not likely to put much enthusiasm into our work. People do not sacrifice and suffer for causes of whose necessity they are in doubt. That the original position of the Churches of Christ was a sound New Testament one is conceded by leaders in most sectarian bodies. It is easy to sneer and say, 'So you believe there is no one right but yourselves.' The more important question is, Are we right? Can our position be proved true when tested by the New Testament standard? 'We know.' 'We believe and are sure,' was the language of the first Christians,

God expects all to do their best.

The Church, the Body of Christ, can only grow and increase when every member is in the right place, in a healthy condition, and doing the work for which it is fitted. The idea of a 'Minister' doing nearly all the work is foreign to the New Testament ideal, and is fatal to the development and growth of the Church. All at it, and always at it, is the secret of success.

Too many church members forsake assembling together. They do not help the work by their presence, or financially, or in any other way. No church can be successfully run with such members. C. H. Spurgeon said he knew a lot of Baptists who would be better of another dip. Perhaps we would all be better after another dip. If we fully realised what our immersion into Christ meant, there would be a higher level of spiritual life, and more earnest efforts in the Lord's service.

We can make the beginning of 1955 a time of reconsecration of ourselves, body, soul and spirit, to the Lord, who loved us and gave Himself for us. If we really attempt great things for Him, we can expect great things from Him. 'Prove Me . . . saith the Lord of Hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it.'

EDITOR.

Unity in Access

'FOR through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father' (Eph. 2 : 18).

From a superficial glance, this passage of scripture looks simple enough, but when we look into it we find that it contains a depth of truth that is well nigh inexhaustible, for it takes us back to the beginning of man's history, and forward to the end of days. In fact, it embraces the whole scheme of salvation. Let us consider it under three heads ; loss of access ; means of access ; and unity in access.

1. LOSS OF ACCESS

Go back to the beginning, and we find man perfect, set in the midst of perfection, having perfect access to, and therefore perfect communion with God. But sin entered, and through it man not only lost his perfection, but with it the priceless privilege of perfect access to God. And when we consider it, we realise that all the evils of this present world have their roots just there, for they are the consequences of loss of access to God. Man cut off from God is cut off from love, therefore hatred and enmity towards God and towards his fellow-men must ensue. Cut off from God, man is cut off from light, therefore spiritual darkness and defilement is the result. Cut off from God, man is cut off from life, therefore disease and death are the consequences.

Access of the Jew

This loss of access has always been clearly marked in God's dealings with men. This was apparent even with Israel. Although God chose the Israelites for His own people and dwelt in their midst in the tabernacle, His separation from them was clearly marked. Not once, was any common person ever allowed to even approach the Holy of Holies, wherein the presence of God was manifested. Even the high priest could enter it but once a year. What a fearful time that was, with the people outside waiting in awe and apprehension to see whether the priest would ever return. It is a sad commentary upon the state of man, when we realise that the very few times God ever appeared in the cloud of glory outside the tabernacle, it was mostly in order to punish some sin,

Access of the Gentile

If the Israelite, with all his privileges, had so little claim to access to God, how much worse was the Gentile, who had no claim whatever to special favour. Paul, in this chapter we are considering, speaks of this, when he reminds the Gentile Ephesians of their former state.

First, he reminds them that they were the children of wrath, walking according to the course of this world in the spirit of disobedience; living in the desires of the flesh. Having no means of atonement like the Jew, the full weight of the wrath of God abode on them continually.

Secondly, he tells them that they were uncircumcised. Thus, both in God's sight and in the sight of the Jews, they were an unclean people.

Thirdly, he reminds them that they were 'aliens from the commonwealth of Israel.' No Gentile was ever admitted to tabernacle or temple worship. Even though some adopted the Jewish faith, they could never be admitted in the full privileges of one who had been born a Jew.

Fourthly, and perhaps worst of all, he shows them that they had been 'strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world.' For the Jew, there was always the bright star of hope that kept his nation alive, enabling it to pass through untold tribulation, namely, God's promise of the Messiah. But as far as the Gentile could know, he had no hope whatever.

As far as access to God was concerned then, both Jew and Gentile were shut out from His presence. God could not approach, the barrier of sin was there, and man dare not do so. What was the answer?

2. MEANS OF ACCESS

God found the answer, and Paul reminds us of that answer in the verse we are considering. 'For through *him* we both have access, by one Spirit, unto the Father.'

Meaning of the word Access

A full appreciation of this verse is centred in our understanding the word 'access.' The word has two meanings which are closely related to each other. Its primary meaning is connected with a dignitary of ancient royal courts. Eastern potentates were often very difficult to approach. We have examples of this in the scripture, such as the fear and trembling with which Joseph's brothers approached him, seeing in him only a high Egyptian official. Or again, we are reminded of the king of Persia, who would allow only those to approach him to whom he had extended the royal sceptre. It was necessary then to have at court an 'introducer,' an official whose duty it was to arrange introductions to the king. The word 'access' translates a Greek word which has a connection with this custom. The second meaning is very closely related to this, for it means liberty to approach, like a royal pass or warrant that admitted into the august presence of the king.

Approach to the Father

Now although both these meanings have been retained in this verse, one part of the figure behind the meanings has been changed, for instead of God being portrayed as a king, He is brought before us as the Father.

The nearest illustration we might take of the meaning is that of David and Absalom. Absalom had not only sinned against David as king, having transgressed the royal law, but he sinned against him as a father and against his father's house. It was necessary that David should banish his son from his presence. But in spite of this, he did not cease to love his son. However, had it not been for the intervention of Joab and his pleading before the king on Absalom's behalf, David would have seen the face of his son no

more. Joab became the 'introducer' of Absalom, the one who through intervention and intercession obtained for Absalom the liberty to approach his father David.

Christ Our 'Introducer'

Now this verse we are considering states that it is through Christ that we have access to the Father. In other words, Christ acts for us before God, our Father, in much the same way as Joab acted on behalf of Absalom before David; only, in this case, the thought is much wider, for the 'introducer' has effected the intercession by bearing the punishment of those for whom he is interceding. In simple terms, the great truth here taught can be reduced to three points, each a volume of truth in itself.

Ground of Access

In the first place, the basis or ground of our access to God is the sacrifice of Christ. Guilty men need a propitiatory sacrifice to approach God. This was taught over and over again to the Jew. Equally to the Gentile, Paul reminds these Ephesians that their privilege of being able to draw near to God at all is solely on one ground alone, the blood of Christ. We might say then that the blood of Christ is the pass, the royal warrant, that assures us of acceptance in the presence of the Father.

Ministry of Access

In the second place, the ministry of access is the High Priesthood of Christ. It was the 'introducer's' duty to establish contact between the people and their ruler. Religiously, it was the priest's duty to establish fellowship between man and God. Heb. 8:1-2 tells us, 'We have such an high priest, who set at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens; a minister of the sanctuary.' But our Lord is no mere formal official in the court of heaven, but an active sympathiser; a priest who has been tempted in all points like as we, and therefore knows our needs and encourages our supplications before the Throne of Grace. Heb. 2:17 says, 'Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people.'

Place of Access

But, thirdly, the place of access, as taught by the tabernacle type, is the spiritual temple of Christ, and through that into the very courts of heaven itself. Israel had a worldly sanctuary, for then 'the way into the holiest was not yet made manifest while the first tabernacle was standing.' Now there is no outer court for the people and inner temple for the priest, for all are priests in the church of the Lord and have the right to meet God 'in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.'

3. UNITY IN ACCESS

The third great aspect of this verse involves not simply access to God, but unity in access. We have touched on this, but let us look at it more closely. Actually, when we look into this verse we see not one, but two unities each making a marvellous united whole. The first is the unity of the people of God; and the second is the unity of the persons of the Godhead.

Unity of the People of God

Sin not only had the effect of making enmity between God and man, but because of this, enmity between man and man. This was no more forcibly expressed than in the enmity between Jew and Gentile. Not only were they different in religion, culture and thinking, but seldom have two branches of the human race despised one another so vehemently. But

reconciliation between the father and children of the family must also involve reconciliation between children of the family. How was unity to be brought about?

Well, again Christ is the means. He not only stands as Sacrifice and High Priest, but as a Son, and therefore the 'elder brother' of that future united family. Breaking down the 'middle wall of partition' 'even the law and commandments,' which separated Jew and Gentile, through the cross He brought both into One Body, the church, so that those who had been former enemies became one, and those that had been outside the commonwealth and covenants were made fellow-heirs. As Paul says in Eph. 3-6, 'That the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel.' What a profound truth is this, the heart not only of the verse we are considering, but indeed of the whole epistle!

Unity of the Godhead

But there is an even deeper truth in this verse, for notice Paul says, 'For through *him* we both have access by one *Spirit* unto the *Father*.' There is then, acting on behalf of this united body, the entire united power of the Godhead, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Stand back for a moment and see the church, that united body in worship. The corporate prayer and praise rises before the throne of God. But as it does, each member of the Godhead is exercised on its behalf. On earth, the Spirit is taking the deep longings of the heart, the 'groanings which cannot be uttered' and is making intercession for the saints. In heaven, the Lord, standing as High Priest at the right hand of God, is receiving and interceding as a benevolent Father inclines His ear.

Unity in Growing

But go even further, and this time look at that united body not only worshipping, but living and growing before God, and again every member of the Godhead is exercised on its behalf.

We have said that the sacrifice of Christ is the royal warrant into the Father's presence. We have stated that Christ our High Priest in heaven is the 'Introducer' before the throne of the Father. But more is needed. We might obtain a pass into the royal presence; we might have the aid of the 'Introducer'; but we still will want to know how to conduct ourselves when we get there. As far as God is concerned, this is the Spirit's work. Christ redeems us; He intercedes for us; but the Spirit fits us for the Father's presence, making us anew, and instructing us through His word in heavenly conduct, fit for God's presence. 'For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father.' 'Unity in access' through unity of the Godhead.

Brethren, as we contemplate these profound truths, may we see more clearly the greatness of our privileges in Christ. Let us therefore mutually and daily drawing closer to Him, mutually and daily draw closer to each other in the One Body, fitting ourselves for that blessed time of eternal 'unity in access' before our Father in heaven above. L. CHANNING.

(Address given at Hindley Bible School)

GLORIOUS things of thee are spoken,
Zion, city of our God!
He whose word can ne'er be broken,
Formed thee for His own abode.
On the Rock of ages founded,
What can shake thy sure repose?
With salvation's walls surrounded,
Thou canst smile at all thy foes.

See! the streams of living waters,
Springing from eternal love,
Well supply thy sons and daughters,
And all fear of want remove.
Who can faint while such a river
Ever flows their thirst t'assuage?
Grace which, like the Lord, the Giver,
Never fails from age to age.

When we were all One

NO SINCERE and devoted member of the Church of Christ can contemplate the present divided state without deep regret and sorrow of heart. We look back to the happy days when we were as one man regarding the principles of the New Testament. We were proud of the heritage which our fathers in the faith had left us.

To have been raised in the atmosphere of a pure and unadulterated Christianity was a precious and priceless boon. This was the writer's privilege: from boyhood's days, as it was the privilege of thousands. We lived for the church, and rejoiced in the association of men and women of profound faith in the things of the Kingdom of God. Many would be ready to say that to be blessed with the training under the teaching and example of our leaders was indeed the highest education. 'Brother, never forget what you and I owe to the Churches of Christ.' Such was the kindly rebuke of an older brother to a younger who was voicing a complaint against their own assembly. They had attended the Lord's Day school as boys because it was nearest to their home, their parents not being members. An older brother was a publican. Both became preachers of the Gospel and were much esteemed. How many likewise could say, 'I owe more than I can possibly express to the Churches of Christ.' Recently, however, there appeared a long list of departures from 'the faith once delivered to the saints' on the part of many churches (see 'S.S.,' August, 1954), amongst them instrumental music in church worship, even at the Breaking of Bread.

Notwithstanding the solemn warning of loyal brethren that this would lead to other digressions, the organ was introduced. Now in the *Christian Advocate* there often appears without shame many references to the use of this thing, borrowed from the sects; in their turn copied from the Anglicans; and originally introduced by the Pope of Rome! The following remarks by Bro. J. W. McGarvey sums up what he had to say in *The Apostolic Times* (U.S.A.) on the organ question: 'I feel, in regard to this matter of adopting from sectarian churches, practices which they have adopted from the Roman Apostacy, very much as I do in regard to the conduct of King Amaziah, who, after he had conquered the Edomites, brought home the gods in which the conquered people had vainly trusted and worshipped them himself. We have gone forth in the panoply which God alone supplies, and defeated the hosts of sectarianism on every field of battle; shall we now, when the redoubt is nearly won, begin to arm ourselves with weapons which have proved worthless in their hands? Shall we trail our own victorious banner in the dust, and lift their faded and tattered standards above us? Shall we bow down before Gods which could not deliver their own people out of our hands? Shame and confusion to the man who will not answer NO! The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but they are mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds. Let us never lose our confidence in them. . .'

Alas, the subsequent history of 'the disciples' in America and Churches of Christ in Great Britain manifest how largely this confidence has been lost. The warning of the pioneers has been unheeded and the use of the organ has led the way to many innovations.

Brother and Sister McGarvey withdrew as members of the Broadway Church at Lexington because of the installation of a pipe organ. To this Bro. McGarvey strongly objected. To add insult to injury, in less than nine years' time McGarvey's lifeless form was carried back to this same house of worship. Three songs were sung during the exercises, and each one accompanied by the organ. They also played the organ as the bier was

passing out of the house. A brother who was present says, 'Why this, I know not. I only know I was deeply chagrined. An aged woman who sat by me said, "This is a great wrong, for he opposed it all his life."'

Bro. C. Abercrombie, one of our early evangelists, in a letter to the *American Christian Review* in 1883, says of the organ: 'I do not desire to reopen the question as to instrumental music, should it be tolerated in the churches? But I would not be sorry if, by some competent brother, it were reopened, and kept in vigorous agitation until all the churches were satisfied that in the Church of Christ there is no place for the organ or any other musical instrument.'

What a noble but misused saying, 'The Bible, the whole Bible, and nothing but the Bible, our rule, faith and practice.' Time it is that not 'a few' should consign that, along with many other sayings which were wont to be watchwords, to the realm of forgetfulness. What would these same brethren say now? Many are growing old in this campaign for restoration, and we must expect to leave these earthly scenes, so we would plead with younger brethren to 'push the battle to the gate,' and not even to allow friendship with some who have fallen out of the ranks to deter or hinder you from loyally defending the plea for adherence to the original position of Churches of Christ.

J. HOLMES.

(To be concluded)

'Man as He was, as He is, and as He may become'

IN THE ARTICLE with the above title, appearing in November 'S.S.' are statements concerning the constitution of man, death and resurrection, which call for enquiry.

1. Constitution of Man

'God created man in His own image and likeness.'

In what was man like God? Was it in his material form? Our Lord Jesus said, 'God is a Spirit' (John 4:24), and 'a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have' (Luke 24:39).

'Into his nostrils the breath of life was breathed, and he became a living soul. It is not suggested that God formed a body and gave it a soul,' etc.

In a public discussion with a Christadelphian who asserted that 'God caused an inrush of air into the man's lungs,' Bro. James Anderson asked, 'What beside air was put into man at the beginning?' After repeating this question again and again, his opponent replied, 'Spirit of God.' The Scriptures make clear that the body is the tent or tabernacle in which the real person dwells. Paul speaks of 'our earthly house of this tabernacle,' and of 'desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven' (2 Cor. 5:1-8). Peter says, 'As long as I am in this tabernacle,' and 'shortly I must put off this my tabernacle' (2 Peter 1:13-14). What is going to be unclothed, and clothed upon? Is the body (the tabernacle) going to put off itself? Paul speaks of our 'whole spirit and soul and body' (1 Thess. 5:23). Bro. James Anderson in a letter said: 'As we generally use the word soul, the Christadelphian denies the soul altogether; and when a man denies the soul he is a long way on the road to atheism, even if he does not think so.'

2. Death

'In the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die.' 'Death threatened as the penalty for disobedience.'

What death did Adam die that day? Physically he lived for centuries after that, and was 930 years old when he died. Was it not separation from God which is the penalty of sin? In the article we are reviewing, it is stated: 'When death is recorded it is stated briefly, "He died." "He was gathered to his people,"' etc. Is this true? Of Abraham it is recorded that he 'gave up the ghost, and died in a good old age . . . and was gathered to his people,' and of Rachel, 'As her soul was in departing, for she died' (Gen. 25 : 8, 35 : 18), and other similar passages. 'And Enoch walked with God ; and he was not, for God took him' (Gen. 5 : 24). The Lord Jesus said : 'Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit ; and having said this, he gave up the ghost' (Luke 23 : 46). The martyr Stephen said, 'Lord Jesus, receive my spirit . . . he fell asleep' (Acts 7 : 59-60).

Jesus said, 'Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul ; but fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell' (Matt. 10 : 28). 'Fear him, which after he hath killed hath power to cast into hell' (Luke 12 : 4-5). Man can kill the body, but there is something which Jesus calls the soul that man cannot kill, but after the death of the body can be cast into hell. Solomon tells us what happens at death, 'Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was, and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it' (Ecc. 12 : 7).

3. Resurrection

In view of recent criticism, we state briefly and plainly that we most surely believe in the resurrection of the dead, a resurrection which leaves an empty grave behind. It seems clear to us that however long we argue, and whatever we may say or think about Paul's statements in 1 Cor. 15, the fact remains that what grows comes out of that which is sown. We may not be able to explain how, 'but God giveth it a body as it hath pleased Him.'

EDITOR.

FAMILY CIRCLE

conducted by Harold Baines

THE ALPHABET OF SUCCESS

Make few special acquaintances.

Never try to appear what you are not.

Observe good manners.

We have again three good mottoes that will give us much food for thought. The making of friends is one of the joys of life ; the *keeping* of them one of life's responsibilities, and one of life's hardest tasks.

In these days of extensive travel our circle of friends is much wider than was possible in the days of our forefathers. Consequently most of us have hosts of friends up and down the country, most of whom know only *one* side of our natures—and most of us have two sides, one our best side with all the best aspects of our nature on show, the other our weaker, more sinful side. Incidentally, one test of true friendship is having one who knows our faults and still loves us. Adversity and unpopularity are also tests of true friendship. So be careful not to overload your life with special acquaintances, but make friends and keep them by sheer love and force of example, and have only a few trusted ones to whom you can confide your innermost thoughts.

Our next motto touches upon a human weakness, the desire to appear better than we really are, to show off before our fellows. The writer firmly

believes in the dignity of labour; no one need be ashamed of their occupation if it is honest. One has never been able to fathom why certain individuals should regard work and workers as something to be despised. I think it was Thomas Carlyle who once said, 'God's mandate to his creature Man is work, and all true work is sacred.' No man or woman need ever be ashamed of being a worker, whether he be collier or carpenter, weaver or watchmaker. Each have their contribution to make to society, so never try to appear what you are not, but whatever you are, 'Do it as unto the Lord and not unto men.'

Our next, 'Observe good manners,' is one badly needed by the rising generation, without being disrespectful to my youthful readers, many whom I know personally and love in the Lord. Nevertheless, there is a sad lack of the common courtesies of life, speaking generally, amongst our young people.

In our young days good manners were enforced upon us, whether we liked them or not, at home by the parental rod of correction, at school by the headmaster's cane.

Now, it ought not to be that good manners should be forced upon us. Courtesy and good manners sweeten life, they show good breeding and cost little in effort and seldom anything in money. It is not just a question of 'please' and 'thank you,' but consideration for others, especially those worse off than ourselves. Remember, the qualities of a gentleman are always determined by his attitude towards his social inferiors.

So, my dear young readers, try a course of good manners, those common courtesies of life that cost so little, yet mean so much.

STORY OF A SUNBEAM (*concluded*)

IT was now getting towards teatime and our little friend, the Sunbeam, knew he wouldn't have much longer to stay on the earth, for he remembered that his father had told him he must return with his brothers and sisters at the end of the day or he wouldn't go to Earth ever again, but he did want another adventure before he went.

He found himself at the edge of a little town and gazing out over the countryside, all white and shiny in the snow, and thought, 'What a beautiful picture.' Presently, he saw an old man gazing down the road. He had a sad look in his face as though he had been looking for someone and they hadn't turned up.

'Are you looking for someone, mister?' said Master Sunbeam. 'Yes,' said the old man. 'My son left home a long time ago and every day I look for his return, but he doesn't come back. How I wish he would!'

'Tell me all about it,' said our young friend, and the old man poured out his heart to him, told of the quarrel he had with his son, how he took his half of his father's fortune, how he had spent it all in riotous living in a country ever so far away, and how every day for months he had looked for his son.

Master Sunbeam was very sad and said, 'Never mind! Shall I try to find your son?' 'I wish you would, it would gladden an old man's heart if you could.'

Now Master Sunbeam had seen something that the old man hadn't seen, or thought he hadn't, and set off down the road at a great pace, for in the distance a figure of a young man appeared on the horizon. The old man had seen him while he was yet a great way off, and at that instance Master Sunbeam alighted on the young man's face and lit it up with a warm rich glow.

'My son, my son,' said the old man, and ran to his son and kissed him, and called all his friends and neighbours together, and made a great party. 'For,' he said, 'this is my son that was lost and is found.'

It was now getting late and Father Sun was calling all his little sunbeams back home, and as our young friend set off to his home in the sky he passed a little chapel and heard the loveliest sound he had ever heard in his young life.

Children singing, little girls and boys like you. And what do you think was the hymn that sounded so lovely to our little friend? It was

Now the day is over, night is drawing nigh,
Shadows of the evening steal across the sky.
Now the darkness gathers, stars begin to peep,
Birds and beasts and flowers soon will be asleep.

I wonder whose Sunday school it was? Could it be yours, I wonder? Now this is the end of Master Sunbeam's adventures, but if he comes to Earth again he may have some more adventures for you.

SCRIPTURE READINGS

Jan. 2: Exodus 22:21 to 23:9. Luke 6:20-38

„ 9: Malachi 1. Luke 6:39-49.

„ 16: Ruth 1:1-18. Luke 7:1-18.

„ 23: Haggai 2:1-9. Luke 7:19-35.

„ 30: Psalm 51. Luke 7:36-50.

The Sermon on the Plain (6:20-49).—

Bearing in mind the busy life and popularity of the Saviour at this time, we must surely expect that His teaching on many points would be repeated again and again. So it is possible that Matthew and Luke are reporting teaching given on different occasions—verse 17 might indeed suggest my title. But the substance of the teaching is identical, and the Holy Spirit has provided the two-fold account of it that we might be 'completely furnished.'

(1) The happy and the unhappy.—Those who would be regarded by the world as unfortunate and to be pitied, are counted happy in the new law of God here promulgated. Those regarded as fortunate by the world are much otherwise in God's clear sight. Christians must not seek popularity obviously, they must regard themselves with suspicion when the world smiles on them. This does not mean they are to court or seek persecution, but they are to endure it when it comes on account of their loyalty to Christ and truth.

(2) Treatment of others.—Our normal human inclinations are to be restrained and replaced by the opposite feelings. This goes deeper than the mere outward observance of the commands. It is even possible to respond to meanness (for instance) with generosity with the inward motive of getting the better of another, but true love of God and therefore of man should result in such action arising out of the heart's desire for the

good of the wrongdoer. The golden rule expressed in verse 31, and the following verses to 38 inculcate a reckless perseverance in doing good—overcoming evil with good—which would not stop at loss or death. But if suffering and disaster do come the balance sheet will still be balanced—abundantly, see 2 Cor. 4:17; 1 Peter 4:12; 1 John 3:2. Christians who have suffered will testify however to the truth of 37 and 38.

(3) Teaching by example.—It is no good trying to teach others until we have ourselves received instruction, and our own faults hinder the possibility of correcting effectively the faults of others—something we should wish to do but very humbly. False teachers are recognisable by their example, and its results, but not always very obviously.

(4) Conditions for success as citizens of the Kingdom.—The test is not profession, but practice. The teaching has to be taken to heart, or when the trials come the profession will be shown to be hollow.

The Cure of the Centurion's slave (7:1-10).—This incident as given by Matthew shows the centurion to have an exceptionally good character, but when his humility is more fully revealed by Luke, we see one who loved the Jews—certainly a remarkable thing. As in the case of Cornelius, the word of God had found a lodgment in a heathen heart. He had learnt the truth in spite of the merely national characteristics of the Jews. Shall we suggest that he had contact with one who was really a Jew (Rom. 2:29), and had thereby been led to the source? So often we may hide Christ instead of manifesting him—by our behaviour (and 'who is sufficient for these things?'). He had at least learnt that Jesus had Authority—and that a greater authority than Rome—for it could not save his beloved slave. We have to turn to Matthew for the Saviour's full comments—how sad that He had to say of His own people, 'cast into outer darkness.' When we are greatly privileged, we are in danger. (Matt. 8:5-13).

The widow's son at Nain (7:11-17).—

We can hardly realise the greatness of the fame of Jesus. Communications of course were very slow in those times, but news of this kind would travel fast, and undoubtedly everyone in Galilee and most in Judaea, knew of this great Teacher and Healer. Hence He was followed around by crowds, and astonishment grew as the wonder of His love and power became better known. This incident illustrates both points. We picture the disciples and the crowds following their leader along the road to the town, and a far different procession comes out of the gate. The two must pass, and the heart of Jesus fills with loving sympathy as the circumstances of the case pass through His mind. God's love is always the same but not all widows in Israel, nor in the wider world, are relieved as was this one. The purposes of God were served in this case that the people might know that Jesus is the Christ—and receive a greater benefit, forgiveness and eternal life. Little wonder that the verdict of the populace was right—'a great prophet,' and God's visitation. But the Saviour refused to let even the devils testify to His title—doubtless on account of the completely mistaken view of His functions. The raising of the dead was certainly an undeniable evidence.

John Baptist's message (7:18-23). —

John has already said 'He must increase, and I must decrease,' and now he awaits death in prison for doing right. But the Christ he had baptised seemed not to be doing what was expected of Him, and so we get this pathetic appeal. Doubt appears to have arisen in his mind in spite of the very plain intimation of God Himself that this is the 'Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world.' The Saviour's answer may serve as a lesson for us also—to be satisfied with what God has revealed, even if it does not fit in with our ideas. However, we feel a deep love and sympathy for John, which was undoubtedly the mind of Jesus also, and the manner of answering his question was intended to console him in his lonely and difficult path of self-sacrifice. The mighty works and the promise of the kingdom's advent would assure John that God was at work, and would fulfil His Word.

Christ's estimate of John (7:24-30).—

Here is teaching by contrast. Those eminent in worldly affairs have earth's comforts, but the greatness of the prophet of God and His forerunner was far otherwise. He was a man in the highest sense quite equal to any of the prophets of old, stern and unbending in his opposition to evil, and utterly careless of his own comfort. He became the arbiter of the conscience of his nation. Those who accepted him accepted God, those who rejected his counsel rejected God Him-

self. The humblest member of the church of Christ, however, has a higher place, being accepted under a better covenant with better promises than the old.

Christ's estimate of His generation

(7:31-35).—When man refuses the truth, he finds any excuse good enough, however poor. So John is too hard and the Lord too soft—and so on. The wisdom of God in presenting His truth through diverse methods may be seen to be altogether right by those willing to see it.

Jesus anointed in Simon's house (7:36-50).—

It seems that Simon wished to have contact with the Saviour, and was favourably disposed towards Him. We can imagine that his house was very respectable, but I understand that houses would be more open to visitors and generally to view than western types allow. The woman was obviously a notorious sinner, and her presence would certainly be unwelcome. She knew something of the Saviour's treatment of sinners and came bringing the precious ointment—a sign of repentance. Meals would be taken in a reclining position so that the feet of the guests would be outwards from the table and therefore accessible to the visitor. Her weeping expressed the contrition of her soul and would be welcomed rather than rejected by Jesus, but to the Pharisee it was disgraceful that the eminent teacher he had condescended to entertain at his table should allow this degrading exhibition. But he is plainly reminded of his lack of courtesy, and the Teacher he had entertained without the common courtesies of hospitality rebukes his self-righteousness, and forgives the despised sinner. The guests are shocked at the claim to authority which they could not refute, however.

R. B. SCOTT.

CORRESPONDENCE

Letter from Lusaka

Dear Brethren,—We should like to bring before you the position of the Lord's work in Lusaka.

The plans for our building in the Chilenje suburb have been accepted by the Municipal Authority here. Having to comply with the town's requirements has made the building to be more costly than if we were able to build out of the town's boundaries. In all, the contractor estimates a cost of £850. This leaves us with at least £450 to find by the beginning of March.

We are grateful to all who have in any way had fellowship with the work. If other brethren wish to help with this work they may do so by sending contri-

butions either to the Dewsbury Church, or to me directly in Lusaka. We would ourselves prefer that the help should be sent through the Dewsbury Church, but any private contributions will be acknowledged and the amounts also notified to the Dewsbury Church.

God has really opened the way for us, and has given His blessing where we have been ready to follow. When the building is completed, it will be the first permanent Church building, except for Mission buildings in Northern Rhodesia. As this is in the capital, and Africans are great travellers, we hope that this will be a place where the Gospel will find a way to many other parts of the country. In the last two weeks, two families have moved to Ndola, a town on the Copper Belt. It is 230 miles distant. If we can teach Christians to gather, then we see opportunities to extend the work of the Lord.

We hear from Sinda of some who have written to the workers there. They are very grateful for this. We will try to find time to write at greater length in the near future.

Christian greetings.

FRANK AND NANCY MURPHY.

P.O. Box 600,
Lusaka.
29th Nov., 1954.

WITH WHAT BODY DO THEY COME?

Dear Editor,

Bro. George McIlroy, in his interesting letter commenting on my article, wrote that he feels there must be 'many simple Christian people like himself who experienced a sense of shock, and perhaps alarm, by my suggestion that the body of a buried person is lost for ever. I cannot think that either shock or alarm can be very real that is caused by any word of mine about anything, and certainly not about the resurrection. That will take place as God intends, whatever anyone may say or think.

But I ask: why the shock or the alarm? Is it because a cherished idea, held, perhaps, for a life time, is all of a sudden called in question?

As I pursued his letter, there came out from the past a memory. Two people, Primitives of the old kind, fervid and wholehearted when Primitive Methodism was a greater force in the land than now, came to be neighbours of members of one of our Churches, and, inevitably, baptism came under discussion. The Methodist wife ultimately became ready to obey. The man saw his duty clear enough, but had in him a large grain of stubbornness. He would not dissociate himself from the Primitive idea with its life-long associations. He died, as did his wife, neither of them having obeyed the Lord's command. They could not stand

up to the shock and alarm such obedience would or might bring upon them.

So I say to Bro. McIlroy, and any who feel as he says he does on this resurrection question, not to bother. Face up to what is presented for understanding, and, if needs must, accept it. 'Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.'

Towards the end of his letter, our Brother quotes Matt. 27:52, 'Graves were opened, and many bodies of the saints which slept arose . . . went into the Holy City and appeared unto many.' Since I first read and understood it, I have always thought that to be one of the most astonishing statements in the whole Bible, and it was with it in mind that I wrote, in the early part of my first article "That the bodies of the widow's son . . . and some others were actually raised again after death . . . I implicitly believe.' Everyone of those named, I would say, experienced a prolongation of their natural life, but that, with the single exception of Jesus Christ, they all died a second time. This must be so, for the Lord is declared to be 'the first born from the dead,' which could not be unless they died again, for they all, having died, returned to life before Christ rose from the tomb. The passage quoted is no help to us in understanding the question under discussion.

In an attempt to prove the resurrection of the body, Bro. McIlroy quotes Paul's words: 'The dead in Christ shall rise first.' It is ingenious, but false. He ends by completely denying the words he quotes. First, our Brother says, Paul's statement 'must refer to the physical body in the grave,' which is equivalent to saying that it is the physical body which is 'in Christ.' That is not true. Our Brother himself rightly designates those who are 'in Christ' as those who have 'obeyed the Gospel call to belief,' etc.

Belief is not a physical act but an operation of the mind, as is the will to obey. 'Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus.' 'If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.' Those are indications of what it is to be 'in Christ.' As for our Brother's 'text' (Paul's statement, which could not be more explicit), we read: '**The dead in Christ shall rise first.**' Of these 'dead in Christ,' our Brother writes: 'Being in a state of life, they do not require to be resurrected.' A contradiction so flagrant as to be indeed a shock and most alarming.

Bro. McIlroy kindly credits me with not seeking to limit the power of God. Is there no limit to the power of God?

Heard or read somewhere, sometime, was a remark that even God cannot make a valley without hills on each side of it! That may be out of Euclid, logic, or 'what have you.' There is a limit which God places upon Himself by His very nature; His word must be true to

itself. Any interpretation we arrive at on any Bible subject must be in the light of all that is written about it.

Bro. McIlroy's suggestion that we bring to mind 'the almighty power of God, which raiseth the dead,' and dispense with human reasoning and logical argument is really a confession of failure to achieve his aim. Paul rebukes his questioner, calling him a fool, for not using his reason. The analogy is itself an appeal to reason, and our Brother is driven to forsake reasoning only because he cannot establish his belief from what God has revealed in His word, so calls in the Almighty power of God for aid, which is human reasoning gone astray.

He does reason out two statements, however, neither correct. 'I find,' he says, 'a likeness of the seed to the body in that they are both put into the place of death.' But for the seed the earth is not a place of death. It is sown for the propagation of life. 'Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone, but if it die it bringeth forth much fruit.' And in those concluding words is found the answer to his other statement, 'the seed never dies.' For die it does. It dies in 'giving birth' to the new plant, and what is not taken by the plant to sustain itself is cast off, and returns to the dust from which it came.

Thus, in wheat, the living germ is raised and is given its 'proper body,' recognisable as it grows in the field. In man, the living germ, the spirit is **not sown with the body** as is the wheat. That this is so, Scripture clearly teaches, which cannot be disputed. So, using the same figure as of the body, the spirit is sown, lies dormant, asleep, the identity preserved—('that which I have committed,' says Paul)—in God's care, there to await God's good time to be raised.

Which brings us back to our question: 'With what body do they come?' and Paul's answer (in part): 'Thou sowest not the body that shall be. [Yet there are those who contend that it is from the body which is sown that the new body comes]. But God giveth it a body as it hath pleased him, and [a limitation of almighty power God placed upon himself] **to every seed its own body.**' 'There is a natural body and there is a spiritual body,' so that, to the natural seed there is given a natural body which dies, and to the spiritual a spiritual body which lives unto God, a body not now recognisable, 'for it doth not yet appear what we shall be.'

In the truths here expressed we do discern something of the mighty power of

God, and, in all kindness, I put it to Bro. McIlroy and all who think as he does: which is the better thought to carry to the end of one's days, that outlined above? or that of a grave and what it contains? My belief has been made abundantly clear, and no scriptural argument has yet been produced that proves it untenable.

W. BARKER.

NEWS FROM THE CHURCHES

Kentish Town.—We rejoice to record the baptism of three sisters: Mrs. Kirkham on November 7th, Mrs. Newman and Mrs. Venn on November 29th. The church here has been privileged to have the services of Bro. R. J. Smith, from Frankfurt, Germany. He served us from November 27th to December 5th, preaching the gospel seven evenings, exhorting the church on the two Lord's Days, and taking part in a special meeting on Saturday afternoon, December 4th. We were joined in that meeting by brethren from Tunbridge Wells and Aylesbury, and Bro. Smith gave an account of the German work, and spoke of the religious situation both in West and East Germany. We were glad to know so many in another country are hearing the simple New Testament gospel, and pray for its further progress. Our own meetings have been good for the conditions in which we work, but there was but little response to the wide distribution of leaflets. However we had quite a number of visitors to hear the plain gospel messages of our brother. Our gratitude is expressed to the congregation in Frankfurt, which enabled us to have Bro. Smith's services.

R. B. SCOTT.

Wigan (Albert Street, Newtown).—On Saturday, November 27th, we welcomed to the district Bro. S. F. Timmerman, of Belgium, for a six-day visit. Gospel meetings were held each night at 7.30, and though our numbers were not so large as before owing to sickness and bad weather, fairly good attendances were maintained, with a good number of friends, for some of whom it was the first time in our meeting place, and they heard inspiring messages. The Gospel was preached in all its fullness, and after each meeting much time was spent in private conversation. He also exhorted the Church on Lord's Day morning, and gave a brief talk on the work in Belgium, at 6 p.m. Once more, we rejoiced to witness the power of the Gospel. Mildred Dawber, wife of Bro. Harry Dawber, following Jesus in the way appointed, and

of Sister Tabener being restored to the Church. As we look back over the past year, we thank God for these blessings, and realise there is no limit to what God can do, if His people have a mind to work and pray.

On behalf of the Church, I would like to thank all the Brethren who have served us so willingly each week through the year. We realise it is the seed sown by them that makes a good harvest, and we look forward to another year of service for the Master, and pray the Lord will use His Church mightily in all lands. We render Him all the thanks.

W. SMITH.

Tunbridge Wells (5 Mount Ephraim Road). — The Church here has been edified and encouraged by the efforts of visiting brethren during November. The special services, held each Saturday, Sunday and Tuesday, gave us great cause for thankfulness to God. Andrew Gardiner spoke on November 6th, 7th and 9th; Roy B. Scott spoke on the 13th; Ralph Limb on the 14th and 16th; Alex Allan on the 20th, 21st and 23rd; Phillip Partington on the 27th, 28th and 30th.

One or two evenings torrential rain hindered attendances. Otherwise attendances were good, and many non-members came in to hear the gospel. They heard the New Testament teaching faithfully and ably stated; and they show their interest by continuing to attend after the Mission has ended. We pray that the gospel seed may take root and grow in many hearts.

We thank God for the faithful ministry of these brothers. We pray for the efforts of all saints. Brethren, pray for us.

A. E. WINSTANLEY.

East Kirkby (Beulah Road). — The Church, by the goodness and mercy of our heavenly Father, has been permitted to enter upon another year's service for our Master. On Saturday and Lord's Day, Nov. 27th-28th, we gathered to rejoice with each other upon the occasion of our thirtieth birthday. Our veteran Brother, Walter Crosthwaite responded to a pressing invitation to be our speaker for the week-end. In addition, a second Brother of long experience, Bro. T. Dand, of Mapperwell, Yorks., known to many, came at the invitation of the Church to give us a message. It has been a most uplifting and inspiring time, and truly we have felt the guidance and blessing of God, whom we seek to serve and honour.

On Saturday, a record number (approximately 150) sat down in the Labour Hall (hired for the occasion) to a tea served by the Sisters, when all enjoyed to the full, both the social intercourse, and the good things provided. Later in the evening the meeting was held in our own meeting house, when a partition had to be taken down to provide room for

those who assembled. Even then, not all could find a seat. After some hearty singing (led by our Precentor, Bro. John Longden) Bro. McDonald led the meeting in prayer. Following a few remarks, and words of welcome by Bro. W. Jepson (chairman) Bro. Crosthwaite with unabated vigour and earnestness addressed the meeting upon Rev. 3:8.

As our brother talked of, and applied the above scripture, the spirit's word entered our hearts, and we felt its power and blessing. Bro. Dand followed on, speaking of the need and value of prayer in the Christian life and witness, and went on to warn us of the 'Day of the Lord,' which draweth near. Bro. F. C. Day concluded our meeting with prayer, which ended another 'High Day' in the Church's history here.

The usual services were held on Lord's Day, and Bro. Crosthwaite exhorted the Church in the morning upon words in our O.T. lesson, 'Beware lest thou forget the Lord.' The message he gave us, based upon that scripture, will, we trust, live in our hearts for a long time, and bear fruit. The School also was addressed by our Brother, and our 'Young People,' under the leadership of Bro. T. Woodhouse, were exhorted to give their hearts to the Lord. The day closed with a most powerful discourse by our Brother upon 'The Church we stand for.'

All felt to have received a great incentive, notwithstanding many serious difficulties and trials, to go forward in our witness for our Lord and Master.

W. B. JEPSON

OBITUARY

Rosyth. — After six months' illness, patiently borne, Brother Martin Donaldson fell asleep in Jesus on November 24th. He was sayed about thirty-five years ago, and was a member of the Church at Tranent, then at Dunfermline, and finally at Rosyth. We are grateful to God for having been in fellowship with such a Christ-like influence, both with regard to his life, and his unswerving loyalty to his Master. He served the Church here faithfully and profitably; both in the Gospel and in the ministry of the Word to the saints, and was a faithful member of the oversight. We know our beloved brother has made a change for the better as he is now with the Lord which is far better, but we on our part feel that we have suffered a grievous loss.

Bro. Donaldson leaves a widow, a sister of faith and courage, who nursed her loved one devotedly to the last. We feel sure that she will overcome this parting, and pray that with the rest of us, will go on more determined than ever to live for Christ our Master.

GEORGE MCILROY,

RELIGIOUS FREEDOM.

Malcolm Martin Jnr., twelve-year-old son of a Roman Catholic father and a non-Catholic mother, has right to attend a non-Catholic school, if he so desires. That is the decision reached in a Brooklyn court and upheld by the Appellate Division of the New York State Supreme Court.

The parents are separated and the mother is bringing the boy up as a non-Catholic. The father charged she had no right to break the promise made at the time of their marriage in a Roman Catholic Church. Like all other non-Catholics married in a Roman Catholic Church, she had to promise that children of the union would be raised Catholics.

The courts ruled the Catholic Church has no business requiring any such promise, and that the promise made at marriage is not binding in this respect, and the boy is entitled to choose his own religion.

—(Arkansas Herald)

THE "SCRIPTURE STANDARD."

The majority of our members take this excellent little monthly. We want to commend it to those who are not taking it. The present issue (December) completes its twentieth year of publication under the editorship of our esteemed Bro. Walter Crosthwaite. During these years when there has been such a wholesale departure from the original 'position and plea' we held as Churches of Christ, this paper has done a great service in rallying and keeping together 'the loyal-hearted to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered unto the saints.' We honour and respect our brother for his personal work and worth in the cause of New Testament Christianity. His editorial this month is exceptionally good and timely and should be read by every one of us. If you want plain, simple, Bible truth, read this fine little magazine. At the same time,

the editor is fair and is not afraid to give the 'other man's point of view.' He is quite impartial and fair to all. It is only sixpence per month.

—Ilkeston Church paper.

COMING EVENTS

Birmingham, Summer Lane.—Special Mission from 15th to 30th January. Bro. A. E. Winstanley will be the preacher each Lord's Day at 6.30. Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays at 7.30 p.m. and on Saturdays at 6 o'clock. Questions will be invited on Christianity and the Bible and these will be answered at the Saturday evening meetings.

F. C. DAY.

Slamannan District.—The New Year Social Gathering of the Churches of Christ in the Slamannan District will be held (D.V.) on Saturday, January 1st, 1955, at twelve noon in the Church Meeting Place, New Street, Slamannan.

Will Churches usually represented at this gathering please inform the undersigned, as soon as possible of the approximate number intending to be there.

Speakers: Brethren Joe Nisbet (Tranent) and D. Dougall (Evangelist).

Chairman, Bro. E. Jess (Dalmellington).

Note change of Secretary's address: Hugh S. Davidson, 11 Rosslyn Avenue, East Kilbride, Lanarkshire.

Wigan (Albert Street, Newtown).—February 12th to 27th: Bro. L. Channing (Aylesbury); March 26th, 27th, Bro. Will Steele, of East Lothian; April 2nd to May 29th, Bro. A. E. Winstanley, of Tunbridge Wells.

WANTED.

"A Vision of the Ages" (B. W. Johnson); Acts of Apostles (J. W. Garvey); Life and Epistles of Paul (Conybeare & Howson); "Atheism to Christianity" (I. Selby); "Bridge of History over the Gulf of Time" (T. Cooper).

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Secretary of Conference Committee: A. HOOD, 8 Torquay Avenue, Owton Manor, West Hartlepool, Co. Durham.

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