5 BIO Ch. 21 - The Threat of Pantheism

The year 1903 witnessed in a very marked way the fulfillment of a prediction made by Ellen White in 1884 and published in the *Testimonies* in 1885: – {5BIO 280.1}

The enemy is preparing for his last campaign against the church. He has so concealed himself from view that many can hardly believe that he exists, much less can they be convinced of his amazing activity and power. They have to a great extent forgotten his past record; and when he makes another advance move, they will not recognize him as their enemy, that old serpent, but they will consider him a friend, one who is doing a good work.... – {5BIO 280.2}

Satan hopes to involve the remnant people of God in the general ruin that is coming upon the earth. As the coming of Christ draws nigh, he will be more determined and decisive in his efforts to overthrow them. Men and women will arise professing to have some new light or some new revelation whose tendency is to unsettle faith in the old landmarks. Their doctrines will not bear the test of God's word, yet souls will be deceived.—Testimonies for the Church 5:294, 295. – {5BIO 280.3}

To understand better the crisis that faced the church in the Kellogg controversy, it is necessary to review the events that preceded the 1903 General Conference and the move to Washington, D.C. – {5BIO 280.4}

The medical work in which Seventh-day Adventists were engaged, which later came to be known as the medical missionary work, was in God's providence instituted as a means of bringing relief to the sick and of acquainting them with the Saviour and preparing them to meet Christ at His second coming. This work was to be the right arm of the message. It was a means of contacting and reaching people effectively. – {5BIO 280.5}

It is not strange, then, that the great adversary of all truth, one who had declared war against God and His people, should attempt to nullify the effectiveness of this ministry. Preceding chapters have noted the steps taken by Dr. Kellogg to wrest the medical work from the control of the church leaders and form it into a great nondenominational Christian work. – {5BIO 281.1}

There is no question that Dr. Kellogg was an unselfish, dedicated, much-loved man. He was a generous, great man. But it was largely (yet not altogether) through Dr. John Harvey Kellogg that the great adversary introduced into the ranks of Seventh-day Adventists the seeds of error in the form of so-called new light, just at a time when the medical work was at its height. – {5BIO 281.2}

Pantheism is the term used to designate the strange new teachings that were being introduced. Pantheism pictures God not as a great personal Being, but a mysterious essence—an impersonal influence pervading all nature. God is seen in all nature—in

trees, flowers, sunshine, air, and human beings. The power of God in nature is confused with the personality of God. – {5BIO 281.3}

As is so often the case with misleading teachings, it came to the ranks of Seventh-day Adventists subtly, as new, advanced truth. At first it was not discerned as a threat to the church. Dr. Kellogg had toyed with these concepts before James White's death in 1881, and considering it "great light," had discussed it with Ellen White. "'Those theories are wrong," she told him. "'I have met them before." He seemed dazed as she showed him the outcome of espousing such a philosophy. She then admonished, "'Never teach such theories in our institutions; do not present them to the people."—Manuscript 70, 1905. — {5BIO 281.4}

Dr. Kellogg Introduces Pantheistic Teachings

Fifteen years later (1895) a Dr. A. H. Lewis, editor of the *Sabbath Recorder*, prominent among Seventh Day Baptists, and steeped in pantheism, visited Battle Creek and was entertained in the Kellogg home (Mrs. Kellogg was a Seventh Day Baptist). Lewis talked his pantheistic views, which did not fall on deaf ears. Kellogg first introduced pantheism publicly in 1897 in a series of talks at the ministerial institute that preceded the General Conference session held in the College View church at Lincoln, Nebraska. – {5BIO 281.5}

The records of what took place are clear, for they were published in the *General Conference Bulletin*, and distributed to Adventist workers throughout the world. The issue of February 18 carries the first of the Kellogg addresses under the title "God in Nature." This was presented Tuesday morning, February 16. In his talk he introduced an extended quotation from Ellen White, taken from Manuscript 4, 1882, carrying the title "God in Nature." In this document she stated that Christ and the Father are continually working through the laws of nature. Nature is God's servant, directed as He pleases. Nature at work testifies of the intelligent presence and active agency of a Being who moves in all His work according to His will (The General Conference Bulletin, 1897, 73). – {5BIO 282.1}

Dr. Kellogg drew heavily upon Ellen White in laying out his position that God works through nature and in nature. His next presentation carried the title "God in Man." Under this title he gave several talks in which he set forth clearly the pantheistic philosophy he held: – {5BIO 282.2}

Gravitation acts instantaneously throughout all space. By this mysterious force of gravitation the whole universe is held together in a bond of unity.... We have here the evidence of a universal presence, an intelligent presence, an all-wise presence, an all-powerful presence, a presence by the aid of which every atom of the universe is kept in touch with every other atom. This force that holds all things together, that is everywhere present, that thrills throughout the whole universe, that acts instantaneously through boundless space, can be nothing else than God Himself. What a wonderful thought that this same God is in us and in everything.—Ibid., 83. – {5BIO 282.3}

In words that seemed to put man above God, he boldly declared: – {5BIO 282.4}

What a wonderful thought, that this mighty God that keeps the whole universe in order, is in us! ... What an amazing thing that this almighty, all-powerful, and all-wise God should make Himself a servant of man by giving man a free will—power to direct the energy within his body!— Ibid.

Ministers and Teachers Imbibe the Intriguing Views

Ministers and physicians who had a high regard for Dr. Kellogg began to imbibe his philosophy and to develop it in their own work, not sensing the point to which it would lead. One such was Elder E. J. Waggoner, who was also a physician. He was at one time editor of the Signs of the Times and the man who, with Elder A. T. Jones was used mightily of God at the General Conference in 1888 to bring a reemphasis on the message of righteousness by faith. Elder Waggoner, one of the denomination's highly respected speakers, was repeatedly called upon at the time of General Conference sessions to conduct series of Bible studies. – {5BIO 283.1}

At the General Conference of 1899, held at South Lancaster, Massachusetts, Waggoner was a delegate from England, where he was engaged in editorial work. In a discussion of health and temperance, Elder Waggoner was asked to make a presentation of some things he had been giving to the Battle Creek Sanitarium family. He opened with the rather bold statement: – {5BIO 283.2}

I thank God, brethren, that the Lord has taught me something in the last few months, and enabled me to teach something of how to live forever.—Ibid., 1899, 53. – {5BIO 283.3}

He recognized that some would feel that this was fanaticism, but he denied this. He asked the question: – {5BIO 283.4}

What is it that gives us life, no matter who we are? It is the life of God. How many lives are there in the universe? There is but one life, and that is the life of God. What is the life of God given to us for? That we may live it. And how long is the life of God to endure? Through eternity. What does He let us have this life for? and why does He bear it with us, and with this whole world? That we may take the life that He has already given, and know that it is eternal life.—Ibid., 53. – {5BIO 283.5}

He was asked by someone in the audience, "Do you ever expect to be sick?" – {5BIO 283.6}

He answered, "No; I expect to live forever."— Ibid. – {5BIO 283.7}

In his presentation, which carried over into the afternoon, Waggoner referred to man's first breath. He noted that the first thing a human being does when he comes into the world is to breathe. This is what happened in Adam's experience.

God breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and he became a living soul.

Man breathes the breath of life into his nostrils eighteen times a minute. "Brethren," declared Dr. Waggoner, "God is wonderfully near."—Ibid., 57. – {5BIO 284.1} Waggoner went on: – {5BIO 284.2}

When a man knows and recognizes that every breath he draws is a direct breathing of God into his nostrils, he lives in the presence of God, and has a Spirit-filled life.... Let a man breathe by faith, and he will be full of the Spirit of God.—Ibid., 58.

Continuing his discussion, the doctor introduced another illustration: – {5BIO 284.3}

When Paul was stung by a viper, those standing by thought he would die. But he did not. Why? There was a power, a life, to resist, was there not? – {5BIO 284.4}

We are continually breathing in germs. You cannot go on the street, at least in the cities, without breathing in germs of tuberculosis. But we do not all have tuberculosis. We may be exposed to typhoid fever, and yet escape.... Why? Because, you say, there was a vitality to resist. – {5BIO 284.5}

But what is it that swallows up these germs? It is the life of God.— Ibid. – {5BIO 284.6}

The air is God's medicine, and good food is God's medicine. There is power, life, in the pure water, because God's life is in it.— Ibid. – {5BIO 284.7}

He went on to discuss the matter of bread: – {5BIO 284.8}

What do we put into the ground when we want corn? We plant the seed.... Now when you have a handful of good seed, that seed has the life of God in it.... When this is made into bread, life is in it still. We do not see the life, but it is there, and it is the life of God. It is His body, and we take His body and get life.— Ibid.

Someone in the audience asked, "Is the life of God in the bread?" – {5BIO 285.1}

"Yes," Dr. Waggoner answered. – {5BIO 285.2}

The questioner asked further: "What is the difference, then, between this and the position taken by the priest?" – {5BIO 285.3}

To this Waggoner gave a rather devious answer, claiming that they were "diametrically opposite" (Ibid.). – {5BIO 285.4}

Dr. Kellogg, in giving a report a day or two later on the design of sanitariums, reiterated these concepts: – {5BIO 285.5}

As Dr. Waggoner was telling you the other day, we never eat anything good, but we are tasting God. It is a sacred thing to eat. This grows out of the fact that God is in everything.—Ibid., 1899, 119. – {5BIO 285.6}

At this same meeting Dr. Daniel H. Kress spoke of the marvelous work in the healing of a wound: – {5BIO 285.7}

The Lord is constantly at work. God works in us, constantly building up, repairing waste, and healing all manner of diseases. "I am the Lord which healeth thee." But in addition to the fact that God is in every man, we must recognize that He is in everything—the food we eat, the air we breathe. These are a means of ministering life to man.—Ibid., 120. – {5BIO 285.8}

Seeds of Error Carried to the World Field

Thus the seeds of pantheism were being sown at the General Conference session of 1899, and through the *General Conference Bulletin* they were carried to the church throughout the world. Somehow the peril of this teaching was not discerned. It seemed to be beautiful light; light that if adequately understood would lead to holy living: God is in the air; God is in water; God is in the corn; God is in the bread; and it is because God is in men and women that disease cannot take hold of them. – {5BIO 285.9}

From time to time during the session, communications were received from Ellen G. White, who was in Australia, and certain meetings were set apart for the reading of these communications. One such was on Wednesday morning, March 1. The following Sabbath afternoon was also given over to "reading several Testimonies received since the opening of the session of the conference." Elder G. A. Irwin read these. Significantly, the first carried the title "The True Relation of God and Nature." Ellen White spoke of the Fall of man and of the worship of the Athenians who erected their altars for the worship of nature on which they might well inscribe "To the unknown God." "Nature is not God," she said, "and never was God. The voice of nature testifies of God, declaring His glory; but nature itself is not God. As God's created work, it but bears a testimony of His power."—Ibid., 157. – {5BIO 285.10}

She continued: – {5BIO 286.1}

The ancient philosophers prided themselves upon their superior knowledge, but God has said of them: "Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things.... Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshiped and served the creature more than the Creator."—Ibid., 157 Then she made a point that showed where the "new light" would lead. – {5BIO 286.2} Christ came to the world as a personal Saviour. He represented a personal God. He ascended on high as a personal Saviour, and He will come again as He ascended to heaven—a personal Saviour. We need carefully to consider this; for in their human wisdom, the wise men of the world, knowing not God, foolishly deify nature and the laws of nature.— Ibid. – {5BIO 286.3}

In the following words she clearly sorted things out: – {5BIO 286.4}

Those who have a true knowledge of God will not become so infatuated with the laws of matter and the operations of nature as to overlook or to refuse to acknowledge the continual working of God in nature. Deity is the author of nature. The natural world has in itself no inherent power but that which God supplies. How strange, then, that so many make a deity of nature! God furnishes the matter and the properties with which to carry out His plans. Nature is but His agency.— Ibid.

How interestingly these words of counsel dealt with presentations that had been made earlier in the session. But as far as the record reveals, the delegates seem to have made no connection between those presentations and the messages that Ellen White sent from Australia. The timing, too, was significant, for she wrote nearly a month before the session opened and they arrived when truly needed. Those inspired messages should have forever buried the pantheistic teachings. But not so. They were forgotten, but pantheism was not. Dr. Kellogg and those who held views similar to his became even more bold in the presentation of pantheistic teachings. Such teachings threatened the principal doctrines that Seventh-day Adventists hold, particularly that of the sanctuary, with Christ ministering in the Most Holy Place. But the danger was not seen by most. – {5BIO 286.5}

The pantheistic views became popular and were taught in Battle Creek College. They were taught in the Sanitarium, and as has been shown, they were defended by some physicians and some ministers. – {5BIO 287.1}

Pantheism Rampant in Battle Creek

As Elder Daniells took up residence in Battle Creek as the leader of the church following the General Conference of 1901, he found these teachings rampant. For years he had been more or less isolated in Australia. He was amazed to hear the talk of God in flowers, in trees, in mankind. The expression was constantly heard: The acorn falls to the ground and a tree springs up. It was argued that one must say there is a tree maker in the tree. It was declared that the Creator, whatever He might be like, was in the things that were made, and therefore, man must look within for his maker and his God. And some boldly said that there is no great Being sitting on the throne in heaven, but God is in all nature. – {5BIO 287.2}

This Daniells could not accept, because, as he declared: "I knew that the Bible says that there is a great Supreme Being who had created all things. So I never felt in harmony with this idea."—DF 15a, AGD, "How the Denomination Was Saved From Pantheism," copy A, p. 2. – {5BIO 287.3}

Elder W. A. Spicer, who was serving with Elder Daniells in the General Conference as newly appointed secretary of the Foreign Mission Board, had spent years of service in India. He was astonished at this teaching that was being proclaimed around Battle Creek. He recognized it clearly as pantheism, which is the basis of Hinduism. He asked himself, "Could it be that the philosophies of heathenism are being taught by leading men in the Seventh-day Adventist Church?" – {5BIO 287.4}

On February 18, 1902, as noted in Chapter 11, the Sanitarium in Battle Creek burned to the ground, and the denomination was confronted with the matter of rebuilding. Dr. Kellogg came to the General Conference Committee and asked what the General Conference could do to help. Thinking of the effort being made in the selling of *Christ's Object Lessons* to help clear the debts of the church's educational institutions. Elder Daniells suggested that Dr. Kellogg write a simple book on physiology and health care that could be sold by Seventh-day Adventist throughout the United States. Perhaps they could sell half a million copies, and all income from the sale of this book could be used to help rebuild the sanitarium. – {5BIO 288.1}

This appealed to Dr. Kellogg. But Daniells hastened to say: – {5BIO 288.2}

"Now look here, Doctor, that book must not contain a single argument of this new theory you are teaching, because there are a lot of people all over the States who do not accept it. I know from what they say, and if it has any of what they consider pantheism they will never touch it."— Ibid., 3.

And the doctor replied, "Oh yes, oh yes, I understand that." And Daniells reiterated the point: "You must leave all that out."— Ibid. Dr. Kellogg fully agreed. (As Kellogg tells the story, it was he who proposed the book for popular sale. Perhaps the idea originated in the minds of both leaders.) In the summer of 1902 Daniells took the matter to the union presidents, and they promised to support the wide sale of a book that would help to raise funds for the Sanitarium. – {5BIO 288.3}

Dr. Kellogg was a tireless worker. He dictated a manuscript as quickly as he could, and it was sent to the Review and Herald office for the setting of the type. In the form of galley proofs the nascent book, to be called *The Living Temple*, came to Elder W. W. Prescott, General Conference field secretary, who was serving as acting leader in the absence of Elder Daniells, and to Dr. Kellogg, who was in Europe. – {5BIO 288.4} Elder Prescott called Elder Spicer's attention to some of the chapters. Spicer in turn mentioned his feeling to one of Dr. Kellogg's medical associates, that wrong ideas were set forth in certain portions of the book. – {5BIO 288.5}

The medical friend looked the matter over and wrote to Elder Spicer that it was his conviction that the matter in question was quite right and in harmony with the Advent message, however differently truths might be expressed from a scientific standpoint. He felt that the church ought to be ready to accept advancing light. To this Elder Spicer replied in a letter written June 5, 1902: – {5BIO 289.1}

"A book to be used as it is purposed that this shall be, in order to pay debts on our sanitariums, must be altogether above question and controversy. It is not a question as to whether our people ought to take advanced light or not, but simply a question as to rallying everybody to undertake what at best will be a very difficult problem."—DF 15c, W. A. Spicer, "How the Spirit of Prophecy Met a Crisis," Copy A, p. 18. – {5BIO 289.2}

Soon after Kellogg's return to Battle Creek, Spicer was invited by the doctor to come to his home for a discussion of the book. The men spent an entire Sabbath afternoon together, and soon they were in rather bitter controversy, as the doctor explained that the teachings of the book presented his views in a very modest fashion, and it was his intent to teach that God was in the things of nature. – {5BIO 289.3}

Later Spicer wrote of the exchange: – {5BIO 289.4}

"Where is God?" I was asked. I would naturally say, He is in heaven; there the Bible pictures the throne of God, all the heavenly beings at His command as messengers between heaven and earth. But I was told that God was in the grass and plants and in the trees....

"Where is heaven?" I was asked. I had my idea of the center of the universe, with heaven and the throne of God in the midst, but disclaimed any attempt to fix the center of the universe astronomically. But I was urged to understand that heaven is where God is, and God is everywhere—in the grass, in the trees, in all creation. There was no place in this scheme of things for angels going between heaven and earth, for heaven was here and everywhere. The cleansing of the sanctuary that we taught about was not something in a faraway heaven. "The sin is here ...[Dr. Kellogg said, pointing to his heart], and here is the sanctuary to be cleansed."— Ibid., 19, 20. – {5BIO 289.5}

As he left the doctor on that Sabbath afternoon, Spicer reported: – {5BIO 290.1}

I knew well enough that there was nothing of the Advent message that could fit into such a philosophy. As I had listened, one light after another of the gospel message seemed to be put out. Religious teaching that to me was fundamental was set aside.— Ibid., 21.

Manuscript for The Living Temple Turned Down

When the General Conference Committee perceived the nature of the manuscript, a committee of four was appointed to give study to it and bring a report. As members of the committee read, they found such explanations as the following: – {5BIO 290.2}

Suppose now we have a boot before us—not an ordinary boot, but a living boot, and as we look at it, we see little boots crowding out at the seams, pushing out at the toes, dropping off at the heels, and leaping out at the top—scores, hundreds, thousands of boots, a swarm of boots continually issuing from our living boot—would we not be compelled to say, "There is a shoemaker in the boot"? So there is present in the tree a power which creates and maintains it, a tree-maker in the tree.—JHK, *The Living Temple*, p. 29. – {5BIO 290.3}

After the reading, two reports were prepared, a majority report and a minority report, a rather unusual procedure in the experience of Seventh-day Adventists. The reports were taken to the Autumn Council that year. The majority report stated: – {5BIO 290.4}

"That, we find in the book *Living Temple* nothing which appears to us to be contrary to the Bible or the fundamental principles of the Christian religion, and that we see no reason why it may not be recommended by the Committee for circulation in the manner suggested." A. T. Jones, J. H. Kellogg, David Paulson.—DF 15c, W. A. Spicer, "How the Spirit of Prophecy Met a Crisis," Copy A, p. 27. – {5BIO 290.5}

The minority report was written by W. W. Prescott, and it read: – {5BIO 291.1}

"I am compelled to say that I regard the matter, outside those portions of the book which deal with physiology and hygiene, as leading to harm rather than good; and I venture to express the hope that it will never be published."— Ibid.

The General Conference Committee accepted the minority report. In the discussion that followed, according to the minutes, the author requested the privilege of withdrawing the book from consideration. It was not long, however, according to Elder Daniells, before Kellogg jumped to his feet and demanded an open hearing so that everybody from the Sanitarium and the Review and Herald could hear both sides of the matter. He pointed out it should not be confined to a small meeting of the General Conference brethren. So it was decided to hold such a meeting in the Review and Herald chapel. Daniells expected that only a relatively few people from the Review and Herald would be able to get off work to attend, although the chapel would hold a big crowd. However, when they met at eight-thirty in the morning, the room was packed to the anteroom and down the stairs. The meeting lasted until noon. – {5BIO 291.2}

Elder Daniells reviewed the history of the church's medical work, the steps being taken to bring the finances into line, and the pantheistic teachings in the galleys of *The Living Temple*. In the afternoon Dr. Kellogg presented his side of the story. Elder Daniells felt that he faced a real crisis in this situation and spent much of the night in study and prayer. The next morning as the Autumn Council attempted to proceed with its business, Dr. Kellogg was present with a big pile of books. He asked for a point of privilege that he might present the fact that "from the first, Elder James White, George I. Butler, and all ... your leaders have been absolutely opposed to this medical department of the denomination."—DF 15a, AGD. "How the Denomination Was Saved From Pantheism," Copy A, p. 13. – {5BIO 291.3}

The brethren listened for a while. Finally one of the men stood and asked: – {5BIO 291.4}

"Mr. Chairman, I rise to a point of order. I cannot sit here in this committee and listen to these harsh terms that Dr. Kellogg is using against our venerable founder and leader [James White]. I wish the chairman to call him down."— Ibid. – {5BIO 291.5}

The chairman accepted the proposition and declared, "I will say to Dr. Kellogg, "We do not wish any more of this." You will please terminate your subject."— Ibid., 13, 14. He did, but under protest. – {5BIO 292.1}

Dr. Kellogg placed a personal order with the Review to print *The Living Temple*. About a month later the Review and Herald burned, and the plates for the book, which stood ready for the press, were destroyed by the fire. – {5BIO 292.2}

Pantheistic Teachings and the General Conference of 1903
As leading workers approached the General Conference session, which was to open on March 27 in Oakland, California, the proposed book *The Living Temple* was a matter of deep concern. On March 16, Ellen White wrote to Dr. Kellogg: – {5BIO 292.3}

You are not definitely clear on the personality of God, which is everything to us as a people. You have virtually destroyed the Lord God Himself.—Letter 300, 1903. – {5BIO 292.4}

Again on April 5, while at the session, she wrote to the doctor: The specious, scheming representations of God in nature carry their charming, soothing influence as a peace and safety pill to give to the people, in the spiritualistic views [Note: This term does not refer to spiritualism as we speak of it today, but to spiritualizing certain truths.] that Satan has instituted in your theories.—Letter 301, 1903. – {5BIO 292.5}

She wrote to him a second letter on the same day. In this letter she said: – {5BIO 292.6}

Your ideas are so mystical that they are destructive to the real substance, and the minds of some are becoming confused in regard to the foundation of our faith. If you allow your mind to become thus diverted, you will give a wrong mold to the work that has made us what we are—Seventh-day Adventists.—Letter 52, 1903. – {5BIO 292.7}

Early in the session, in one of her talks Ellen White had declared: Those who stand as teachers and leaders in our institutions are to be sound in the faith and in the principles of the third angel's message. God wants His people to know that we have the message as He gave it to us in 1843 and 1844. We knew then what the message meant, and we call upon our people today to obey the word, "Bind up the law among My disciples."—The General Conference Bulletin, 1903, 32. – {5BIO 292.8}

On April 3 she had warned: – {5BIO 293.1}

Spurious scientific theories are coming in as a thief in the night, stealing away the landmarks and undermining the pillars of our faith. God has shown me that the medical students are not to be educated in such theories, because God will not endorse these theories.

The most specious temptations of the enemy are coming in, and they are coming in on the highest, most elevated plane. These spiritualize the doctrines of present truth until there is no distinction between the substance and the shadow. – {5BIO 293.2}

You know that Satan will come in to deceive if possible the very elect. He claims to be Christ, and he is coming in, pretending to be the great medical missionary.—Ibid., 87. – {5BIO 293.3}

As mentioned in an earlier chapter, Ellen White fully intended on several occasions at the 1903 General Conference to meet pantheistic teachings explicitly and face to face in an open meeting where Dr. Kellogg and his views would be completely exposed. But in each case she was restrained from doing so. While at the session she was instructed in vision that she "must not say anything that would stir up confusion and strife in the conference."—DF 15c, W. A. Spicer, "How the Spirit of Prophecy Met a Crisis," Copy A, p. 30. – {5BIO 293.4}

That the General Conference session should come to a close without the issues being squarely met was a matter of deep perplexity to not a few, including her own son, W. C. White. Most came to see that somehow in the providence of God He does not always deal with such matters precipitously. He did not do so in dealing with Lucifer when he fell in heaven. Things must develop to a certain point before the issues could be met in a way that all would understand what they were and take a safe stand. And so it was seen in 1903 in the case concerning the pantheistic teachings. – {5BIO 293.5}

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