

Beyond the Four Spiritual Laws

Various methods are used to share the Gospel which can be very effective in bringing people to Jesus Christ. But there are many places where simply sharing the "Four Spiritual Laws" or showing the "Jesus Film" is not enough. In order for people to hear the Gospel it is necessary in some places to first break the spiritual strongholds that have prevented the people in a targeted area from hearing the Gospel and responding to it. It is necessary first to engage in spiritual warfare in order that the ears of the people may be opened.

by Neal O. Michell

Have you ever been driving along when all of a sudden you come to an area congested with churches? Then, you drive farther along and you come to a neighborhood that is run down, the businesses are less than topnotch? You think, "Isn't it a shame that this neighborhood isn't like the other neighborhood? If these people could become Christians, they could fix up their neighborhood."

For a growing number of Christians, there is more below the surface of these two neighborhoods than simple economic development. They are discovering the deeper meaning of 2 Corinthians 4:3, "And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing." They are discovering new ways to "unveil the gospel" so that once hidden people are now being reached.

A number of methods have been used to share the Gospel. Evangelistic crusades, evangelistic Bible studies, Campus Crusade's "Here's Life", Evangelicism Explosion, and annual revival meetings have all had their place in bringing people to Jesus Christ, but there are many places where simply sharing the "Four Spiritual Laws" is not enough. In order for people to hear the Gospel, whether through the "Four Spiritual Laws or Evangelism Explosion or by means of the film "Jesus," it is necessary in

some places first to begin breaking the spiritual strongholds that have prevented the people in a targeted area from hearing the gospel and responding. It is necessary first to engage in spiritual warfare in order that the ears of the people that we want to reach may be opened.

A Case in Point

John Dawson tells the story of a spiritual breakthrough. Several years ago Dawson led a Youth With a Mission team to Cordoba, Argentina, to evangelize the thousands of Argentines who had come to that city of 1.1 million people for the world soccer playoffs. Thousands were there for the event. Also two hundred evangelists were witnessing the Good News.

These evangelists felt stymied. They had been trained; they had prayed; and they came with excitement and expectancy; but their witnessing lacked power. After their initial disappointment all 200 met together at a rented monastery. They fasted and prayed; then the Holy Spirit began to reveal to them the spiritual issues facing Cordoba. The fields were "white unto harvest," and the laborers were not few, but there were deeper issues than simple logistics that this YWAM evangelistic team had to deal with.

They discerned that there was an underlying spirit of the "pride of life" in the city. To overcome the spirit of pride they must exhibit the humility of Jesus. The next day they formed in groups of thirty. They gathered in groups in the open-air mall and knelt on the cobblestones. Surrounded by "expensive bistros, sidewalk cafes, and boutiques," they lowered their foreheads to the cobblestones in humility as they "prayed for a revelation of Jesus to come to the city."

The revelation came immediately. Crowds of people began to form around each group. They listened, they heard, and they received the Gospel.¹

What began in weakness and failure concluded in boldness and harvest. What happened? These YWAM evangelists engaged in the spiritual battle at a deeper level. They went beyond the mere logistics of mobilizing 200 evangelists and training them in how to share the gospel. The presentation of the gospel was aided by first engaging in spiritual warfare.

What is Spiritual Warfare?

Spiritual warfare involves engaging the enemy, that is, Satan, and breaking the hold that Satan (or his minions) has over an individual or a

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group so that the individual or group will be free to respond to the promptings of the Holy Spirit.

When a person is involved in evangelism, spiritual warfare may be a necessary precursor to successful evangelism. Spiritual warfare is not evangelism; it is *pre-evangelism*. It is like tilling the soil. Some soils are naturally fertile and will grow an abundant crop, while other soils need to have rocks and sticks and glass removed before seed should be planted. Removing the rocks and sticks and glass will help the soil to grow the seed into a healthy plant.

It is called "warfare" because the Bible says that we are engaged in warfare. Paul writes in Ephesians 6:12 and 13: "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand." Paul later on tells Timothy: "This charge I commit unto thee, son Timothy, according to the prophecies which went before on thee, that thou by them mightest war a good warfare." 1 Tim 1:18 (KJV).

The kingdom of God and the kingdom of this world are in conflict. Jesus said that the kingdom of heaven is at hand (Matthew 3:2; 4:17; 10:7). Although Satan has been defeated (Colossians 2:14-15), Satan is not yet destroyed. He is still at work, blinding the minds of those who have not received the gospel. "In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not (2 Cor 4:4). Spiritual warfare is the means of doing battle with the "god of this world" so that a greater number of people are free to respond to the gospel.

This warfare is engaged on a spiri-

tual plane. "For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds." 2 Cor 10:3-4

Three Levels of Spiritual Warfare

Peter Wagner, professor at the School of World Mission at Fuller Theological Seminary, distinguishes between three "generalized levels" of spiritual warfare: Ground-Level, Occult-Level, and Strategic-Level.² The apostle Paul's ministry in Ephesus gives an account of these three levels of spiritual warfare."

1. Ground-Level Spiritual Warfare

Ground-level spiritual warfare is "the ministry of casting out demons."³ It involves breaking the hold that Satan has on particular individuals. Ground-level warfare may involve inner healing, casting out demons, or deliverance. Acts 19:11 records that "God did extraordinary miracles through Paul, so that even handkerchiefs and aprons that had touched him were taken to the sick, and their illnesses were cured and the evil spirits left them." (NIV) Healing and casting out demons are, of course, signs of the kingdom of God (Luke 4:18).

2. Occult-Level Spiritual Warfare

Occult-level spiritual warfare involves spiritual warfare that is directed at occult or magic practices. Peter Wagner says, "It seems evident that we see a kind of demonic power at work through shamans, New Age channelers, occult practitioners, witches and warlocks, satanist priests, fortune tellers and the like. This is substantially different from the ordinary that may cause headaches, marital blowups, drunkenness, or scoliosis."⁴ In Acts 19:19 the early Christians encountered occult-level spiritual warfare: "Many of them also which used curious arts brought their

books together, and burned them before all men: and they counted the price of them, and found it fifty thousand pieces of silver." (NIV)

3. Strategic-Level Spiritual Warfare

Strategic-level spiritual warfare involves engaging the Enemy at the territorial level. It comes from recognizing Satan's strangle hold over communities, groups of people, geographic regions, and even whole continents. Strategic-level spiritual warfare is described in Acts 19:27. "There is danger not only that our trade will lose its good name, but also that the temple of the great goddess Artemis will be discredited, and the goddess herself, who is worshiped throughout the province of Asia and the world, will be robbed of her divine majesty." (NIV)

The clearest example of spiritual warfare at this level is described in Revelation 12. "And there was war in heaven Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon and his angels fought back." (Rev. 12:7) (NIV) Frank Peretti's books of fiction, *This Present Darkness* and *Piercing the Darkness* have focused much attention on strategic-level spiritual warfare.

Issues in Ground-Level Spiritual Warfare?

Jesus gave the command to his disciples to engage in spiritual warfare. In Matthew 10:7-8 Jesus said, "As you go, preach this message: 'The kingdom of heaven is near.' Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons. Freely you have received, freely give."

Ground-level spiritual warfare, as we mentioned above, is casting out demons. Ground-level spiritual warfare may involve both non-Christians (Ephesians 2:2) and Christians alike (Ephesians 6:11-12).

Many Christians disagree over whether Christians can be demon-

possessed. "Demon possession" may not be the best translation of the Greek participle *daimonizomenas*. "Demonization" is a better translation and suggests demonic influence over or involvement in a person but does not imply possession or ownership of an individual. For a fuller discussion of whether Christians can be demonized, see Dr. Ed Wheat, *Spiritual Warfare* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1992).

The term often used for the release of demonic control or influence in a person's life is usually called "deliverance." There seems to be a difference of opinion over the "standard operating procedure" for deliverance to take place. Different writers emphasize different aspects of deliverance. Without reducing their differences to "just semantics," it appears that the differences in these writers and practitioners is primarily one of emphasis rather than of substance.

These different approaches to deliverance from demonic influence may be described as differences in how the demonic influence is encountered and ministered to. There are four basic approaches or encounters.

1. Power Encounter

Power encounter is where the demon is encountered and addressed in a face-to-face confrontation. The person is delivered from demonic influence or control by casting it out. The usual term for this is exorcism. John Wimber states, "We must face the enemy; we must fight. Like Jesus himself, we have a job to do: *proclaim* the kingdom of God and *demonstrate* it through healing the sick and casting our demons (John 20:21)."⁵

2. Truth Encounter

Another approach can be described as "truth encounter." This is the approach taken by Dr. Neil Anderson. "I believe wholeheartedly

that your hope for growth, meaning and fulfillment as a Christian is based on understanding who you are, specifically your identity in Christ as a child of God."⁶ He says further about the importance of truth as the primary spiritual weapon against Satan in *Victory over the Darkness* (Regal Books),

If the strongholds of the mind are the result of conditioning, then you can be reconditioned by the renewing of your mind. Anything that has been learned can be unlearned.

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Certainly this is the major path of renewal in the New Testament. Through the preaching of God's Word, Bible study and personal discipleship you stop being conformed to this world and experience the transformation of the renewing of your mind (Rom. 12:), 7

3. Inner Healing Encounter

A third approach is an "inner healing" encounter. Dr. Charles Kraft of the School of World Mission at Fuller Seminary emphasizes this approach in ground-level spiritual warfare. He says,

Whether or not there are demons, emotional problems are primary. Demonization is always secondary, just as rats are secondary to garbage. If we get rid of the rats and keep the garbage, the person is in great danger still. But if we get rid of the garbage, what we have done automatically affects the rats. Whether there are demons or not, therefore, we go after the primary problem—the emotional and spiritual garbage... This approach recognizes that the real problem facing demonized people is never the

demons, but the deep-level emotional problems to which they are attached.⁸

4. Presence Encounter

A fourth approach is a "Presence encounter; the "Presence" is the Presence of God. This approach is described by Leanne Payne.⁹ She says, "Separation from the Presence is quite literally, what the Fall is. This fallen self, turned inward and narcissistic, dwells in misconceived feelings and attitudes, those that arise from listening to the self-in-separation and to the voices of a fallen world. That self is to be 'put off'—we are not to practice the presence of that self."¹⁰ Therefore, the key to freedom from oppression is to "practice the Presence of God."

To sum up then: all this is not a matter of developing the intuitive faculty, but of worshipping God and being filled with Jesus. To do this is to become a sacramental vessel that wafts continually the sweet aroma of the gifts and fruit of the Presence: those that have to do with Christian man's way of being knowing, willing, and doing.¹¹

These four approaches should not be seen as in opposition to each other. They are really different points on the continuum of engaging demonic forces. Jesus said about demonic activity:

When an evil spirit comes out of a man, it goes through arid places seeking rest and does not find it. Then it says, 'I will return to the house I left.' When it arrives, it finds the house unoccupied, swept clean and put in order. Then it goes and takes with it seven other spirits more wicked than itself and they go in and live there. And the final condition of that man is worse than the first. That is how it will be with this wicked generation. Matthew 12:23-25 (NIV)

These four approaches are ways of freeing the individual from unholy forces and powers that keep us from

being conformed to the image of Christ.

Exorcisms in the Early Church

Exorcisms in the church of the apostolic age played a significant role in evangelism. Lucian, who became a bishop of Rome, became a Christian after his family called on the local church's exorcist when he was gravely ill.¹²

Historian Ramsey MacMullen writes in *Christianizing the Roman Empire* the following litany of the role that exorcisms played in evangelism in the early centuries of the Christian church:

...we have Justin boasting "how many persons possessed by demons, everywhere in the world and in our own city, have been exorcised by many of our Christian men"; Irenaeus asserting that "some people incontestably and truly drive out demons, so that those very persons often become believers"; Tertullian issuing the challenge, "let a man be produced right here before your court who, it is clear, is possessed by a demon, and that spirit, commanded by any Christian at all, wilt as much confess himself a demon in truth as, by lying, he will elsewhere profess himself a 'god'; and Cyprian once again declaring that demons in idols, "when they are adjured by us in the name of the true God, yield forthwith and confess, and admit they are forced also to leave the bodies they have invaded, and you may see them, by our summons and by the workings of hidden majesty, consumed with flames."¹³

Dr. MacMullen concludes that what really separated early Christianity from other religions was the "antagonism of God toward all other spiritual powers."¹⁴ Conversions to Christianity in the early church often occurred instantaneously because of the "supernatural actions," that is, miracles, of Jesus and his followers.¹⁵

Numerous other examples of exorcisms in the early church could be given.¹⁶ One more will suffice. St.

Antony, a monk in Egypt in the fourth century had numerous encounters with demonic activity. Athanasius records the following "power encounter" in the life of Antony:

Having come down to the outer cells another time, and being asked to enter a boat and to pray with the monks, he alone sensed a horrible and extremely pungent odor. Now those in the boat said there were fish and dried meat in the boat, and that the odor came from these, but he asserted that the stench was from something else. And even while he was speaking, a certain demon-possessed young man who, entering earlier, had hidden himself in the boat, suddenly cried out. But being rebuked in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, the demon departed and the man was restored to health. Then everyone recognized that the stench was from the demon.¹⁷

Exorcisms Today

But what about exorcism today? In Argentina, where the church has grown "more in the last four years than in the previous one hundred,"¹⁸ Carlos Annacondia leads an average of 1,000 people a day to Christ.¹⁹ At his crusades, he prays for people and offers people the opportunity to accept Christ at four different times. First, he preaches and then invites those who want to be saved to do so. After a time of worship, he prays for those who are demonized. After he prays, "hundreds, sometimes up to one thousand fall to the ground under demonic oppression. Many are carried to a separate tent behind the platform called "The Intensive Care Unit"—where they may be prayed for and ministered to for hours until they are delivered. More music comes next, then he prays for the sick. Last, he prays for those who want to be filled with the Holy Spirit.²⁰

Occult-Level Warfare

Occult-level spiritual warfare deals with breaking the power of

Satan as exercised by individuals intentionally in the service of the Enemy. Edgardo Silvano tells that in 1985 he and some friends traced on a map a circle designating a 100-mile radius around the Harvest Evangelism leadership training center near Rosario, Argentina. They discovered there was no evangelical church in 109 of the towns within that circle. In a town called Arroyo Seco there was a warlock named Merigildo who had exercised tremendous power and influence for a long time. When he died, Merigildo transferred his power to a spring of water. Christians in the area gathered for prayer and engaged in spiritual warfare.

Edgardo Silvano went with five others to the headquarters of Merigildo in Arroyo Seco. They served public notice that he was defeated by the blood of Christ, pointed their car toward their headquarters building, and broke the evil power in the name of Jesus.

The results? In less than three years after Merigildo's power was broken, 82 of the 109 towns had an evangelical church, and more were rapidly being planted.²¹

At another time in Argentina, Edgardo Silvano intended to implement an evangelistic plan which he called, "La Plata Plan." He realized that many of the participants were very immature spiritually and that before any public prayer occurred a tremendous amount of inner healing needed to take place in the people. He arranged for teaching and ministry to those who would later minister. Peter Wagner reports that "the net result is that the faith of the believers is now high, they are praying for each other, they are breaking curses left over from the days when some were in witchcraft, they are casting out demons, and the vessels that God wants to use to take the city are being cleansed."²²

Strategic-Level Warfare

One of the most fascinating areas of study today in spiritual warfare is Spiritual Mapping. Spiritual mapping, according to George Otis Jr., "involves superimposing our understanding of forces and events in the spiritual domain onto places and circumstances in the material world. The result is often a set of borders, capitals and battlefronts that differ notably from those we have come to associate with the political status quo."²³

Spiritual mapping involves viewing a city, an area, a region, a country and so on, from the vantage point of history, spirituality, economics, sociology, anthropology and even geography in order to discern the spiritual forces at work in those areas. By knowing these spiritual forces, God's people can then engage in spiritual warfare so that spiritual strongholds can be broken and the gospel can be preached more effectively.

Redemptive Gift

According to John Dawson effective spiritual mapping begins with determining the "redemptive gift" of the area. "I believe our cities have the mark of God's sovereign purpose on them. Our cities contain what I call a redemptive gift."²⁴ He says further: "A city is a human institution, and like all institutions it develops a creaturehood or personality that is greater than the sum of its parts... I believe God has participated in the creation of our cities both in forming their personality and in stationing high ranking angels over each one."²⁵

Just as each person is given spiritual gifts for the building up of the body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:6-12), so each city has been given by God a "spiritual gift" or "redemptive gift" with which God intends to bless the inhabitants of the region. In order to

pray effectively for the redemption of the city, we must first determine what gift God intended to bless the city with and to bless that gift.

I had a friend who was a new seminary graduate. He served as an assistant for a year under an older pastor who continually criticized his sermons. Try as he might, the young pastor would get more and more nervous each time he preached. After a year of frustration he took a position in another church as an assistant

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pastor. The new senior pastor never criticized the young preacher; he only praised him for the effective elements of his preaching. The young preacher became an effective preacher under the affirmation of the second senior pastor. Affirmation of the young man's gifts was tremendously more effective in helping the young preacher improve than criticism of his weak points.

Redemptive purpose lies at the heart of spiritual warfare. To call forth in an individual or a city the redemptive gift and purpose is to free people and whole cities to become what God intended for them to be. People cannot be called to repentance without being called to their redemptive purpose.

Researching Our Cities

The next step is to conduct substantial research on the historical, spiritual, and physical background of the city. Questions to ask include:

* *The History of the City:* Who founded the city and for what purpose? Why was the city named and what is its significance? What is the history of the city? How has the city treated the poor and oppressed? How were immigrants and minorities treated?

* *The History of Religion in the City:* What were the religious views and practices of the people who first inhabited the city? What non-Christian religions have been in the city? Has there been occult activity, witches covens, satanist cults, and so on in the city? Has there been denominational strife or cooperation in the city?

* *Physical Research:* What are the significant landmarks in the city? architecture? works of art? Are there pockets or concentration of sinful activities such as abortion clinics, topless night clubs, violent neighborhoods? What is the highest geographical point of the city? What is located there?²⁶

* *Identification Repentance*

The third step is what is called "Identification Repentance." John Dawson says,

Repentance, reconciliation and healing could take place if Christians from the black and white community joined together in identification with the sins and griefs of our forebears. If the sin is acknowledged and relationship is restored, then the authority of the Lord can be exercised over the demonic forces that have been exploiting the past.²⁷

A Case Study

Bob Beckett is the pastor of the Dwelling Place, a non-denominational

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church in Hemet, California, in the desert between Los Angeles and San Diego. Hemet was popularized as having the first mobile home retirement community established by Art Linkletter.

Through Spiritual Mapping, Bob and members of his church were enabled to view the community through spiritual eyes. The church was then able to break the spiritual strongholds in the community that were binding the community from fulfilling the redemptive purpose that God had intended their community to enjoy.

His church had split four times in his first five years. The church is situated in a straight line between a certain "mountain" where an evil spirit was said to dwell according to native American folklore and "the earth's navel," a place where Transcendental Meditationists meditated until the water coming from a waterfall began to drain in a counterclockwise direction. (Water drains in a clockwise direction in the northern hemisphere.) By waging spiritual warfare, Bob and his elders were able to break the curse over his church and experience tremendous growth both spiritually and numerically. Bob reports that there have been no more church splits since that time.

Praise Marches and Prayerwalks

Praise Marches. Marches for Jesus was begun by Graham Kendrick and others in 1985 in the Soho district of London.²⁸ It is now an international event held in over 200 cities in Europe, the United States and Canada with over 600,000 participants.²⁹ The testimony of the Marches for Jesus is of unity across denominational and racial lines.

Prayerwalks. Whereas praise marches focus on cities, prayer walks focus on neighborhoods. Prayerwalking has been called "praying on site

with insight."³⁰ One testimony comes from Tom Pelton, director for March for Jesus, U.S.A., from Austin, Texas:

In 1989 we gathered the teenagers from several youth groups because we wanted to do a praise and prayer march. About eighty of us went to a high school on a Saturday morning and marched around the perimeter of the school singing praise songs. At the end of the walk we had them in groups of four or five and pray for the school. Later that very night a youth pastor from one of the churches had a knock on his door. There was a student who had started a satanist cult in that high school and had about forty kids following him. He said that his house had burnt down that evening, and he was tired of this life and wanted out of it. He gave his life to Christ and proceeded to lead many of the teenagers he had led into satanism unto Christianity.³¹

Prayerwalks are being conducted in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic; Savannah, New York, Memphis, and in Tennessee, to name a few. In Medellin, Colombia, the number of evangelical churches grew from 93 to 140 during the 4 years of prayerwalks in the city. The number of Christians grew from 4,434 to 10,350.³²

One more amazing fact has been discovered. "Every Home for Christ" sent personnel to different neighborhoods to enroll people in a Bible study course; those who finished the course were then invited to receive Christ. In the neighborhoods where there had been no prayerwalking, only 10 percent of those who accepted the first Bible study finished the course and accepted Christ. In the neighborhoods where prayerwalks had occurred, the number jumped to 55 percent!³³

Prayer Expeditions. Prayer Expeditions focus on regions, often on entire nations. One such prayer expedition took place in 1992 and was organized by Roger Forster, Gerald

Coates, Lynn Green and Graham Kendrick. It covered an 800-mile route from London to Berlin. Intercessors from 6 nations participated.³⁴

Prayer Journeys. Prayer journeys focus on particular strongholds of a region that prevent the gospel from being responded to.³⁵ Prayer journeys take the insight gained from the spiritual mapping of a region or country and focus prayer on those specific areas. One particular focus is on what has been identified as the "10/40 Window." The 10/40 Window is geographically situated between the tenth and fortieth latitudes north. It has been estimated that at least ninety-five percent of the world's unevangelized peoples live within these two latitudes.³⁶

The Weapons of Our Warfare

Finally, what are the weapons of our spiritual warfare? How do we engage in the battle? There are seven: The Name of Jesus, the blood of Jesus, agreement, fasting, praise, the word of God,³⁷ and prayer.

The Name of Jesus. Jesus said in John 14:14, "If you ask anything I my name, I will do it." To name the name of Jesus is to speak with authority.

The Blood of Jesus. "They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony; they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death" Rev12:11 (NIV).

Agreement. "Again, I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything you ask for, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven." (Mat 18:19). Also, on the Day of Pentecost, the disciples were together in one accord (Acts 2:1). Unity is essential for Christians against the assaults of Satan.

Fasting. In Matthew 17:14-21 a man brought his son to Jesus because the disciples had been

unable to cast the demons out of him. Jesus said that they had been unable to cast the demon out because "this kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting."

Praise. Psalm 22:3 says, "But thou art holy, O thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel." Where praise is, there is no room for the Enemy.

The Word of God. Another spiritual weapon is the Word of God: Jesus used the word of God to combat Satan during the temptation in the wilderness (Matt. 4:1-11. "For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart." Heb. 4:12(NIV). Also in Ephesians 6:17-18, the Christian warrior is urged to "take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God." Eph 6:17.

Prayer. The last, and certainly not the least, weapon of our spiritual warfare is prayer: "And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints." (Eph 6:18)

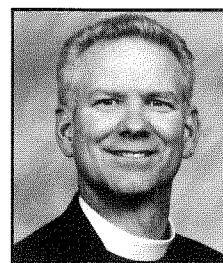
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