

THE EPISTLE

Saint James' Episcopal Church
Livingston, Alabama

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December 2013

This Month's Cover

This month's covert is *Saint John the Evangelist*, an unpainted wood carving by Tilman Riemanschneider. It is about 22" high, and was carved sometime around 1505-1510 for the *Marienkappelle* (Mary Chapel) in Würzburg. It is displayed in the *Bayerisches Nationalmuseum* in Munich.

Riemanschneider was born in Heiligenstadt in Thuringia (now Germany) sometime between 1459 and 1462. When he was about five years old his father was involved in a political revolt. He lost all his possessions, and fled to Osterode am Harz in lower Saxony. There he became Master of the Mint, which was a very good position at the time. The boy spent his childhood there, and at the age of 18 he went to Würzburg, where his uncle was the financial advisor to the local bishop. He did not stay long, however, but traveled through Swabia and the upper Rhineland studying woodcarving. In those days the guild of sculptors required that a student travel from studio to studio, so we know little of Riemanschneider's life during that period. We do know that he studied with Martin Schongauer, whose copper sculptures had a strong influence on Riemanschneider's work. In 1483 he returned to Würzburg and settled down there. He joined the Saint Luke's Guild of painters, sculptors and glassmakers as a painter's assistant. In 1485 he married Anna Schmidt, a goldsmith's widow with three sons. This marriage not only brought him property, but it qualified him to become a master craftsman and

set up his own shop. During the next ten years he continued to expand his shop and his business. After Anna's death in 1495 he married three more wives in succession. He received many important commissions from Würzburg and neighboring cities. By 1500 he had developed a widespread reputation, and was a wealthy and important citizen of Würzburg. He owned several houses and vineyards. In 1504 he became a city councilman, and held that office for the next twenty years. This not only brought him great social status, but through it he obtained many very profitable commissions. In 1520 he was elected *Bürgermeister* (Mayor) of Würzburg, an office he held for four years.

Disaster befell Riemanschneider in 1524. Würzburg sided with the peasant army during the German Peasants' War. In 1525 the peasant army outside Würzburg was destroyed, and the city surrendered. The mayor and city council were imprisoned and tortured in the Marienberg citadel. Both of his hands were crushed, ending his career. He was freed after two months, but most of his property had been confiscated, and he could no longer work. He spent the rest of his life in retirement with his fourth wife. His son Jörg by his second wife continued his workshop and supported him until his death in 1531.

Richard R. Losch+

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A Word from the Editor

This month begins the season of Advent—it's one of the few years when Advent doesn't begin on the last Sunday of November—and we want to remind you that it is not the beginning of Christmas or of the "Holiday Season." Advent is not the season to celebrate the birth of Christ, nor is it the season set aside to prepare the Christmas festivities, although it is indeed a season of preparation. It is the time to prepare our souls for the Second Coming of Christ, when we will stand before him to account for ourselves. Whether this is at the end of all things or at the end of our lives, it will come for each of us, and we had better be prepared. Advent serves as a reminder that whatever else we may procrastinate, we cannot afford to risk putting off our preparation for the end. It also reminds us of what the world would be like without Christ.

The lessons during Advent focus on the promises of God and on the Old Testament prophecies that fill us with hope. They make us realize how empty the world was as it hoped and dreamed of the Messiah, but had not yet known him. The mystic Saint Simeon expressed this hope magnificently when he first laid eyes on the infant Jesus. He was an old man who had lived in the Temple for years, incessantly praying for the coming of the promised Messiah. When Mary and Joseph brought Jesus to be presented in the Temple, Simeon took him into his arms and said, "Lord, as you have promised, you may now dismiss your servant in peace. For my

eyes have seen your salvation." When he saw the promise fulfilled, he was ready to die.

The purpose of Advent is not to cause us to focus on our death. People in the Middle Ages focused more on their death than on life, and it warped their worldview and inhibited their functioning in this life. Advent, rather, focuses on being always prepared not only for death, but also for whatever may happen in this life. Much of what comes our way is unexpected, and if we are prepared for the unexpected by being disciplined and well-armed for whatever challenge may face us, we will prosper spiritually as well as materially. We may live "by the seat of our pants" when all goes well, but not when an unexpected dire challenge suddenly looms before we had a chance to prepare for it. In the parable of the wise and foolish virgins, the foolish ones simply assumed that the bridegroom would come, as normal, at dawn. When he arrived in the night they were literally left out in the dark (Matt. 25:1-13).

How do we prepare? The most important way is through prayer. If we do not talk to God, when we face him he may well say, "I do not know you." We also prepare through regular worship. Worshiping in church is not an option if there is nothing better to do, it is an obligation—"Remember the Sabbath Day, that you keep it holy."

"Watch, therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of Man cometh."

Father Rick Losch

ECW News

At its September meeting, the ECW decided how to allocate the money brought in by the Superbowl Po' Boy sales, the candy sales at the Sucarnochee Folklife Festival, and the Antique Alley yard sale. Your hard work and the effective plans of the ECW last spring raised \$3500. The money was divided among the Livingston Junior High supplies/clothes program, the Sumter Academy Grandparents Club, Harriet's House, Sheila Hull's art program, the Black Belt contribution, the Welcome Wagon outreach, the nursing home birthday party, funding for individual requests, and a Joan Oswalt memorial gift. You can get an idea of how actively our organization impacts the community by looking at the number of projects the ECW supports.

The Welcome Wagon committee delivered four baskets to new residents this fall and plans to deliver a fifth one.

In October, the ECW helped host the Fall Blackbelt Convocation at Trinity Church in Demopolis. Ethel Scott and her committee did an excellent job providing and serving the light breakfast before the October 10th meeting. Linda Muñoz donated a stunning turquoise fish-shaped hors d'oeuvres platter, and Charlie Muñoz donated a lovely silver cross for the silent auction at the meeting. Bea Strom, head of the Blackbelt Convocation, sent a thank you note especially commending Heather Hall and Rosalie Dew for their help at the October 9th banquet.

At the October meeting, Susanna Smith-Naisbett presented a program on Harriet's House and displayed jewelry she designs and sells to raise money for the home for battered women. Women from other churches were invited to the meeting, which was well attended and successful.

The ECW hosted a book signing on Sunday, October 27th, for Father Losch's new book, *All of the Places in the Bible*. The ECW needs items for its Welcome Wagon baskets: Items such as inexpensive kitchen or home decor items, hardware items, flower pots, coffee cups, picture-hanging items, and anything else someone moving into a new home might need. At the December 11th ECW meeting, each member is asked to bring an item for the baskets.

Join us as we carry out our fellowship, outreach, and fundraising activities. As always, we appreciate your support.

Sharon Underwood

The Cost of Healthcare

According to Judicial Watch, Maryland Health Connection, the state-run health insurance marketplace, paid the Baltimore Ravens \$130,000 to promote ObamaCare on radio, TV, Facebook and Twitter. In fact, the ones who actually paid for it were the taxpayers of Maryland.

Breaking news—the Washington Redskins are dropping the word “Washington” from their name. It seems that a large number of people find it offensive.

Be Wordly Wise

Some "Quickies"

Cobweb: It is generally said that the word cobweb refers to the intricate pattern of a spider's web, which looks like the pattern on a corn cob. Not so. It comes from the Middle English *cupweb*, which in turn comes from the Old English *cuppeweb*. This is the combination of the Old English *cuppe*, "spider," and *web*, "woven fabric," from *weben*, "to weave." A cobweb is a "spider-weaving."

Opportunity: An opportunity is a set of favorable circumstances. It comes from the Old French *opportunit *, from the Latin *opportunitas*. That derives from the prefix *ob-*, "towards," and *portus*, "harbor," meaning a favorable wind that blows a ship into a safe harbor. In Latin, *opportunitas* can also mean "convenience."

Boy: Boys will be boys, and apparently it has been so since the beginning of language. The word "boy" derives from the early Frisian *boi*, "young man," which derived from the Middle High German *Buobo*, which meant both "boy" and "scoundrel."¹ That in turn is akin to the Old Norse *bofi*, "boy" or "rogue," and the Dutch *boef*, "boy" or "knave."

Gantlet: The expression "run the gantlet" (not "gauntlet," a glove) refers to a military punishment in which the offender runs between two lines of soldiers who, as he runs by, beat him

with truncheons. It comes from the 16th century English "gantlope," which in turn derives from the Swedish *gatlopp*, which is literally a running (*lopp*) down a lane (*gata*).

Richard R. Losch+

The Cost of Education

According to the College Board, the total cost of an education as an in-state student at a public state college has increased by an average of 5.8% every year for the last 30 years. If that rate of inflation continues for the next 15 years, a first-grader today can expect to pay \$158,868 for a four-year education at an in-state public college. It will approach \$500,000 at the top private universities. It has been said that if you think education is expensive, try ignorance. This will become truer than ever if we end up with a small elite plutocracy ruling over a vast semiliterate proletariat.

Men's Breakfast

The Methodist Church has declined to host the Men's Breakfast, so for the next few meetings we will rotate between Hardee's on Washington Street, and the Episcopal and Presbyterian churches. This month we will meet at Hardee's on Sunday, December 1 at 7:45 a.m. In January we will meet at Saint James', and in February at the Presbyterian Church. If any other church would like to join in the rotation, they would be more than welcome. Men of all denominations are invited and encouraged to attend.

Richard R. Losch+

¹ In modern German its derivative *Bube* generally means "boy," but the jack (knave) in playing cards is also called *Bube*. From this derives the English "boob," a foolish, stupid person.

Evening Prayer and Parish Supper

December's Evening Prayer and Parish Supper will be on Wednesday, December 18th, at 6:00 p.m. and will serve as our Parish Christmas Party. You are asked to bring your favorite hors d'oeuvre. Beverages will be provided. For more details, please speak with Hiram Patrenos.

Hiram Patrenos

Thank you Deep South Landscaping

We are grateful to Jason Gordy and his workers of Deep South Landscaping for their gift of giving and planting the pansies in the prayer garden. We appreciate their hard work and generosity!

Hiram Patrenos

Annual Parish Meeting

Our Annual Parish Meeting will be held on Sunday, December 8th immediately following the 11:00 a.m. service. Reports of various parish organizations will be made and two new Vestry members will be elected to replace Hiram Patrenos and Madelyn Mack, whose terms expire December 31st. Mr. Patrenos and Ms. Mack will not be eligible for re-election to the Vestry for one year.

To be eligible for nomination and service on the Vestry, one must:

1. be an active confirmed communicant in good standing at St. James' (communicants' names are printed in bold type in the parish directory);

2. be frequent and regular in worship attendance;
3. support the work of St. James' by making and fulfilling an annual pledge to the operating budget;
4. be willing and able to attend Vestry meetings and perform the work expected of a Vestry member.

Vestry meetings are normally scheduled on a bi-monthly basis on a weekday at 5:15 p.m. Members' schedules and obligations are taken into consideration as much as possible when meetings are scheduled.

Other members of the Vestry are Joe Moore and Rosalie Dew, whose terms expire on December 31, 2014, and Mary Helen Jones and Barry Green-Burns whose terms expire on December 31, 2015.

Hiram Patrenos

Wilmer Hall Christmas

St. James' will be making a special gift to Wilmer Hall for its Christmas needs this year. Last year because of your generous contributions, we were able to contribute \$750.00 and we hope to be able to make an even more generous gift this year. Envelopes are available on the table at the back of the church. Contributions should be made payable to St. James' and designated for "Wilmer Hall Christmas." Envelopes may be placed in the alms basins or given to Hiram Patrenos. So that we may forward our contribution to Wilmer Hall in time for use this Christmas, the last day for making a contribution is Sunday, December 8th.

Hiram Patrenos

Christmas Flowers

Each year St. James' Church offers the opportunity to remember loved ones through donations to the Altar Guild, which provides poinsettias and other decorations in the church for Christmas. If you wish to make a donation for this—In Memory of, In Honor of, or In Thanksgiving for—envelopes with forms are available at the back of the Church or you may print this information clearly and mail it along with your contribution to Carolyn Patrenos, President, St. James' Altar Guild, P.O. Box 399, Livingston, AL 35470. Checks should be made payable to St. James' Altar Guild. Because of the increased costs for these flowers and decorations, we ask for a donation of \$40.00 for memorials. The publication deadline for inclusion in the Christmas bulletin is Sunday, December 22nd. Your donation is tax deductible.

Hiram Patrenos

Special Services

On December 22nd, the Fourth Sunday of Advent, at 11:00 a.m., we will have as our service the "Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols" as developed and celebrated at King's College, Cambridge annually since 1918. This service was adapted from an order drawn up by E.W. Benson, who was later Archbishop of Canterbury.

Immediately following the Lessons and Carols service, the Altar Guild and volunteers will decorate the church for Christmas. A light lunch will be provided for those assisting

with the work. Volunteers should be sure to bring their hand clippers and gloves, and wear casual clothes.

Our celebration of Christmas will begin on Christmas Eve with our traditional "Midnight Mass" at 11:00 p.m. Fr. Hatchett will officiate. Our Nursery will be open for this service.

Hiram Patrenos

Sunday School

Sunday School for children and adults will meet each Sunday through December 15th but will not meet on December 22nd or December 29th. Sunday School will resume on Sunday, January 5th.

Hiram Patrenos

Every Member Canvass

We have begun our Every Member Canvass. Pledge cards have been mailed to all members and are available on the table at the rear of the Church. Please prayerfully consider your commitment to St. James'. Cards may be placed in the alms basins or mailed to T. Raiford Noland, Treasurer, St. James' Church, P. O. Box 446, Livingston, AL 35470. Please return your card no later than December 8th.

Hiram Patrenos

Fifth Sunday Services

St. James' will be the host for the fifth Sunday Community Service on December 29th. Please plan to participate and help us to continue this unique Livingston tradition.

Hiram Patrenos

The Pharisees

The common image of the Pharisees is that they were arrogant, self-absorbed hypocrites. In fact, quite the contrary is true. *Halakhah* is the very detailed Jewish law regarding purity and cleanliness, and the Pharisees were strict observers of it. The Jews were among the cleanest people in the ancient world, behind only the Egyptians and Romans, who bathed at least daily and when possible even more often. The only reason the Jews did not bathe as often was that water was scarce in most of their land.

Unfortunately, it was time-consuming and costly to obey much of *halakhah*. For example, according to the literal interpretation of the law, if the outside of a vessel became impure then the vessel and all its contents must be destroyed. If that were a pot containing a poor family's sole grain or oil supply, this could be a disaster for the family. Impurity could come about in a great number of ways. For example, if a woman touched the vessel during her menstrual period or within the designated period after childbirth, then the vessel was impure. It would also be tainted if it were touched by anyone who had touched a dead body, or even by anyone who had touched such a person. The result was that it was difficult for anyone but the wealthy to obey the law.

The Pharisees were diligent students of the law and its huge body of interpretations, and they would pore over it, often looking for loopholes. This was not hypocrisy, however. What they were seeking were legal

interpretations that would enable the poor to obey it. They found, for example, several scholarly interpretations that said that if the outside of a vessel were impure but the inside and contents had not been tainted, there were ways to remove the contents to a pure vessel and then purify rather than destroy the tainted one. A clay pot is cheap by modern standards, but to a poor family in ancient times it could be a costly possession whose destruction could be a calamity. Because of the Pharisees' interpretations, the poor were enabled to obey *halakhah*.

The Pharisees' greatest weakness was that they were so immersed in the interpretation of and obedience to the law, that they had lost sight of the spirit in which the law was given. They had forgotten that "the law was made for man, not man for the law." They were obsessively obedient to the law, and this led them to take pride in their "righteousness." In the parable of the Pharisee and the publican, the Pharisee said, "Thank you, God, that I am not as other men." He was truly grateful that he was a good man, but his pride in being good undid any merit for his goodness. This is why Jesus railed against them so much—not because they were bad men, but because they were good men who had missed the point. They undid their goodness through their pride in it. The parable teaches us that a bad man who repents of his sins is justified in the eyes of God more than a good man who is prideful about his goodness.

Richard R. Losch+

mtDNA in Ethnic Research

Modern technology has enabled scholars to make amazing discoveries in all areas of historical and biblical research, and now a recent study of mitochondrial DNA (mtDNA) and the human genome has given a clue to the solution of an ancient dispute about the origin of European Jews.

Modern Jews are divided into two main groups, the Ashkenazi of Europe and western Asia, and the Sephardim of the Iberian Peninsula, southern France and northern Africa. The Ashkenazi make up by far the largest majority of the world's Jewish population. In the 8th century B.C. various calamities had begun the dispersion of Jews from Israel into all parts of the world. This is called the Diaspora (the dispersion). In the early second century A.D. the Romans expelled all Jews from Palestine. The general theory is that there were two waves of emigrants. One went across the Mediterranean into Iberia (the Sephardim), and the other, by far the larger group, went north and west, eventually concentrating in Russia and later in the German states.¹ They are known as the Ashkenazi. The theory goes on to say that most of them, because they did not marry outside their faith, re-

mained racially distinct from other Europeans as a more-or-less purely Semitic people.

A new Mitochondrial DNA study at the University of Huddersfield (UK) has cast serious doubt on that theory. mtDNA is inherited from the female and never the male, thus enabling scientists to trace racial ancestry very accurately.² The study shows that the female line of Ashkenazi ancestry closely resembles that of Southern and Western Europe rather than of the ancient Middle East, as has been thought for centuries. A recent article in *Nature Communications* revealed the results of the study. The leader of the study, Dr. Martin B. Richards, wrote in the article,

[The mtDNA] variation in the Ashkenazim is highly distinctive, with four major and numerous minor founders ... we show that all four major founders, [about] 40% of Ashkenazi mtDNA variation, have ancestry in prehistoric Europe, rather than the Near East or Caucasus. Furthermore, most of the remaining minor founders share a similar deep European ancestry. Thus the great majority of Ashkenazi maternal lineages were not brought from the Levant, as commonly supposed, nor recruited in the Cau-

¹ Many German Jews look down on Russian Jews. They maintain that the ancestors of the German Jews had the spine to fight back and escape the brutal anti-Semitism in Russia, while the ancestors of the Russian Jews simply hunkered down and took it. Anti-Semitism always existed in the German states, but until the Nazi regime it was never as hateful and barbarous as it was in Russia.

² It is interesting to note that under ancient Judaic law, one's "Jewishness" comes from the mother, not the father. The child of a Jewish mother and Gentile father is unquestionably Jewish, while that of a Gentile mother and Jewish father is not. If the Gentile partner converts, however, the Jewishness of the offspring is not questioned. This ancient law long preceded any knowledge of mtDNA.

casus, as sometimes suggested, but assimilated within Europe. These results point to a significant role for the conversion of women in the formation of Ashkenazi communities, and provide the foundation for a detailed reconstruction of Ashkenazi genealogical history.

A study of the DNA of male Ashkenazim reveals a mainly Middle Eastern origin. This indicates that population migration and conversion to Judaism may have been a primary factor in the growth of the Ashkenazi population. At the time Rome expelled the Jews from Palestine there was already a very large Jewish population spread throughout the Roman Empire, including 30,000-50,000 in Rome alone. Many of these may have descended from original converts to Judaism. While most Gentiles considered Judaism to be a bit strange, what with having only one God and yet so many laws, Jews were for the most part respected in most parts of the empire. There were many “God-fearers,” who were Gentiles who accepted the Jewish moral law but not the ceremonial law.¹ Many God-fearers eventually converted completely and became circumcised Jews.

Throughout history the Jews were concerned about Jewish men marrying Gentile women and then letting their faith be corrupted by their wives’ paganism. The Books of Ezra and Nehemiah deal strongly with this, and most Bible readers are aware of how the pagan Jezebel corrupted and even-

tually destroyed Ahab’s dynasty. In the case of the Jewish refugees to Europe, however, the opposite seems to have happened—while many men married Gentile women, these women converted to Judaism and became the ancestors of a significant portion of European Jewry. This explains why although the Semitic peoples are generally swarthy, many European Jews look distinctly Aryan. This mtDNA research also seriously undermines the twisted racial philosophy of George Bernard Shaw and the Fabians, Margaret Sanger, the Nazi eugenicists, and their bigoted successors.

Richard R. Losch+

Who Did Cain Marry?

This question has challenged biblical scholars for thousands of years, and over those years a fascinating variety of answers has arisen. Genesis tells us that when Cain killed Abel, he was cast out to wander the earth. He went to the land of Nod and married (4:1-17). But whom did he marry? Supposedly when he killed his brother he reduced the world population from four to three. Genesis tells us that Adam and Eve had daughters (5:4). The main ancient explanation, accepted both by the ancient rabbis and by early Christians, was that Cain wandered the earth alone for years, and eventually married his own sister.² The name Nod means “wandering,” and probably was never intended to signify a

¹ It is likely that Saint Luke was a God-fearer before he became a Christian.

² An ancient legend says that he married the demoness Lilith, but this never gained much credence by either Jews or Christians.

specific geographic location.

Another ancient rabbinic legend says that Cain had a twin sister, Abel was a triplet with two sisters, and Cain married Abel's sister immediately upon being expelled. The legend goes on to say that Cain killed Abel over an argument about the sister.

Modern sociological and anthropological research provides another possible answer to the conundrum. In most ancient societies, but particularly in the Middle East (even today), tribal and clan structure is the basis of all societal functions. Anyone not in one's own clan was considered suspect, and anyone not of one's tribe was considered subhuman.¹ Even when different peoples were allies they rarely trusted each other.² Often peoples were aware that there were other tribes "out there somewhere," but as long as there was no contact it didn't really matter. As Mary Joan Winn Leith of Stonehill College says, "'We' are who 'we' are because 'we' don't do what 'they' do." For example, the Israelites referred to the Philistines as "the uncircumcised." In Maccabean and New Testament times, all who were not a Jew were

called Greeks, regardless of their cultural or ethnic ancestry. It is basic to human nature to feel that anyone who does not think and do as we do is inherently inferior. The ancient Egyptian word for Egyptian meant "human," and the names of a majority of American Indian tribes mean the same thing. If "we" are human, then "they" are not.³

So it was with Cain's wife. The ancient story-teller knew that there were other people "out there," but they did not matter, because they were "they," not "we." The ultimate degradation for Cain, then, was that he married a subhuman—a foreigner with strange and unacceptable customs—and that his children would therefore not be "real" people. While this kind of thinking seems very primitive to us, we must remember that it was the norm throughout the world 3000 years ago, particularly in the Middle East.

Cain's descendants were Enoch, Irad, Mehujael, Methushael and Lamech. The descendants of Seth (Adam's third son) were Enosh, Kenan, Mahalalel, Jared, Enoch, Methuselah and Lamech (the father of Noah) (Gen. 4:17-5:32). The similarity of these names is a strong indication that we have a conflation of two ancient oral traditions into a single written story. Notwithstanding, the allegory of the story, that of the weakness and fall of man, remains powerful.

Richard R. Losch+

¹ This is still the case in much of the Middle East, and especially in Pakistan and Afghanistan. The failure of Western culture to understand this is one of the main reasons for the disasters that have prevailed there for decades.

² This was also true of the tribes of Israel. The inter-tribal activities of the Levites (the hereditary priesthood) helped bind them together somewhat, but they were always bickering. Saul's unification of the northern tribes and David's unification of all twelve were truly amazing feats of political acumen.

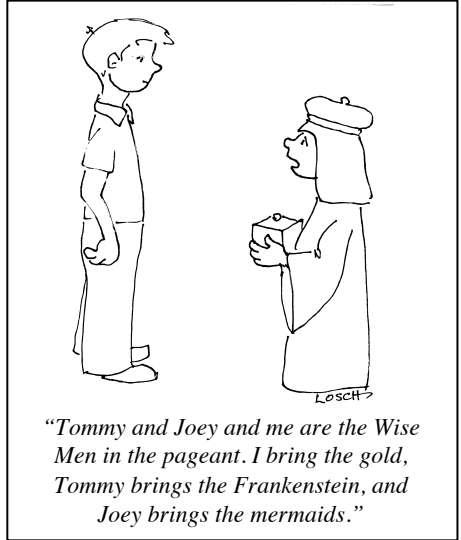
³ Hitler played this to the hilt in his anti-Semitic propaganda, claiming that Jews, because they were different, were subhuman.

JAMIE

by Richard R. Losch

Don't Forget
 INTERFAITH
 MEN'S
 BREAKFAST
 DECEMBER 1
 7:45 A.M.
 Mark your Calendar

HARDEE'S ON
 HIGHWAY 11 NORTH



"Tommy and Joey and me are the Wise Men in the pageant. I bring the gold, Tommy brings the Frankenstein, and Joey brings the mermaids."



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