

a sermon from REVELATION 3:14-19:
O CHURCH, REPENT FROM APOSTASY!

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I. A PRAYER

Let us pray: “May You be adored, O merciful GOD of ours, O All-powerful Lord and Creator. In deepest humility, we give You praise, Plunging ourselves into the ocean of Your Godhead...¹ You, O merciful GOD, did not let humanity perish [in its sins, but gave us...] the promise of a Redeemer...”²

“Come, Lamb of GOD, take away our vile sins, Come, illumine our darkness like a ray of light.³ Humanity calls out to You unceasingly, O Lord of lords, Calls out to Your unfathomable mercy, to Your compassion. O great YAHWEY, grant that we may make atonement, Remember Your goodness, and forgive us our sins.”⁴ In The Name of GOD The Father, The Son and The Holy Ghost. AMEN.

II. A PROPOSITION

For whom The Father in Heaven loves, those He rebukes and chastises, that they may repent in radical fidelity to CHRIST and a live in total holiness before Him!

III. A SCRIPTURE - REVELATION 3:14-19 - A SLEEPING APOSTATE CHURCH

14 And unto the angel of the Church of the Laodiceans write; These things saith The Amen, the faithful and true Witness, the beginning of the creation of GOD;
15 I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot.
16 So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of My mouth.
17 Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked:
18 I counsel thee to buy of Me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see.
19 As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent.⁵

¹ 1, Divine Mercy Diary, Saint Faustina, entry 1744, p 616, paragraph 1.

² 1, Ibid., p 617, paragraph 2.

³ 1, Ibid., p 617, paragraph 5.

⁴ 1, Ibid., p 617, paragraph 6.

⁵ 2, KJV, REVELATION 3:14-19.

IV. INTRODUCTION – THE LUKEWARM FAITH OF AN APOSTATE CHURCH

We live in a time and place of great apostasy within The Church! Let us recall the judgements of The Spirit of GOD upon the 7 Churches in The Book of REVELATION. Our attention today is directed particularly to The ancient Church at Laodicea in her day of apostasy, as recorded for us by Saint John in REVELATION 3:14-19. Recall that That Church was neither hot nor cold in their Christian faith before GOD, but simply "lukewarm!"

They wanted GOD on their own terms, and that only as long as it didn't interfere with their love for things of the world first! "Ach!" they tempered their faith with, "Let's not get too overboard in this Church stuff! Let's not get too carried away with this religious thing! Too much of a good thing about CHRIST is bad for business! We don't want to offend anyone with this 'repent from sin' mantra – that's just so 'unloving' and 'judgemental.' And Heaven forbid the offended should take their tithes and offerings elsewhere! How would we pay for all our great expansion plans and plush programs?"

Indeed, perhaps these compromised halfhearted Christians had in mind that the local public school board elections were coming up and they didn't want to loose their seats of honor before men! Or maybe they owned stock in the local idol manufacturing industry! Or was it for instance that they just didn't really love GOD first, with all their heart, mind and soul – nor therefore their neighbour as themselves – but wished to keep to their comfortable heathen ways and have The Lord in their back pockets as an insurance policy – just in case this Heaven or hell thing turned out to be true after all!

V. THE REBUKE IS ISSUED BY THE ALMIGHTY

REVELATION 3:14: "And unto the angel of the Church of the Laodiceans write; These things saith The Amen, the faithful and true Witness, the beginning of the creation of GOD;"⁶

PSALM 24 proclaims and confesses "GOD as Sovereign over all the earth [and] must not be approached lightly." This PSALM contains questions and answers that were likely chanted between the Priests and Levites of Old Testament Israel in public and

⁶ 2, KJV, REVELATION 3:14.

communal worship of The Lord.⁷ GOD is The King of The Universe, and His glory is so great that the doorposts and lintels of The Jewish Temple in Jerusalem must figuratively lift themselves up to accommodate the entrance of The Presence of The Creator therein! As Wycliffe says here, “The summons to the gatekeepers symbolizes the truth that The Presence of GOD is... evident.”⁸ And when The Maker of all things sends His theophantic Shekinah Glory into the place of worship of His people, are we not to give Him homage and praise, whether The Church of The Old Testament or The New, whether on earth or in Heaven?

This is The same omnipotent Divine One Who Saint John declares for us here in REVELATION 3:14. He is from before the beginning of creation, calling The lukewarm Church at Laodicea as The faithful and true Divine Witness, The One Who declares His own glory and rebukes their halfhearted faith and infidelity to Him. So David writes of the coming of The everlasting King of Glory in PSALM 24:7-10 and declares, “Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors; and The King of glory shall come in. Who is this King of glory? The LORD strong and mighty, The LORD mighty in battle. Lift up your heads, O ye gates; even lift them up, ye everlasting doors; and The King of glory shall come in. Who is This King of glory? The LORD of Hosts, He is The King of Glory!”⁹

VI. WE CAN NOT HIDE OUR DARKENED HEARTS FROM THE LORD

REVELATION 3:15: “I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot.”¹⁰

The indictment of GOD against This Church is that she was neither hot or cold in her devotion to CHRIST. And though she thought herself righteous and could not see her own decrepit state of impurity, even so The Lord sees these and all things. Of this terrible spiritual sickness Wycliffe comments, “The lukewarm [Christian] person does not become greatly disturbed at hearing heretical teaching, and is not vigorous in the defense of The Truth.” Indeed, “this spirit of indifference is the most tragic thing that can

⁷ 3, Wycliffe Bible Commentary, PSALM 24:3-6, p 504.

⁸ 3, Wycliffe Bible Commentary, PSALM 24:7-10, p 504.

⁹ 2, KJV, PSALM 24:7-10.

happen to a Church!”¹¹ Such was the spiritual disease of This particular Church, which very much paints the pathological picture of many Churches today in our own land!

A lukewarm faith in the hearts and lives of Christians is but one terrible step away from apostasy from The Truth of GOD. And it is but two steps from the precipice of denying JESUS as The CHRIST and setting up false gods upon the altar table of the congregation, from which The Holy Communion is administered to GOD’s people! So the writer of PROVERBS 30:8-9 prays, O LORD, “Remove far from me vanity and lies: give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me: Lest I be full, and deny Thee, and say, Who is The LORD? or lest I be poor, and steal, and take The Name of my GOD in vain!”¹²

This was a prayer that The ancient Church at Laodicea - and all lukewarm and falling away Churches since then and to come until the return of our Lord – has failed to pray! And we see this in our own time and place, where much of The Body of CHRIST in The West has been corrupted and made itself comfortable in the wealth and comfort of the world, rather than clinging faithfully to The Saviour, Who bought out The Church from darkness and sin with His own precious Body and Blood given up for us!

And it is but a small further step to denying Who CHRIST is in His Person as fully GOD and fully Man but without sin – which has been revealed by The HOLY SPIRIT within The Holy Scriptures and kept by The historically faithful Church. From there but a few steps more over the edge of apostasy brings us to denying CHRIST’s Work as The only Redeemer and Saviour of mankind. This was the terrible path upon which the Laodicean Christians were embarked on, and which required the direct intervention of The Almighty, for they could not perceive their earthly and eternal dangers with their own eyes unaided by GOD’s Grace!

¹⁰ 2, KJV, REVELATION 3:15.

¹¹ 3, Wycliffe Bible Commentary, REVELATION 3:14-22, p 1504.

¹² 2, KJV, PROVERBS 30:8-9.

VII. THE TERRIBLE FATE OF THE UNREPENTANT LUKEWARM CHURCH

REVELATION 3:16: “So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of My mouth.”¹³

Let us of The Church take a lesson from sleeping and apostate Israel in I KINGS 18. The people, the religious leaders and the king himself – Ahab – had fallen into the simultaneous superficial lukewarm worship of JEHOVAH, while also worshipping the false gods of the surrounding heathens, most notably Baal. It was in fact King Ahab who had caused the widespread apostasy of the lukewarm Israelites into Baal worship through his marriage to the pagan Baal-worshipping Jezebel, who then became queen over Israel!¹⁴ Baal worship was particularly insidious, in that the idols themselves were super heated in flames and living human infants were then placed into the outstretched arms of the idol as human sacrifices!¹⁵

So we read of the confrontation between apostate King Ahab and Elijah, the lone faithful prophet of GOD, in I KINGS 18:17-18 with great expectation, anticipating the rebuke and chastisement of The Almighty upon His people: “And it came to pass, when Ahab saw Elijah, that Ahab said unto him, Art thou he that troubleth Israel? And he answered, I have not troubled Israel; but thou, and thy father's house, in that ye have forsaken The Commandments of The LORD, and thou hast followed Baalim!”¹⁶

So we see that lukewarm faith and worship of The Almighty sets the stage for the apostate setting up of false idols in our lives and in The Church which, if left unchecked, always leads to a complete falling away from The LORD and all its terrible

¹³ 2, KJV, REVELATION 3:16.

¹⁴ 2, KJV, I KINGS 16:30-33, “And Ahab the son of Omri did evil in the sight of The LORD above all that were before him. And it came to pass... that he took to wife Jezebel the daughter of Ethbaal king of the Zidonians, and went and served Baal, and worshipped him. And he reared up an altar for Baal in the house of Baal, which he had built in Samaria. And Ahab made a grove; and Ahab did more to provoke The LORD GOD of Israel to anger than all the kings of Israel that were before him.”

¹⁵ 2, KJV, JEREMIAH 32:34-35, “But they set their abominations in The House, which is called by My Name, to defile it. And they built the high places of Baal, which are in the valley of the son of Hinnom, to cause their sons and their daughters to pass through the fire unto Molech; which I commanded them not, neither came it into My mind, that they should do this abomination, to cause Judah to sin.”

¹⁶ 2, KJV, I KINGS 18:17-18.

consequences! So today faithful Christians and faithful branches of The Church on earth often face the multitudes of corrupt unclergy, pseudoChristians and nonChurches in the same spiritual warfare. And when we refuse to bow down to their false idols, to defile The blessed Cross and cast away The Commandments of The LORD, what words do we hear? “It is you conservative Christians who are the troublers of The Church and of mankind!”

But as Wycliffe observes here, “Elijah met Ahab’s insinuating remarks forthrightly by casting the challenge back into his face. He reminded the king that it was not he, Elijah, who had been the troubler” of GOD’s people, but the Baal-loving King Ahab himself! ¹⁷ Our reply to the King Ahabs of our own time, like the prophet Elijah to the corrupt King Ahab, can only be this: “It is not we who have troubled The Church and mankind, but you compromised and apostate Churches who have caused many lukewarm and vulnerable Christians to turn from The Commandments of our Lord JESUS CHRIST and brought them to follow the false gods of this age which you have set up within The Houses of GOD!”

Just as the faithful prophet Elijah confronted those false rulers and false priests of idolatry and apostasy in ancient Israel, are not we who are faithful to GOD in The Church in this day and age called to speak up in the same way? And as those of the ancient Israelites who repented in their day in The Presence of GOD acting through His faithful prophet Elijah, can we not claim the same hope here and now? Should not we who are still faithful within The Church on earth today seek a time of falling down upon our faces with our apostate brethren and call upon GOD's mercy and grace? For if we fail to speak out in His Truth and Love, those parts of The Church will indeed be spued out from The Presence of The Lord into eternal damnation and darkness! And many lives and souls fall into destruction both now and forever therewith!

¹⁷ 3, Wycliffe Bible Commentary, I KINGS 18:17-18, p 332.

VIII. THE LUKEWARM CHURCH DOES NOT SEE ITS OWN APOSTASY

REVELATION 3:17: “Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked:”¹⁸

Now among GOD’s people, first within ancient Israel and now in The Church down through the ages, there have always been souls called by The Creator to be sanctified to Himself which, by a lukewarmness of their faith, have cast away their first love of The Divine Master. Those souls in particular – whether clergy, religious orders or laity within The Church – which are redeemed by The precious Body and Blood of The Saviour JESUS CHRIST that then compromise their walk with Him are a great sorrow to The Almighty and a terrible injury to vulnerable men!

Saint Faustina had a vision of The Lord’s rebuke upon lukewarm branches of His Church because they are “...souls without love and without devotion, souls full of egoism and self-love, souls full of pride and arrogance, souls full of deceit and hypocrisy, lukewarm souls who have just enough warmth to keep them alive!” As Saint Faustina writes of such lukewarm Christians, those who go through the motions of The Faith but are in fact equally comfortable within the fallen sinfulness of the world as in GOD’s House, “...If they do not repent and become enkindled by their First Love [JESUS CHRIST], ...[He] will deliver them over to the fate of this world...!”¹⁹

What does The LORD declare in The Holy Scriptures of such men called to be His servants and sanctified by His Presence? As the prophet records The Words of The Almighty spoken through him in ISAIAH 29:13-14, “Wherefore The Lord said, Forasmuch as this people draw near Me with their mouth, and with their lips do honour Me, but have removed their heart far from Me, and their fear toward Me is taught by the precept of men: Therefore, behold, I will proceed to do a marvellous work among this people, even a marvellous work and a wonder: for the wisdom of their wise men shall perish, and the understanding of their prudent men shall be hid!”²⁰

¹⁸ 2, KJV, REVELATION 3:17.

¹⁹ 1, Divine Mercy Diary, Saint Faustina, entry # 1702, p 602-603, paragraph 1.

²⁰ 2, KJV, ISAIAH 29:13-14.

O how foolish are men - most especially those blessed ones called to salvation, redeemed from death and damnation and sanctified by His Presence - that boast in secret among themselves of their superficial piety and corroding love for things of the world, the flesh and even the devil! As Walvoord and Zuck say of Isaiah's prophetic words of chastisement from The LORD upon the people of Jerusalem, while "...professing to know GOD, [they always] were formally involved in acts of worship, but they did not worship GOD from their hearts. They were more concerned with man-made legalistic rules than with GOD's Law."²¹ They were, as our Lord said of such men at His First Coming in MATTHEW 23:27, "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness!"²²

As a result, such men always lose sight of GOD's call upon His people in every time and place to show forth the good works of salvation, which the prophet Micah sums up for us in MICAH 6:8, "He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth The LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy GOD!"²³ As Saint James says in JAMES 2:18, "Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works!"²⁴ Because then of their lukewarmness and apostasy, therefore "GOD would judge them!"²⁵ Their own mere manmade wisdom of folly would convict them of their unfaithfulness before the judgement seat of GOD!

IX. CHRIST CALLS THE COMPROMISED CHURCH TO RETURN TO HIM

REVELATION 3:18: "I counsel thee to buy of Me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see."²⁶

What then is this terrible spiritual impurity, shame, nakedness and blindness, that The Maker should have to issue such a strong prescription? Is this not the taking of our

²¹ 4, Bible Knowledge Commentary – Old Testament, ISAIAH 29:13-14, p 1079.

²² 2, KJV, MATTHEW 23:27.

²³ 2, KJV, MICAH 6:8.

²⁴ 2, KJV, JAMES 2:18.

²⁵ 4, Bible Knowledge Commentary – Old Testament, ISAIAH 29:13-14, p 1079.

salvation in CHRIST for granted, receiving The holy Eucharist lightly and in fact trampling under foot The precious Body and Blood of The Redeemer Himself by a lukewarm Christian life of halfhearted faith and works under His Name? Is this not the mere carrying about The Name of The blessed Trinity upon our lips, while the lives we live blaspheme GOD The Father, Son and Holy Ghost with corrupt thoughts, words and deeds?

What does Saint Paul warn of receiving the Grace of GOD, most especially in The holy Eucharist, in such a lukewarm and impious state? Is it not declared in I CORINTHIANS 11:27-29, “Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of The Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of The Body and Blood of The Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning The Lord's Body!”²⁷

As Walvoord and Zuck say of The Holy Communion, Saint Paul's admonition has at least four senses: First, that there be “...soul-searching introspection and silent confession to CHRIST, so that no one will sin against The ...Presence of The Lord by irreverent observance.” Second, that there be none in The Church who have “...despised a poorer member by utter disregard for his need...” Third, that we not produce “disunity and alienation” within The Body of CHRIST with superficial self-centered disputes. Forth, that we should “...seek out the wronged brother and ask for his forgiveness.”²⁸

These things we must do before receiving The Lord's Supper, that we not receive The holy Eucharist unworthily, and so bring condemnation upon our own souls! Let we who are The Church on earth now then consider our works towards our brethren and fellow man, examine our souls before our Lord, confess and repent of our sins and amend our ways. Thus may our faith be refined in the fires of holiness, our Christian walk be made righteous in CHRIST and the eyes of our souls opened to behold the unity and

²⁶ 2, KJV, REVELATION 3:18.

²⁷ 2, KJV, CORINTHIANS 11:27-29.

glory of The Body of CHRIST. For then may we be found to have been worthy servants of our Redeemer JESUS CHRIST and enter into The Church eternal in Heaven forever!

X. THE DIVINE REBUKE SHOWS THE DIVINE LOVE

REVELATION 3:19: “As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent.”²⁹

Note that The LORD calls that apostate Church at Laodicea to cleanse her hands and hearts before Him. They are assured by The HOLY SPIRIT writing through Saint John The Revelator that The Father Above loves them, and so rebukes and chastens them in order to purify them! The same lesson applies to us today in The Church, as it does for the saints of The Lord all times and places. When we The Church zealously repent as The Body of our Lord JESUS CHRIST, seeking Him in holiness and truth, we are assured of GOD's mercy and grace!

So the Psalmist writes in PSALM 43:3-4, “O send out Thy light and Thy truth: let them lead me; let them bring me unto Thy holy hill, and to thy tabernacles. Then will I go unto the altar of GOD, unto GOD my exceeding joy: yea, upon the harp will I praise Thee, O GOD my GOD!”³⁰ Saint Padre Pio calls us to look up Above to CHRIST our Light, “...and you will see a light that participates in the light of the eternal sun” – The Light of The Lord – Who desires that we have total, living and radical faith in Him. For He is “that Light that illuminated the steps of the people of GOD [in The Exodus] in the desert... the light that led the Magi to adore the newly born Messiah... [The Light that] ...also illuminates your soul and directs your footsteps so that you do not stumble!”³¹

Ah, but what of the people of GOD who refuse to repent of their apostasy? As in The Church today, so the ancient Israelites time and again learned this same lesson: that we should zealously repent of our apostasy and return to The LORD. For if we do not, the otherwise impending wrath and judgement of The Almighty will surely come upon us! Only when GOD's people – having gone astray into lukewarmness and even

²⁸ 5, Bible Knowledge Commentary - New Testament, I CORINTHIANS 11:27-29, P 531-532.

²⁹ 2, KJV, REVELATION 3:19.

³⁰ 2, KJV, PSALM 43:3-4.

apostasy - heed the corrective hand of The Creator upon our shoulders and thus turn from our wickedness and live again in Him, will we be restored by GOD's infinite mercy and grace! Therefore when we fall into lukewarmness, apostasy and error, we should gladly accept the rebukes and chastisements of The Lord, for they are brought upon us because He loves us and desires that we return fully to Him. For only then may we receive our Maker's full blessings in both this life and the next!

XI. GOD'S PRESCRIPTION FOR THE HEALING OF LUKEWARM CHURCHES

The Church today in The West is very much divided between those who remain radically faithful to our Lord and seek total holiness in His revealed Truth as kept down through the ages by The faithful Church versus those who have cast These Treasures away. As Saint Origen says, "Where there are sins, there are also divisions, schisms, heresies and disputes. Where there is virtue, however, there also are harmony and unity [in The Body of CHRIST on earth], from which arise the one heart and one soul of all [True] Believers" in The Saviour JESUS CHRIST.³² The oneness of Christian unity can rest only on and within His Spirit and His Truth.

The cure prescribed by The Almighty for such maladies within The Church on earth is twofold: First, there must be a return by all branches of The Church to radical fidelity to CHRIST in Who He is in His Person and Works as revealed in Holy Scripture and kept down through the centuries by The faithful Church. As our Lord prays in JOHN 17:17 for us to The Father, "Sanctify them through Thy Truth: Thy Word is Truth!"³³ Second, there must be a living out – within and through GOD's Grace and renewal and recovery by The HOLY SPIRIT – in our daily lives of marching towards total holiness before The Lord. As The Almighty commands to ancient Israel, so He commands also now to His Church, as in LEVITICUS 19:2, "...Ye shall be holy: for I The LORD your GOD am holy!"³⁴

³¹ 6, Saint Padre Pio, PSALM 43, CHRIST The Eternal Sun, p 59.

³² 7, Catechism of The Catholic Church, # 817, Wounds to [Church] unity, p 235. "Origen, Hom. In Ezek.9, 1: PG 13, 732."

³³ 2, KJV, JOHN 17:17.

³⁴ 2, KJV, LEVITICUS 19:2.

XII. IN CONCLUSION

We have seen in our Text from REVELATION 3 the sorry state into which the ancient lukewarm Church at Laodicea had fallen. The very prescription given by The LORD for their cure tells us that they were “neither hot not cold” in The Faith. They were so objectionable in fact that it required a written rebuke directly by The HOLY SPIRIT through Saint John, for they were on the verge of being cast away from the very Presence of CHRIST because of their unholiness. Their worldly wealth and comfort had corrupted them, but yet they were wretched, miserable, poor, blind and naked before The Saviour! This sickness of sin we all fall into at one point or another to various degrees in our own lives as Christians, and every Church in every age must be always on guard against such compromise.

But we have also seen in our Text from REVELATION 3 GOD’s great mercy and compassion in the Divine call issued to this ancient apostate Church at Laodicea - that counsel of Divine rebuke and correction – by which the loving arm of The Lord is always calling back His Church to Himself, that we always be renewed in our fidelity to Him! So they are called to live and offer up a pure Christian walk unto The Lord. They are called to put on the robes of righteousness. They are called to humility. And they are called to open their spiritual eyes, that they may see their own sins for what they are and that they may behold The Holy One Who bought them with His precious Body and Blood upon The Cross! And so are we!

And note that it is the very rebuke and correction of The Almighty which shows forth CHRIST’s continuing love for even His wayward Churches which, until they are in fact cut off and cast away into the flames of Divine wrath unto destruction, even until the last possible moment are given the opportunity to zealously renew their fidelity to CHRIST and repent of their apostasy! This same great mercy and compassion of The Creator calls all of us to renewed fidelity to and radical holiness in CHRIST, most especially when we fall into lukewarmness and apostasy, because The Lord indeed rebukes and chastises those who He loves!

If we proceed just a few verses further in REVELATION 3, we find Saint John recording CHRIST's Words to us in REVELATION 3:20-22, "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear My voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me. To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with Me in My throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with My Father in His throne. He that hath an ear, let him hear what The Spirit saith unto The Churches!"³⁵ For whom The Father in Heaven loves, those He rebukes and chastises, that they may repent in radical fidelity to CHRIST and a live in total holiness before Him! In The Name of GOD The Father, The Son and The Holy Ghost. AMEN.

³⁵ 2, KJV, REVELATION 3:20-22.

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