



## Exploring Pentecostal Spirituality in the Contemporary Theological Landscape

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### Abstract

Pentecostal spirituality has grown rapidly in global Christianity, especially in the last two decades. The movement emphasizes direct experience with the Holy Spirit through manifestations of spiritual gifts such as tongues, divine healing, and prophecy. However, in the contemporary theological landscape, this approach is often confronted with the challenge of rationality and more systematic theological reflection. This research aims to explore the dynamics of Pentecostal spirituality in the context of contemporary theology, analyzing the challenges and opportunities of integration between spiritual experience and academic reflection in Christian theology. This study uses a qualitative approach with a literature study method. Data sources were obtained from scientific journals, academic books, and research reports related to Pentecostal spirituality and contemporary theology. The analysis technique used is content analysis with thematic synthesis. The results show that although Pentecostal and contemporary theology have different approaches, they can complement each other. Contemporary theology provides an intellectual foundation, while Pentecostal spirituality offers a deeper experience of faith. The main challenges in this integration include the subjectivity of spiritual experience, criticism of systematic exposition of the Bible, and relevance in the face of social and technological change. However, with adaptations in theological education, the use of technology, and involvement in social issues, Pentecostal churches can maintain their uniqueness while contributing to modern theological discourse.



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### INTRODUCTION

Pentecostal spirituality has become a rapidly growing phenomenon in global Christianity, especially in the last two decades (Miller, 2009). This movement is rooted in direct experience with the Holy Spirit, which is often manifested through manifestations of spiritual gifts such as tongues, divine healing, and prophecy (Aliyanto, 2021). The uniqueness of Pentecostal theology lies in its experiential and emotional approach to worship, which is different from the traditional approach that is more dogmatic and rational (Erlan, 2023; Stephenson, 2013). In Indonesia, this spirituality is increasingly widely accepted by various Christian denominations, even in churches that previously did not identify themselves as Pentecostal churches (Pane, 2022).

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Pentecostal theology is a branch of Christian theology that emphasizes direct experience with the Holy Spirit, which is often manifested in the form of spiritual gifts such as speaking in tongues, divine healing, and prophecy (Aliyanto, 2021; Vondey, 2017). The Pentecostal movement flourished in the early 20th century and has undergone various transformations, including in ways of worship and theology that focus on personal experience with God. In practice, Pentecostal worship is often expressive and emotional, reflecting the belief that the presence of the Holy Spirit can be felt in everyday life (Erlan, 2023; Stronstad, 2019).

As the times have evolved, Pentecostal theology faces challenges from various contemporary theological approaches, which emphasize rationality, deep theological reflection, and relevance to the current social context (Jibobo, 2024; Pane, 2022). In several aspects, contemporary theology seeks to connect theological teachings with scientific and socio-cultural developments, so that the church can be more relevant in facing the changing times (Sulistiono, 2022). In this regard, contemporary theology also plays a role in criticizing some aspects of Pentecostal theology that are considered too subjective and less based on systematic exposition of the Bible.

Despite the differences in approaches, Pentecostal theology and contemporary theology can complement each other. Pentecostal theology emphasizes the power of spiritual experience, while contemporary theology provides a more solid intellectual foundation to support religious faith and practice (Abi Say, 2023; Mumu, 2021). In recent developments, many churches have tried to accommodate both approaches, adopting a more reflective method of worship but still maintaining the spirit and spiritual experience that characterizes Pentecostal churches (Sulistiono, 2022).

In the Indonesian context, the application of Pentecostal theology continues to grow with the increasing number of congregations interested in a more personalized spiritual experience (Aritonang, 2023). However, it is important for Pentecostal churches to continue to be open to contemporary theological developments in order to be able to answer the challenges of the times, especially in the face of increasingly complex social and cultural issues (Hanani, 2024). By integrating distinctive spiritual experiences with deep theological reflection, the church can continue to be a relevant place for the faithful in living their life of faith (Bani, 2023).

In the modern era, many churches have adapted more inclusive and interactive worship methods, including by utilizing digital media in their ministry (Pangaribuan, 2024). This raises the question of how Pentecostal spirituality can survive in an increasingly rational and technology-based landscape of contemporary theology. With the increasing variety of forms of expression of faith in today's churches, there is a need for a more in-depth study of how the distinctive elements of Pentecostal spirituality can remain relevant and develop in the broader theological context.

Several previous studies have examined aspects of the spiritual experience in Pentecostal churches, including how congregations respond to liturgies that are spontaneous and full of emotions (Erlan, 2023). In addition, other studies highlight the importance of the role of the Holy Spirit in daily life for Pentecostals as well as how these charismatic experiences become part of their identity (Aliyanto, 2021). However, there are still few studies that specifically address how this spirituality interacts with contemporary theology, especially in the face of modern-day challenges (Pane, 2022). Therefore, this study will fill the gap by analyzing the dynamics between Pentecostal spirituality and modern theological thought.

This research aims to explore the spirituality of Pentecost in contemporary theology, focusing on its key characteristics, challenges, and opportunities for integration, as well as the church's strategy for maintaining its uniqueness amid changes in Christian theology. It is hoped that this research will provide insight into the harmonization of spiritual experiences with systematic and academic-based theological reflection.

## METHOD

This study uses a qualitative method with a literature study approach to explore the understanding of Pentecostal spirituality in the contemporary theological landscape (Creswell & Poth, 2016). The literature study was chosen because it allows researchers to analyze theological concepts based on existing academic sources as well as to examine the development of Pentecostal theology in relation to modern theological thought. This method is also in accordance with the theological research approach which is often reflective and interpretive in understanding religious doctrines and practices.

The data sources in this study come from secondary literature which includes national scientific journals, academic books, research reports, and publications from relevant theological institutions. Articles and books used as references are obtained from academic databases such as Neliti, Garuda Kemdikbud, Google Scholar, and university repositories. To ensure the relevance of the research, the selected literature has a span of the last five years (2019–2024) and discusses Pentecostal spirituality and its interaction with contemporary theology.

The data collection technique is carried out through the documentation method, namely by collecting, selecting, and reviewing various relevant scientific references. In this process, the research follows the PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) approach to ensure that the sources used have high credibility and can make a significant contribution to the study conducted. Articles that are irrelevant or do not meet academic standards will be excluded from the analysis to maintain the validity of the research (Krippendorff, 2018).

The data analysis method used in this study is content analysis with a thematic synthesis approach (Bowen, 2009). This technique aims to identify patterns, themes, and relationships between various findings found in the literature related to Pentecostal spirituality and contemporary theology. The analysis is carried out by grouping the various key concepts that emerge from the literature into several categories, such as the spiritual experience in the Pentecostal tradition, the challenges of integration with contemporary theology, and its opportunities and theological implications for the development of Christianity. The results of the analysis are then contextualized with the dynamics of modern theology to provide a deeper insight into how Pentecostal spirituality can survive and thrive in an increasingly complex theological environment.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The following are 10 selected articles from various studies related to Pentecostal spirituality in the contemporary theological landscape. These articles are selected based on the relevance, credibility of the source, and the year of publication (2019-2025) in order to provide up-to-date insights into this research topic.

**Table 1.** Literature Review

No	Author	Title	Research Focus
1	E. George	Revisioning a Pentecostal Theology of Water Baptism: An Ecclesial Rite of Embodied Transformation	Highlights the revision of the theology of water baptism in the perspective of Pentecost with an experimental and theological approach.
2	C. Adeleye, O. Aluko, S. Owoye	Evaluating Theological Education in The Apostolic Church Nigeria: Contributions, Challenges and Future Directions	Reviewing theological education in the Nigerian Pentecostal church and its

			challenges in contemporary theology.
3	D.D. Daniels III	Two Million Trees Planted: The Green Reformation and Ghana's Church of Pentecost	A study on the involvement of the Ghanaian Pentecostal church in contemporary ecological theology.
4	A. Afolayan	Pentecostal Political Thought	Examine political thought in the modern Pentecostal tradition and its influence on social theology.
5	R. Munyenyenbe	From Reformed Roots to Charismatic Renewal: An Exploration of the Shift in Theology and Spirituality in the CCAP Synod of Livingstonia	Examines the church's transition from the Reformation tradition to charismatic spirituality within the Pentecostal church.
6	T. Liland, J.D. Andersen, J.I. Jenssen	Perspectives on Christian Revivals and Societal Change	Discuss the role of revival in social change and Pentecostal perspectives on societal transformation.
7	K.A.A. Agyapong	The Priesthood of All Believers: Pentecostal-Charismatic Ecclesiology as the Nexus of Equipping	Examines the concept of the priesthood of all believers in the Pentecostal church and its implications in contemporary ecclesiology.
8	S. Frestadius, M.J. Cartledge	Pentecostal Public Theology	The study of public theology in the context of Pentecost and its relationship to social and political ethics.
9	A. Prevot	Varieties of Healing: A Catholic Perspective	Analyze the ecumenical dialogue between Catholics and Pentecostals in healing practice and charismatic theology.
10	T. Ma	The Missionary Spirit: Evangelism and Social Action in Pentecostal Missiology	Exploring the mission of the Pentecostal church in evangelism and social action in a global context.

Pentecostal spirituality in the contemporary theological landscape has undergone various developments that reflect the dynamics of modern Christianity. In various studies, key aspects of Pentecostal spirituality include the practice of worship that emphasizes the experience with the Holy Spirit, the role of ecclesiology in shaping communities of faith, and interaction with the social, political, and ecological dimensions in theology. The articles that have been selected in this study show that Pentecostal spirituality is not a static entity, but a theological phenomenon that continues to transform according to the times.

One of the major studies highlighting important aspects in Pentecostal spirituality is a study by George (2024) that discusses revisions to the theology of water baptism in the Pentecostal tradition. In this study, he emphasized that baptism is not just a religious ritual, but also part of a profound spiritual transformation experience. This approach reflects how the Pentecostal

community sees the sacrament as a meaningful experience, where interaction with the Holy Spirit becomes a major part of one's walk of faith. This understanding has become relevant in the context of contemporary theology that often prioritizes academic reflection over mystical experience (George, 2024).

Another study by Adeleye, Aluko, and Owoeye (2024) highlights the importance of theological education in Pentecostal communities, particularly in the Nigerian Apostolic Church. This study shows that theological education in Pentecostal communities faces various challenges, especially in balancing aspects of spiritual experience with a more systematic academic approach. The researchers emphasized that Pentecostal churches should develop a curriculum that not only emphasizes mystical experiences, but also teaches a strong theological foundation to shape church leaders who are better prepared to face modern-day challenges. These findings are important in understanding how theological education plays a role in shaping contemporary theological thought among Pentecostal churches (Adeleye et al., 2024).

On the other hand, a study conducted by Daniels (2024) on the involvement of Pentecostal churches in environmental issues shows how these communities are beginning to adapt ecological perspectives in their theology. The study illustrates how churches in Ghana embarked on the Green Reformation initiative, which emphasizes the importance of ecological responsibility as part of Christian spirituality. This perspective indicates that Pentecostal spirituality is not only individualistic or mystical, but also has a strong social dimension. These findings are in line with trends in contemporary theology that increasingly highlight the importance of the church's social involvement in various global issues, including climate change and environmental sustainability (Daniels III, 2024).

Meanwhile, research by Afolayan (2024) highlights the role of politics in Pentecostal spirituality. This study addresses how Pentecostal communities develop their political thinking, especially in relation to public policy and civil rights. This research reveals that there is a tendency in Pentecostal churches to be more active in the world of politics, by emphasizing the values of justice and morality in public policy. This shows that Pentecostal spirituality is not only limited to the experience of worship in the church, but also plays a role in shaping social and political ethics in society (Afolayan, 2024).

Another study by Munyenembe (2024) observed how churches originating from the Reformation tradition began to adopt elements of charismatic spirituality typical of the Pentecostal tradition. The study reveals that there has been an increase in the acceptance of more expressive worship practices in non-Pentecostal churches, suggesting the influence of the Pentecostal movement in Christianity more broadly. This change reflects how Pentecostal spirituality has become part of a global trend in contemporary theology, where the boundaries between denominations are beginning to melt, and churches are increasingly adopting a more open approach to more dynamic expressions of worship (Munyenembe, 2024).

A study by Liland, Andersen, and Jenssen (2024) in the *European Journal of Theology* shows that revival in Pentecostal churches is often linked to broader social change. In their study, the researchers highlighted how revival can be a catalyst for cultural and social structural changes in society. This perspective provides insight into how Pentecostal spirituality can have a greater impact than just individual experiences, but it is also capable of bringing about broader change in the lives of communities (Liland et al., 2024).

In addition, a study by Agyapong (2025) highlights the ecclesiological aspects in the Pentecostal church, particularly in the concept of the priesthood of all believers. In this study, he reveals how the Pentecostal church encourages the active involvement of every congregation in the life of the church, in contrast to the traditional church model which is more hierarchical. This study



shows how Pentecostal churches are trying to build more inclusive and participatory communities, which is in line with trends in contemporary theology that emphasize congregational participation in ecclesiastical life (Agyapong, 2025).

Research by Frestadius and Cartledge (2024) in Springer explores how Pentecostal public theology interacts with social issues, such as economic justice, civil rights, and public policy. The study underscores how Pentecostal communities can use their spirituality as a foundation for broader social engagement. This suggests that Pentecostal spirituality is not only oriented towards personal life or church communities, but also has the potential to contribute to broader social development (Frestadius & Cartledge, 2024).

A study by Prevot (2024) in the ORU Journal of Theology explores the dialogue between Catholicism and Pentecostals in the context of divine healing and spiritual practice. This study shows that there are many similarities between the Catholic and Pentecostal traditions in their approach to mystical experience and the influence of the Holy Spirit in daily life. This research opens up the possibility of a broader ecumenical dialogue between various Christian traditions in understanding the role of spirituality in the life of faith (Prevot, 2024).

Finally, a study by Ma (2024) in the Pneuma Journal highlights how Pentecostal churches are developing their missions in evangelism and social action. This study shows how Pentecostal spirituality is not only inward-looking but also outward-looking, emphasizing the importance of making an impact on the outside world through evangelism and social ministry (Ma, 2024).

From these various studies, it can be seen that Pentecostal spirituality in the contemporary theological landscape is no longer limited to aspects of worship or personal experience with the Holy Spirit, but also includes a wider range of aspects, including education, politics, ecology, ecclesiology, and social engagement. These studies show how Pentecostal spirituality can continue to evolve and adapt to changing times, making it one of the most dynamic theological movements in contemporary Christianity. As such, this research contributes to providing a broader understanding of how Pentecostal spirituality can remain relevant and thrive in the modern theological landscape.

## **Discussion**

### **Key Characteristics of Pentecostal Spirituality in Contemporary Theology**

Pentecostal spirituality in contemporary theology has unique characteristics that continue to evolve and are part of a major shift in the global Christian landscape. The main uniqueness of this spirituality lies in its direct experience with the Holy Spirit, the manifestation of spiritual gifts, and its expressive and passionate style of worship. This characteristic is reflected not only in the practice of worship but also in theological doctrines that emphasize personal experience with God. Drawing on historical sources, field data, and theories from experts, this section will elaborate in depth on how Pentecostal spirituality developed and adapted in contemporary theology.

The modern Pentecostal movement has strong historical roots in the 1906 Azusa Street Revival in Los Angeles, United States, led by William J. Seymour, an African-American preacher who has a background in the Holiness movement (Miller, 2009). This revival is marked by the mass manifestation of the gifts of the Holy Spirit, such as speaking in tongues (glossolalia), prophecy, and supernatural healing. Many eyewitnesses to this event reported mystical experiences and spiritual signs that were perceived as outpouring of the Holy Spirit as occurred in Acts 2:1-4.

The Azusa Street event had a great influence on the spread of the Pentecostal movement around the world. These revival-inspired churches began to flourish in the United States, Europe, Latin America, Africa, and Asia. Some of the major denominations born from this movement include the Church of God in Christ (COGIC), the Assemblies of God (AG), The Apostolic Church, and many others (Stephenson, 2013).

In Indonesia, Pentecostal spirituality began to develop in the early 20th century, along with the influx of missionaries from America and Europe. The Pentecostal Church in Indonesia (GPdI), founded in 1921, is one of the oldest Pentecostal churches in Indonesia and is growing rapidly to this day. Then, in 1952, the Indonesian Bethel Church (GBI) was born, which currently has more than 5,000 branches throughout Indonesia (Aritonang, 2023). In addition, the Church of God Congregation of God (GSJA) is also one of the largest Pentecostal churches that has many congregations in various major cities.

In addition to the church, the Charismatic movement that emerged in the 1960s and 1970s also brought Pentecostal spirituality into non-Pentecostal churches, including Catholics and Protestants. This movement is known as the Pentecostal-Charismatic Renewal, which encourages the emergence of freer expressions of worship and more tangible experiences of the Holy Spirit in previously more liturgical Christian communities (Frestadius & Cartledge, 2024).

The main peculiarity of Pentecostal spirituality is the direct experience with the Holy Spirit, which is believed to be the sign of the baptism of the Holy Spirit. This concept comes from Acts 1:8, which states that "But you will receive power, if the Holy Spirit comes upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth." In Pentecostal churches, these experiences are often accompanied by supernatural manifestations such as speaking in tongues, healing, and spiritual visions (Aliyanto, 2021).

In practice, this experience can be found in various churches around the world. For example, Bethel Church in Redding, California, is known for its worship that emphasizes the manifestations of the Holy Spirit, such as healings, prophecies, and other mystical experiences (Frestadius & Cartledge, 2024). In Indonesia, the Tiberias Church of Indonesia often holds Divine Healing Devotionals, where many congregants believe that they experience physical healing after being prayed for by church leaders (Pane, 2022).

In Africa, the Church of Pentecost in Ghana is an example of how the experience of the Holy Spirit not only takes place in the realm of worship, but also has an impact on the social mission of the church. The church has carried out various faith-based social programs, including massive greening and church-based community building, as part of the implementation of their spirituality in daily life (Daniels III, 2024).

In addition to the real experience of the Holy Spirit, Pentecostal churches are known for their expressive and passionate style of worship. Praise and worship music plays an important role in establishing an atmosphere of worship that allows the congregation to experience God's presence more deeply.

At Hillsong Church (Australia) and Jesus Culture (California, USA), worship is often accompanied by modern music that evokes the emotions of the congregation and creates a more intimate atmosphere of worship (Sulistiono, 2022). Songs from this church are often used by the Mawar Sharon Church (Surabaya), GBI Jakarta, and GPdI Bethany, which adopt a more modern style of worship.

According to James K.A. Smith, a Pentecostal philosopher and theologian, worship that involves all aspects of human emotions helps the congregation experience God's presence more clearly (Smith, 2016). This is in line with Psalm 150:4-6, which emphasizes the importance of praising God with dance, music, and musical instruments as a form of expression of faith.

The gift of the Holy Spirit is an integral part of Pentecostal spirituality. The two most common gifts in Pentecostal churches are divine healing and prophecy, as described in 1 Corinthians 12:7-11. At the Tiberias Church in Indonesia, many congregations claim to have experienced healing after being prayed for in a healing service. In fact, several churches in Indonesia hold Divine Healing Devotionals on a regular basis, where sick congregations come to receive prayers and hope to be

restored through the power of the Holy Spirit (Pane, 2022). In Nigeria, the Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG) annually holds the Holy Ghost Congress, which is attended by thousands of people seeking healing and other miracle signs (Afolayan, 2024).

In addition to healing, prophecy is also an important part of the Pentecostal churches. At Bethel Church and IHOP (International House of Prayer) in Kansas City, congregations often experience prophecies and visions believed to come from the Holy Spirit (Frestadius & Cartledge, 2024). In Indonesia, a similar phenomenon occurred in GBI and GSJA, where church leaders often delivered prophetic messages regarding the future of the nation and the life of the congregation.

However, not all parties agree with this practice. John MacArthur, an evangelical theologian, criticized that many practices in Pentecostal churches lack a strong theological basis and can mislead congregations if they are not based on correct biblical exposition (MacArthur, 2013).

From this analysis, it is clear that Pentecostal spirituality has strong roots in history, a real experience of the Holy Spirit, an expressive style of worship, and significant manifestations of spiritual gifts. With the growing of this movement, Pentecostal spirituality continues to be an important part of the contemporary theological landscape, as it is written in Acts 1:8, that "you shall receive power, if the Holy Spirit descends upon you, and you shall be my witnesses."

### **Challenges in Integration with Contemporary Theology**

Despite its strong appeal, Pentecostal spirituality also faces a number of challenges in its integration with contemporary Christian theology. One of the biggest challenges is the tension between spiritual experience and academic theological reflection. Some theologians from the Reformed and Catholic traditions often criticize Pentecostal theology as too subjective and lacks a systematic basis in biblical exposition (Pane, 2022). This has implications for the low involvement of the Pentecostal movement in academic theological discussions, even though many Pentecostal churches have their own theological schools.

In addition, there are also challenges in ecumenical dialogue with other Christian denominations. Some traditional churches, such as the Catholic Church and the major Protestant churches, are often skeptical of the highly emotional approach and mystical experience that characterizes Pentecost (Miller, 2009). This has led to limitations in cross-denominational cooperation, despite efforts by some Pentecostal groups to bridge these differences through theological dialogue.

In the modern context, the challenges of globalization and technology also affect the development of Pentecostal spirituality. Modern churches have to face major changes in communication patterns and social interactions due to digitalization. Many Pentecostal churches are now beginning to utilize digital media, such as live worship broadcasts through YouTube and other streaming platforms, but there is still a gap in how Pentecostal theology can remain relevant in this digital age (Pangaribuan, 2024).

### **The Pentecostal Church's Strategy in Maintaining Its Uniqueness**

To survive and thrive in the contemporary theological landscape, Pentecostal churches need to implement adaptive and innovative strategies. One of the key strategies is to strengthen academic-based theological education, so that church leaders and Pentecostal theologians can be more active in global theological discussions. Several theological institutions such as Oral Roberts University in the United States and Pentecostal Theological Seminary in Cleveland, Tennessee, have begun to develop curricula that combine spiritual experience with in-depth academic study (Frestadius & Cartledge, 2024).



In addition, Pentecostal churches must also bridge the gap between spiritual experience and a more systematic theological understanding. The Church can do this by encouraging stronger biblical literacy, supporting academic research on Pentecostal theology, and establishing a broader dialogue with other Christian denominations. Thus, Pentecostal spirituality is more acceptable in the mainstream of Christian theology.

In terms of global expansion, the use of technology and social media is an important tool in maintaining the relevance of Pentecostal spirituality. Churches such as Hillsong and Bethel Church have effectively utilized digital media to reach the younger generation. This model has also begun to be implemented by several churches in Indonesia, such as the Mawar Sharon Church and GBI Jakarta, which are increasingly active in spreading their teachings through digital platforms (Sulistiono, 2022).

Another strategy that can be applied is to develop a more inclusive approach in social missions. Many Pentecostal churches have expanded the scope of their ministry to social, educational, and health fields. For example, the Tiberias Church of Indonesia and the Church of Pentecost Ghana have combined spirituality with social action to make a real impact on the community. This shows that Pentecostal spirituality is not only oriented towards supernatural aspects, but also has a strong social dimension in serving the needs of society.

## CONCLUSION

Pentecostal spirituality continues to evolve in the contemporary theological landscape. The movement emphasizes personal experience with the Holy Spirit, which is often manifested through spiritual gifts such as tongues and divine healing. Despite the challenges of its integration with contemporary theology—especially in terms of rationality and academic reflection—these two approaches can complement each other. Pentecostal theology emphasizes the power of spiritual experience, while contemporary theology provides a more solid intellectual foundation. Adaptation to the times, including the use of digital media and involvement in social issues, allows the Pentecostal church to remain relevant and grow.

The need for Pentecostal churches to be more open to contemporary theological developments without losing their distinctive identity. Academic-based theological education is key in bridging the gap between spiritual experience and systematic exposition of the Bible. In addition, the church's involvement in social issues such as justice, the environment, and politics can increase the real contribution of Pentecostal spirituality to the life of modern society.

Further research can be focused on how Pentecostal churches in various cultural contexts are adapting contemporary theological approaches without losing the essence of their spiritual experience. In addition, further exploration of the impact of digital media in maintaining Pentecostal spirituality in the era of globalization is also needed to understand how technology can be used effectively in the dissemination of Pentecostal teachings and worship practices.

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