

IS THE SOUL OF MAN IMMORTAL ?



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Is the Soul of Man Immortal?

IT is a common feature to be observed in those, who teach that the soul of man is mortal, that they confound eternal life with the immortality of the soul. They treat eternal life and immortality of the soul as one and the same thing. From this springs the error called, **Conditional Immortality**; that is, that men generally, as partakers of a sinful nature, are mortal body and soul; and only through accepting the Saviour do they become possessors of eternal life; that is, their souls become immortal.

Now Scripture never confounds immortality and eternal life. The Greek word for immortality is **athanasia** (deathlessness), whereas the Greek words for eternal life, are **zōē** (life) **aiōnios** (eternal). These are never confounded in Scripture. The former, as we shall see from Scripture is the deathlessness of the soul, as compared with the mortality of the human body, whether the soul of believer or unbeliever; whereas eternal life is a new divine life, granted only to those who believe *on the uplifted Son of God, who on the cross died*, that believers might have a life suitable for fellowship with God, a life which is eternal, a life, which is the gift of God. (Rom. 6: 23). So we read,

“ In this was manifested the love of God toward us [believers on the Lord Jesus], because that God sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might LIVE through Him.” (1 John 4: 9).

The careful reader will observe how this is confirmed, as we proceed in our enquiry as to what Scripture teaches on this important subject.

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It is to be remarked that men generally believe that death to the body does not carry with it death to the soul. They believe that the soul survives the death of the body. We find the Japanese offering their votive offerings to their ancestors; the Red Indian believing their braves join their forbears in the happy hunting grounds of their paradise; the Mohammedans holding out to their adherents the promise of a sensual heaven of a most materialistic order. Even in heathen lands where the Bible has never penetrated, and the name of the Saviour has never been heard, this belief of the soul surviving the death of the body is found. It is as if God wrote this great truth on men's hearts intuitively.

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It is moreover a common practice of those, who believe that the soul of man is mortal, to ask a favourite question, Will you show me one single passage of Scripture that plainly affirms that the soul is **immortal**? When it is acknowledged that there is no such plain affirmation in Scripture, they consider they have settled the matter. They ask

the question with the triumphant air of those who feel sure that there is no more to be said.

But two can ask a question. We would ask, Where in Scripture is it affirmed in a few well-chosen words that the soul of man is **mortal**? The only answer they can give is, that there is no such Scripture. It is evident then that these questions settle nothing, that the one cancels out the other. Instead of a single passage of Scripture in a few well-chosen words being demanded, we shall have to enquire what Scripture generally teaches on this subject. We need not shrink from this examination. We shall gain only truth in the process of doing so.

We would begin by asking the reader to note carefully that Scripture from Genesis to Revelation affirms over and over again, often in a few well-chosen words, that the body of man is mortal, not as created, but as the result of sin. Were the soul of man likewise mortal, we should certainly expect affirmed in the Scripture **an equal volume of proof to this effect**. But this is not so.

We therefore challenge those, who affirm that man's soul is mortal, to furnish one single line of Scripture, either by direct statement, or by just inference, that this is so. **They cannot produce one.**

It is no wonder that men, believing this lie of the devil that man's soul is mortal, that in their judgment there is no life beyond this present world, should act as if there were no God, no hereafter, no Heaven, no Hell. They live in the belief that death ends all, so what is better than

to eat and drink for tomorrow we die. Such belief brings man lower than the very beasts of the field.

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But let us see what further argument believers in the mortality of the human soul have to advance in this matter. A very favourite passage of Scripture they use, or misuse, is the following:

“The blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords; **WHO ONLY HATH IMMORTALITY**, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to whom be honour, and power everlasting. Amen.” (1 Tim. 6: 15, 16).

They fasten greedily on the words, “**WHO ONLY HATH IMMORTALITY**,” and expatiate especially on the word “**ONLY**.” This they triumphantly claim settles the whole matter, that none outside the blessed God has immortality, and therefore man’s soul must be mortal.

But this is evidently twisting the passage out of its true meaning, as we shall see. The assertion that the human soul is mortal, falsely inferred by manipulating this passage to suit their own ideas, proves too much. Their inference only recoils on their own heads. Their argument contradicts a good deal of Scripture. If their exegesis of Scripture were correct, they must of necessity deny that the holy angels possess immortality. Scientists tell us this earth was created millions of years ago. It may be so. There is nothing in Scripture to contradict this. We read, however,

that when the sons of God, angel beings, beheld the earth appearing at the command of the Creator in all its glory and beauty, they were so enchanted by the marvellous sight, that they shouted for joy. (Job 38: 7). Angels celebrated the birth of our Lord, and again were witnesses of His resurrection. Much is said of angels in the Bible. **But we do not read of a single angel dying.** Moreover, the very angels, who grievously sinned, were not annihilated, but cast into hell, delivered into chains of darkness, being reserved unto judgment (2 Peter 2: 4).

In the light of this it is very evident that the Scripture, affirming that God only hath immortality, teaches us that it is only God, who has immortality **essentially** and **inherently**, that He alone is the FOUNTAIN and SOURCE of life, whether it be the life of angels, of men, of beasts; or as Bestower of spiritual life. This, however, does not preclude His conferring immortality when and on whom He pleases. This explanation denies no Scripture. It is indeed a wonderful and true thought that God is the only Fountain and Giver of life.

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The believer in the mortality of the soul may, however, ask, Does not Scripture say,

“ The soul that sinneth, it shall die ” ?
(Ezek. 18: 4).

He may ask triumphantly, Does this not teach the mortality of the soul? We answer that this is decidedly not so. To teach so would contradict the whole range of Scripture bearing on

this subject. One Scripture never contradicts another. It can easily be shown that Scripture often uses the word, **soul**, to designate the person, and it is so here. For instance we read,

"All the **souls** that came with Jacob into Egypt, which came out of his loins, besides Jacob's sons' wives, all the **souls** were three-score and six." (Gen. 46: 26).

Even an hardened non-immortality propagandist could scarcely suggest that sixty-six bodyless, immaterial, viewless souls journeyed with Jacob into Egypt. No, the passage simply means that sixty-six **persons** so journeyed.

Again we read,

"No **soul** of you shall eat blood, neither shall any stranger that sojourneth among you eat blood." (Lev. 17: 12).

Evidently **soul** means the person, for who ever heard of a bodyless soul eating?

Here is a passage where the soul stands in contrast to the body:

"And it came to pass, as her [**Rachel's**] **soul was in departing**, (for she died) that she called his name Ben-oni: but his father called him Benjamin." (Gen. 35: 18).

Here the soul of the mother does not die, but departs, as another Scripture puts it:

"And the spirit shall return unto God who gave it." (Ecc. 12: 7).

In our ordinary speech we use the word, **soul**, as meaning a person. We read in the newspapers of a great liner totally wrecked, and one thousand souls perishing. No one makes any mistake

as to the meaning of this announcement, viz., that one thousand **persons** perished.

If any honest enquirer will take the trouble to examine all the passages where the word, **soul**, is mentioned, he will see how often the word is used as meaning person, a responsible individual; and sometimes as differentiating the soul from the body. In the case of the Scripture,

“The **soul** that sinneth, it shall die,”
(Ezek. 18: 4).

we have most clearly a case where the responsible individual is meant.

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We do well at the outset to enquire what Scripture says as to the creation of man. The description of the creation of the beasts of the earth, cattle, creeping things, etc., is as follows:

“And God said, Let the earth bring forth the living creature* after his kind, cattle, and creeping thing, and beast of the earth after his kind.” (Gen. 1: 24).

Here we read of millions of the lower creation brought into existence at the command of the Creator. In vivid and most startling contrast to this is the account of the creation of a **SINGLE** man, the progenitor of the human race. We read a very arresting account:

“And the **LORD** God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a **living soul**.” (Gen. 2: 7).

* The word **creature** (Hebrew, **nephesh**) is translated **soul** no less than 428 times; **creature** only 9 times.

God Himself created this single man, God Himself breathed into his nostrils the breath of life. Then we get the significant words added, "And man became a **living soul**." And further, man was made in the image and likeness of God. (Gen. 1: 26). Dominion over the lower creation was given to him. Surely this is very far removed from the degrading evolutionary theory, now exploded, and at last renounced by the leading evolutionists of our day, as completely unproved.

There is something very significant in the LORD God breathing thus into man's nostrils the breath of life. Sin had not intruded in God's fair creation at this stage. It was not till man sinned, that the sentence of death was passed upon him, the penalty of his transgression. We can only come to the conclusion that by this significant action of God breathing into man's nostrils the breath of life, man was created an immortal soul, in contrast to the soul of the beast, which ceases to exist when its body dies. We shall see how this is amply confirmed, as we examine the Scriptures that throw light upon the nature of man's soul.

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We now refer to the incident of Moses and the burning bush. Exodus 3: 1-6 is a great outstanding Scripture in the Old Testament, testifying to the great truth of the immortality of the human soul. One day in the desert, Moses saw a strange sight — a bush burning, yet not consumed. He turned aside to investigate this most unusual occurrence. To his utmost surprise he heard the voice of the LORD, calling out of the burning

bush, "Moses, Moses." He was then bidden to take his shoes from off his feet, for the ground on which he trod was holy ground. Then the LORD uttered a most significant communication:

"I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." (Ex. 3: 6).

How could God say this? Abraham, Isaac and Jacob had long since died. If they had died body and soul, if they had utterly ceased to exist, God could not have made this statement. Note the LORD did not say, I WAS the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, but I AM the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob!

And when we come to the New Testament we find even fuller light thrown upon this Scripture by no less an authority than the Lord Himself. Not only so, our Lord's words are thrice recorded, showing the great importance of this communication. Our Lord's words were:

"As touching the resurrection of the dead, have ye not read that which was spoken unto you by God, saying, I AM the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? **God is not the God of the dead, BUT OF THE LIVING.** And when the multitude heard this, they were astonished at His doctrine." (Matt. 22: 31-33).

This was all the more striking when we remember this answer was given to the Sadducees, who believed there was no resurrection, and who disbelieved in the existence of angels and spirits.

Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, as far as their bodies were concerned, had been dead for many long years when God addressed Moses out of the

burning bush; and for nearly eighteen long centuries when our Lord answered the Sadducees. And yet our Lord took the ground that these patriarchs were still alive, not as to their bodies, but as to their souls, for God is not the God of the dead, but of the living, and that of all mankind, whether believers or not, for

“ALL live unto Him.” (Luke 20: 38).

Surely such full and powerful testimony is sufficient to prove the truth of the immortality of the soul. To refuse such testimony is to be “willingly ignorant.” (2 Peter 3: 5).

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We shall now see how other Scriptures fall into line with this testimony. Our Lord plainly told His disciples that man can kill the body, **but cannot kill the soul**. We read:

“Fear not them which kill the body, **but are NOT able to kill the soul**: but rather fear Him which is able to destroy* both soul and body in hell.” (Matt. 10: 28).

The body of man is mortal. We have no need to stress that fact. The life of the body can be extinguished by violence. But no hand of man can destroy the soul of man. Our Lord plainly stresses the fact that the soul of man is immortal.

* The word **destroy** in Matthew 10: 28 does not mean annihilation, as those, who refuse the truth of everlasting punishment, are fond of affirming. For clear proof as to this we refer the reader to a pamphlet of the writer, entitled, **Hades and Eternal Punishment** to be had of our Publishers.

It is the refusal of sinful man to receive the truth of the survival of the human spirit after the death of the body, that is largely responsible for the sad condition of the world today, especially in lands once purified and elevated by a measure of belief in the immortality of the soul, carrying with it a sense of responsibility to God, and the knowledge that the certain future is to be spent in Heaven with its unutterable bliss and joy, or in Hell with its weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth.

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The case of Saul and the Witch of Endor is most illuminating. The King had cut off in the land of Israel those, which had familiar spirits, what we would call today spiritist mediums. In Saul's pitiable plight he had sought guidance and help from God, but he had sinned away his day of grace. God did not answer him by dreams, nor by Urim, nor by prophets. In the frenzy of despair Saul had recourse to that which he had sought to exterminate out of the land. Disguised he came to the Witch of Endor, and requested her to bring up Samuel from the grave. Saul evidently believed that the soul of Samuel was alive, though his body rotted in his grave.

Now spiritists cannot call up the departed at their pleasure, but can only deceive by bringing up personating demons. But God specially intervened in this particular case, and allowed Samuel to appear; the one solitary case on record. The Witch of Endor, astonished and dismayed, turned upon Saul, and cried out that he had deceived

her. She described Samuel as an old man covered by a mantle.

Samuel then asked Saul why he had disquieted him. Saul answered that he was in sore distress, and that God had forsaken him. Samuel answered him in truly blood-curdling words, that on the morrow he should be delivered into the hands of the Philistines, adding the solemn words,

“ Tomorrow shalt thou and thy sons be with me.” (1 Sam. 28: 19).

This incident is most striking, showing that the soul of Samuel survived the death of his body, and that the souls of Saul and his sons would on the morrow be with him, while their bodies lay dead on the battlefield. This could not have been, if body and soul were both mortal, and perished together.

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When King David's child by the wife of Uriah the Hittite lay dying, David fasted, lying on the ground in his overwhelming grief. The elders of his household wished him to rise and eat bread, but he refused. On the seventh day the child died, whereupon the King rose from the ground, washed and anointed himself, changed his apparel, went into the house of the Lord, and worshipped, finally returning to his house, and partaking of food. His servants ventured to enquire how it was that he fasted and wept whilst the child lived, but when he died he should rise from the earth and call for bread.

King David replied:

"While the child was yet alive, I fasted and wept: for I said, Who can tell whether God will be gracious to me, that the child may live? But now he is dead, wherefore should I fast? can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me."
(2 Sam. 12: 22, 23).

King David here speaks of his son as alive, though his body at that moment was lying dead in the house. David could only have referred to the **soul** of his son. And further, David expressed the thought, that when his turn to die should come, though his body might be buried in the sepulchres of the kings, his soul would be consciously alive in the presence of God.

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And what shall we say of Solomon, King David's son, who was so wonderfully favoured in his early life as king over Israel, but who turned aside in his later life to folly and idolatry. In the disillusionment of his closing days he wrote the Book of Ecclesiastes, which has been aptly described as "the dirge of a dead world with its greatest prince as chief mourner." Solomon writing of the unsatisfying portion of what was "under the sun," used that expression twenty-seven times, declaring that all was vanity and vexation of spirit. Was there then nothing **ABOVE THE SUN?** Did he believe that at death body and soul ceased to exist, and that man perished, as if he had never been? Hear what he says,

"Man goeth to his long home, and the mourners go about the streets . . . then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: **and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it.**"
(Ecc. 12: 5 and 7).

Thus spake the wisest of men. The meaning is plain. The body dies, but the spirit goes to the Creator. Can anything be plainer?

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We come now to testimony in the New Testament as to the survival of the soul after the death of the body. There is one striking occasion when our Lord was here on earth when He taught most plainly that whilst the body may die the soul continues to live on in all the responsibility accruing to the life lived on earth. When the Pharisees derided His teaching, He told them plainly of what will obtain in the next world. He told them of two men, whether actual men, or spoken of as in a parable, makes no difference whatever as to His meaning. He spoke of a beggar man, lying at the gate of a rich man, who showed no compassion to his poor neighbour. He spoke also of the rich man living in ease and luxury, clothed in purple and fine linen, and faring sumptuously every day. The end came for both, as it will assuredly come for us all. Our Lord told how,

“The beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham’s bosom.” (Luke 16: 22).

He died. His body was buried. Was that all? Did his soul die? There is no hint of this from our Lord. On the contrary the beggar was carried by the angels into Abraham’s bosom, a figure of speech, well-known to His hearers, that the beggar — his soul — had gone to Heaven.

But what of the rich man? We read:

“The rich man also died, and was buried.”
(Luke 16: 22).

Was that all? Did he die body and soul? No, our Lord makes His meaning crystal clear. Our Lord spoke in language the plainest possible. What about the rich man?

“In hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments?” (Luke 16: 23).

The rich man's body lay in the grave. How then could he be in hell and in torments? Surely this speaks of his immortal soul. Unspeakably solemn truth is embodied in our Lord's words. Would that these great truths were generally believed, for then there would be a great crying out on the part of men everywhere, What must I do to be saved?

Without going into every detail of this deeply informative parable of our Lord, a parable illustrative of great realities, it clearly presents three things: (1) The death of the body; (2) The survival of the soul after death; (3) That in the next world there are two conditions of existence, one of happiness, the other of torment. This picture of the next world unfolded by our Lord shows that both believer and unbeliever pass into the next world deathless souls, either bound for Heaven or Hell. May God graciously drive the deepest conviction of this fact into the soul of every reader of this pamphlet.

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Most people, if they believe in resurrection at all, believe in one great general resurrection. But our Lord spoke of two. He said:

“Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear His voice, and shall come forth; they

that have done good, unto **the resurrection of life**; and they that have done evil, unto **the resurrection of damnation.**" (John 5: 28, 29).

Here our Lord speaks of two resurrections, one to life, the other to damnation. This includes all mankind, of all time. This does not look like the mortality of the soul. All have to give account to God. But not till we get to the Book of the Revelation, do we discover that the two resurrections are separated by the thousand year reign of our Lord over the earth. We read:

"But the rest of the dead lived not again till the thousand years were finished. **This is the FIRST resurrection.** Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the **FIRST** resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years." (Revelation 20: 5, 6).

Six verses lower down in the chapter we read:

"And I saw the dead small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works . . . And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire." (Rev. 20: 12-15).

How unspeakably solemn are these verses. Death and **hades** are to be cast into the lake of fire. This refers to the wicked dead only. Their dead bodies will be raised to life again, and their disembodied souls will re-enter their raised bodies. The individuals, who in their former condition of bodies apart from the soul, formed the condition

of death; and souls, separated from their bodies, formed the condition of **hades**, body and soul reunited will be cast into the lake of fire. How these Scriptures shatter the idea of soul and body perishing at death never to be raised, unless as a matter of what they falsely call Conditional Immortality.

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When our Lord hung upon the shameful cross in agony, utterly beyond our conception, the repentant thief turned to **Him** with the touching petition,

“ Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom.” (Luke 23: 42).

What was our Lord’s gracious response? —

“ Verily I say unto thee, **TO DAY** shalt thou be with Me in paradise.” (Luke 23: 43).

Could our Lord have said that if he had believed, that when a man dies he died soul and body, that he ceases to exist, as if he had never been? On the contrary our Lord greatly cheered the dying penitent by assuring him, that when his body should be cast into a dishonoured grave, his soul would be in the bliss of companionship with his Saviour in the paradise of God.

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Evidently the great Apostle Paul did not believe in the mortality of the soul. Hear his testimony:

“ We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord.” (2 Cor. 5: 8).

If the soul dies with the body, these words of the Apostle would be meaningless, foolish and misleading. Again he says:

"I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is FAR BETTER." (Phil. 1: 23).

Which would be far better, to be alive on the earth in the happy knowledge of the love and care of God, in happy communion with the Lord; or to die, to cease to exist body and soul, to know nothing? This certainly would not put the Apostle in a strait betwixt two. Could this be described as FAR BETTER? Surely not. But when death comes to the tired body, for the ransomed soul to depart to be in the bliss of the Lord's presence in glory is indeed FAR BETTER.

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And what is the Apostle John's testimony in this matter? In his wonderful vision of the last days, he records:

"And when he had opened the fifth seal, **I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held:** and they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost Thou not judge, and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?" (Rev. 6: 9, 10).

True, the Apostle John employs symbolic language very largely in describing his vision, throwing light on the happenings of the last days, but it is **the truth** he presents in that way. In the passage we have quoted we have presented to us souls, parted from their bodies, living and con-

scious, crying aloud for righteous judgment to be meted out to their murderers. This certainly does not look like the Apostle being a believer in the mortality of the soul.

Again the Apostle John writes:

"And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever." (Rev. 20: 10).

This is a most remarkable passage of Scripture. We know that the beast (the impious head of the Roman Empire), and the false prophet (the antichrist, the man of sin) will be consigned to the lake of fire during the millennium, the thousand year's reign of our Lord over the earth. It is very evident there is no hint of annihilation here, and the future of the devil is to be for ever and ever in that solemn place of God's righteous judgment. This passage of Scripture rules out the thought of annihilation, and establishes the truth of the immortality of the soul.

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And please remember that when we quote the writings of Moses, of the evangelists — Matthew, Mark, Luke —; of the apostles, — Paul, Peter, John —; we are quoting from a Book inspired by GOD (Greek, **theopneustos**, God-breathed), we are listening to GOD HIMSELF. Dare we refuse to hearken and receive such testimony?

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Finally we have seen that the unscriptural doctrine of the mortality of the soul is sought to be proved by its advocates by twisting one or two isolated passages of Scripture out of their real meaning; and on the other hand by ignoring the general testimony of Scripture on this solemn and vital subject.

It is a great thing when men and women realise their souls are immortal, that there is an unending future life, that our bodies will eventually put on immortality at the resurrection; this is never said of our souls, for being immortal there is no need to say immortality is put on, when they are immortal all the time.

What a joy for the Christian to know that his eternity is assured, that he will be with his Saviour in the bliss of Heaven. But how infinitely sad for the unbeliever, who dies, realising that it is too late to rectify his terrible mistake in rejecting God's offer of eternal blessing through faith in the Lord Jesus, who made atonement for sin on Calvary's cross, that nothing remains for him but an eternity in Hell with its blackness and darkness and distance from God.

God grant that these solemn truths may be revived in the hearts of men and women everywhere to their eternal blessing. May they quicken in the hearts of Christians a deep and urgent desire for the salvation of their fellow-men.

By the same Author

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