

StraitWay



October 1999

The Preacher's Attitude Toward "Preach the word..." (3)

This month we return to our study of the preacher's attitude toward "Preach the word...." Paul instructed Timothy and Titus regarding this serious responsibility. Preachers must heed those admonitions.

(1) The warning of II Tim. 3:1ff put Timothy on guard against these things. Some folk seem to think that a preacher should not warn of difficult problems and issues which come from within as well as without. If you will reflect on Acts 20:28-32; II Thess. 2:1ff; and I Tim. 4:1-4, you will remember Paul's warnings of things to come. (2) Preachers who "Preach the word..." and "...live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecutions" (II Tim. 3:12). Preachers must "...arm themselves likewise with the same mind..." (I Pet. 4:1) and "...think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you..." (I Pet. 4:12). But, you do not have to bring it on yourself by selfish and unwise conduct. (3) "But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them..." (II Tim. 3:14). How many times do preachers start out well only to give up the truth later in life? They do not stay in the strait way. How many preachers have taken a compromising stance regarding the truth? A stance they would have rejected years ago. Current attitudes toward Romans chapter fourteen are a good example. Some have decided that doctrinal matters, such as marriage, divorce, and remarriage, can be tolerated by putting them in Romans fourteen. Such is not the case. Matters in Romans fourteen are matters which are **INDIFFERENT TO GOD**. (4) The gospel preacher must be impressed with the truth that the Bible is verbally inspired of God and furnishes him unto every good work (II Tim. 3:16,17). This should convince every young man who preaches to immerse himself in the study of the text itself. Denominational authors, and some professing to be members of the church, have left a path of misguided preachers by their popular, smooth, empty ramblings. When a preacher's library is lined with books by such authors as Swindol, Lucado, and a host of others, does one have to wonder where his priorities are? Such readings often lead to sermons which are little more than after dinner speeches, where the word of God is so minimized that it is no wonder we have church members with less than a "thimble full" of the knowledge of God's word. If you think I am exaggerating, just try something. When you attend gospel meetings, listen as if you were not a member of the church. See how many times a preacher in an evangelistic meeting will try to convert you. It is high time for "back to basics" in the pulpit. (5) "Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine..." (II Tim. 4:1,2). The content of preaching is to be the word of God. The work to be done through preaching is exhortation, reproof, and rebuke. And it is to be done constantly -- in season and out. This type of preaching is the result of seeing eternity bound souls in the audience and being more concerned about their eternal destiny than anything else. Study carefully.

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Word Studies

"Tempt"

Can God be tempted? James wrote that "God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone." (James 1:13, NKJV). This statement has led some to conclude that, since the Bible tells us (Matt. 4; Heb. 4:15) that Jesus was tempted while on earth, His spirit did not then possess or did not have use of the characteristics of God. Others deduce that He had both a divine spirit and a human spirit, and only the latter was involved in His temptations. I submit that these conclusions are unwarranted, being based upon a faulty understanding of the word "tempt."

The English dictionary (Webster's 9th) gives the primary meaning of "to tempt" as, "to entice to do wrong by promise of pleasure or gain," and that is how we usually understand the word when used in modern speech. However, a second definition, "to make trial of: test," is stated to be obsolete, although this is closer in meaning to the word's origins.

The Bible states many times that not only has God tempted men, but He has been tempted by men: "God tempted Abraham..." (Gen. 22:1); "...by temptations...which the Lord your God did for you in Egypt..." (Deut. 4:34); "Ye shall not tempt the Lord your God..." (Deut. 6:16); "Yet they tempted and provoked the most high God..." (Ps. 78:56). In fact, all appearances (17) of the words "tempt" or "temptation" in the King James Version of the Old Testament are references either to God tempting man or to man tempting God!

Peter asks of Jewish believers in Acts 15:10, "Now therefore why tempt ye [NKJV: 'Why do you test...'] God, to put a yoke on the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear?" The Greek word here translated "tempt" is "peiradzo." It means "to try, make trial of, test." (Thayer, p. 498). Peter exhorted that the Jews not test God by calling in question His wisdom and His will regarding acceptance of the Gentiles. Yes, it is possible for men to tempt (test) God, but it is foolish and sinful for them to do so.

In what sense can God not be tempted, as stated by James? He wrote that "God cannot be tempted with evil," that is, there is no evil desire within Him to which one might appeal. James (1:14) affirms such desires to be the source of our own temptations, and the fact that God cannot thus be tempted implies that He would not try to allure us into evil, although He does test or try the righteous, for their good. (Ps. 11:5; Ps. 139:23; Zech. 13:9).

Consider this illustration: An honest, diligent bank president finds that money is being taken from the vault by someone among three of his workers, he knows not which. He sets up a situation wherein the unguarded vault is left open with an employee working alone near it, but under surveillance. The first employee sees the open vault, but having no interest in taking what is not rightfully his, he gives no thought to entering. The second worker, upon seeing the open door, looks into the vault and contemplates taking some of the cash, but turns away, fearing the consequences. The third sees the opportunity, enters, steals, and is nabbed as the culprit. All three were tested, but the first man was not "tempted with evil," having no covetous desire within him. The other two were tempted by their own desires, but one did not yield.

What if the bank president were to change the test, asking the first employee to try to talk the second into stealing? That would be called entrapment. As an honest man, this bank president would be above such tempting of his staff. Neither could a bank employee tempt the boss to steal from the bank. It would be against all that he stands for in his position! So it is with God. He tests, but He does not tempt man with evil, and cannot Himself be so tempted.

Jesus was tested by men and by Satan, but as with His Heavenly Father, He had no desire for evil. (John 14:30). Thus, He was not tempted in the sense described in James 1:13, 14.

First Principles Saved by Nothing "Alone"

Churches established by men have their creed books, manuals, catechisms, and disciplines in which they set forth their peculiar doctrines. Prominent among the tenets of some of the major denominations is the teaching that salvation from sin is "wholly of grace"; while others assert that salvation is "by faith only" or "alone." The Bible attributes salvation to many things, all of which are inter-related or interdependent. If any two (or many) things are inter-related and interdependent in salvation, then it cannot be "wholly" or "only" by any one of them, nor by one of them "alone". We are saved by grace, and without it we could not be saved; but is it "wholly of grace"? "Wholly" means "entirely; totally; altogether". God's salvation-bringing "grace has appeared to all men" (Tit. 2:11), but not all will be saved (Mat. 7:21-27; 25:31-46). Salvation is by faith, and without faith one cannot be saved, but salvation is not by "faith only" or "faith alone" (Jas. 2:14-26). Faith and grace are inter-related factors in salvation. "For by grace you have been saved through faith...." (Eph. 2:8).

It is perhaps beneficial to some to ask, "What is it to be saved?" Salvation is reflected in a number of terms such as redeemed, pardoned, cleansed, justified, freed from sin, sins blotted out, remission of sins, or sins washed away. These are different expressions all referring to the same benefit. Consider now some more of the many things by which we are said to be saved.

WE ARE SAVED: By God. "...We trust in the living God, who is the Savior of all men, especially of those who believe" (I Tim. 4:10b); "It is God who justifies" (Rom. 8:33b). *By Jesus.* "...you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins" (Mat. 1:21). "...the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost" (Lk. 19:10). "...Christ died for us....having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him" (Rom. 5:8-9). *By the Spirit.* "But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God" (I Cor. 6:11; cf. 2 Thes. 2:13). *By Christ's life.* "For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life" (Rom. 5:10). *By Christ's death.* Note again the statement in the preceding verse and this, "Jesus Christ...gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil age...." (Gal. 1:4). *By His blood.* "...justified by His blood...." (Rom. 5:9). "whom God set forth to be a propitiation, through faith, in His blood...." (Rom. 3:25). "In Him we have redemption through His blood...." (Eph. 1:7; cf. Col. 1:14-20; Heb. 9:12). *By the love of God.* "But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us...has made us alive together with Christ...." (Eph. 2:4-5; Jn. 3:16; I Jn. 4:9-10).

WE ARE SAVED: By God's mercy. "...not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us..." (Tit. 3:7; cf. Eph. 2:4). *By the gospel.* "...I declare to you the gospel which I preached to you, which also you have received and in which you stand, by which also you are saved...." (I Cor. 15:1-2; cf. Rom. 1:16; 2 Thes. 2:14). *By the word or words.* "....receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls" (Jas. 1:21); "who will tell you words by which you and all your household will be saved" (Acts 11:14). *By the doctrine of Christ.* "He who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son" (2 Jn. 9; cf. I Tim. 4:16). *By self.* Continue in the doctrine, "for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you" (I Tim. 4:16; Phil. 2:12; Acts 2:40). *By others.* "....save...those who hear you" (I Tim. 4:16; cf. I Cor. 3:5). *By repentance.* "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins..." (Acts 2:38; 17:30; 2 Pet. 3:9). *By confession.* "...with the mouth confession is made to salvation" (Rom. 10:10). *By baptism.* "There is also an antitype which now saves us, namely baptism...." (I Pet. 3:21; Acts 2:38; 22:16; Gal. 3:27).

Friend, truly there are many things upon which your and my salvation rests. Are you saved?

Personal Work

In Matthew 7:13,14 Jesus said, "Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it." We must know where we are going before we choose which road we will travel. The choices one makes will be his own. we are influenced by others, and many are being led down the road to eternal destruction by false teachers. It is sad that false teachers will be lost, but it is even more so because every one that follows them will also be lost.

These people think that they are traveling the strait and narrow that leads to eternal life. They have been deceived by false teachers and it is up to us to try to teach them the truth. The Lord loves their soul just as He does ours. I certainly realize that not all can be taught the truth. But, we must reach all that we can with the gospel.

I believe the example of the Apostles is a good example for us to follow today in trying to reach the lost. The Apostles would go into the synagogue of the Jews to teach. These believed in God and they gave visitors a chance to speak. I don't mean that we should go into the synagogue today. I mean that people in the denominations are people who believe in God. So, we should try to set up a study with them. If they really want to go to heaven and believe the Bible is the inspired word of God, then we can teach them the truth.

The best way to start with a Bible study with people who are members of a denomination is with some questions. Such as, do you believe in God? Do you believe the Bible is the word of God? Do you believe we must obey God in order to be saved? Then, teach lesson on authority. Show them that we must do all that God says in order for us to be saved. The Lord is the one that does the saving and He has told us what we must do to be saved. Just because one obeys most of the commands will not do. One must obey all that He says. Many people do not obey the gospel because they just do not believe it. Many people know that the Bible teaches that one must be baptized. But, they will say, "I know that is what it says, but I don't believe you have to be baptized to be saved." Now when one says that, he really does not believe the Bible. Many times this is because some false teacher has convinced them that they do not have to be baptized to be saved. It is up to us to convince them that they cannot disobey the Lord and be saved. Jesus said, "He that beleiveth and is baptized shall be saved...." (Mark 16:16).

To be a success we must have a wholesome self-respect and a positive mental attitude. We must show the people that we are really interested in their soul. Unless we gain their confidence we will not be able to teach them. We need to be positive, aggressive, optimistic and above all, converted members who are willing to go out and bring the lost to Christ. This why the Christians in the first century were able to teach people the gospel. They showed the people that they really believed God's word. We must do the same today. Dear brother or sister do you really want to go to heaven. Do you think you can go to heaven and not try to teach anyone?

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EVIDENCE EXTINCTION OF THE DINOSAURS AND OTHER FABLES

SCIENCE DIGEST of August, 1988, page 56 summarizes from SCIENCE: "Considerable evidence suggests that an asteroid or enormous comet struck Earth some 65 million years ago and caused a mass extinction of species." THE PHYSICAL SCIENCES, 1955 on pages 368-370 lists the geologic eras (some epochs) and periods and states that dinosaurs appeared in the Mesozoic era about 100 million years ago and were extinct 30 million years later as the present Cenozoic era began 70 million years ago. EXPLORING EARTH SCIENCE, 1970 a Texas Public Schools text says on page 180 that the Cenozoic period began 60 million years ago reflecting a 10 million year difference with the first text cited.

An earlier theory for dinosaur extinction was climatic changes. In Genesis 2:5B-6 we read, "--the LORD God had not caused it to rain upon the earth, and there was not a man to till the ground. But there went up a mist from the earth, and watered the whole face of the ground." This is consistent with a tropical world based on fossilized palms found in frigid zones of Earth. In Genesis 7:4 we read, "For yet seven days, and I will cause it to rain upon the earth forty days and forty nights; and every living substance that I have made will I destroy from off the face of the earth." Such a flood is recorded in Babylonian literature and confirmed by geological evidence. Evolutionists reject the Biblical flood as an explanation for dinosaur extinction believing that men and dinosaurs did not coexist. Dr. C. E. Baugh, Don Patton geologist and gospel preacher and others have worked along the banks of the Paluxy River in central Texas for several years. Dinosaur and human footprints were found in layers overburdened with other sediments. One human print rests within a dinosaur print. Evolutionists discredit these findings claiming that these remarkable prints are man made. What saith the scriptures? Job 40:15-24 describes behemoth which means a big animal. If the reconstructions of dinosaurs mean anything, verse 17 should be given some attention: "He moveth his tail like a cedar." Leviathan is the player in chapter 41. Observe verse 14 and think of Tyrannosaurus Rex: "Who can open the doors of his face? his teeth are terrible round about." These may well be dinosaurs since the descriptions are consistent with what we accept today. Some might dismiss verse 19 as myth which says, "Out of his mouth go burning torches; Sparks of fire leap forth." Bombardier beetles have this capability. Is it an impossibility on a larger scale?

Bible believers rebel against the smug attitude of those who dote on ever changing theories. My old college text says on page 370, "Earth began as a nuclear knot in a spiral nebula. It grew by attracting planetismals." Infidels and theistic evolutionists explain that the Big Bang theory is current—it wasn't in 1955. Genesis read then as now. Older texts picture brontosaurus. Since 1979 he has a new head according to DINOSAURS, by L. B. and Jenny Halstead, Blanders press, 1981 on page 116. Look it up! In "TYRANNOSAURUS REX," a film at Moody Gardens in Galveston, Texas a young girl goes back in time, pets Rex and witnesses the asteroid colliding with earth. The film has a spiritual quality encouraging one to have an "educated imagination." Saints must combat these less than subtle influences upon us and especially upon the young.

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Issues Among Brethren

MATTHEW, MARK, LUKE AND JOHN

In an effort to defend the unlawful marriages of some it is being taught that Matthew, Mark, Luke and John are books of the Old Testament. Advocates of this doctrine would have us believe that such verses as Mt.5:32 and Mt.19:9, being part of the Old Testament, were nailed to the cross and taken out of the way, Col.2:14. Being nailed to the cross and taken out of the way these verses, and all other verses of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, contain not one command or instruction that lost sinners of today are obligated to follow. The teachers of this doctrine declare that “the law of the Lord went forth from Jerusalem, Isa. 2:3, and was fulfilled, in Acts 2. Therefore no part of the New Testament is recorded before Acts 2.” In this article we will consider this idea.

If this idea be true, then indeed, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John are to be treated as Old Testament books and have nothing to do with the gospel of Christ. On that basis what purpose does the record of Jesus’ encounter with Nicodemus serve, Jn.3? The “new birth” is surely no part of the Old Testament! If not connected with the gospel and being no part of the Law of Moses why would the Holy Spirit inspire John to include this event in his book? Is it there simply to occupy space?

And what about the Lord’s meeting with the Samaritan woman at the well, Jn. 4 .Was Jesus simply explaining to her the Law of Moses that she might better understand the Law? She wasn’t even a full-blooded Jew. She and her people were no longer following the Law. In teaching her about “living water” Jesus was not making a “fuller” explanation of Moses’ law. He taught her things that the apostles were later to go into all the world and teach.

Many other events, recorded in Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, could be added to the above but space does not allow their inclusion.

Sensing the difficulty of making the “new birth” and “living water” part of Old Testament doctrine some defend their teaching by saying that these subjects were “prophecies of Jesus, an Old Testament prophet.” Such a defense is a dodging of the issue. Why not be honest and admit that the “new birth” and “living water” are part of that which is taught in the gospel and that Matthew, Mark, Luke and John are books of the New Testament? Actually, trying to classify these accounts as simply “prophecies” is a clear admission that Matthew, Mark, Luke and John do include teachings that apply to all lost sinners.

Next, let’s notice a few verses that show, without doubt, that some of the things which Jesus taught before the cross apply to all accountable beings today. Look at the “Great Commission,” as we refer to it. After telling the apostles to go and teach all nations Jesus continued, “Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world,” Mt.28:20. Here is positive proof that the Lord wanted the apostles to later teach all things which He had previously taught them. If Jesus only taught them things connected with the Law of Moses, His apostles could not continue to teach those things after Jesus died and nailed them to the cross. Referring to the gospel of Christ the Hebrew writer says, “which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him,” Heb.2:3. These words state plainly that Jesus was the first to teach about the gospel. This is a problem for those who teach that while in the flesh Jesus taught Jews only about the Law of Moses. If Jesus, before His death, confined His teaching to the Law of Moses, when, and where, did He teach about the gospel? The answer of some is that He taught the apostles about the gospel during the 40 days between His resurrection and ascension. Again, they prove inconsistent because their doctrine says that no part of the New Testament is recorded before Acts 2. Also, their doctrine proves to be false doctrine and contrary to inspired truth. Let all beware of it!

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The Shame Of Nakedness

Revelation 3:17-18 pictures a proud church like a poor, diseased man with inadequate clothes. If the church repented, Christ would supply every spiritual need, “that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear.” This figurative use of inadequate clothing is based on the concept of the shame of nakedness and on the failure of some people to recognize this shame.

Nakedness may refer to nudity or to inadequate clothing. Adam and Eve were first nude but then partially clothed with “aprons” (girdle, loin-covering; Gen. 3:7). God replaced this inadequate clothing with “coats,” proper and adequate garments “generally with sleeves, coming down to the knees” (vs. 21; Gensenius, Hebrew & Chaldee Lexicon, p. 420). God replaced their shorts with garments covering from the shoulders down to the knees to cover the shame of their nakedness.

To uncover or see nakedness is a euphemism for sexual intercourse (Lev. 18:6; 20:17). Nakedness with its sexual appeal and implications is a blessing in marriage, but a curse and shame when displayed outside marriage. Therefore, in addition to outer robes, the priests wore pants reaching from the waist to the knees--“breeches to cover their nakedness; from the loins even unto the thighs they shall reach” (Ex. 28:42). Even heathen women knew the embarrassment of lifting their skirts to cross a river--“make bare the leg, uncover the thigh....Thy nakedness shall be uncovered, yea, thy shame shall be seen” (Isa. 47:2,3). Exposing the thighs reveals the shame of nakedness.

God commanded women to “adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with broided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array; but (which becometh women professing godliness) with good works” (I Tim. 2:9-10). Shamefacedness or shamefastness is an innate sense of honor which “shrinks from overpassing the limits of womanly reserve and modesty, as well as from the dishonor” of such an act (Trench, Synonyms of the New Testament, pp. 63-68). It is “a sense of shame” or “modesty which is ‘fast’ or rooted in the character” (Vine, Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words, IV:17).

Modesty, shamefacedness, and sobriety deeply rooted in a woman’s character cause her to shrink back from exposing the shame of her nakedness. This shame is exposed before men by her wearing skirts and shorts above the knees, miniskirts, low cut dresses and blouses, swimsuits, tube or tank tops, tight or formfitting attire (leotard, bicycle shorts, etc.), and the generally abbreviated uniforms worn by majorettes, cheerleaders, and flag or drill teams. A man in shorts revealing his thighs and without a shirt exposes the shame of his nakedness to women.

The sin of exposed nakedness is fraught with dangers. It creates temptation for the opposite sex, sears the conscience, and refuses the truth of God’s Word (Matt. 18:6-7; Jer. 6:15; Hos. 8:12). It weakens the home by causing parents to fail in their duty to their children or children to rebel against parental leadership (I Sam 3:13; Deut. 21:18-21). When Christians are guilty, they conform to the world, start down the road of apostasy, set the wrong example, and bring shame on Christ and His church (Rom. 12:2; Judg. 2:10; Matt. 5:3-16; Eph. 5:26-27). Souls will be lost over such sins (Gal. 5:19-21).

Christ can clothe us spiritually and teach us to dress properly when people in the world repent and are baptized to be forgiven through His blood, or when erring Christians repent and pray for forgiveness (Acts 2:38; 8:22). --Written by Ron Halbrook in The Hebron Herald, via Great Plainness Of Speech.

[Editor’s comments: Bro. Halbrook has addressed matters which are worthy of our consideration. With precious little respect for themselves and others, too many women who claim to be Christians seem determined to wear the “..attire of an harlot...” (Prov. 7:10). And can the men be less guilty when they dress in attire like Adam and Eve made for themselves? Do sporting events provide immunity for either male or female? Let us dress more like godly, spiritually minded, eternity bound saints who are concerned about our own souls and the souls of others.]

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The New International Version (4)

I had intended to conclude this study with the previously written articles, but would like to consider the last few verses of Mark 16. In article three, I briefly mentioned the treatment the NIV gives to Mark 16:9-20. This section is marked off by a line and the comment, "The most reliable early MSS omit Mark 16:9-20." This throws an unnecessary cloud of doubt on the inspiration of this passage and some, but not all, debaters, trying to defend the doctrine that man is saved at the point of faith without further acts of obedience, have used this (the denial of the inspiration of Mk. 16:9-20) in an effort to uphold their doctrine. In the Hardeman-Bogard Debate, bro. N.B. Hardeman demonstrated that Dr. Ben M. Bogard switched positions on the inspiration of Mk. 16:9-20, depending on whom he was debating. I have not seen Dr. Bogard's denial of the accusation, but have seen his evading the issue (please see the Hardeman-Bogard Debate). Why would any man switch positions on the inspiration of a text, not just once but several times?

In the Warren-Ballard Debate, Mr. L. S. Ballard tried this but bro. Thomas B. Warren showed that Mark 16:9-20 was contained in a number of versions in the second century AD: Peshitto, Curetonian, Copitic, Sahidic, Tatian's Diatessaron. Also, he showed that the "church fathers" of the second century had quoted the text in their writings. In what century did the most respected manuscripts appear? The third century AD, long after the versions which contained the text and the quotes of the "church fathers."

More recently, Mr. Hoyt Chastain tried this in debate with bro. David Bonner, but when bro. Bonner pointed out that the "church fathers" in the second century used Mark 16:9-20 in their writings, the matter was quickly dropped by Mr. Chastain. Wonder why?

When a person's doctrine depends on such feeble, unscholarly efforts there has to be something wrong. So what has the NIV done with Mark 16:9-20? It has joined the ranks of those who unnecessarily and incorrectly question or reject the inspiration of Mark 16:9-20. The NIV encourages infidelity, unbelief, and skepticism. Study carefully.

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