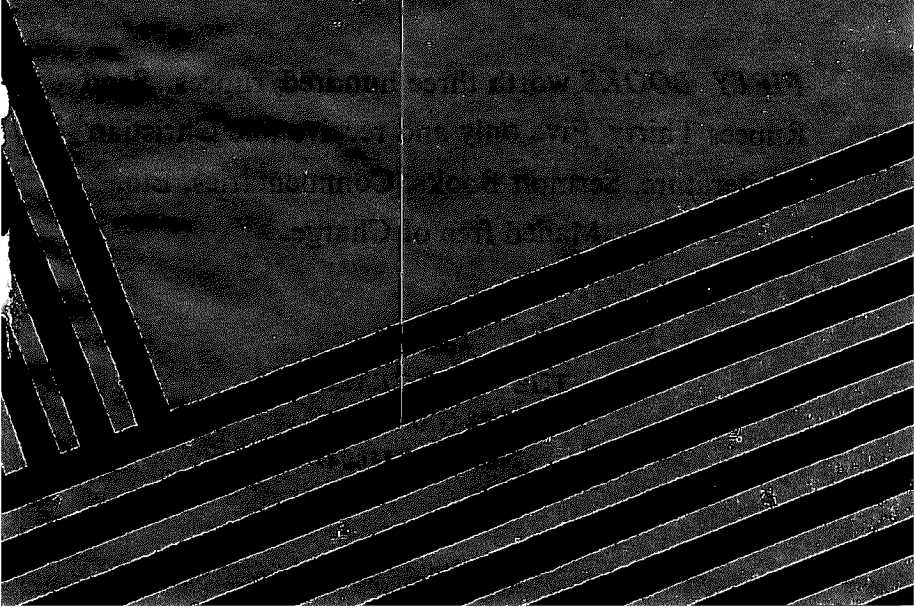


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Editor :

J. C. CHOATE

Associate Editor :

SUNNY DAVID

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If I Can But Touch The Hem Of His Garment

When Jesus was on earth he healed a lot of people. He generally moved around from village to village, from town to town or city to city. As a result of his work, his fame went out over the country. There were always numerous people trying to reach him that he might heal them. Some believed so strongly that they reasoned that if they could but touch the hem of his garment that they would be healed. We have an example of this in Matthew 9:20-22. The record says, "And, behold, a woman, which was diseased with an issue of blood twelve years, came behind him, and touched the hem of his garment : For she said within herself, If I may but touch his garment, I shall be whole. But Jesus turned him about, and when he saw her, he said, Daughter, be of good comfort; thy faith hath made thee whole. And the woman was made whole from that hour."

On another occasion, when Jesus and his disciples came into the land of Gennesaret, we read, "And when the men of that place had knowledge of him, they sent out into all that country

round about, and brought unto him all that were diseased; And besought him that they might only touch the hem of his garment : and as many as touched were made perfectly whole." (Matthew 14:35, 36).

Concerning the woman who wanted to touch the garment of Jesus, Mark says that she had spent all that she had on physicians in an effort to get well, but instead she had gotten worse. Then he says, "When she had heard of Jesus, came in the press behind, and touched his garment. For she said, If I may touch but his clothes, I shall be whole. And straightway the fountain of her blood was dried up; and she felt in her body that she was healed of that plague." (Mark 5:27-29).

With this woman, and with those in general, who sought to but touch the hem of Jesus' garment, they had great faith in his power to heal them, and as a result they were healed. But think about this woman, for example. She was not trying to touch just any garment, or the garment of just any person. Her faith, rather, was in Jesus and she had so much faith that she reasoned that if she could just touch his garment, and even just the hem or the edge of his garment, that she could be healed. She therefore put fourth the necessary effort to get to where Jesus was and then to reach out to touch his garment. This no doubt was very difficult for her to do since she was sick, and since there were so many gathered around Jesus. Yet, she was determined to do it and when she did so then her faith was rewarded. Her attitude, faith, and determined effort made all the difference.

Wouldn't it be wonderful if we had more people today with that attitude, with that kind of faith, and the willingness to do whatever is necessary to obey the Lord and to serve him? My friends, we shouldn't want to settle for anything less than the truth in all religious matters. Truth is from God and it is the truth that saves and makes us free. (John 17:17; John 8:32). It seems though that a lot of people will go along with just anything that is taught, but remember that John warns us that many false prophets or teachers have gone out into the world. (1 John 4:1).

We should not be satisfied with just some religion, just any religion, but only the religion of God. There are many religions

but only one that is of God. (James 1:26). Religions of men are corrupt but the religion of God is pure. (James 1:27).

Our attitude should be that if we can just hear and obey the gospel of Christ that we know that we can be saved. Christ said that this gospel should be preached to all and "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." (Mark 16:15, 16). There are many gospels, different gospels, perverted gospels, but those of men cannot save. They may sound good but in the end they will destroy. Paul stated the seriousness of staying with the one pure gospel of Christ when he said to the Galatians, "I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him, be accursed." (Galatians 1:6-9). Paul said that he had preached the one gospel of Christ to them but that if he or others should then come and preach a different gospel then the curse of God would be upon them. He said that even if an angel should come and preach another gospel that he likewise would be cursed. Now where can we find the one true gospel of Christ? In God's book, of course. That means then if we all obey that gospel then we will all obey the same gospel. It also means that if we all obey the same gospel then we all should be saved the same way and be members of the same church, etc. But that is not true, is it? That means then that somebody is preaching a gospel different to the gospel that Paul and others preached in New Testament times as recorded in the scriptures. That likewise means that a lot of people will therefore be lost for accepting another gospel. But to hear religious leaders talk today then they would have us believe that regardless of what is preached that it is all the gospel of Christ. My friends, don't you believe it. We should not accept anything but what we read in God's word. Our desire should be to know and obey the one pure gospel of Christ. Only then can we be saved.

In regards to the church, my friends, we should be determined not to be a member of any church except the Lord's church, the one and only church that we read about in the Bible. Why would anyone want to be a member of just another church, especially a man-made church, one that does not belong to Christ, and that does not wear the name of Christ? Listen, if I am going to be a member of a church then I want to be a member of the one that Christ built (Matthew 16:18), the one that had its beginning in Jerusalem in A.D. 33 (Acts 2), the one that Christ died for (Ephesians 5:27), the one he shed his blood for (Acts 20:28), the one that he is saviour of (Ephesians 5:23), the one he is head of (Colossians 1:18), and the one that wears his name. (1 Corinthians 12:27; Romans 16:16). Oh yes, there are plenty of people who will tell you that the church is not important, that it doesn't matter which church you are a member of, that all churches belong to the Lord, but don't you believe a word of it. If you believe that then you will believe anything. What if that woman had said that it doesn't matter about the garment; that one garment is as good as another, and so on? Do you think that she would have been healed? Certainly not! But her attitude was that if I can but touch his garment. It had to be his garment, and she had to touch that garment to be healed. Once she touched his garment then she was healed. Likewise, it must be his church. He is the saviour of his church and that means that we must be members of it to be saved. We must not only know this but we must put forth the necessary effort to obey the Lord that we might be saved and so he can add us to his church. (Acts 2:47). And listen, he has only one church. (Ephesians 4:4; Colossians 1:18).

Again, we should be determined to wear the name of Christ both as a member of his church and as an individual follower of Christ. We are told that salvation is not in just any name, but in the name of Christ. (Acts 4:12). We are told also that we are to do all things in his name. (Colossians 3:17). As for the church, if Christ built it, if he is the saviour of it, the head of it, if he counts it as his bride, his body, his family, and so on, then would it not follow that it would wear his name? If it was not going to wear the name of Christ, then whose name would it wear? My friends, the scriptures speaks of the body of Christ

(1 Corinthians 12:27), referring to the Lord's church, and therefore, the church of Christ. In speaking of several congregations of the church, Paul describes them as churches of Christ in Romans 16:16. As individual followers of Christ, they are called Christians in the Lord's word. (Acts 11:26; Acts 26:28; 1 Peter 4:16). So, if we are going to wear any name religiously, we should want to wear only the Lord's name. Yes, as with other matters, our religious friends will tell us that the name doesn't matter, that it is not important, and all of that, but the scriptures do not teach this. You go to God's word and see what it says about the name of Christ, the name of the church, and what we are to be called as followers of Christ. If that will not convince you, then nothing will.

When it comes to worship, we should be determined to worship only as the Lord directs in his word. Of course, we are told again, as with so many other things, that it doesn't matter how we worship just so long as we are honest and sincere, but where do we read that in the scriptures? As a matter of fact, we are warned that our worship will be vain if we worship according to the doctrines and commandments of men. (Mark 7:7). On the other hand, Christ says that our worship must be in spirit and in truth, that is, in all sincerity and according the Lord's teaching. (John 4:24). When we read through the New Testament we are made to realize that there are some specific things that are required if our worship is to be acceptable to God. First, we are told that we are to worship on the first day of the week. (Acts 20:7). Second, we are told that our worship must include reading and studying God's word (2 Timothy 2:15), going to the Father in prayer (Acts 2:42), singing praises to the Lord (Ephesians 5:19), partaking of the Lord's Supper (1 Corinthians 11:23-29), and giving of our means. (1 Corinthians 16:2). And third, we are warned against forsaking the assemblies. (Hebrews 10:25). Now, if we are going to worship, then we should want to do it the way that the Lord wants us to do it. If we are not going to do it that way then why bother with it?

Likewise, with all of the other things that we say and do in the name of religion, we should want to do them as the Lord directs in his word. Why go through life doing those things that

are questionable, that which is contrary to God's wishes, that which is according to the teachings of men? Why depend on our wisdom and the wisdom of men when we can go to the Lord for guidance? Why risk being lost when we can be sure that we are right? Why listen to others when the Lord has spoken? My friends, our souls are too precious, life is too short, and eternity is too long, to take chances. The Lord's way is right. (Matthew 7:21). There is but one way and it is strait and narrow. (Matthew 7:13, 14). There is no way to God but by him. (John 14:6). Let us be sure that we take that road. Let us be satisfied with nothing less.



**associate
editorial**

G.P.C.

I once heard a preacher tell the story of a farmer who wanted to preach, but he was waiting for a "Special Call" from the Lord. One day as he was ploughing, he saw a strange looking patch of cloud up in the sky. He got interested in it and began to make out what did it mean. Soon he came up with an idea, and walked back to his house. He told his wife that now he was going to preach. His wife was astonished to hear about that sudden change of mind, and asked him how did he suddenly decide to go to preach. The farmer told his wife about the clouds he had seen and said that it read like G.P.C. and that he firmly believed that it was a sign from the Lord, and means: "Go Preach Christ." So the farmer left his house and went to preach. However, after a few months he came back to his house, and was in a bad shape, tired and fatigued. His wife asked him, how did he do and what was the problem? Well, said the farmer, I misread the clouds. What said the wife. Yes, the farmer replied, I believe it meant "Go Plough Corn"!

The above story illustrates that zeal without proper knowledge can be harmful. There are many today, who like the farmer, want to preach, but while they do have zeal they lack the knowledge of the word. Some may have gone to denominational seminaries, or various books and commentaries to learn to preach. But all they know to preach is the doctrine of that denomination which seminary they attended, or the philosophy of men. They still do not have the knowledge that comes from studying God's word. To preach the Bible one must know the Bible, and there is only way to learn what the Bible teaches and that is by studying the Bible itself. Just as one can't learn how to shoot with a gun by practicing on sticks.

The word of God is the sword of the Spirit. (Ephesians 6:17). The inspired writer of the Bible wrote: "For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joint and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." (Hebrews 4:12). To effectually use the sword one must learn how to use it otherwise in stead of protecting it can be harmful to the one who is using it and perhaps might cause harm to many other innocent people. Speaking about the epistles of Paul the apostle Peter wrote, "As also in all his epistles, speaking of them in these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction." (2 Peter 3:16). True, many today are preaching to their own destruction, for they are telling people to do such things which are not commanded in the Bible. (Matthew 15:9). Preachers are telling people today to get saved by praying and confessing their sins; they are telling their audiences to believe and be saved by faith alone, without the obedience to the Lord's command. This is not what the author of salvation taught (Hebrews 5:9,9; Mark 16:16), and neither did his apostles teach such a thing. (Acts 2:37,38). Preachers, among other things, are telling people today that the church is not important and that they can join any church of their own choice. This is not what the Bible teaches, however. (Acts 2:47; 20:28; Ephesians 5:23; 4:4; 1:22,23).

The Bible exhorts, "Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth." (2 Timothy 2:15, NIV). Preachers have a great responsibility, because they are dealing with the word of God, which is God's power to save. (Romans 1:16). But if they do not learn to handle aright the word of God the same power can destroy both them and their listeners. (John 12:47,48). Who did Christ picture in Matthew 7:22 as standing before him in the day of judgment? Were they not preachers? And listen, what he said about them, "Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?" Here were these men who professed before the Lord that they had done many great and wonderful works in his name. They were zealous, while on earth, they went about doing things in the name of the Lord, or as they thought then that they were doing those things in the name of the Lord, even claimed of having performed miracles in the Lord's name! But, what did the Lord say? He said, in the next verse, "And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity." (Matthew 7:23). He would not receive them, he refused to even recognize them, and said that all they did was iniquity! Why? Because they were not according to the revealed will of the Father, God. (Matthew 7:21). There are many such preachers today, some of them are considered to be great world-famous, who are supposedly working miracles in the name of Christ and preaching to large audiences, and doing different things in the name of the Lord. But to their great astonishment they are, on the day of judgment, going to discover that all that they did was in vain and "as iniquity before the Lord, because what they did and preached was not according to the will of God, as He has revealed to man in his book, the Bible.

The apostle Paul is a good example of misguided zeal. His introduction is given in Acts the 9th chapter as, "And Saul, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the high priest. And desired of him letters to Damascus to the synagogues, that if he found any of this way whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound unto

Jerusalem." Later when he was converted, and when he stood before king Agrippa; as a gospel preacher, he told him, "I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. Which thing I also did in Jerusalem: and many of the saints did I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death, I gave my voice against them: And punished them oft in every synagogue; and compelled them to blaspheme; and being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted them even unto strange cities." (Acts 26:9-11). Saul was a religious man, he worshipped the true and the living God. He was full of zeal for God and His cause. But in his zeal he was actually kicking against the pricks. (Act 26:14). He was harming himself, because he was going against the will of God, while he thought he was doing God's will. He had then zeal for God but he lacked the knowledge of the truth. Later he wrote Timothy about himself, and said, "Who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief." (1 Timothy 1:13).

While there are some preaching today only for some material gains, and these are the ones who would preach anything for any church or organization, as long as they are being paid. The apostle Paul write about them in Romans 16:17,18 and said that such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ but their own belly. But there are some others who are sincerely and honestly preaching contrary to God's word, as the apostle Paul did before he realized his mistake on the road to Damascus. (Acts.) They have zeal like Saul (Paul) had, but they lack the knowledge of the word. They are like those of whom the apostle Paul wrote in Romans 10:12, "For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge." Being ignorant of the truth they are preaching error, while thinking that they are preaching God's word. Zeal to do God's work, preach and teach is good (Titus 2:14), but if it is without the knowledge of God's word then it can be dangerous, and can and will lead one, and many others, into eternal destruction. (Matthew 7:22,23). I challenge you to examine what to preach in light of the word of God.

The Elders And Congregational Unity

Bob Duncan

(While we have finished our discussion of the qualifications of elders, something needs to be said about the duties and responsibilities of every member of the church to the eldership. The following editorial was originally published in the *Words of Truth* of March 31, 1978 under the title, "Unity in Matters of Judgment". Please read it carefully.)

A great dictum of the Restoration Movement is stated in the following words: "In matters of faith, unity; in opinion, liberty; and in all things, charity." We would do well to repeat this from time to time, and be reminded of its implications. Perhaps it is superfluous to point out that matters of faith are those things believed because they are clearly revealed in the Bible, for "faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Romans 10:17). Matters of opinion are those things concerning which one may have formed a judgment, and yet concerning which the Bible is silent. In such case, of course, each one is free to have his own opinion. It is a tragic mistake to treat matters of faith as if they were nothing more than matters of opinion; and it is also tragic to treat matters of opinion as if they were matters of faith.

And yet there is a sense in which all members of a given congregation must maintain unity, even in matters of judgment or opinion. "Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the *same judgment*" (I Corinthians 1:10). This is not to say we can all think alike in matters of judgment; it is rather admonishing that there be a harmony and unity of action, even in matters of judgment.

It is easy for us to see why there must be unity in matters of judgment in each congregation. If such did not prevail, it would be impossible to have an orderly worship period or an effective program of work. The hour at which the church begins its

worship on the Lord's day is a matter of judgment, but each member of the congregation is not at liberty to begin at whatever hour his own personal judgment dictates. The number of songs to be sung, and the number of verses of each song are matters of judgment, and doubtless there are differences of opinion with reference to these in practically every congregation. Even so, there must be unity and harmony of action in singing the songs. Who is to preach in meetings, and how long they are to last are matters of judgment. Whether to build a meeting house, what kind to build, how best to use it, whether to have a bus program, what the busses are to be used for, etc., are all matters of judgment. Different ones are bound to have different opinions about these matters. And yet there must be unity with reference to each one.

In *matters of faith* we can be united when everyone submits to the word of God. How can we be united in *matter of judgment or opinion*? We can be united in matters of judgment only if all in a given congregation will submit to the judgment of some in that congregation; and the Bible tells us to whose judgment we are to submit. "Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you" (Hebrews 13:17). R.C.H. Lenski, commenting on this verse says it refers to the fact that "one yields, gives up, when he has a contrary opinion." Every member of the congregation, even though he may have a contrary opinion, is to yield or give up to the judgments of the eldership. Brother Rex A. Turner, Sr., writing in the 1977-78 *Gospel Advocate Annual Lesson Commentary*, has made the following excellent observation:

"Elders are responsible for church policy. Often murmurings and misunderstandings arise in a congregation over matters of mere policy. The times for meeting on Lord's day and on the weekdays is a matter of policy. The use that outsiders will be allowed to make of the church building—for funerals, weddings, and public or private school systems—are in the realm of policy. The use of an organ in the building for a wedding is a matter of policy. . . . The point of emphasis is,

that the elders should lead the church in the development of a set of rules relative to matters pertaining to policy."

Needless to say, in practically every congregation there would be those whose judgment would differ from that of the eldership. One may differ with the judgment of the eldership because he does not have access to all the facts in the case. He may differ because he has not taken the time to study and investigate the matter as thoroughly as have the elders, or because his knowledge of the scriptures and his experience in making such judgments are limited. Or he may differ with the eldership in a given situation because the elders have used poor judgment, and his judgment is better. In any case, however, every member of the congregation must yield to the eldership in matters of judgment. This is God's plan for unity in *matters of judgment*. God's plan for unity in *matters of faith* is for everyone to yield to the scriptures. To reject God's plan for unity in either realm is to set oneself over against God.

Behold, I Come Quickly

Rayhawk

"But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father". (Mark 13:32).

The above passage indicates that only the Father knows the day and hour Jesus will return to judge the world. Not even Jesus knows! Since Jesus himself said he did not know, any passage we find in the New Testament which indicates a time limit would not be a passage talking about his literal coming in the clouds to destroy this world and judge mankind. After all, if Jesus does not know when he is returning, he could not very well say, "Behold, I come quickly," could he? The word "quickly" is an adverb of time. The Greek word, *tachu*, means "shortly, without delay, soon, suddenly, readily, or quickly." It is used in passages that always mean a short time. "Agree with thine adversary quickly" (Matthew 5:25). "And go quickly, and tell

his disciples" (Matthew 28:7). "She arose quickly, and came unto him". (John 11:29). "...else I will come unto thee quickly". (Revelation 2:5). "Surely I come quickly; Amen". (Revelation 22:20). The word is never used in the New Testament to indicate a long period of time such as 500 or 2000 years !

If we find a passage in the New Testament which states Jesus will return shortly or quickly, it cannot be talking about a coming in our future which only the Father knows about, but must be talking about a coming which transpired in the first century. Since the Holy Spirit was sent to tell the apostles and prophets things to come, whatever they revealed would be what Jesus spoke. (John 14:18; 16:13). But, Jesus did not know the day nor hour. So, when a time is given as being in their lifetime, it cannot be his literal coming in judgment for we know that has not taken place. Whatever coming it was, it has already happened, because the Holy Spirit said it would and it took place in the first century. That coming was not a literal coming but the coming of Jesus in judgment upon Jerusalem in A.D. 70.

"But when they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another : for verily I say unto you, Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel, till the Son of man be come". (Matthew 10:23). This passage is stated by Jesus to the apostles. He said they would not have covered the cities of Israel before he came. This passage cannot refer to a second literal coming, but must refer to the fall of Jerusalem and Jesus' coming through the Roman army.

"For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works. Verily I say unto you. There be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom". (Matthew 16:27, 28). When you compare this passage with Mark 8:23-9:1 and Luke 9:26, 27 you can see Jesus in speaking of the completion of his kingdom on earth during the lifetime of his disciples standing before him at that time. Verse 27 may confuse the reader until he compares the language found in Matthew 24:30, 31; Mark 13:26, 27; and Luke 21:27, 28. These are time passages that relate to the destruction of Jerusalem. The kingdom was established on Pentecost and

saints were in it before A.D. 70, but it was not perfected (*teleios*, I Corinthians 13:8-10; Ephesians 4:11:13) until this coming of Jesus. (Acts 2:14; Colossians 1:13; Revelation 1:9).

Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand". (Philippians 4:5). The phrase, "at hand" is from the Greek word, *eggus*, and means to bend the arm so that the hand is near. It came to mean near, at hand, nigh, ready. This word is found in thirty passages and always translated as nigh, near, ready, or at hand. Once, in Acts 1:12 it is rendered "from" in the KJV but from the context means near. This passage indicated Jesus was at hand or near in his coming. This cannot have reference to a coming in our future. It must refer to a coming in the lifetime of the Philippians. Besides, a time limit is put upon it and since no one knows when Jesus is coming back literally, it has to refer to his coming in A.D. 70 which was known by given *signs*. (Matthew 24:3, 30).

"For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry". (Hebrews 10:37). The expressions "a little while" and "not tarry" puts this coming in the framework of the first century. It refers to a known coming which cannot be that one spoken by Jesus in Mark.

"Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord... Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts : for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh". (James 5:7, 8). Since Jesus did not know when he would come according to Mark, this coming has a time limit and must be accepted as a coming that was nigh or near for those James wrote to. Some might say the expression "nigh" is figurative and 1000 years is but a day to God. But, James isn't speaking to God, he is speaking to men. The word "nigh" is from the Greek word *eggizo* and is never used to indicate 1000 years. In fact, it is the same word used in Matthew 3:2 and 4:17 "for the kingdom of heaven *is at hand.*" If it means 1000 years in James it would have to mean 1000 years in Matthew ! Are we ready to accept that error ?

In Revelation 2:5, 16; 3:11 and 22:7, 12, 20 Jesus says he will return quickly ! Mark 13:32 says he doesn't know the day nor hour, only the Father. Yet, in Revelation he tells John, the Ephesians, Pergamos, and the church at Philadelphia that he is

coming quickly. The quick return must be his coming in judgement upon Jerusalem and the temple. (Matthew 24:1-35). It cannot refer to a literal coming to end the world and judge mankind, for Jesus does not know when that is! To make these passages apply to a future coming is to twist them out of context, make words into things they do not mean, and miss the entire meaning and application of Revelation!

Other passages to consider in this study are Matthew 24:3, 27, 30, 31; 26:64; Mark 8:38-9:1; 13:24-31; Luke 9:26, 27; 17:20-37; 19:41-44; 21:7, 20, 27, 28; John 21:21-23; Acts 2:20; 3:19, 20; 6:13, 14; Romans 13:11; 16:20; I Corinthians 1:7, 8; 13:1-10; Philippians 4:5; Hebrews 10:37; 12:22-29; James 5:7, 8; I Peter 4:7, 13, 17; I John 2:18; Revelation 1:1, 3; 3:11; 22:6, 10.

Notice the ending of Revelation 22:20, 21: "He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come Lord Jesus. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen." Jesus told John he was coming quickly. To that remark, John, understanding the impact of the word "quickly" said, "Even so, come Lord Jesus." John was not asking Jesus to come 2000 years later, but right then! Since Jesus did not know when he would come back in Mark 13:32, this quick coming must refer to one he knows about and recognizes it will be quickly. That is the only interpretation of these words.

Blessings Of Being A Christian Only

E. Claude Gardner

As a Christian, one has countless reasons to rejoice. One enjoys these blessings as a Christian:

1. He is in Christ and the church where there is salvation. "Rejoice in the Lord." Phil. 3:1.
2. He is a new creature with all of his past sins forgiven. 2 Cor. 5:17.
3. He has fellowship with God, Christ and the Holy Spirit and he is also a partner with other Christians. I John 1:3.

4. He has the privilege of worshipping God "in spirit and truth." John 4:24.

5. He has the opportunity to render great service. He can teach his neighbor the will of God. Rev. 22:17.

6. He can enjoy a full measure of happiness for Jesus brought us the abundant life. (John 10:10).

7. He has hope now and forevermore. "Rejoice in hope ***." Rom. 12:12.

These blessings make us happy, zealous, lovable, calm, stable, useful and obedient. Why not be a Christian? You will be glad when you do so.

When one who hears the gospel of Christ, believes it and then is led to repentance and baptism upon a confession of faith in Christ, he becomes a Christian and a Christian only (Acts 2:38; 8:26-39; 22:8-6). It requires more than obedience to the Lord's way to be more than a Christian. In the divided state of Christendom people claim to be Christians but then a label is worn to identify the particular "brand" of Christian they purpose to be. They claim the name Christian but "Plus" another name that is human in origin. The "Plus" religious name may be designed after a man, a Bible doctrine, or a form of church government.

Why not wear the name "Christian" without adding any other designation? Please consider these reasons for being a Christian only :

1. We Honour Christ. By wearing the name Christian we honour Christ. Each time we pronounce the name we of necessity speak the name of Christ. Since Christ is Saviour, it is reasonable that men should honour him by wearing his name. He is to be pre-eminent in all things. (Col. 1:18). His name is "above every name" Phil. 2:9.

The church is the bride of Christ. (Rom. 7:4; 2 Cor. 11:2). It is inconceivable that any thoughtful person married to Christ would really consider wearing the name of another. In human affairs it is understood that the bride takes her husband's name and she does it with joy and with the desire to honor him.

"Nothing in a name" we are advised. How can this be? Luke records, "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." Acts 4:12.

2. It is Udenominational. The "ecumenical" idea has an appeal to some who declare they are tired of division. One barrier to unity is the name by which men are called. Names with much tradition attached to them as well as any other human names are responsible in part for division. One barrier to unity is the name by which men are called. Names with much tradition attached to them as well as any other human names are responsible in part for division. Party names foster division. Partyism is condemned (1 Cor. 1:10-16). The world can never be united on any denominational name. The only name on which it could even unify is the name Christian.

3. We Follow the Bible Example. In fulfillment of an Old Testament prophecy that God's people would be called by "a new name" (Isa. 56:5; 62:2), the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch". Act 11:26. King Agrippa said to Paul, "almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian." Acts 26:28. Peter declared, "Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf." (1 Pet. 4:16).

We cannot improve on the name God's people used in the beginning of Christianity. When we wear the name Christian, we are in the company of Paul, Peter and the other inspired apostles.

God's Precious Promises

Bobby Key

"Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature . . ." (2 Pet. 1:4.) this great verse is the source of great joy, assurance and consolation to the child of God.

Many of the world's problems seem to have no human solutions. But "the gloomier the outlook, the brighter the uplook"; the darker the night, the brighter God's promises. God assures us in His word that His "hand is not shortened, that it cannot save." (Isaiah 59:1). For every command there is a promise—for every human need there is a promise to meet that need.

We can be sure of God's promises. "The Lord is not slack concerning his promises, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to usward, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance." (2 Peter 3:9). "God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?" (Numbers 23:13). "Fathful is he that called you, who also will do it." (1 Thessalonians 5:24)

There are thousands of promises in the Bible. The exact number is not important. The important thing to remember is that God's promises are sure. They are given to you and me. "My God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus." (Philippians 4:19.) "How much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?" (Matthew 7:11.) "They that seek the Lord shall not want (lack) any good thing." (Psalm 34:10.) With these promises before us how much should one worry about life's daily needs?

God has promised salvation through his son, Jesus. He came to seek and to save the lost. He is the author of salvation to all them that obey him. (Hebrews 5:8-2.) "Wherefore he is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them. The sin problem is solved when we obey the Lord and place our confidence in Him to keep His word.

God promised his people "that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them that are called according to his purpose." (Romans 8:28.) We can live a successful and victorious life. "Now thanks be unto God, which causeth us to triumph in Christ." (2 Corinthians 2:14.) "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." (Philippians 4:13.) "He

is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless . . .” (Jude 24.)

God has promised us wisdom in solving our problems. (James 1:5). He has promised to be with us in life and in death. (Matthew 28:20). He will never leave us or forsake us. God has promised a way of escape in temptation. (I Corinthians 10:13.)

We even have the promise from the Father that one day we shall see final victory over that old enemy, death itself. “Death is swallowed up in victory, O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? . . . Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.” (I Corinthians 15:54-57). The Lord is even now preparing your home in heaven with all the saints of all ages. (John 14:1-6). In that happy place “God himself shall wipe away all tears from our eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away. . . . Behold, I make all things new . . . He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my people” (Revelation 21:4-7).

Yes, God will keep his promises! “In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began.” (Titus 1:2.) The faithful child of God has “an inheritance incorruptible and underfiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven.” (I Peter 1:4). Thank God for his precious promises!

Forgetting Those Things

Roy Fuller

The great Apostle Paul who was no stranger to abuse, mistreatment, persecution, and often the very threat of death is a great source of inspiration to the weary Christian sojourner as he writes: “Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus”. (Phil. 3:13-14). Except for Christ himself perhaps no other man

has had so much to forgive and forget as the beloved apostle, and yet, it was only by the grace of God and the power of Jesus Christ that he was able to do so. Thank God we have access to that same grace and power today. (Rom. 5:2). The problem for so many of us today is the inability to "forget those things which are behind"; thus we are greatly hindered in our forward progress.

In the human family it is often the case that mothers and fathers, sisters and brothers are at odds with one another and remain so because of the inability to forgive and forget. The insult or injury may be trivial in nature but it divides and alienates. It festers and grows like a cancerous malignancy until permanent and irreparable harm is done to the relationship. The body of Christ is not spared the devastating effects of this basic human weakness.

Sometimes I wish that we could turn off our memory just as quickly and easily as we turn off our TV sets. Realizing however that we cannot, our only recourse is to pray for the strength that only God can supply. Paul said: "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me". (Phi. 4:13). Now wouldn't it be just wonderful if we could have absolute control over our memory? We could just forget all of our sad and unhappy experience, the unkind words and insults. We could remember all of the precious moments of joy and elation, all of the good and none of the bad. But alas, "'tis not to be so in this life, because this is a basic human characteristic. We will not have this problem in the eternal abode, but here on earth we have to cope with ourselves as we are and with our fellow man as he is.

Since the characteristic of forgiveness is divine in nature, we recognize that we must attain to some degree of the divine nature if we are to forgive at all, and the greater the attainment the better. Peter tells us that we are made "partakers of the divine nature" through faith and obedience to Jesus Christ. (II Pet. 1:1-5). He also tells us that we can "grow in the grace and knowledge of the our Lord and Saviour". (II Pet. 3:18). He further tells us that this growth is to be attained by partaking of the sincere milk of the word. (I Pet. 2:2).

May God help us all to attain that measure of grace whereby we can say with the Apostle Paul: "Forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forth to those things which are before." Brethren, that which is before us is the great mission of the church to preach the gospel of Christ to every soul on this planet in our generation. Beloved, that is more important than you or I, vastly more important than our present problems or hangups, or anything that has ever happened in the past. Let us all petition the Lord on bended knee to give us the grace and strength to forget the past, forget ourselves, exalt Christ, and get on with the business of evangelizing the world. (Mk. 16:15-16; Matt. 28:18-20), for therein will we find the true purpose of Christianity and attain for ourselves the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

On Laying Up Treasures In Heaven

W.A. Holley

Our Lord Jesus Christ, says, "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal". (Matthew 6:19-21).

Scholars say that "break through" means, literally, to "dig through." The thought is that a thief could, using a knife or trowel, dig through the dried mud and wattle of those primitive houses, in about a half an hour or less time, and take away whatever treasure there may have been cached therein. Hence, it is essential for children of God to understand that all earthly treasures are always in danger of being lost, either through negligence, or thievery, or calamity. And if by no other means, when one leaves this world, one cannot carry his earthly treasures with him (I Timothy 6:6-10). In a very true sense, we save only what we have given to the Lord!

To lay up treasures in heaven, we must set our affection on spiritual things. The apostle Paul wrote, "If ye then be risen

with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth". (Colossians 3:1-2).

If we wish to lay up treasures in heaven, we must SEEK the kingdom of God first. (Matthew 6:33). The thought is, we must let the will of God and the kingdom of God occupy the uppermost place in our thoughts and affections. To put the kingdom of God first involves our money, our material wealth. But it involves much more than our earthly treasures; it requires the proper use of our time and talent, as well.

Furthermore, to lay up treasure in heaven comprehends the doing of the will of God—obeying his commandments. From the pen of the beloved John, we read these words: "And hereby do we know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him". (I John 2:3-4).

"Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city". (Revelation 22:14).

We must understand that God keeps our record: somehow, he maintains a close scrutiny over every aspect of our lives, our words and deeds. We may think that the Internal Revenue Service keeps a close check on our financial affairs, but be it remembered that God is an even closer observer. God Almighty is aware of each member of the human family, whether good or bad. (Philippians 4:3; Revelation 13:7-9; 20:11-15). Paul wrote, "Not that I desire a gift: but I desire fruit that may abound to your account". (Philippians 4:17).

It is here suggested that "your account" is ever in the full view of God. It is unlikely that you will ever give too much to the Lord. Let us, therefore, be generous, free-hearted, magnanimous, marked by abundance and ample proportions, in our giving to the cause of the Lord.

"But this I say, He that soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly: and he that soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully. Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let

him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver". (II Corinthians 9:6-7).

We should not be ashamed for others to know how much we contribute to the Lord, although we should not wish to parade it before the world. (Matthew 6:1-4). Ananias and Sapphira, Acts 5:1-11, were unwilling for others to know what they gave, but the Lord knew just the same.

Postures Toward Leadership In The Church

Via Words Of Truth

Attitudes range from worship to complete defiance of leadership. Both extremes are wrong. Peter would not allow Cornelius to worship him. When Cornelius "fell down at his feet, worshiped him," Peter "raised him up, saying, stand up; I myself also am a man" (Acts 10:25). The Judaizing teachers at Corinth sought to discredit the apostleship of Paul. He reminded them, "Ye are our epistle, written in our hearts, known and read of all men" (II Cor. 3:2). Since the day of Cain, the impenitent sinner has hated the righteous and the messengers of righteousness. He has been instrumental in replacing gospel preachers for those who would scratch his itching ears (II Tim. 4:3).

Leadership is deified in some churches. The truth is every person has clay feet. No one has reached the point of perfection. In spite of this fact some look upon certain ones as being unable to do any wrong. If and when the devoted's idol falls, he falls by the wayside. This failure in faithfulness comes about because more faith is placed in man than in Christ. Too often leadership cultivates such a posture. Preaching self molds such idolizing.

We must take the inspired counsel of Paul. He said, "Be ye imitators of me, even as I also am of Christ" (I Cor. 11:1). The good characteristics of our leaders we must follow. The Christian must refuse to conform to evil. Some of our greatest leaders have shown their clay feet at least at one point in life. All have

exhibited some human failing in moral strength. However, we must not lose faith in God or become disgruntled regarding the state of men.

Today there are many efforts to divest leadership of all respect and honor. Power-hungry men continually stir unrest and rebellion against the elders. They seek to get the preacher to line up with them. If he refuses, they seek to undermine his influence for good and engineer efforts to remove him from the pulpit. The underlying causes are jealousy and envy. James revealed, "For where jealousy and faction are, there is confusion and every vile deed." (Jas. 3:16). Where there is no faithful or stable leadership, this kind of condition exists more than not.

Women are the most faithful, working and sound force in many churches. They are a great blessing to the cause of Christ. However, as is the case with most issues of society, *the church is influenced to some extent by the "Women's Lib."* We know of congregations without elders because the women will not submit to them, and continually cause unrest.

Many want leadership based on their political leadership. This simply means they want to appoint leaders who appeal to the whims and fancies of the majority of the church. On this basis leadership would change about every three months as the whims change. According to this view of leadership, Jesus was the world's greatest failure in leadership.

What is the position of mind God would have us to hold with reference to leadership in the Lord's body? "Esteem them exceedingly highly in love for their work's sake." (1 Thes. 5:13). The above is said in reference to "them that labor among you and are over you." This clearly refers to the elders. In this passage Paul also says the membership of the church is to know the leadership. Some effort is to be made to know them personally. It is impossible to have a personal esteem of those you do not know.

We must recognize the elder's right as well as his responsibility to rule over the flock (Heb. 13:17). We must not let the society's rebellion to authority in the home, school, and civil affairs affect our responsibilities as Christians to submit to God-designated authority.

The man who preaches the gospel should have the right to "lead about a wife that is a believer" (I Cor. 9:5). This certainly means he has the right to a family. He has the right to financial support in keeping with the position he holds and the responsibilities he has to support his family. His family needs food, clothing, shelter, recreation and education. Paul asked questions concerning the right of the soldier to wages, the husbandman to fruit from his vineyard, the herdsman to eat of his flock. He reminded them of the law of Moses concerning the right of the ox to eat while treading out the corn. (I Cor. 9:7-9). When brethren bargain to see how cheap they can get a preacher, they have not grasped the import of Paul's preaching. They do not have proper esteem of the preacher nor his work.

We need more faith in God and his word and less in the world and its philosophy of life. Let us seek first the church and the righteousness of God. (Matt. 6:33). May we love God with all of our heart, soul and mind and our neighbours as ourselves. (Matt. 22:37-38).

A Whitewash Or A Renovation ?

Dillard Thurman

When a house has become delapidated, with its foundation crumbling and its support structure rotten, a fresh paint job is not going to save it! It's foolish to think a coat of whitewash is going to correct the hidden defects: it only disguises the real causes of destruction. Therefore when the Building Inspector examines the building, he doesn't spend much time checking the paint job! He is interested in structural strength and soundness! He hunts the hidden parts, probes the foundation, examines the sills, and checks the joists. Inspectors know the outward appearance won't disclose the actual state of the building.

An examination of our lives must be along these same lines! Outward appearances can be deceiving, or the inner strength is all-important! You would not treat lung cancer with a Band-Aid; nor a liver infection with cosmetics; nor treat a serious heart trouble with brighter nail polish! When you have a serious

malady, you want to get to the heart of the problem with remedial attention and care! Facing a matter of life or death, you want to bypass the veneer of social standing, educational attainments, and cultural polish! The worth of stocks and bonds, assets and holdings, and bank deposits holds little interest then. The need is for health: not outward show or pretense!

The Place for Structural Strength

The strength and true worth of a house lies in its structural soundness; not in a fresh paint job! Whitewash will not hold a house together! Jesus very pointedly emphasized this: *"Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock."* (Mt. 7:24-25). If we are to stand the test of the judgement, we must have far more than outward appearance: we must be built upon the Rock! Of the saints, Paul said they were *"built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; in whom the whole building fitly framed together groweth unto a holy temple in the Lord: in whom ye also are builded for an habitation of God through the Spirit."* (Eph. 2:20-22). This structure is far more important than a flashy exterior! We shouldn't be thinking of a whitewash when we evaluate it! Peter said, *"Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ."* (1 Pet. 2:5). This relationship with God should preclude and cheap hypocrisy! We must look to inner strength and character!

No exterior application hides inner defects from the Lord. *"All things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do."* (Heb. 4:13). The Lord looks on the heart, and from that fount comes either righteous or evil things. *"For from within out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornication, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: all these things come from within, and defile the man."* (Mk. 7:21-23). Washing and painting the outside will never purify the heart! It takes far more than a paint job! Cheap hypocrisy only compounds the trouble,

Outward Appearance Are Deceiving

It is easy to become too concerned with outward appearances. The real evaluation of worth is within. God pointed this out when Israel was to have a king: *"For man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart."* (1 Sam. 16:7) This weakness in the scribes and Pharisees brought forth the most stinging rebuke from the Lord. *"Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess. Thou blind Pharisee, cleanse first that which is within the cup and platter, that the outside may be clean also."* (Mt. 23:25-26). They had the holiest pretense and show, but their hearts were rotten to the core! But more was to come—*"For we are like whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and all uncleanness. Even so ye also appear to be righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity."* (vs. 27-28). It would take more than whitewash to remedy their condition! They were rotten to the core, and their whole structure was unsound. They needed more than a touch-up of paint!

They Loved the Praise of Men

Herein lay the cause of their rejection of the Saviour! *"Nevertheless, among the chief rulers also many believed on him; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue: for they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God."* (Jno. 12:42,43). The Pharisees were long on pretense: *"But all their works they do to be seen of men. . . . They love the uppermost rooms at feasts, and the chief seats in the synagogues, and the greetings in the markets, and to be called of men, Rabbi, Rabbi."* (Mt. 23:5-7). Have you observed this attitude among the clergy in our day? Is it any wonder that Jesus warned, *"Beware the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy"* (Lk. 12:1)? Men are prone to reach for the whitewash to hide their weakness: but this does not strengthen the moral fiber! Nor is sin covered by pretense of righteousness, *"And be sure your sin will find you out."* (Num. 32:23).

Men seek to whitewash their lives by ostentatious display and pretentious rituals, and in this way they "play to the grandstand". (Gal. 6:12; Col. 2:23). *"Be not deceived; God is not*

mocked. (Gal. 6:7). He still looks on the heart, and is not blinded by a paint job! The display of pageantry does not influence Him. The vanity of man still clambors for chief seats and lofty titles, but God is judging *character*! Our modern Diotrophes still loves to have preeminence in the church, and let the widows and orphans scurry for shelter! Many follow the course of Ananias and Sapphira, giving little but claiming all; but before the church they scurry for the "Amen corner." There are splendid paint jobs on condemned buildings! The true worth is to found within! Who has committed himself to the Lord without pretense?

More Than a Cosmetic Application

Conversion is for more than a cosmetic application! It demands an inner change! To saints in Colosse, Paul wrote: "*For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.*" (Col. 3:3). This is the total cost of remodeling the old man! So Paul concluded, "*Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; be hold, all things are become new.*" (2 Cor. 5:17). This is no superficial application of white-wash! Notice what it did for Paul: "*I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life that I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.*" (Gal. 2:20). Paul was not willing to be judged as a pretender, white-washing his past. Rather, "*By manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.*" (2 Cor. 4:2). His life was an open book: "*Ye know from the first day I came to Asia, after what manner I have been with you at all seasons.*" (Acts 20:18). Paul didn't camouflage nefarious needs with sanctimonious hypocrisy! He was a simple, forthright disciple of Christ, striving to please God. He was not interested in covering weaknesses with whitewash! He wanted to so live that all men could see, and follow his example (1 Cor. 11:1).

Far too much concern has been given to reputation to the neglect of *character*! Reputation is what people think we are: character is what God knows we are! Though we may fool all men, we can never deceive God! We may "put up a front" before our fellowman, and fool many; yet God is searching the heart and has a true evaluation of our real worth. It will take more than whitewash to pass God's inspection of our lives!

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