

PART 1:

The Coming Anti-Christ: Jesus of Nazareth? A Tragic Case of Mistaken Identity?

Why do the nations rage and the people imagine a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD and against His Christ...He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh... Yet I have set my king upon my holy hill Zion. (Psalm 2:1, 2, 4, 6)

A most interesting aspect of this prophetic Psalm is that the opening inquiry of the writer is left unanswered. His searching question concerns the reason why the peoples of the earth are hostile to Christ when he returns to subject the earth to his benevolent rule. The word used in the query, "vain," means "having no real substance." The distinct implication of the question is that the world has imagined something that is not true, that its leaders are deceived in some way. In this work a possible reason for the opposition to Christ, which it is believed is related to the "vain" idea those opposing him will hold, is advanced. It is the sincere desire on the part of those producing this pamphlet [Antipas in the producing of this website], to inform the public as to the nature of the expectations of many modern Bible students, and the possible consequences that these views may ultimately have when Jesus returns to this earth. By becoming acquainted with the evidence, the reader will hopefully then be in a better position to form his own opinion on the validity or invalidity of the ideas being put forth respecting future events.

In recent years, there has been a tremendous increase in interest within christian circles as to what the Bible reveals about the course history will follow. One of the most prominent beliefs to emerge is the conviction that a single man will arise, the Antichrist, who will personally fulfil many prophecies in the Bible. With many this idea has become a basic tenet of their faith. An almost feverish anticipation has developed, fueled by a continuing stream of books and films, that this individual will soon appear in Jerusalem, demand to be worshipped and revered as a god, and quickly ascend to the position of supreme world dictator. There is almost complete agreement that these events are nearly upon us. This presents a very sobering and arresting challenge to the reader. Where will he give his loyalty when this personage manifests himself? Could it be, is there even a remote possibility, that Christ himself could be mistakenly identified as the Antichrist? Could the most serious blunder of history be the opposing of the real Christ as the fabricated Antichrist? Lest the reader dismiss the suggestion out of hand, we beg him/her to compare what the Scriptures reveal concerning Christ at His second coming on the one hand, with what many christian expositors believe this evil despot, Antichrist, will do, on the other.

The Supposed Future Antichrist of Popular Expositions

1. Antichrist will appear suddenly.

"The way in which this dictator is going to step onto the stage of history will be dramatic. Overnight he will become the byword of the world. He is going to be distinguished as supernatural..."¹

2. Antichrist himself, or his chief cohort, the False Prophet, will be a Jew.

"This person (The False Prophet), who is called the second beast, is going to be a Jew. Many believe he will be from the tribe of Dan, which is one of the tribes of the original progenitors of the nation of Israel."²

"Several other items lead Bible students to conclude that antichrist will be a Jew. It is hard to believe that Israel would receive a Gentile Messiah. No Gentile could pose as Christ with any success."³

3. Antichrist will claim that he is the Messiah of Israel.

"The antichrist will actually pose as the Messiah, he will claim Messianic titles and privileges... The antichrist is a person who will attempt to convince Israel that he is their long-anticipated Messiah."⁴

The Christ of the Scriptures At His Coming

1. Christ will appear suddenly.

"For as a snare shall it (his coming) come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth." (Luke 21:35)

2. Jesus is a Jew.

"Where is he that is born King of the Jews?" (Matt. 2:2)

Among Christ's immediate co-rulers will be Jews — the twelve apostles. "Ye also shall sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel." (Matt. 19:28)

3. Jesus will exercise his appointed office of Messiah.

"I will overturn, overturn, overturn it: and it shall be no more, until he come whose right it is; and I will give it him." (Ezek. 21:27)

"And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end." (Luke 1:33)

"And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn. (Zech. 12:10).

4. Antichrist will perform miracles.

"With (sic) the counterfeit arrives, he will perform miracles in order to convince Israel that he is the prophet like Moses. The man of sin sits as a priest in the temple and engages in a prophetic ministry."⁵

"In other words, Satan himself is going to give him fantastic power. He is going to be able to work all kinds of miracles. This is one reason that Christians should not get too excited when they see a miracle. It may not be a miracle from God. Satan is a miracle worker..."⁶

5. Antichrist will reside in Jerusalem.

"Jerusalem... the capital and centre of the world dictator's (i.e. Antichrist's) rule..."⁷

6. Antichrist will rebuild the Temple at Jerusalem and be involved with the service therein.

"The Antichrist will deify himself — just like the Caesars did. He will proclaim himself to be God. He will demand that he be worshipped and will establish himself in the temple of God. (2 Thess. 2:4) There is only one place where this temple of God can be and that is on Mount Moriah in Jerusalem, on the site where the Dome of the Rock and other Moslem shrines now stand. There are many places in the Bible that pinpoint this

4. Christ will perform miracles.

"Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing; for in the wilderness shall waters break out and streams in the desert." (Isaiah 35:5,6)

(Note: At the first coming of Christ, the prevalent opinion was that there was some external being, Beelzebub, prince of the devils, who was responsible for the miracles of Jesus. (Matt. 12:24) This belief in some external personage of evil pervades modern christendom today; and it is easy to see from the quote opposite to what agency the miracles of Christ at his second advent could be ascribed.)

5. Jesus will rule from Jerusalem.

"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killest the prophets, ... Ye shall not see me, until the time come when ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord." (Luke 13:34-35).

"Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion." (Psalms 2:6).

"...for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem." (Isaiah 2:3).

6. Jesus will rebuild the Temple at Jerusalem and be involved with the service therein.

"After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up: That the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles, upon whom my name is called, saith the Lord..." (Acts 15:16-17).

"And speak unto him, saying, Thus speaketh the LORD of hosts, saying, Behold the man whose

location as the one where the Jews will rebuild their Temple."⁸

"The Israelis will then be permitted to reinstitute the sacrifice and offering aspect of the law of Moses. This demands that the Temple be rebuilt, because according to the law of Moses, sacrifices can only be offered in the Temple at Jerusalem. Apparently all this will be done under the protection of the Antichrist of Rome. (P.S. The Arabs are not going to like this idea of rebuilding the Temple one bit.)"⁹

7. Antichrist will form a covenant with the Jews.

"The Romans under Titus did the destroying, so the coming prince would have to be someone out of the Roman culture ... (Others say that Antichrist must be a Jew, rather than someone of the Roman culture — see point 2 above. This shows the immense amount of unsubstantiated speculation that has been done.) This Roman prince will come to power just before the return of Christ. He will make 'a strong covenant' with the Israelis, guaranteeing their safety and protection. The word translated 'strong covenant' has the idea of a treaty or mutual protection pact."¹⁰

"It will be a covenant which will permit Israel to continue and renew her religious ceremonies including the building of a Jewish temple, and the reactivation of Jewish sacrifices."¹¹

name is The BRANCH; and he shall grow up out of his place, and he shall build the temple of the LORD: Even he shall build the temple of the LORD; and he shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon his throne; and he shall be a priest upon his throne: and the counsel of peace shall be between them both." (Zechariah 6:12-13).

7. Jesus will be a great leader and will re-introduce the Jews into God's true everlasting covenant.

"And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob: For this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins." (Romans 11:26-27).

"Incline your ear, and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David. Behold, I have given him for a witness to the people, a leader and commander to the people." (Isaiah 55:3-4).

"Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah:" (Jer. 31:31).

For the children of Israel shall abide many days without a king, and without a prince, and without a sacrifice, and without an image, and without an ephod, and without teraphim: Afterward shall the children of Israel return, and seek the LORD their God, and David their king..." (Hosea 3:4-5).

8. Antichrist will somehow defeat Russia when it attacks Israel.

"With the world balance of power dramatically in his favor and the world dazzled by Russia's defeat (in its attempt to invade Israel) the Antichrist will show his true colours. He will declare himself world dictator and move to crush all opposition."¹²

9. Antichrist's rule will commence with a proclamation and those who refuse to submit to it will be crushed.

"Ironically, the Mediterranean leader will begin his world government by proclamation. Using his consolidated position of power in the Middle East, **he will promise a new day of peace** and prosperity for all who recognize his leadership ... This man's absolute control politically, economically, and religiously will give him power **such as no man has ever had in human history**. His brilliance as a leader will be superhuman for he will be dominated and directed by Satan himself. But during his 3-1/2 year rule, he will ruthlessly crush all opposition."¹³ (Emphasis added)

8. Russia will be defeated by the power of Almighty God at a time very close to, if not coincident with, Christ's return to commence his rule on earth.

"Thus will I magnify myself, and sanctify myself; and I will be known in the eyes of many nations, and they shall know that I am the LORD." (Eze. 38:23).

The Bible clearly teaches that God, and not a human agency will destroy Russia when it moves south; the idea that some individual will do this is totally foreign to scripture.

9. Christ's rule will commence with a proclamation and those who refuse to submit to it will be crushed.

"And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people, Saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters." (Rev. 14:6-7).

"And he shall judge among many people, and rebuke strong nations afar off..." (Micah 4:3).

"To execute vengeance upon the heathen, and punishments upon the people; to bind their kings with chains, and their nobles with fetters of iron; to execute upon them the judgment written: this honour have all his saints." (Psalms 149:7-9).

See also Daniel 2:44; 7:14; Psalm 72:7,11

The reader may well reflect at this juncture, "I see clearly the possibility that due to the remarkable similarity between what Jesus will do at his Second Coming and what this supposed Antichrist, according to many writers, would do, that a case of mistaken identity could certainly result: Jesus could very definitely be opposed for the reason that many think him to be this very Antichrist that they had been told about. Two questions do arise, however: (1) By what authority is it stated that these expositions of a Coming

Antichrist are not sound? (2) Surely it is not being implied that good christian people, many of them currently holding this Antichrist view, will be among those deceived, if the above hypothesis is, in fact, true? Is the writer unaware that the Rapture will occur just prior to the manifestation of this Antichrist (according to present day expositions) and that they will be in heaven with Jesus during the reign of the Antichrist, and therefore could not *possibly* be deceived?"

The response to these eminently reasonable queries is as follows: (1) The entire basis for this Antichrist view is founded upon an interpretation of a portion of Daniel 9 -- the prophecy of the Seventy Weeks. This particular view was championed by Sir Robert Anderson in his book *The Coming Prince*, first published in 1881. This interpretation is discussed in detail in the second portion of this pamphlet.

Question (2) above involves of necessity a detailed discussion of another widely held tenet of faith, namely that an event known as "The Rapture" (or "The Great Snatch", as one evangelical writer termed it, is soon going to occur. What is this "Rapture", as it is commonly conceived, and upon what is it founded?

This popular notion has its foundation, ostensibly, in 1 Thessalonians 4:17:

Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air (or atmosphere): and so shall we ever be with the Lord.

This is interpreted to mean that believers will be caught up into the literal clouds high above the surface of the earth ("in the air") and taken off to heaven. One well-known writer on the subject states:

"The largest descriptive volume of the Tribulation is found in Revelation 6 through 19. Here is a fascinating revelation about Revelation. In the first five chapters of this book, the church is mentioned thirty times. In fact, in chapters 2 and 3, at the end of each letter to the churches, John says, 'Let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches'. This is repeated seven times. Then we have the beginning of the description of the Tribulation and there is not one mention of the churches. The church is conspicuous by its absence. Why? Because the church will be in heaven at that time. If you are a believer, chapters 4 and 5 describe what you will be experiencing in heaven."
(Lindsey, Hal, "The Late Great Planet Earth," Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, 1970, p. 143-144)

One further point should be made at this time with respect to the "rapture". There are currently three views as to when in the seven-year career of Antichrist this remarkable event will occur. (The reason for a period of seven years, rather than some other period of time, will be explained in Part 2 of this pamphlet.) The most popular view is known as

the "Pre- tribulation" rapture. Exponents of this understanding believe that believers will be taken to heaven just before Antichrist begins his seven-year reign. Then there is the "Mid-tribulation" exposition, which states that the church will be here on earth for the first half of Antichrist's rule, and then be taken to heaven by Christ. Lastly, there is the "Post-tribulation" rapture, in which the view is maintained that the believers will be on earth for the whole of the seven-year reign of Antichrist. The three views are depicted diagrammatically overleaf. The important point that the reader should file away in his mind for future consideration is that the question of when the rapture will occur is one upon which there is some disagreement. Hence, there exists a great deal of flexibility on this point. The possible implications of his flexibility will be examined presently.

On returning to 1 Thessalonians 4:17 for a moment, the key verse used to support the entire rapture theory, it is found that the commonly accepted evangelical interpretation is not borne out either by the verse itself or by other Scripture. The clear meaning intended is that a large body of people (here translated "clouds"-- see Hebrews 12:1) will be gathered by the power of God to a place of judgment here on this earth, in the very air or atmosphere. The place of judgment will most probably be somewhere in the Sinai Peninsula, from which Jesus and his redeemed brethren will proceed to Jerusalem. (See Deut. 33:2,3; Isaiah 63:1-6; Habakkuk 3:3; Obadiah 21; Matthew 23:39.) The theory that there will be two comings of Christ separated by a seven-year interval is one that has no basis in Scripture but is rather one that has been introduced to coincide with the theory of a Coming Antichrist.

Is there a possibility then that the following situation could develop?

The three theories of the rapture:

1. Christ takes believers to heaven where they spend the next seven years; Antichrist appears in Jerusalem and reigns for seven years.

2. Believers live on the earth for the first 3-1/2 years of Antichrist's reign; in the middle of his reign, they are taken to heaven by Christ, while on earth his reign is dreadful for the next 3-1/2 years, known as the "Great Tribulation". (The "Great Tribulation" is supposedly described in the book of Revelation, with the time periods there being understood as literal periods.)

Believers live on earth throughout the whole of Antichrist's reign; Christ appears at the end of the last week and gathers believers. Armageddon follows in which Christ subdues the nations.

A new Jewish leader has suddenly appeared in Jerusalem. The rapture⁽¹⁾ has not occurred. What will professing christendom conclude as this new leader commences his ambitious programs, apparently with supernatural power? Slowly, dimly, do we not begin to see a spectre taking shape on the horizon, giving us the answer to the question in Psalm 2? In their estimation this new ruler cannot *possibly* be Jesus, for he is expected to take the church away from the earth. There is only one conclusion left for them to reach: This new ruler must be the Antichrist, and the rapture *must occur either at Mid-tribulation or Post-tribulation*. Meanwhile, it is the duty of all sincere christians to prepare themselves to "witness" against this new dictator. For suddenly onto the world scene comes a new leader who:

⁽¹⁾It is the position of this publishing committee [Antipas] that those who will be called to judgment at Christ's appearing will be those noted in Psalm 50:5 -- "Gather my saints together unto me; those who have made a covenant with me by sacrifice." This covenant is the one God made with Abraham and his "seed" or descendants. Those who are outside this covenant are not counted as saints. The two positions, namely those who are adopted into the commonwealth of Israel and are included under the terms of the Covenants of Promise, and those who are not, are clearly delineated in Ephesians 2:11-13. Others, however sincere, are not named in this agreement. They have never been adopted into the family of Abraham, that is, become spiritual Israel, and therefore have no claim to the things promised. This, unfortunately, encompasses a large group of persons who believe that they are in the way of salvation, but are not so as defined by Scripture, our only reliable guide in this most important matter. One evangelical writer expresses his hope as follows:

"For us, as believers, our hope is different from Israel's . . . First there is a great distinction between God's purpose for the nation of Israel and His purpose for church, which is His main program today." (Lindsey, Hal, "The Late Great Planet Earth, pp. 139-142)

This contrasts starkly with the declaration of the apostle Paul:

"For this cause therefore I have called for you, to see you and to speak with you; because that for the hope of Israel I am bound with this chain." (Acts 28:20)

The Hope that the Bible holds out is that Israel will become the centre of the Kingdom of God with the faithful seed of Abraham (whether Jew or Gentile) as the rulers. The future of Israel and the future of the redeemed are inextricably linked.

1. Appears suddenly
2. Is a Jew
3. Claims that he is the long-looked-for Messiah of Israel
4. Has supernatural powers
5. Resides in Jerusalem
6. Commences the rebuilding of the Temple
7. Talks of restoring the Jewish nation to their position under the Covenant
8. Appears very near to the time when Russia was defeated
9. Promises the world a new era of peace and prosperity, but demands submission and commences military operations when his request is not complied with by the nations.

DOES NOT JESUS FIT IN EVERY PARTICULAR THE POPULAR CONCEPTION OF THE COMING ANTICHRIST? Can we not see that when he manifests his power, the religious leaders of the day will come to fear this political ruler and brand him as the long-awaited "Antichrist"?

And so, sad to relate, history will repeat itself. The first time, the professing religious people were expecting a Lion, and found a Lamb.

When Jesus therefore perceived that they would come and take him by force, to make him a king, he departed again into a mountain himself alone. (John 6: 15)

In fact, he *disclaimed* any right to rule in any sense at his first coming:

And one of the company said unto him, Master, speak to my brother, that he divide the inheritance with me. And he said unto him, Man, who made me a judge or a divider over you? (Luke 12:13,14)

When he would not be a king, but rather a Lamb, they would have no part of him, but demanded his crucifixion.

Now there are growing numbers of christians who expect Christ to take them to heaven while violent wars occur on the earth. Unfortunately they will experience instead a Jewish political Lion whom they will not recognize. They could find themselves warring against the real Christ who does not meet their preconceived specifications of what He should be like or what He should do at His advent. It should be noted that it was the very people who claimed that they were looking for the Messiah who opposed him at his first coming when he did not fulfil their preconceived ideas of what he should accomplish. When he does not fulfil their notions this time, such as their being taken to heaven, it is easy to see that it could be this group that will again oppose him.

There is a clear distinction then, as to how the Bible reveals the second coming and how many religious expositors view it. Even though the name Jesus is the same, it is *another* Jesus.

For if he that cometh preacheth another Jesus, whom we have not preached . . . ye might well bear with him (2 Corinthians 11:4).

Perhaps it comes down to the fact that his title is not understood. His name is Jesus ("Saviour"): *Thou shalt call his name Jesus: for he shall save his people from their sins* (Matthew 1:21). However, his *office* is that of The Christ, The Anointed, The Messiah, which denotes his *national* position as ruler of the Nation of Israel. Many religious persons think that the term "Jesus Christ" is equal to, say, "John Doe". Such is not the case at all. This designation relates directly to his work—first as *Saviour* (from eternal death) of his brothers and sisters, and secondly as *National Deliverer* of the nation of Israel. When the significance of the name and office of Jesus is understood, the link between his death 2000 years ago and the rebirth of the Nation of Israel in our time is easy to comprehend; where this is not understood, confusion prevails.

A final practical question arises in connection with this Coming Antichrist idea: Who could this Antichrist be? It has been said that "Coming events cast their shadow before". What nation on this earth would have a leader who would befriend Israel (for the supposed Antichrist must be a leader of a country able to guarantee Israel, by terms of a covenant, safety for seven years), when this would immediately alienate those with whom the world economic power lies, namely, the Arabs? Would it be the United States? Russia? China? Europe (as is commonly suggested)? The Arabs themselves? What would any nation possibly have to gain by making a covenant with Israel? What nation could promise Israel that it would guarantee its survival? Would any of these nations support an individual wanting to be worshipped in a rebuilt temple in Jerusalem as god? The answer clearly seems to be that no human being could ever fulfil the necessary requirements of the supposed coming Antichrist. The only individual who could possibly perform the miraculous feats required would be Jesus himself, by the power of God Almighty. It is the very show of this power which will undoubtedly deceive those looking for Antichrist into thinking that Jesus is in fact he.

Objections

As the reader has worked through the above thesis, some objections may have arisen in his mind. Three possible objections are considered below:

1. Psalm 2 indicates that the kings of the earth fight against the LORD and against his Christ. Does not this show that they know who they are fighting against, and are not deceived into thinking that this new leader is the long expected Antichrist?

In Revelation 17:13,14 it is clearly pointed out that certain nations will resist the claims of Christ:

These have one mind, and shall give their power and strength unto the beast. These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them: for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings: and they that are with him are called, and chosen, and faithful.

The question being asked is whether they do this in knowledge or ignorance of whom they are opposing. An allusion to Psalm 2 is made by the early disciples in Act 4:23-27. The "kings of the earth" here are defined as being composed of both Jews and Gentiles. Did they oppose the LORD and His Christ in knowledge or ignorance of what they were doing, for the language is clear that they "set themselves against the LORD and His Christ"? The answer is clear: they opposed God and His Son in ignorance.

Which none of the princes of this world knew: for **had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of Glory** (1 Corinthians 2:8).

This shows clearly that this Psalm could very possibly apply at his second coming in the same manner as it did at his first coming; namely, referring to opposition to him in ignorance. A probable reason for this opposition is that they believe him to be the Antichrist.

2. Jesus is clearly a Jew. Is it not now true that many expositors identify Antichrist as someone from the Roman cult? Does not this destroy the above thesis?

It is true that many expositors identify Antichrist as a Roman. Some, however, say that he will be a Jew. Because, in our opinion, none of the prophecies used to support the Coming Antichrist concept refer to a future individual in any way, human imagination must fill in a number of gaps, which is the great danger in the entire concept. The details of this supposed Coming Antichrist are so plastic that they could very easily be moulded to fit the Christ of the Scriptures at his second coming by those anticipating the appearance of Antichrist.

3. Is not the Antichrist hypothesis only held by a very small percentage of the world's population? How could this small group influence the whole world?

It is true that the persons holding this view, taken as a percentage of the world population, are a minuscule proportion indeed. However, with a world devoted to the occult, astrology, UFOs, and soap operas, it is easy to see that should a Middle Eastern leader commence a campaign of spectacular military victories, all people would look for a solution to this new and disturbing enigma. Organized christianity would claim that it had predicted some time before that this exact situation would arise. No other philosophy or cult would have any answer. Religion now would be solicited for advice on how to handle the situation. Organized religion would, therefore, experience a tremendous

resurgence of influence during this period, among people with very divergent backgrounds.

In summary, this portion of the pamphlet has outlined the opinions currently extant among many evangelical writers on the subject of the Coming Antichrist. It has been pointed out that as a result of speculation on prophecies which, in our opinion, have nothing to do with a Coming Antichrist, the similarities between what this supposed individual would do, and what the Christ of the Scriptures will do at his Second Coming, are very striking -- striking to the point that when the "rapture", as commonly conceived, does not occur, and yet a new ruler, Jesus, appears in Jerusalem, the world at large could be very well induced by professing organized christianity into believing that he is the Antichrist. Objections have been considered, and it has been shown that it is the very elasticity in the views held with respect to this Coming Antichrist that could make an application to Jesus himself at His Glorious Appearance very feasible.

The conclusion of this portion of the pamphlet is this: We would do very well to investigate the bases for all predictions concerning a Coming Antichrist. It is particularly important at this time in history that we are neither deceived ourselves nor that we deceive others as to the nature of coming events. The warning of the apostle John speaks urgently to our generation:

Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God; because many false prophets are gone out into the world (1 John 4: 1).

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