Mormonism a Testimony Of the Christ

A Discourse by Elder Joseph W. McMurrin, Delivered in the Tabernacle, Salt Lake City, Sunday, October 31, 1909.

(Reported by F. W. Otterstrom.)

I have been requested, my brethren and sisters, by the presiding authority in this meeting, to occupy this very important position. I think the elders of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints can scarcely be placed in a position more calculated to make them conscious of their own weakness and of the need of the help of the spirit of the Lord. I have that feeling, my brethren and sisters, upon this occasion. I humbly pray the Lord to answer the prayer that has been offered, and grant that his spirit may direct the words that shall be spoken during our services this afternoon. We cannot hope to be benefited in relation to the things of God unless we worship under the inspiration of his Holy Spirit. We are taught in the holy Scriptures that it is the will of the Lord that those who worship God should worship him in spirit and in truth. I suppose those who are gathered together in this great building this afternoon have come with a desire in their souls to worship the Lord in this manner, this being the day that has been set apart by the commandment of the Lord, for the people to worship him. We have been directed of the Lord to come together in our solemn assemblies, upon the Lord's day, and seek unto him for help, and for strength, and for the inspiration necessary to enable us to comprehend his wonderful purposes, that will enable us to walk in the path in which he would have us walk.

I do not suppose that any of us feel that we are able of ourselves, independent of the help and inspiration of the Lord, to carry on his work, to declare his word acceptably to the Lord, or to the salvation of the peoples of the earth. We are all very weak. We all need divine assistance. We should all have a feeling of sympathy in our hearts for each other, and we should be willing upon all occasions to plead with our Father in heaven that his word might have free course, and we should pray that the men who stand up to preach his gospel might preach it—not in the enticing words of man's wisdom alone but in the power and in the demonstration of the Holy Spirit, that the hearts of men might be pricked, and that he brought to an understanding of the glorious work of salvation that God has set his hand to accomplish in the age in which we are living.

NEW DISPENSATION OF THE GOSPEL.

We believe, my brethren and sisters, as a people, that the Lord has revealed himself, and that in this age in which we live a gospel dispensation has been committed to men who are dwelling upon the earth, and that divine authority has been restored by our Father in heaven, by which authority men minister to their fellowmen the saving ordinances of the everlasting gospel. As a people we have been very much misunderstood because, I think, in part, of our belief in revelation from the Lord—in our present revelation. Of course the world generally—at least all Christendom in the world—believe that our Father in heaven has communicated his will at various times to the people who have dwelt upon the earth; and as a result of those various communications we have this great volume of Scripture, the holy Bible.

BELIEF IN THE BIBLE.

The Latter-day Saints believe the Bible to be the word of God, as far as it has been properly translated. If there are errors in the Scriptures, that have crept in through the lack of understanding or through wilful alteration on the part of men, we of course do not believe in such errors that may be found in the Scriptures; but we sincerely believe the truth as it was revealed anciently to the servants of God, and so far as that truth has been translated correctly and handed down to us in the holy Bible. Some men have been startled at the declaration that is made by one of the articles of faith believed by the Latter-day Saints, because of the announcement that "we believe the Bible to be the word of God as far as it is translated correctly." But there is no need of being startled because of the declaration in the article of faith which I make reference, for the learned men of the world have practically made the same announcement. It was but a few years ago, during 1880 and 81, that the learned men of the religious world became very much concerned in relation to the holy Bible and our present translation of it—the authorized version. I do not know that it would be correct to say that they became concerned in the 80's only; they had been concerned for a long period of time, but during those years they commenced a new translation of the holy Bible, and in time they gave to the English speaking peoples, particularly, what is known as the revised version of the Scriptures. That revised version was given because errors of translation had been found in the Scriptures. Information had come into the hands of the learned men of the world that was not in the hands of the men who gave this King James' translation of the holy Bible, and because of that increased information a feeling grew up among men who were students of the Scriptures, that there should be another translation. As a result of that feeling we have had given to us by the best learning and wisdom that could be found among the learned men of Great Britain, and the learned men of America, the revised version of the holy Scriptures. My brethren and sisters, this action of the wise and learned men of the world is a confirmation of the truth and inspiration, and wisdom manifested by the Prophet Joseph Smith in writing the articles of faith, when he made the statement to which I have referred regarding the holy Bible.

Many men are laboring under a misapprehension in regard to our reverence towards the Bible. Owing to their understanding that we believe also in other Scriptures, there has grown up in the minds of men, to a very great extent, the belief that we have displaced the old Bible by the new Scriptures that have come into our hands. It is very common to hear from those who are not of us, statements made regarding the belief of the Mormon people in a "golden Bible," a record that the Latter-day Saints claim was discovered by the founder of Mormonism—the Prophet Joseph Smith. When I speak of Joseph Smith as the "founder" of Mormonism, I would have it understood that I only speak of him in the sense that he established this work as he was directed by our Father in heaven, for we do not believe that any man has been the founder of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, but we do believe that it has been founded and organized by the will and revelation of our Father in heaven. We believe that the revelations that were necessary to the planting of Mormonism were given of God to the Prophet Joseph Smith, and in that way only we speak of him as the founder of this great Church. But we have not displaced the good old Bible.

THE BOOK OF MORMON.

We do, it is true, believe in other volumes of Scripture. We have them here upon this stand. There are three volumes—the Book of Mormon is the volume that is spoken of, in the world, as the "Golden Bible." I suppose it is spoken of in this manner because the testimony has been delivered to the world, by the Prophet Joseph Smith, and by chosen witnesses who were selected by the Lord God of heaven, to bear record concerning this book—that it had been translated from certain golden plates that were delivered to the Prophet Joseph Smith by an angel. After this translation had been made in the form that we have it now, the Lord selected these witnesses to give their testimony to the world that it had been correctly translated—translated by the gift and power of God. These witnesses, in giving their testimony, bear record that the truth of the sacred volume had been made known to them by the voice of the Lord, and that the record had been shown to them by an holy angel. They give their testimony, in most solemn language, to all the peoples of the earth—that they know of a certainty, and surety, that the work had come forth in the manner I have mentioned, and that they had received the commandment of God, our Father, to bear that witness to all men. Accordingly, we have in this Book of Mormon the testimony of these witnesses; and I would like to say upon this occasion that while these men did not remain with the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints—because they discovered some things that in their poor wisdom ought not to be, they gradually became discouraged. Through lack of faith they were unable to endure the troubles, and the persecutions, that arose in their path, and they fell away from the Church as an organization, but, thanks be to our Father in heaven, and all honor also, to the witnesses of the Book of Mormon, in that until their dying day, they all remained faithful and true to their testimony as given and recorded on the title page of the Book of Mormon. They never lost that testimony, they never related any other story concerning the coming forth of the Book of Mormon. They were frequently approached upon the subject, and upon their dying beds they gave anew, as they had at various periods during their life time, declared again and again, the truth of their testimony as delivered by them in the beginning, concerning the Book of Mormon. Whatever the opinion of men may be, concerning that testimony, we can say of a truth that their testimony has never been disproven. It stands in force and in effect today.

The information that has been gathered up by men who have traveled and who have studied ancient conditions, as they once existed upon this great continent of North and South America, has brought abundant evidence in favor of the Book of Mormon. The Book of Mormon declares, from beginning to end, that the Lord of heaven established certain peoples upon this continent, that they became mighty commonwealths, that they built great buildings, that they arrived at a high degree of civilization and then, through unbelief, and through transgressions, and through turning away from the voice of the Lord, just as the Bible describes people doing anciently on the other hemisphere, they dwindled away in unbelief. The remnants of those once mighty peoples are found today in North and South America, they are the American Indians. All the information that has come into the hands of intelligent men, who have made researches in relation to this civilization that once existed throughout this continent, is a confirmation of the truth of the record that has been given to the world as the Book of Mormon. Men may have sneered in times gone by, in relation to some of these things, but such an amount of evidence has been accumulated now that well informed men everywhere are ready to believe that there was, in the past, a highly civilized people living upon this continent, and that mighty empires flourished in this western world long ages before it was discovered by Christopher Columbus. There never has been found any man, among all the men of the world, who has been able to tell from whence came this civilization, or who the people were that built up these great commonwealths that have dotted the land, during ancient times, here in America. The Book of Mormon only tells that story.

As a people, we recommend the sacred volume to the thoughtful people of all countries, to Christian men and women everywhere. We recommend it because it is the word of God. We have discovered by investigation, by faith and by prayer, to our own satisfaction and conversion, that it is just what these witnesses declare it to be—a sacred history of the people of ancient America, preserved by the power of God, and translated by his power, through the Prophet Joseph Smith. That is the testimony of this congregation; that is my personal testimony. I do not bear this manner of testimony thoughtlessly or flippantly. I bear it in all solemnity, in all sincerity, feeling that I am under obligation, as a servant of the living God, to bear record to the truth, and to lift up my voice in defense of the work that God has set his hand to accomplish, and that he has preserved and brought up to its present standard. I do bear record that by the manifestations of the spirit of the Lord, I have been made to feel and know, in my whole being, that the Book of Mormon is the truth of God, and that it contains the fulness of the everlasting gospel.

THE BOOK OF DOCTRINE AND COVENANTS.

Then, we believe in another volume of Scripture—the book of Doctrine and Covenants. This book contains the revelations that were given by our Father in heaven to his servant and prophet Joseph Smith in the age in which we are now living. It is the law more especially to suit the conditions of the Latter-day Saints today; for conditions change, and under changed conditions, if people are to understand what the Lord would have them do, he must manifest and reveal to them his will, or they will not know what his will is. The testimony of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, in their conferences, at various times, is that this Book of Doctrine and Covenants contains sacred and holy revelations that have been given by our Father in heaven for the guidance of his Church in the age in which we are living. We have been called upon, at various times, to manifest by our uplifted hands, by the vote of the whole people, as they have been assembled in general conference, our acceptance of these precious revelations.

THE PEARL OF GREAT PRICE.

In connection with these revelations, we believe, also, in the inspired writings contained in this little volume, the Pearl of Great Price. This book contains some of the writings of the Prophet Moses, and the writings of the Prophet Abraham, as they were given to the Prophet Joseph and have been preserved in this manner. It contains also some of the writings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, wherein he relates the first visions, revelations and ordinations conferred upon him by the Lord God of Heaven, at the opening of this dispensation of the fulness of times. It contains also the articles of faith of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, as they were written under the inspiration of the Prophet Joseph. So we acknowledge to all men everywhere, and it is our business and our ministry, and we are under responsibility and obligation to bear record, wherever we have opportunity, that these volumes that I referred to are the word of God, just as sacred and binding upon the Latter-day Saints as the words that are contained in the holy Bible.

We do not displace the holy Bible when we make this declaration. We do not come in conflict with the words that are written in the Bible in relation to those who add to the word of God. Men sometimes appear to think that we are in conflict with the word of the Lord as given in the holy Scriptures, when we bear testimony that we believe in these sacred writings, and they quote this Scripture: "For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book,—if any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book." We believe that Scripture. We cannot conceive or anything that would be more in opposition to the mind and will of our Father in heaven than to attempt to add to this book of Revelation, for it should be known to all men, that this Scripture that I have read applies to the book of Revelation that was given to the Apostle John when he was banished for the testimony of the Lord Jesus, upon the Isle of Patmos. It should be remembered that some of the books of the New Testament had not been written when the apostle wrote the words I have read. His own gospel was written at a later date than the book of Revelation from which I have read. There was no such record as the New Testament in existence, at the time these words were given to the apostles.

Any man—declared the holy prophet, as he was lit up by the power of the Holy Ghost—that would attempt to add anything to what God has given, and had commanded him to give to the people, should be under condemnation; but there is not a word in this passage of Scripture—nor in any other passage of Scripture that can be found in the holy Bible—that in any way intimates that this revelation, or any other revelation that has ever been given to mankind, closed the voice of our Father in Heaven, and made it impossible for him to reveal anything more to the children of men. We have not added to the words of John the Revelator, but the Lord of heaven has given these now volumes of revelation—as it is his right to give. We would like to ask of all men everywhere: Can there be any human being that can actually feel within his soul that our God, the Creator, cannot now reveal his holy will and say to his people, and say to all the inhabitants of the earth, at his will and pleasure, "Thus saith the Lord?" If there be any man who entertains a view of this character, or any people entertaining such a view, then we cannot be in harmony with that people, for we make the declaration, and we feel within our souls that we speak the truth when we say to all men everywhere that our Father in heaven, the God of the human family, the Creator of the planet upon which we dwell, the Father of our bodies and our spirits, our Father in heaven, is a living God, that he lives and loves his children today as he did anciently; that he was a God of revelation in bygone times, when he spoke to Moses and the prophets, when he revealed himself to his Son, our Redeemer, the Lord Jesus, and to his apostles. He was a God of revelation then, and the Scriptures teach that he is the same yesterday, today and forever; that he is without even the shadow of changing. Everlasting is his name, the same always, and no respector of persons. The Latter-day Saints contend for this old faith that was once delivered to the saints. They make the declaration that our Father and our God stands ready now, as he has stood ready in all past ages of the world, to reveal his will, and be a God of revelation whenever the people were willing to receive revelation, whenever the people manifested that they had confidence and faith in the Lord, that he would hear, and that he would answer: "Knock and ye shall receive; seek and ye shall find; ask and it shall be given you." That is the doctrine of the Master. He understood the doctrine of the Father and the things necessary and essential to the salvation of men. So that we do not feel that we have in any way come in conflict with anything written in this book of Revelation, or in any other part of the holy Scriptures, when we bear testimony that the Father who revealed his will to all these prophets, and through them has given to the world this volume of revelation, is the same loving Father and God now that he was when these precious truths were given. But, instead of being in conflict with the word of the Lord, we are in more complete harmony with it than men can possibly be who teach that the God of the Bible who revealed the things that are in the Bible no longer speaks. Our statement and testimony is that he does speak; and as a result of his speaking, and his revelation, and his guiding hand, this work has been brought into existence.

ONLY ONE GOSPEL.

People sometimes believe that we not only have another Bible—which I hope I have made plain is not true—but that we have another way of salvation, that we have found or gotten up for ourselves a new way of getting back into the presence of our Father in heaven. This also is a misapprehension of the doctrines of the Latter-day Saints. We stand for the things that are written. I will call your attention, my brethren and sisters, to a little story in the Acts of the Apostles, wherein Peter and John, two of the apostles, as they were passing into the city of Jerusalem, found a man who had been lame from his birth. He was sitting at the gate asking alms of the people. "And he gave heed unto them"—to these two apostles, expecting to receive something of them—"then Peter said: 'Silver and gold have I none, but such as I have give I thee: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk;' and he took him by the right hand and lifted him up; and immediately his feet and ankle bones received strength; and he, leaping up, stood and walked and entered with them into the temple, walking and leaping and praising God." As well he might do—a man that had been unable to walk, a man that had been placed at the gate, unable to move, obtaining a livelihood by asking alms of the people as they passed to and fro; to be commanded to rise up and walk, and to find his ankle bones receiving strength, and life coming into his limbs—no wonder he went with them, leaping and rejoicing and praising the name of God, for this marvelous manifestation of his power, and for the healing that had taken place in his limbs, that had been useless from his birth. But the people did not feel well towards the apostles. One would think that such an evidence of the favor of our Father in heaven would have caused the people to look upon those men with reverence, and to say within themselves: Surely these men are of God, for without his power, such a marvelous thing could not have been wrought. Without taking up time to read the whole story—let it suffice to say that the apostles were thrown into prison. The people looked upon them as impostors. They were brought out of prison the following day, and questions were propounded by the people and the priests to the apostles, in relation to the miracle that had been wrought. Then Peter, filled with the Holy Ghost, said unto them: "Ye rulers of the people, and elders of Israel: If we this day be examined of the good deed done to the impotent man, by what means he is made whole, be it known unto you all and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, who ye crucified whom God raised from the dead, even by him doth this man stand here before you whole. This is the stone which was set at naught of you builders, which is become the head of the corner; neither is there salvation in any other, for there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we may be saved." So says Mormonism. After bearing record of the revelation that has been given in this great dispensation of the fulness of times, the raising up of prophets and of apostles, the raising up of special witnesses to bear testimony to the truth of the Book of Mormon—notwithstanding all this, Mormonism, with all the strength and power that can be found in it, makes the announcement and the declaration to the peoples of the earth everywhere, that all other names, in comparison with the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth—who was taken by the wise men, and the priests, and the soldiers, and the populace, and nailed to the accursed tree, as being unfit to live,—notwithstanding that, he is the Savior of men everywhere, and without him and without his name, there is no salvation. No more salvation in the name of Joseph Smith than there is in the name of Peter or John or any other apostle—not one whit. Peter and John were expounders of the gospel revealed by the Lord Jesus. Joseph Smith and those chosen to minister with him in this latter dispensation, have operated by the very same authority; but they all bow the knee to the Lord Jesus; they all understood, and understand today, that his is the only name given under heaven whereby man can be saved. I might call your attention to the word of the Lord given in our own age, in relation to this matter:

"And also unto my faithful servants who are of the high council of my Church in Zion, for thus it shall be called, and unto all the elders and people of my Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, scattered abroad in all the world, for thus shall my Church be called in the last days, even the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints."

That is the word of the Lord to the people of the Latter-day Saints, and yet, notwithstanding that this is the only Church in all the world named by revelation the Church of Jesus Christ, we are oftimes charged with having some other Savior than our blessed Redeemer. We want to say that this idea that has obtained to some extent among men, is entirely wrong; and we, like other men who believe in the mission of the Redeemer of the world, bow the knee to him and to him alone. All other men, even though acting by appointment from God are our fellow servants; all other men that have been endowed with authority are, to us, ministers and ambassadors of this man, the King of kings, the Savior of the world. We believe that in addition to having faith in the Savior of the world, we must yield obedience to his doctrines and to his gospel. I will read what that gospel is, in a simple story that is told in the holy Scriptures. It is a gospel story; it tells in detail what men did anciently who had the gospel taught to them, and it was taught by those who were called and chosen by divine authority. Listen to the story. Accept it, my brethren and sisters and friends, for it is all-important that we stand ready to yield our opinions and our judgment, and the teaching of our fathers of all the generations that have passed, to the word of the living God. His word will stand and endure forever, when all other things are shaken and when all other things are brought to naught. This is the word of the Lord, according to the Scriptures:

"Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria and preached Christ unto them, and the people with one accord gave heed unto those things which Philip spake, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did,—for unclean spirits were cast out, and other miraculous things were accomplished—"and when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women; and when the apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent onto them Peter and John, who laid their hands upon those baptized believers, and they received the Holy Ghost." So teaches this Scripture; and this same man, Philip, was constrained by the spirit of the Lord, commanded of the Lord, to go and attach himself to a chariot that was passing through the country, and he found a man reading from Esaias the prophet and he inquired if he understood what he was reading; the answer was this: "How can I except some man should guide me?" He desired Philip that he would come up and sit with him, and he did so and commenced to expound the Scriptures that the eunuch had been reading. "Then Philip opened his mouth and began at the same Scripture, and preached unto him Jesus; and as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water, and the eunuch said, See, here is water, what doth hinder me to be baptized? And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. And he commanded the chariot to stand still; and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch, and he baptized him."

We believe not only in the mission of the Redeemer, but we believe in the gospel that he taught among men. We believe in the doctrines that he commanded his apostles to teach. When Jesus sent his apostles out into the world, he gave them this commandment: "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel unto every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned."

We do not believe that any person has a right to the ordinance of baptism who does not first believe in the Lord Jesus with all his heart, like the eunuch did. We do not believe in baptism without genuine repentance has first come into the soul of the individual. We do not believe in infant baptism; but on the contrary know that it is offensive to the Lord, for he has so declared in the revelations he has given in our own time. Infant baptism is absolutely without warrant in the holy Scriptures. We warn all men not to believe or teach doctrine that has not been revealed of God.

That is Mormonism, my brethren and sisters. We do not feel that we have the right to say, I will accept of the teaching of the Scriptures where I am advised to believe in the name of the Redeemer, but I will not yield obedience to the doctrine of baptism. We claim that the gospel that was revealed by the Lord of glory, was the power of God unto salvation, and without it there can not be salvation for any man. The Scriptures teach the very same doctrine. "Verily, verily I say unto you, he that cometh not by the door into the sheep fold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber." There is no other way. So taught the apostle: "I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the gospel 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 we have preached unto you, let him be accursed." That is the gospel preached by these inspired apostles.

The apostle wrote to the Corinthians, after describing the manner of the organization of the Church, with apostles, with prophets, and with evangelists, and with pastors and teachers, and telling of the various gifts that were given to the people, the gift of faith, the gift of healing, the gift of tongues, the gift of the interpretation of tongues, the working of miracles, the gift of prophesying—after describing all these officers and these various gifts, he makes this declaration: "If any man think himself to be a prophet or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord." There was no uncertain sound in the testimony of those ancient apostles concerning the gospel; I trust that there is no uncertain sound in the testimony of the missionaries and elders of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in their proclamation of the truth; that proclamation is that the God of heaven has spoken. Hear it! Oh, ye people of the world. This is the declaration of our Father in heaven: "Fear and tremble O ye people, for what I the Lord have decreed shall be fulfilled." This is the promise of God, and the invitation of God to every soul under heaven, is that if they will give attention, if they will seek, if they will test the doctrines that have been revealed, they shall be made to know their truth by the power of the Holy Ghost.

MORMONISM A TESTIMONY OF CHRIST.

There is a marvelous and unique spectacle in this land, from the east to the west, and from the north to the south: Three hundred thousand people, or more, gathered from all the nations of the earth, standing up—a mighty host—bearing witness and testimony that they have tested the doctrine, and that they have been made to know that it is the truth, and they know they have not been deceived. We invite all men, the strangers within our gates, and the peoples of the nations of the world everywhere to prove Mormonism, whether it be of God or whether it be of man; and we know, by our own experience, that every man who will undertake to prove Mormonism in this manner—by faith and by prayer, with a broken heart and a willingness to follow where God leads—that from the eyes every such man shall the scales of darkness be stricken, and the light of truth shall burst into his soul and he shall be made to know that Mormonism is not a deception nor a delusion, but the everlasting gospel, the gospel of the Lord Jesus revealed anew in fulfilment of the promise of the ancient apostle who "saw another angel flying through the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach, to every nation, to every kindred, to every tongue, and to every people, crying with a loud voice, fear God and give glory to him for the hour of his judgment has come." Mormonism declares to all men everywhere that the planting of this work was the fulfilling of the prophecy of the ancient apostle, and that the angel has come and delivered the message; and because of that, our missionaries are sent abroad in all the world, crying "Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand," and warning men to accept the truth and escape the calamities that are coming upon the mockers and upon the ungodly, in the Lord's own due time.

May the Lord bless these words to the comfort and enlightenment of those who love the truth, is my prayer in the name of Jesus, Amen.

LEAVES FROM OLD ALBUMS.

DAVID HOAGLAND CANNON.

The above cut shows a photograph of the late David Hoagland Cannon, who died in Sieffert, Germany, Oct. 17, 1892, during the fulfillment of a mission undertaken for the L. D. S. Church. He was born April 14, 1871, being 21 years of age at his death, and was a son of the late President George Q. Cannon.

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Cocoa Fact No. 11

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