

Defender

“I am set for the defense of the gospel”

Vol. LV

February 2026

Number 2

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Introduction to the Acts of Apostles

Alexander Campbell

This book has been sometimes titled *“The Gospel of the Holy Spirit;”* because it is the only book which gives us an account of his descent, and splendid operations in the confirmation of the mission of the Apostles. It has also been styled *“The Gospel of the Gentiles;”* because it is the only source of information on their calling, and fellowship with the Jews, in the blessings of the reign of Messiah, the Great King. In most of the Greek copies of the New Testament, it is called *“The Acts or Transactions of the Apostles;”* because it exhibits their labors in planting Christianity in the world. This name, however, does not fully comport with the contents of the book. It is not *The Acts of the Apostles*, but *Acts of Apostles*; because only a few transactions of a few Apostles are mentioned in it. By Chrysostom, one of the Greek Fathers, it is named *“The Book, the Demonstration of the Resurrection.”*

It does not appear that Luke designed to write what might be called an ecclesiastical history of his own times, nor an account of the labors of all the Apostles, nor even of all the labors of any one of

them, during the time embraced in his narrative. If he had designed such a thing, he fell far short of it; for, of the Apostles, except Peter and Paul, he says but little; and even of the last mentioned, though more minute in his history, he narrates, comparatively, but a few great transactions. Though somewhat particular in detailing his journeys by land, and voyages by sea, yet he omits several of his voyages, and is altogether silent on the incidents of his journey into Arabia. Nor does he appear to have designed to write a history of the foundation of the Christian communities, in the different countries of the world, in which he labored during the thirty years embraced in his history: for he says nothing of the foundation of the Christian community in the city of Rome, in Babylon, in Egypt, and in many other places of note, alluded to in the Epistles. Nor can it be gathered from his narrative, that he intended merely to relate such things as he was an eye-witness of, or a party concerned in; for he is not full in recording even these, and tells of many other things, of which he was not an eye-

witness. What, then, was his design?

There are *two* things on which he fixes the attention of his reader, with more than ordinary care. The *first* of these is, the opening of the Reign of Heaven amongst the Jews on Pentecost, and the wonderful displays of heavenly influences attendant on that glorious event. He narrates no more of the history of the first congregation in Jerusalem, than is necessary to give a correct view of the commencement of Messiah’s reign, over the literal descendants of Abraham. This occupies about one-fourth of his whole narrative.

While he follows the order of the commission, beginning at Jerusalem, proceeding to Samaria, and thence to the uttermost parts of the earth, in giving a brief account of the establishment of Christianity; the *second* object—which seems pre-eminently to engross his attention—is the commencement of the reign of Messiah over the Gentiles. Hence we find the calling of the Gentiles, and all the events connected with it, more fully and circumstantially related, than anything else. Of the occur-

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Notes From The Editor

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David's Army

The last tribe we will consider is the tribe of Zebulun. The text says, "Of Zebulun, such as went forth to battle, expert in war, with all instruments of war, fifty thousand, which could keep rank: *they were not of double heart*" (1 Chr. 12:33). We immediately notice these men could and did keep rank. They did not go each at his own rate (speed) or road (way), but they would march shoulder to shoulder. They knew they were soldiers and, in the army, but they also realized they were not the whole army; they were only a part of a whole.

Likewise, the church needs Christian soldiers who can keep rank; they can stay in order. As Paul writes to the Thessalonian brethren, he expected them to be good soldiers who keep rank. However, Paul knew that not all soldiers are what they are supposed to be. He addresses the faithful soldiers and instructs them, "Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us. For yourselves know how ye ought to follow us: for we behaved not ourselves disorderly among you" (2 The. 3:6-7). Paul uses *disorderly* twice (one a verb and the other an adverb). Gerhard

Delling in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* stated concerning these words that "in both it characterises a man as one who sets himself outside the necessary and given order." Rick Brannan made the observation in *Lexham Research Lexicon of the Greek New Testament* that it is "without order—in a manner not submitting to disciple and order."

The command is to "withdraw yourselves" from every soldier who is no longer submitting to the Lord's disciple and order. They are outside the necessary and given order, and we are commanded to have no part or association with their disorderly ways. God knows the principle, "Be not deceived: Evil companions corrupt good morals" (1 Cor. 15:33—ASV). Those who are out of step with the given order will cause others to get out of step so they must be separated from those who are walking orderly. Paul knew those who were walking disorderly must be marked and avoided. "Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple" (Rom. 16:17-18). Mark is "to fix one's eyes upon, direct one's attention to" (Thayer). Those who are out of ranks and no longer submitting to the Lord's orders are to have everyone's eyes fixed on them to make sure they are avoided by all. They were to be avoided because, as we have noted, "Evil companions corrupt good morals."

However, Paul, Silas, and Timothy kept rank while in Thessa-

lonica. They acted according to the given order (what God authorizes for a Christian today) and should be mimicked or imitated by others. They made themselves "an ensample unto you to follow us" (2 The. 3:9), They could encourage brethren to follow them because they did walk orderly. Nevertheless, with Paul it was always, "Be ye followers of me, even as I also *am* of Christ" (1 Cor. 11:1). How we need soldiers today who can keep rank; do only those actions God has authorized.

The soldiers of the tribe of Zebulun knew they were each a part of the army but not the entire army. Each one knew he must keep rank with the other soldiers; they must work with other soldiers in the army. In writing his first letter to Corinth, Paul knew the brethren were being divisive. He begins by teaching them Christ is not divided like they are: "Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ. Is Christ divided?" (1:12-13). While Paul deals with this issue specifically in the first four chapters with a beautiful solution to the problem as he begins by saying, "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*

Defender is published monthly (except December) under the oversight of the elders of the Bellview Church of Christ, 4850 Saufley Field Road, Pensacola, FL 32526. (850) 455-7595. **Subscription is free to addresses in the United States.** All contributions shall be used for operational expenses. All correspondence permissible for publication.
Michael Hatcher, Editor

ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment” (1:10).

These divisions were easily seen in the miraculous powers given to them by the Spirit as the apostles laid hands on them to impart various gifts to them. Certain ones considered themselves more important than others because of the spiritual gift given to them. Paul uses the figure of a body to show the importance of each one of them, and each one was a part of the army but not the entire army.

For the body is not one member, but many. If the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? And if the ear shall say, Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? If the whole body *were* an eye, where *were* the hearing? If the whole *were* hearing, where *were* the smelling? But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him (12:14-18).

Each individual makes up a part of the body, the army. Yet, it takes all individual members to make the body, the army. Each of those individual members must be pulling their part, doing their work for the body, the army, to be successful. Paul spoke of this type of relationship with Apollos earlier in the book when he wrote:

Who then is Paul, and who *is* Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to

every man? I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase. Now he that planteth and he that watereth are one (3:5-8).

Both Paul and Apollos were one. They were each a soldier in the Lord’s army, both keeping rank, both doing the part he needed to do. They also allowed God to do His part. As Paul would point out later, “We then, *as* workers together *with him*, beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain” (2 Cor. 6:1). They were workers together with God.

Another great characteristic of these men from the tribe of Zebulun is they were not of double heart. James gives the description of someone with a double heart: “A double minded man *is* unstable in all his ways” (Jam. 1:8). These soldiers (as well as all the others) had one purpose, they “came with a perfect heart to Hebron, to make David king over all Israel” (1 Chr. 12:38).

Christians are to have one purpose. The apostle Paul put it this way regarding his life: “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” (Phi. 3:13-14). He recog-

nized there was one thing that was important. Jesus told Martha, “One thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her” (Luke 10:42). Paul had also chosen the good part and put all his energies and efforts to that which would not be taken away.

Jesus taught, “The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light” (Mat. 6:22). He was teaching this singleness of purpose or as these men from Zebulun who were not of double heart. All Christians need to learn that we are in a battle with Satan and his forces and we need singularity of purpose to be successful. Think of all the great things Paul was able to do because of that “one thing I do.” God recognized what man could do with that singularity of purpose when man decided to build a tower to reach unto heaven. God said of these men, “Behold, the people *is* one, and they have all one language; and this they begin to do: and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do” (Gen. 11:6). God recognized with unity and the singleness of purpose, they would be able to do anything they imagined. Think of what great things we can do for the Lord if we, as Christians, will remain united with singularity of purpose and not with a double heart.

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Continued from Page 1
rences in Jerusalem, at the time of the meeting of the Apostles, and of the labors of Paul in all his journeys, those things are particularly told, which concerned this event.

These considerations suggest to us that, while Luke designed to give a brief account how the Apostles executed their commission in general, in Judea and Samaria, his grand design in writing was, to es-

tablish in the minds of all Christians of that age, with a reference also to future times, the just claims, and inalienable rights of the Gentiles, to be considered and treated as God’s people; to become mem-

bers of the Christian communities, on the same footing with the Jews. Doubtless, this was his grand or chief design, in writing this history. The plan he pursued, was not to settle the controversy by argument, as Paul does in some of his epistles; but by recording what God had done for this people, by simply showing, that he had done everything for them, which he had done for the Jews, and had made no difference between Jews and Gentiles, under the reign of his Son.

Admitting this to have been his chief design in writing his narrative, how suitably does it account for his minuteness in describing the conversion of Saul, and his call to preach to the Gentiles; the story of Cornelius and Peter; the debates at Jerusalem; the separating Paul and Barnabas to their mission; the decrees of the Apostles and elders: together with his frequent accounts of Paul's speeches to, and interviews with, the Gentiles; and of the success attendant on the labors of Paul and Barnabas among them. This view of his design in writing this book, also accounts for his having omitted to inform us of the travels and labors of the other Apostles, and of the congregations which they planted in different places, with many other things which could not be accounted for upon the supposition of his intending to write a history of the acts of the Apostles, during the period from the ascension of the Messiah, till Paul arrives a prisoner at Rome.

It is nevertheless true, that, in accomplishing his design, he is obliged to give us a very general and comprehensive view of the introduction of Christianity, throughout the whole world. So that still his history is, in a certain

sense, an ecclesiastic one, the oldest and most authentic in the world. As the four preceding histories constitute rather memoirs than biography, so this is rather a mere sketch of what happened, during the labors of the Apostles, than a history of the transactions of any one of them.

Of the New Testament historians, Luke is the most eminent. He gives us one continued history, from the commencement of the Christian era, down to A. D. 63 or 64. He records, in his testimony concerning Jesus, and in his Acts of Apostles, all the grand and important events and transactions connected with the establishment of the Christian religion in Asia, Africa, and Europe. This book is the grand link, which connects the previous histories with the apostolic epistles, and constitutes a key to the right interpretation of them; without which they would have been, in a great measure, unintelligible. An accurate acquaintance with the history of the people which composed most of the congregations, to which the Apostles addressed letters, with the time and circumstances of their conversion, and with their customs and questions, found in this book, greatly facilitates our proficiency in the knowledge of those letters, which explain the meaning and bearings of that one glorious fact, on which the Christian superstructure is reared.

From it alone we learn, by what means that great moral and religious revolution was accomplished, which eventuated in the destruction of polytheism and idolatry, in the best portions of the world; which desolated so many Pagan temples, and caused millions of al-

tars to moulder down to dust, notwithstanding the wisdom and learning of philosophers, the sword of the civil magistrate, and the superstition of the common people, were allied in maintaining them, and in suppressing this "wicked and odious heresy," as the Romans called it.

From it we also learn, what true Christianity is, and how far the modern exhibitions of it, have degenerated from the ancient and apostolic order of things; we discover what was the spirit and temper of the first Christians, and the character and design of their religious meetings. In a word, as Dr. Adam Clarke observes, "in the book of Acts we see how the church of Christ was formed and settled. The Apostles simply proclaim the truth of God relative to the passion, death, resurrection, and ascension of Christ; and God accompanies their testimony with the demonstration of the Spirit. What was the consequence? Thousands acknowledge the truth, embrace Christianity, and openly profess it, at the most imminent risk of their lives. The change is not a change of merely one religious sentiment or mode of worship for another; but a change of *tempers, passions, prospects, and moral conduct*. All, before, was *earthly, or animal, or devilish*, or all these together: but now, all is *holy, spiritual, and divine*—the heavenly influence becomes extended, and *nations* are born unto God. And how was all this brought about? Not by might nor power; not by the sword, nor by secular authority; not through worldly motives and prospects; not by pious frauds or cunning craftiness, not by the force of persuasive eloquence: in a word,

by nothing but the sole influence of truth itself, attested to the heart by the power of the Holy Spirit. Whenever religious frauds and secular influence have been used to found or support a church, professing itself to be *Christian, there*, we may rest assured, is the fullest evidence that that church is wholly *Anti-Christian*: and where such a church possessing *secular* power, has endeavored to support itself by *persecution*, and persecution unto privation of *goods*, of *liberty*, and of

life, it not only shows itself to be *Anti-Christian*, but also *diabolic*. The religion of Christ stands in no need either of human cunning or power. It is the religion of God, and is to be propagated by *his* power: this the book of the Acts fully shows; and in it we find the true model, after which every church should be builded. As far as any church can show that it has followed this model, so far it is holy and apostolic. And when *all* churches or congregations of peo-

ple, professing Christianity, shall be founded and regulated according to the *doctrine* and *discipline* laid down in the book of the Acts of Apostles, then the *aggregate body* may be justly called, "*The Holy, Apostolic, and Catholic Church.*"

"You diff'rent sects, who all declare,

Lo! CHRIST is here, and CHRIST is there;

Your stronger proofs divinely give,
And show me where the Christians live."

Deceased

An Intelligent Faith

Paul Vaughn

It is the responsibility of every elder, Gospel preacher, Bible teacher, and Christian to fill their hearts with the Word of God so they can have an intelligent faith! An intelligent faith will enable Christians to see the power of God in the Scriptures and rejoice at the wonderful words of life. "I rejoice at Your word As one who finds great treasure" (Psa. 119:162). For "Every word of God *is* pure; He *is* a shield to those who put their trust in Him" (Pro. 30:5). Christians must have an intelligent faith in our lives before we can fill others with the knowledge of God's Word.

To develop an intelligent faith, **doctrinal preaching** is a must. Emotionalism and long-winded, empty words will leave people dying of spiritual hunger for truth. An intelligent faith is to know what you believe and why you believe it. "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" (Heb. 11:1). Evidence anchors one in the Scriptures and enables all to develop an intelligent faith.

An intelligent faith helps Christians to be the "salt of the earth" and the "light of the world" (Mat. 5:13-16). It helps Christians to stand against evil and oppose our archenemy, Satan. "Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil" (Eph. 6:10-11). An intelligent faith helps Christians develop enthusiasm. Enthusiasm is one of the most powerful forces of success. Nothing important is ever achieved without enthusiasm. Yet to be pleasing to God, an intelligent faith must check our enthusiasm.

An Intelligent Faith Is Not:

An intelligent faith is not an **inherited faith**. Many good things can be inherited, but faith is not one of them. During the past forty-plus years of preaching, I have seen very faithful parents whose children turn from God as soon as they leave home. There are many reasons this can happen, and one is following their parents' teaching

blindly and never developing an intelligent faith of their own. Children who obey the Gospel because their parents are Christians cannot stand against the torrents of life when they blow in.

Parents must develop an intelligent faith in their children. Under the Law of Moses, it was commanded. "You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength. 'And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up'" (Deu. 6:5-7). When the Israelites failed in teaching their children, they turned from God. Paul, by inspiration, commanded that parents in the Christian Age have the same responsibility to their children. "Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. '*Honor your father and mother;*' which is the first commandment with promise: *that*

it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth.' And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord" (Eph. 6:1-4). When parents teach their children God's Word, they lay a foundation that will help them through life, and they will be grounded in truth and not in the wisdom of man. Paul said, "that your faith should not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God" (1 Cor. 2:5). An intelligent faith is not blind faith. Scriptures plainly teach that evidence is in the foundation of faith. John encouraged testing others' teaching. "Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world" (1 John 4:1).

Blind faith is an unscriptural faith that leaves people abandoned in times of trouble. Therefore, "Test all things; hold fast what is good. Abstain from every form of evil" (1 The. 5:21).

Intelligent Faith Is Established on Truth

If truth does not bring people to Christ, they will prove to be a curse on the church. Error is brought in many times by unconverted "Christians." The doctrines of men carry about those who do not have an intelligent faith. Paul said, "that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting" (Eph. 4:14).

Truth is the only avenue that leads to an intelligent faith. It enables one to walk in God's way and is most valuable to the soul. There-

fore, "Buy the truth, and do not sell it, Also wisdom and instruction and understanding" (Pro. 23:23). All who proclaim truth bring a blessing of righteousness to the hearer of truth. "He *who* speaks truth declares righteousness" (12:17).

Not teaching and respecting truth is one of the most dangerous activities anyone can engage in. Paul warns of the dangers of rejecting truth. His inspired writing speaks of a strong delusion sent by God to all who seek falsehood rather than truth. "And with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie, that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness" (2 The. 2:10-12).

John understood the power of truth in the life of Christians. "For I rejoiced greatly when brethren came and testified of the truth *that is* in you, just as you walk in the truth. I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth" (3 John 3-4). Yet there are multitudes who sabotage truth; they just do not want the truth! They exchange an intelligent faith for personal emotions and lies.

An Intelligent Faith Is Anchored in Jesus

Jesus must never be ignored or neglected! He is the only way to Heaven (John 14:6)! The Gospel record teaches that His friends loved Him and His enemies hated Him. But all must acknowledge the fact that He lived and died. It is a fact that all human accumulated

knowledge could not have conceived God's plan of salvation through His Son dying on the cross.

All one must do is compare Jesus with the whole of mankind who lived since the creation of Adam and Eve. Jesus is the great Physician, the very essence of purity, and the sinless example for all to imitate. Therefore, we must be anchored in Jesus. We must be anchored in His love because He loved us. "Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends" (John 15:13). A study of the magnitude and importance of the love of Jesus will develop an intelligent faith.

Jesus came to save people because of His desire to do the Father's will and His love for mankind. He knew that people were lost in sin and needed an avenue of salvation. "For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10). In the absence of a strong faith in Jesus, man is lost without hope and without God. Developing a secure faith in His sacrifice will lead to a life of blessings.

We can have an intelligent faith by trusting in the resurrection of the Lord and being anchored in that fact. The evidence of the resurrection of Jesus is powerful and helps Christians "put on the whole armor of God" (Eph. 6:11). It builds trust in God and the Scriptures. Paul gives the evidence in his letter to the Corinthians.

For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures, and that He was seen by Cephas, then by the

twelve. After that He was seen by over five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain to the present, but some have fallen asleep. After that He was seen by James, then by all the apostles. Then last of all He was seen by me also, as by one born out of due time (1 Cor. 15:3-8).

Developing an Intelligent Faith Will Require Diligent Work

The lazy man who relies on the study of others will never attain a high degree of faith that will help him “stand against the wiles of the devil” (Eph. 6:11). Christians must study and be diligent in learning about God’s will to be pleasing to

the Lord and develop the tools necessary for victorious life in Christ (2 Tim. 2:15). How much time do Christians give in developing an intelligent faith? Sadly, the world and the passing pleasures it offers rob many, if not most, Christians of the knowledge required in living for the Lord. “For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those *who live* according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded *is* death, but to be spiritually minded *is* life and peace” (Rom. 8:5-6). Developing an

intelligent faith will bring peace to the soul!

Conclusion

All who refuse to develop an intelligent faith are doomed to failure. They are like the passing clouds, here one day and gone the next, never attaining the spiritual growth required for victory over sin. “Therefore, laying aside all malice, all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and all evil speaking, as newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby, if indeed you have tasted that the Lord *is* gracious” (1 Pet. 2:1-3).

Hopkinsville, KY

The Smell of Dead Fish

Ralph Williams

The title is not for the sake of novelty. It is the Bible’s own definition of the keyword *abomination*. This word is variously translated; “detestable, abhorred, loathsome, odious, and stink.” Thirteen times the Hebrew word for *abomination* is rendered in terms of “stink” in the Old Testament (e.g., Exo. 7:17; 8:14). The Egyptians must have found the dead fish in the river of blood and the heaps of dead flies piled high on the land more than their sensitive noses could bear. The scene of these plagues turn the stomach; but helps to understand the extreme offensiveness of this word.

God considers the following as **abomination** to Him:

1. The way and the thoughts of the wicked (Pro. 15:9, 26). Wickedness is synonymous with sinfulness. The man who thinks

and lives contrary to God’s Word is repulsive before heaven.

2. “A proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, An heart that deviseth wicked imaginations, feet that be swift in running to mischief, A false witness that speaketh lies, and he that soweth discord among brethren” (6:16-19). Guilty of any?

3. The worship of the wicked (15:8). Men believe they can live for self and sin throughout the year just so long as they are careful to go through some form of worship at Easter or other special holy day. Perhaps some Christians who never miss a service just as hypocritically are wedded to some secret sin. If these could “smell” their worship as God does, the aroma would shock and nauseate.

4. “He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his

prayer shall be abomination” (28:9). How many retreat to prayer in sickness, fear, calamity, yet just never seem to find the time to study God’s Word when things were going well for them?

By way of contrast, note how the Bible uses the expression: “an offering and a sacrifice to God for an odor of a sweet smell” (Eph. 5:2—ASV). This describes the one who humbly and faithfully submits to God’s will.

In our modern age of the aerosol can, which comes in a family size or matching his and hers, no one would dare venture into a crowd without having first sprayed on a good protective coat of deodorant, lest he or she offend. But how many are so concerned about offending God? What is the fragrance of your life to heaven?

DEFENDER

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