

Dr. Bob's Spiritual Legacy

The Scripture Readings A.A.'s Co-founder Considered "Essential"

In 1948 Dr. Bob stood at the A.A. podium in Detroit delivering what was to be his last major address. He wanted to do more than just tell his story one more time. Bob wanted to impart to the gathered crowd the spiritual essence of the recovery program that had saved his life and the lives of so many of the early AA Pioneers.

It took four long years after Dr. Bob's last drink for the 12 Steps to be formulated and for the Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous to be written, but Bob wanted his audience to know that the healing powers that alcoholics were now finding through the 12 Steps had first come to him and to the Pioneers through another source. ***"We already had the basic ideas.... We got them, as I said, from our study of the Good Book."*** Bob went on to identify the three scripture passages he counted vital for his recovery. ***"To some of us older ones,"*** he said, ***"the parts we found absolutely essential were the Sermon on the Mount, the Thirteenth Chapter of First Corinthians, and the Book of James."***

Many of A.A.'s spiritual principles came to Bill Wilson through the Oxford Group; but in Detroit, Dr. Bob wondered aloud if some didn't also come to Bill during the three months he lived in Akron with him and his wife Ann. Bob told the gathering, ***"There was hardly a night that we didn't sit up until two or three o'clock talking. It would be hard for me to conceive that, during these nightly discussions around our kitchen table, nothing was said that influenced the writing of the 12 Steps."***

The Sermon on the Mount, a scripture that Bob loved and often quoted at Akron A.A. meetings, encompasses chapters 5, 6, and 7 in Matthew's gospel. Within it are found many of the spiritual principles that kept Dr. Bob sober before there was a Big Book or 12 Steps. A small sampling of these include: seeking God's will first (First Things First), taking each day as it comes (One Day at a Time), taking our own and not someone else's inventory (Step 4), guarding against our defects of character or the sins that separate us from God, from one another and even from our true selves (Steps 6 and 7), making restitution for the wrongs we have done and forgiving those who wronged us (Steps 8 and 9). Jesus' sermon even includes the Lord's Prayer that closed Dr. Bob's talk that day just as it did nearly every early A.A. meeting.

First Corinthian's, Chapter Thirteen is often referred to as "The Love Chapter" and it's read frequently at weddings. In part it reads, ***"Love is patient and kind, love is not envious, or boastful, or rude."*** An A.A. archivist reported that before they had the Big Book, alcoholics would often read a short portion from this chapter at their meetings and then go home trying to put the principles to work in their daily lives. Not a bad way to work a Program before the Big Book, ***or even after!***

Finally, Bob recommended reading the Book of James. While some refer to it as a "Book" and other a "Letter," its five short chapters so influenced the early A.A. program that many of the newly sober members wanted to name their young Fellowship "The James Club" instead of Alcoholics Anonymous. The author of James writes, "Faith

without works is dead," so Wilson named the Big Book's publishing Company "Works Publishing." James speaks about "The Father of Light" and the Big Book quotes that one too, even though Wilson erred by pluralizing "Lights." The Letter's reference to finding our "guidance from above" and "not asking for selfish things," found their way into our 11th Step. James is a treasure trove for seeing how a healthy recovery group should function. James urges his readers to pay attention to the new man, especially if he's poor and hurting; he advise them to avoid gossip like a plague, to confess their sins one to another, to go and see a brother if he's in trouble, and to "draw near to God and he will draw near to you." Each line reads like it's lifted straight from the Big Book.

Carl Sandburg wrote, "***Whenever a society or civilization fail, there is always one condition present. They forgot where they came from.***" When Dr. Bob spoke from that Detroit podium so many years ago, he wanted the Fellowship to remember always the deep Christian recovery roots that blossomed so providentially into the 12 Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous.

- **The Friends of Dr. Bob / Austin, Texas**

The Sermon on the Mount

Matthew Chapter 5

Seeing the crowds, he climbed up the mountain and when he had sat down, his disciples came to him. He began speaking to them and this is what he taught:

"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.

Blessed are those who grieve, for they will be comforted.

Blessed are the gentle, for they will inherit the earth.

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after justice, for they will be filled.

Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy.

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called the children of God.

Blessed are those who have suffered for justice, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.

Blessed are you when people reject you, and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil lies against you, because of me. Rejoice, and be glad, for great is your reward in heaven. Remember, this is how they persecuted the prophets before you.

"You are the salt of the earth, but if salt loses its flavor, how can its saltiness be restored? It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trodden under men's feet. You are the light of the world. A city built on a hill can't be hidden. Neither do you light a lamp and put it under a bushel basket, but on a lampstand, where it shines for everyone in the house to see. Let your light so shine before men; that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven.

"Don't think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I didn't come to destroy, but to fulfill. For surely, I tell you, until heaven and earth pass away, not even the smallest letter or one tiny pen stroke shall pass away from the Law, not until all things are accomplished. Whoever breaks one of these least commandments, and teach others to do so, will be called least in the Kingdom of Heaven; but whoever does them and teaches them (to others) will be called great in the Kingdom of Heaven. For I tell you that unless your religion exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, there is no way you will enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.

“You have heard it said to our ancestors, ‘You shall not murder;’ and ‘Whoever murders will be subject to judgment.’ But I tell you, that everyone who is angry with his brother will be in danger of the judgment; and whoever says to his brother, ‘You moron!’ will be in danger of the council; and whoever says, ‘You fool!’ will be in danger of the fire of Gehenna.

“If therefore you are offering your gift at the altar, and remember that your brother has anything against you, leave your gift there and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come offer your gift. Agree with your opponent quickly, while you are with him on the way, lest perhaps the prosecutor delivers you to the judge, and the judge delivers you to the officer, and you are thrown into prison. Most certainly I tell you, you will never get out of there, until you have paid the last penny.

“You have heard it said, ‘You shall not commit adultery;’ but I tell you that everyone who gazes at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart. If your right eye causes you to stumble, pluck it out and throw it away. For it is better for you that one of your members should perish, than for your whole body to be cast into Gehenna. If your right hand causes you to stumble, cut it off and throw it away from you. For it is more profitable for you that one of your members should perish, than for your whole body to be cast into Gehenna.

“It was also said, ‘Whoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorce,’ but I tell you that whoever puts away his wife, except for the cause of infidelity, makes her a victim of adultery; and whoever marries her when she is put away commits adultery.

“Again, as you know our ancestors were told, ‘You must not break an oath, but shall perform your vows to the Lord,’ but I tell you, don’t swear at all: neither by heaven, for it is the throne of God; nor by the earth, for it is his footstool; nor by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. Neither shall you swear by your head, for you can’t turn a single hair either white or black. But let your ‘Yes’ be ‘Yes’ and your ‘No’ be ‘No.’ Anything that goes beyond this is inspired by the evil one.

“You have heard it said, ‘An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth.’ But I tell you, don’t react violently toward the one who is evil; but whoever strikes you on your right cheek, turn the other cheek as well. If anyone sues you to take away your shirt, let him also have your coat. Whoever conscripts you to go one mile, go with him two. Give to him who asks you, and don’t turn away him who desires to borrow from you.

“You have heard it said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I tell you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who mistreat you and persecute you, that you may be children of your Father who is in heaven. For he makes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the just and the unjust. For if you love those who love you, what reward can you expect? Don’t even the tax collectors do the same? If you greet only your friends, why should you be commended for that? Don’t even the tax collectors do the same? Therefore be perfect, even as your heavenly Father is perfect.”

Matthew Chapter 6

“Be careful that you don’t flaunt your religion in public, so others will see, or else you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven. Therefore when you do good deeds, don’t sound a trumpet before yourself, as the hypocrites do in the meeting places and in the streets, that they may get glory from men. Most surely I tell you, they have received their reward. But when you do a good deed, don’t let your left hand know what your right

hand is doing, so that your deeds may be in secret, then your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly.

“When you pray, don’t be like the hypocrites, for they love to stand and pray in the meeting places and on street corners, so they can show off before men. Most certainly, I tell you, they have received their reward. But you, when you pray, go into a room by yourself, and having shut your door, pray to your Father who is in secret, and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly. In praying, don’t babble on, like the pagans do, for they think they’ll receive a reward for the length of their prayers. Therefore don’t be like them, for your Father knows what things you need, before you ask him. Pray like this: ‘Our Father in heaven, may your name be kept holy. Let your Kingdom come. Let your will be done, as in heaven, so on earth. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our debts, as we also forgive our debtors. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one. For yours is the Kingdom, the power, and the glory forever. Amen.’

“For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you don’t forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

“Moreover when you fast, don’t be like the hypocrites, with sad faces. For they disfigure their faces, that men will know they are fasting. Most certainly I tell you, they have received their reward. But you, when you fast, anoint your head, and wash your face; so that you are not seen by men to be fasting, but by your Father who is in secret, and your Father, who sees in secret, will reward you.

“Don’t lay up treasures for yourselves on the earth, where moth and rust consume, and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consume, and where thieves don’t break in and steal; for where your treasure is, there your heart will also be.

“The eye is the lamp of the body. Therefore, if your eye is sound, your whole body will be full of light. But if your eye is evil, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light that is in you is darkness, how great is the darkness!

“No one can serve two masters, either he will hate the one and love the other; or else he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You can’t serve both God and Mammon. Therefore I tell you, don’t be anxious about your life: what you will eat or what you will drink; nor about your body, what you will wear. Isn’t life more than food and clothing? Look at the birds of the air, they don’t plant or harvest or gather into barns. Yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Aren’t you worth far more than they?

“Which of you, by being anxious, can add one moment to his lifespan? Why are you anxious about what you will wear? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow. They don’t toil, neither do they spin; yet I tell you that even Solomon in all his glory was not dressed like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today exists and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, won’t he, all the more, clothe you, you of little faith?

“Therefore don’t be anxious, saying, ‘What will we eat?’ ‘What will we drink?’ or, ‘What will we wear?’ For the pagans go seeking after all these things; for your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek God’s Kingdom first, and his justice; and all these things will be given to you as well. Therefore don’t be anxious for tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Let each day’s trouble be sufficient for the day.

Matthew Chapter 7

“Don’t judge, so that you won’t be judged. For with whatever judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with whatever measure you measure, it will be measured to

you. Why do you see the speck in your brother's eye, but don't notice the beam that is in your own eye? Or how will you tell your brother, 'Let me remove the speck from your eye;' and the beam is still in your own eye? You hypocrite! First remove the beam from your own eye, and then you can see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye.

"Don't give that which is holy to the dogs, neither cast your pearls before swine, for they will trample them under foot, and turn and tear you to pieces.

"Ask, and it will be given you. Seek, and you will find. Knock, and it will be opened for you. Everyone who asks receives; and he who seeks finds. To him who knocks it will be opened.

"Or who is there among you, who, if his son asks him for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a serpent? If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask him! Therefore whatever you desire for men to do to you, you should do to them; for this is the Law and the Prophets.

"Enter in by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and many are those who enter in by it. How narrow is the gate, and restricted is the way that leads to life! Few are those who find it.

"Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves. By their fruits you will know them. Do you gather grapes from thorns, or figs from thistles? Even so, every good tree produces good fruit; but the diseased tree produces rotten fruit. A good tree can't produce rotten fruit, neither can a rotten tree produce good fruit. Every tree that doesn't grow good fruit is cut down, and thrown into the fire. Therefore by their fruits you will know them.

"Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter into the Kingdom of Heaven; but he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will tell me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, didn't we prophesy in your name, in your name cast out demons, and in your name do many great works?' Then I will tell them, 'I never knew you. Depart from me, you evil doers.'

"Everyone therefore who hears these words of mine, and does them, will be like a wise man who built his house on a rock. The rain came down, the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat on that house; and it didn't fall, for it was founded on the rock. Everyone who hears these words of mine, and doesn't do them will be like a foolish man, who built his house on the sand. The rain came down, the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat on that house; and it fell—and great was its fall." When Jesus had finished saying these things, the crowds were astonished at his teaching, for he taught them with authority, and not like the scribes.

The Book of James

Chapter 1

James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes in the Dispersion: Greetings! Count it all joy, my brothers, when trials come, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance and let endurance do its work, that you may be made mature and complete, lacking in nothing. But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives to all generously and ungrudgingly; and it will be given to him. But let him ask in faith, without any doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea, driven and tossed about by the wind; for that man shouldn't think he will receive anything from the Lord. He is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways. But let the brother who is lowly boast in being raised up; and the rich, in being brought low,

because he will disappear like the flower in the grass. For the sun rises with its scorching wind, and withers the grass, the flower falls, and its beauty perishes. So also will the rich man fade away in the midst of his busy life.

Blessed is the man who endures temptation, for when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life, which the Lord promised to those who love him. Let no man say when he is tempted, *"I am tempted by God,"* for God can't be tempted by evil, and he himself tempts no one. But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own lust, and enticed by it. Then the lust, when it has conceived, turns to sin; and the sin, when it is full grown, produces death. Don't be deceived, my beloved brothers. Every generous act and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom can be no variation, nor turning shadow. Of his own will he gave birth to us by the word of truth, that we should be a kind of first fruits of his creatures.

So, then, my beloved brothers, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, and slow to anger; for the anger of man doesn't produce the justice of God. Therefore, put away all sordidness and overflowing of wickedness, receive with humility the implanted word, which has the power to save your souls. But be doers of the word, and not merely hearers, deluding your own selves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man looking at his natural face in a mirror; for he sees himself, and goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was. But he who looks into the perfect law of freedom, and continues, not being a hearer who forgets, but a doer of the work, this man will be blessed in what he does.

If anyone among you thinks himself to be religious while he doesn't bridle his tongue, but deceives his heart, this man's religion is worthless. Religion that is pure and undefiled before our God and Father is this: to care for orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself unstained by the world.

Chapter 2

My brothers, don't hold the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ of glory with acts of favoritism. For if a man with gold rings and in fine clothes, comes into your meeting place, and a poor man in dirty clothes also comes in; and you pay special attention to him who wears the fine clothing, and say, *"Sit here in a good place;"* and you tell the poor man, *"Stand over there,"* or *"Sit at my feet;"* haven't you shown favoritism among yourselves, and become judges with evil thoughts? Listen, my beloved brothers. Didn't God choose those who are poor in this world to be rich in faith, and heirs of the Kingdom he promised to those who love him? But you have dishonored the poor man. Isn't it the rich who oppress you and drag you into courts? Don't they blaspheme the honorable name by which you are called? However, if you fulfill the royal law, according to the Scripture, *"You shall love your neighbor as yourself,"* you do well. But if you show favoritism, you commit sin, being convicted by the law as transgressors. For whoever keeps the whole law, and yet stumbles in one point, he has become guilty of all. For he who said, *"Do not commit adultery,"* also said, *"Do not commit murder."* Now if you do not commit adultery, but murder, you have become a transgressor of the law. So speak, and so do, as men who are to be judged by a law of freedom. For judgment is without mercy to him who has shown no mercy; mercy triumphs over judgment.

What good is it, my brothers, if a man says he has faith, but does no works? Can faith save him? And if a brother or sister is naked and in lack of daily food, and one of

you tells them, *“Go in peace, be warmed and filled;”* and yet you didn’t give them the things the body needs, what good is it? Even so faith, if it has no works, is dead in itself. Yes, a man will say, *“You have faith, and I have works.”* Show me your faith without works, and I by my works will show you my faith.

You believe that God is one. You do well. The demons also believe, and shudder. But do you want to know, vain man, that faith apart from works is dead? Wasn’t Abraham our father justified by works, in that he offered up Isaac his son on the altar? You see that faith worked with his works, and by works faith was perfected; and the Scripture was fulfilled which says, *“Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him as righteousness;”* and he was called the friend of God. You see then that by works, a man is justified, and not only by faith. In the same way, wasn’t Rahab the prostitute also justified by works, in that she received the messengers, and sent them out another way? For just as the body apart from the spirit is dead, so faith without works is also dead.

Chapter 3

Let not many of you be teachers, my brothers, knowing that we will receive heavier judgment. For in many things we all stumble. If anyone doesn’t stumble in word, the same is a perfect man, able to bridle the whole body also. Indeed, we put bits into the mouths of horses so that they will obey us and we guide their whole body. Behold the ships also, though they are so big and are driven by fierce winds, are yet guided by a very small rudder, wherever the pilot desires. So the tongue is also a little member, and boasts great things. See how a small fire can spread to a large forest! And the tongue is a fire! The world of iniquity among our members is the tongue, which defiles the whole body, and sets on fire the course of nature, and is set on fire by Gehenna. For every kind of animal, bird, creeping thing, and sea creature, is tamed, and has been tamed by mankind; but nobody can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison. With it we bless our God and Father, and with it we curse men, who are made in the image of God. Out of the same mouth comes blessing and cursing. My brothers, these things ought not to be so. Does a spring pour forth from the same opening both fresh and bitter water? Can a fig tree, my brothers, yield olives, or a grapevine, figs? No spring yields both salt water and fresh water.

Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show by his good conduct that his deeds are done in gentleness of wisdom. But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your heart, don’t boast and don’t lie against the truth. This wisdom is not that which comes down from above, but is earthly, sensual, and devilish. For where jealousy and selfish ambition are, there is confusion and every evil deed. But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceful, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy. And the harvest of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.

Chapter 4

Where do wars and disputes among you come from? Don't they come from your cravings that are at war within you? You lust, and don't have. You murder and covet, and can't obtain. You fight and make war. You don't have, because you don't ask. You ask, and don't receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your pleasures. You adulterers and adulteresses, don't you know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. Or do you think that the Scripture says in vain, "*The Spirit who lives in us yearns jealously*"? But he gives more grace. Therefore it says, "God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble." Be subject therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Lament, mourn, and weep. Let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he will exalt you.

Don't speak against one another, brothers. He who speaks against a brother and judges his brother, speaks against the law and judges the law. But if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law, but a judge. Only one is the lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy. But who are you to judge another?

Come now, you who say, "*Today or tomorrow let's go into this city, and spend a year there, trading and making a profit.*" Whereas you don't know what your life will be like tomorrow. For what is your life? For you are a vapor, that appears for a little time, and then vanishes away. For you ought to say, "*If the Lord wills, we will both live, and do this or that.*" But now you glory in your boasting. All such boasting is evil. To him therefore who knows the right thing to do and doesn't do it, to him it is sin.

Chapter 5

Come now, you rich people, weep and wail for your miseries that are coming on you. Your riches are rotted and your clothes are moth-eaten. Your gold and your silver are rusted, and their corrosion will be as a testimony against you, and will eat your flesh like fire. You have laid up your treasure for the last days. Behold, the wages of the laborers who mowed your fields, which you have kept back by fraud, cry out, and the cries of those who reaped have reached the ears of the Lord of hosts. You have lived in luxury on the earth, and taken your pleasure. You have nourished your hearts as in a day of slaughter. You have condemned and murdered the righteous one. He doesn't resist you.

Be patient therefore, brothers, until the coming of the Lord. Behold, the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, being patient over it, until it receives the early and late rain. You also be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand. Don't grumble, brothers, against one another, so that you won't be judged. Behold, the judge stands at the door. Take, brothers, for an example of suffering and of perseverance, the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. Behold, we call them blessed who endured. You have heard of the perseverance of Job, and have seen the Lord in the outcome, and how the Lord is full of compassion and mercy. But above all things, my brothers, don't swear— not by heaven, or by the earth, or by any other oath; but let your "yes" be "yes", and your "no", "no;" so that you don't fall into hypocrisy.

Is any among you suffering? Let him pray. Is any cheerful? Let him sing praises. Is any among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the assembly, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord, and the prayer of faith

will heal him who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up. If he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. Confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The insistent prayer of a righteous person is powerfully effective. Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain, and it didn't rain on the earth for three years and six months. He prayed again, and the sky gave rain, and the earth produced its fruit. Brothers, if any among you wanders from the truth and someone turns him back, let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save a soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins.

First Corinthians, Chapter 13

If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have prophetic gifts and know all mysteries and all knowledge; and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but don't have love, I am nothing. If I give away all my goods to feed the poor, and if I give my body to be burned, but don't have love, I gain nothing.

Love is patient and kind; love doesn't envy. Love is not boastful or proud, love doesn't behave inappropriately, doesn't seek its own way, is not provoked, takes no account of evil; doesn't insist on having its own way, but rejoices with the truth; love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never ends.

But as for prophecies, they will end. As for tongues, they will cease. As for knowledge, it will be done away with. For now we know only in part, and we prophesy in part; but when that which is complete has come, then that which is partial will be done away with. When I was a child, I spoke like a child; I felt like a child; I thought like a child. Now that I have become a man, I have put away childish things. For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I will know in whole, even as I have been wholly known. And now faith, hope, and love abide—these three; but the greatest of these is love.

Please visit www.TwoWayPrayer.org to learn more of A.A.'s early history and about the lost prayer practice some A.A. Pioneers considered essential for recovery.

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