Nothing But Christ

"Jesus therefore said, 'When you have lifted up the Son of Man then shall you know that I am He'." (John 8:28)

"For you died, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall be manifested, then shall you also with Him be manifested in glory." (Col 3:3-4)

"For in Him were all things created, in the heavens and upon the earth, things visible and things invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers; all things have been created through him and unto him; *and* he is before all things, *and* in him all things consist. And he is the head of the body, the church; who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all thing, he might have the preeminence. For it was the good pleasure of the Father that in him should all the fullness dwell; and through him to reconcile all things unto himself, having made peace through the blood of his cross; through him, I say whether things upon the earth, or things in the heavens." (Col 1:16-20)

MANS CONCEPT AND REQUEST

The gift which we receive from God's hand is His Son, Jesus Christ. Yet quite varied is the understanding of many concerning the Lord Jesus. If you would allow me to say it, among God's children some consider the Lord Jesus as one of God's many gifts, while others appreciate Him as God's only gift. Some receive Jesus as their first gift, for they believe there are many gifts besides Him-gifts which may run into the thousands or tens of thousands in number-whereas others confess the Lord Jesus to be *The GIFT* of God, that is, He is God's sole gift.

Many feel they are saved when they first receive the Lord Jesus Christ. Later, they learn they still have many deficiencies and needs. Some may discover that their quick temper persists even after they are saved; others notice that their pride follows them; while still others may find that their cowardice remains with them.

In the experience of God's children it is often observed that after being saved many are asking, expecting, believing and praying before God concerning many, many gifts which they duly receive. And they number Christ among the ranks of these many gifts, viewing Him as but one, though admittedly the first and foremost of God's gifts.

It is quite surprising that we notice our needs when we commence to follow the Lord Jesus. Yet are we not already Christians? Why then should we be in need? Yet this is how we in fact feel. We are new Christians but with deficiencies, and whatever our deficiencies may be, they are not oroner, therefore. we strive to deal with them.

We pray and hope, believe and desire, and furthermore, we get what we need. And it certainly feels good when we have overcome our special deficiency. Our heart rejoices over the fact that we have obtained a gift.

Now in this kind of situation many of God's children view God's gift and grace as that which replenishes our want. Indeed, a number of people will probably say, "What else is God's grace for if it is not to fill up our lack?" I have here a Bible with one thousand pages. I am missing the page which asks God to replenish me with His grace (if there in fact be such a page). In other

words, what I lack is only bits and pieces, but I will be complete when that piece is filled in. Some people need five pieces for they lack five pieces, while others need ten pieces because that is what they lack. My personal love is probably almost perfect, through it will be even better if a little humility and a little patience are added. I may still need these bits but I shall be perfected *after these are supplemented*. Man's concept is always a matter of lack or want: consequently. he usually asks God for that particular supply.

Hence the situation is as follows. What we lack and ask for are all **THINGS**, objects which can be counted in number. We declare we are wanting in this or that, and *IF* only God will replenish *IT*, we then will be all right.

Suppose we lack patience. Just exactly what kind of patience are we expecting to have? *Our eyes rarely look up to heaven for our standard*, on the contrary, we usually look around us "What a pity I am not as good as Mr. So-and-So! He is so patient, while I am so ill-tempered. He is so gentle, whereas I am so proud. Would that I could be as patient and as gentle as he." Some have asked in the past-in the first instance that they prayed after the point of salvation in them or being what they feel was saved at the time-for God to give them a Bible like the one a certain brother had. We so often can only pray for what we have seen concerning others. We are unable to ask for something from heaven which we have never seen. We therefore pray for patience or humility such as a certain someone else has. We have already pictured in our minds what humility or patience IS.

May I ask you a hypothetical question? Would you be happy if soon after believing on the Lord God if He would take the patience of a certain person and deposit it within you? You would most likely consider yourself perfect and fully satisfied by such and addition. Think about this.

You view patience as a thing, that which another possesses. Since there is such a trait called patience among brothers and sisters, you too desire to have that trait. Frequently you descend into hating yourself because you were ill-conceived with such a bad temper. How nice it would be were you only to have that thing which the other person has. For this reason, many of God's children admire patience as a thing, that is to say, they long for something such as a controlled temper. To them patience is a thing which God has, which some other people on earth have, but which they themselves do not possess. Their pressing need is to have patience added to them, thus making them patient people also.

Quite candidly speaking, here lies the basic difference between real and faulty Christianity. Many of God's people Are seeking something which seems to be everywhere else except in their own lives. They notice that so-and-so here, and so-and-so there have it, but they do not. Hence they look for a thing, for something existing on the earth. Such is the common notion in Christianity. People pursue and then possess some item. They rejoice and are thankful for the things *they get*.

CHRIST ALONE

What most people fail to recognize is that in the spiritual realm there is nothing but Christ. There is no patience nor humility nor light in the spiritual world. These things do not exist. It is Christ and Him alone. He is everything, all in all. (Refer again to the three scriptures listed on page one.)

In view of this, we need to have a further work of God done in our lives. (Phil 2:13) When we were first saved, or believed, we were shown that what we needed was Christ, not works. We

were saved through Christ and not by our efforts. Just as similar a drastic and thorough revelation should we have in our present concern; namely, that what we need is Christ, not things. Just as there were many matters eliminated when we first believed, so many more matters must be totally wrecked today. *The only difference is that what was first destroyed were sins*, while what is later to be demolished are -spiritual things. (I know this may be hard for some to see at this time, but give this some prayerful thought.)

It was at the first that our pride, jealousy, vainglory, ill-temper, or some other sin(s) were destroyed. Today **our** patience, humility and self-styled holiness must also be destroyed in order that we may understand that Christ is our life and our all. How vastly opposite is this Christianity from Christianity which people usually conceive of in their minds and hearts.

Another scenario needs to be looked at briefly. You may be among that number who may consider yourself to be better than many other people, but I am fearful lest you remain the same throughout your life, because what you have in yourself are but things.

Perhaps you fit into this scenario: As regards to patience, you are truly very patient, as regards humility, your are surely quite humble; you are very bright in performing tasks and quite good in your conduct. You have love and are always willing to help and to forgive. According to the standard of man, where else can one ever find such a good Christian?

If this is the case, I must tell you straight-forwardly that what you have in yourself are mere *things. You* ought to realize before God, that which is spiritual is not a thing but is the Lord Jesus Christ; not what you have, nor what you can do, nor yet what you can get, but only what Christ is. Except He becomes that thing in your life, nothing else is of any spiritual worth. In the spiritual world, there is nothing but Christ since He is God's everything.

WHOEVER TOUCHES CHRIST TOUCHES LIFE

It may be of help here if we touch upon some practical experience. Permit me to relate a little out of my personal experience. Several days ago something happened in a brother's home. According to duty, I naturally should visit him, for unless one decides against being a Christian, he naturally should desire to be a compassionate person. If I were to go see him I might be able to help, on the one hand by sharing with him, something of my personal feelings, and on the other hand by saving him countless troubles in the future. So I started on *my way* to visit that brother, however, the farther I walked the chillier I became within until there was no more spirit left in me. Immediately I realized it was again I who wished to do something compassionate. I was trying to perform an act of loving the brethren, yet I had already touched death. The act was both commendable and right, but it was not Christ because I was doing it.

What would be the consequence if I undertook the task? The answer is inward death, inward freeze. I may have initiated a commendable act, but I did not meet life. It was no doubt and act of compassion, yet I could not find the Lord Jesus Christ in it. All that could be said was that I had been compassionate. Allow me to reiterate that each time you touch Christ, and not conduct, you touch life. Were you only to touch conduct you would surely die-spiritually-since it is you who are doing it. We may know how to do good because, in Adam, we have partaken of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (death) but it is NOT the tree of Life (Jesus Christ).

We should understand that Christianity is Christ, *and* the life of a Christian is also Christ. Do not pile up a thousand good items and view that heap as Christian life. Were you able to gather up all the humilities on earth as well as assemble tens of thousands of other good traits, you still

could not create a Christian. All that can be seen is a chain of things; one cannot see Christ.

Many, many years ago I found myself, what appeared to me as trying to save face. I wished to save the face of others as well as my own. I did not like to expose another's affairs. I would not have individuals leave my home, or where ever we were meeting, feeling hurt and I was most reluctant to embarrass anyone. If anybody should feel uneasy I would try to make them feel better. I was that way for awhile, long before I wanted to be a gentle person. Nevertheless, oftentimes in my contact with this or that person I sensed deatl1 instant death, without any touch of life-when I tried to be a good and tender person towards him. There could be only one explanation for it, this tenderness was a thing, the conduct and product of my own effects. It was not Christ, hence I died instantly. I had touched a dead body. I was weakened within. There was left no strength in me and so I was finished inwardly.

NOTHING BUT CHRIST

This, then is the gist of whole matter. As we live before God, we experience death when we only see a thing. If what we have is merely a thing we' immediately touch death, because Christ is not in it. Had we touched Christ, we would at once have touched life, since He is Life.

THE TREE OF LIFE IS LIVING

We are frequently reproved in our work. I suppose we all know that those of us who serve God always wish to do more for Him. Now to serve God is basically an excellent and correct undertaking. Very often it requires us to suffer, to sacrifice, to spend and be spent. Nonetheless, many a time in our service we cannot touch life, we instead feel we have touched death. Our inside begins to be weakened and we are inwardly censured as being wrong. At what point in time did we go wrong? It is at the moment when we conceive the idea that we will so work for God that we are weakened and inwardly reprimanded. Oh, it is altogether possible to receive more severe reproof *in* our "doing good" than in our "doing evil!"

How many of you believe that God will rebuke us only when we sin? May I suggest that **lie** who dwells in us will often chide us when we do good. For the principle before God is not the tree of knowledge of *good* and *evil*, it is the tree of life. The knowledge of good and evil is inadequate, since the issue is a matter of life. On the day that one eats of the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, he must die. The tree of life alone is living.

TWO KINDS OF CHRISTIAN LIFE

There exist two kinds of life among the children of God; one kind is full of things while the other kind is Christ. In appearance they look almost alike, hence it is extremely difficult to locate their differences. Both may speak of humility, gentleness, love or forgiveness and they will be hardly distinguishable outwardly. Even so, the one is but a chain of things, whereas the other is Christ Himself. How completely distinct they are inwardly.

THE CROSS FOR CHRIST

Let me state it quite bluntly; if yours be things you do not need the cross, but if yours be Christ, y u learn to have the cross. The cross not only interdicts our sin, it also inhibits our activity-it checks our sin as well as curbs our actions. Many difficulties arise just at this point-God's children consider it well if they do good, yet they fail to realize that their good is merely a thing. In the presence of God the whole issue is Christ. Christ is that good thing, Christ is the life. If He remains .quiet, how can we move? We can easily utter many comforting words, but if He does not speak we ourselves dare not speak. For if we do we will touch death, and thus are we inwardly weakened and shattered. We may without effort help people in man ways and concerns and earn the praise of men as being tender-hearted, yet when we set about to perform these helps we immediately feel deflated within.

Herein do we see the cross; that whatever matters we may accomplish by **our** doing good does not require the cross. It is only when we allow Jesus to live in our lives (II Cor 4:11) so that He may be our things and our all do we need the cross. If He makes no move, how can we move? Oh how we need to ask God to deliver us from our good works just as we ask Him for deliverance from our sins. How often it is relatively easier to be delivered from sin-since sin is condemned-than to be delivered from the natural life-since to many the latter is neither condemned nor rejected.

CHRIST IS HEALING

What does it mean to us when we say that Christ is our things? What does such a statement really convey to us? I think we may learn a good lesson from our physical body. Many people who are physically feeble pray concerning healing. Healing is so very important to people, and it is here that we may distinguish three different concepts of faith. Some believe God is their physician; others believe God can give them healing and health; while still others believe God is their healing. (I believe I am healed by the knowledge of His Son, my Lord Jesus Christ. He dwells in me and I know Him as Life.)

When people contact some physical ailment or trouble, what do they seek after? They expect God to be their physician. Since God is the living God, He can touch the body with His power and heal it. If such be the case, let me tell you that their God is as distant from them as is their own physician. (I wonder whether you have really taken in what I have just said?) Many anticipate God to be their physician, yet they seem to forget that just as far as an earthly physician is distant from his patients, so far is God distant from them too.

Others may perhaps show better understanding, for they look to God for healing and health. One day God gives healing and so they get well. Many are praying and looking for healing. Nevertheless, there are still many feeble bodies lying around. Why is this? Because in expecting God to be a physician or to heal, *believers are still seeking for something external*.

Sometimes God in fact does heal, for this is His way in treating little children. To a person who newly believes, God may be willing to be his physician or to grant healing. But after he has trusted the Lord Jesus for a time this believer will be in God's hand for education and training. God will neither be his physician nor give him healing, because He reserves the very best for His excellent ones. God wants to be his healing, not merely as the God who heals, but more-so as God the healing.

God is my healing

Remember when Paul cried out to have the "thorn" removed from his flesh, God told him, "My grace is sufficient for you." For the lack of adequate expression, I can only reverently say before God, that Christ is our healing.

Countless people take healing as an object as something outside of Christ. As long as He heals, all is fine. Recall the woman who had a hemorrhage (Luke 8:43) where she indeed touched Christ, but what then does the Bible say? Christ was aware that power had gone out of Him. It was Christ Himself who had gone out. Not that He was doing the *work of healing*. but that He went out as the healing, When He goes forth as healing, *people get healed*.

How often are we able to look up *in spite of continued weakness and physical pains* and say, "Lord I do not expect You to be my physician, and walk off after the sickness is healed. Neither do I look to You for healing is a thing granted me for my temporal enjoyment but with yourself walking away. - Lord I want YOU to be my healing. If physician, the Physician who dwells in me; if healing, the healing with a Personality."

My healing does have a Personality; it is one person who becomes my health. God is my health, Christ is my health. Do you see the difference? How very distinct they are. One day as we learn this lesson we shall get more than healing as a thing, because we have a Person who becomes the life of our body. Instantly all the other problems are solved. For it is now a relationship between our body and the Lord Jesus Christ. If anything happens between us and the Lord, our body will suffer the consequence of it. Our everything is up to Christ Jesus. We can do nothing but wait on Him. This is quite opposite from healing as a thing.

Thank God, I have received healing numerous times. I am able to tell you how on a certain date I was sick and how on another definite date I was healed by God. I can relate many incidents about healing. The more I reckon up these incidents, the greater their number grows. Yet all these instances are only small healings, being case histories which can be enumerated. However, I can present you with another incident, that on a particular day in a particular month of a particular year God opened my eyes to see that Christ is my healing. This cannot be repeated, nor can it be numbered.

It is once and for all. It is not a case but a Person or a personified healing. My healing now has personality. Christ is my healing forever. Praise the Son of God my Lord Jesus Christ, this is a fact. To have the Lord heal me and to have Him as my healing are two totally diverse roads. The one is a thing while the other is a Person.

May remind you that Paul did not obtain the healing, he nonetheless was healed. Can you notice the difference here? In II Cor 12, Paul tells us that he did not obtain healing as a thing, yet in his life he has One who continues to be his healing. Though his weakness persists his healing likewise persists. His weakness is prolonged, but his healing is prolonged too.

What is our concept of healing after all? Healing to most of us is a matter of elimination. This is NOT so. Healing is not elimination at all, but healing is having Someone there. *It is not the absence of weakness, but the presence of Power*.

I recall when I first saw this, how slowly the light dawned on me. It was because what my mind could grasp were only things and that what I saw around me were also things. I did not know that Jesus would be all things to me, nor did I understand that healing was not a thing. I only knew the Lord had given me a promise. I knew not how He was my healing. One day I was reading Paul's story in 2nd Corinthinians and I mused how easy it was for the Lord to give healing. For Him to take away that "thorn" from Paul was the simplest of matters-I thought. I

felt how strange that God did not do it. I therefore turned to prayer for I did not understand this.

As I was praying I visualized a scene from some years back. I was invited to go fishing with a man. We took his boat out and while moving out the canals I noticed the boat was frequently dragging itself against the river bed, for the water was shallow, the tide was out and the bottom was rugged. Sometimes my friend had to pull the boat by ropes up the river. In my prayer I suddenly recalled this incident. I said, "God, it is easy for you to remove these rocks and other things. How nice it would be for the boat to sail with adequate water underneath it, if you simply remove the rocks."

I read again II Cor 12, where I found this to be precisely Paul's prayer. The water was shallow and the rocks protruded sharply up from the river bed. Hence, Paul was praying, "O'God, would that you might remove these rocks that my boat may sail in the water." God's answer was, "J will not remove, these rocks, but I will cause the water to rise. As the water rises, the boat can easily sail through."

This is God's doing. What we ask for is healing as an object, but God wishes to be Himself our healing. He will carry us through all that is needed. That particular weakness of Paul still remained with him, yet he was not trying to break through his weakness by his own strength. If he were to do so, he would be overshadowing himself with his own power. But it was the power of Christ that overshadowed him. It was God Himself that was working. Here again is the basic distinction, that on the one side is God giving a thing, on the other side is God Himself being that thing.

COUNTABLE THINGS DO NOT LAST

What do many people earnestly seek after? The are in pursuit of a thing. A large number of people come to me to talk about how they longed for patience. Yet I often mused how very thin must their patience actually runs. Their thought is, "If I could only be patient, if God would only give me a dose of patience to swallow, then I should be well." They seek for patience as though it were a dose of medicine. They may be able to be patient for three or five days, but this patience has a time limit. After being patient for a while, this "patience" shrivels up until one day it completely disappears. If it be obtained through prayer, it nevertheless will be exhausted. For the sake of temporary need of His children, and in order to accommodate their foolishness, God sometimes does hear their prayers and grants them their requests. He nonetheless will not hearken to them on all occasions, for such a condition ought never to be over-extended.

Due to the fact that, in His Word, there is no thing but Christ-Christ being all in all-God will not permit patience or humility or even love, as a thing, to be prolonged indefinitely on the earth. Eventually God will show us that Christ is patience, that Christ is humility or that Christ is love. It is Christ, not an item, that He bestows. On the day when our relationship with Jesus Christ is truly *normalized*, we will naturally see how all our problems are solved. It is really not a question of patience or whatever, it is a matter of Christ. As soon as our relationship with Christ is fully restored to that which God has designed, our thousand and one problems will all be duly resolved. For the entire question is Christ, not a thing or things.

MUST KNOW CHRIST

Before God all issues revolve around the one proposition of knowing Christ. What is meant by knowing Christ? Some people know Him as their love, while others know Him as their humility. Some know more of Christ while others know less of Christ. Knowing Christ is not an abstract term applied only to objective truth; knowing Christ is both active and substantial. It is perceiving Him as our things; He is our this thing and He is our that thing. Knowing Christ as our many things is the measure of our knowing Him, for *this alone is reckoned as our proper knowledge*. This may seem confusing to you at this time, none-the-less it is a fact.

Someone may be able to rise and testify how he knew nothing about cleanness, because his heart, head, thought and all else were unclean. But now-thank God-Christ has become his cleanness because The Father has made Him so. Immediately you realize that it is not a thing you possess, rather it is Christ. Since Christ dwells in you. He brings that thing to you. It's not what belongs to you yourself, but what He brings in with Him. *This is Christianity*.

In view of all that we have just stated, allow me to frankly state that unless the eves of a child of God are opened by Him to see that Christ is his things. that person is of very little use to God. Because what he has are simply his works-that which he himself does. Even though he prays and receives from God, what is his is temporary, having little if any spiritual value before God.

Alas, how much grace which many people receive from God is but things. Some though, receive grace with a Personality. Their grace is the Son of God. Wait till one day you are able to say to God, "I thank and praise You Father, because the grace I have received is Christ. My grace is a Person, having a Personality." Oh, let me tell you that as soon as you see such a difference you can immediately distinguish life from death. Many of the brethren can only distinguish between good and evil; they cannot differentiate life and death. The reason for this is simply that they fail to see that everything is in Christ. He is both the thing and the affair. *In the spiritual realm there is neither thing nor affairs, but only Christ*.

If God has truly opened your eyes, you instantly begin to recognize things when you meet them. This way sounds strange, yet it is factual. A person may seem to be patient, gentle, humble, faithful, loving, warm, forgiving and merciful, but to you whose eyes have been opened, he is merely full of things.

Just as everybody can distinguish a ring from a finger, a hat from a head, spectacles from eyes, and a dress from a body, so a person can differentiate things from Christ. To the uninitiated this may appear spectacular, but to those who perceive, it is quite simple. Whatever belongs to things is dead within and produces death without. If anyone has spiritual sensitivity, he will sense death while doing it. The result of such external work can only be death and not life.

Someone may be very nice, yet his influence is limited to the realm of good and evil, having no spiritual effect. A brother who is good-natured, patient, enduring, sacrificial and loving may perhaps please you, but if these characteristics are only traits they will arouse in you a sense of death. You will not be able to embrace them; on the contrary a resistance will well up within you. No one can calculate the power of this resistance of life. Sometimes people may say a word which sounds quite well but is none-the-less inappropriate, and it draws out from you a tremendous resistance. For example, in a prayer meeting, why do you at times respond with an "Amen?" Assuming that you don't say it every time just out of habit, you say it because *you are touched by life*. A brother, as he is praying, has touched your life and you therefore spontaneously say "Amen!"

But some other person's prayer, though it may sound earnest and appealing, produces a chilling

effect within you. You long that he will cease praying, for his prayer is no different from his personality. He has something, only that something has the touch of death. A thing produces death not only in the person himself, but in others as well. There is absolutely no spiritual worth in it, for it is done by man.

Since this is the situation, we can do nothing before God but to wait on Him. More and more we shall see the evil of our own works. For if we are really led forward by God we will surely discover that He hates our works as much as our sins. To those who sin, they must perish; to those who depend on their own works, they cannot be saved. God rejects our works just as He repudiates our sins. accepts one thing only, and that is His Son Jesus Christ. It is one thing only, and that is His Word to us all. It is Christ who becomes all things to us. Thank God, it is the Lord and not I. Not I trying to be humble, but He humbles Himself. Not I struggling to love, but He loves instead. He does not give me power because He Himself is my power.

My dear ones, I do not know how best I should say this; I especially wish the newly saved to notice. When you are delivered from spiritual things, you will touch the Lord. It is far better for you to perceive this as early as possible, otherwise it will become increasingly more difficult as time goes on. *The larger the heap of things, the harder you are able to see through. How* must God beat you and toss you about (Rev 3:19) before He is able to take away these items from you so that you may receive Christ. This I say God will surely do.

I am waiting for. the day when all things-both things in the heavens and those upon the earth-shall be summed up in Christ. Eph 1:10) On that day the word of God will be fulfilled in that Christ is All. Let me challenge you: *How can you expect Christ to be all if today you do not know Him as your all?* Even now Christ will become all our things. God has given His own Son to us; God has given Himself to us. There should not be any division between Christ and things. N9thine is spiritual-only Christ is. He is all and in all.

The reality of this must begin to evidence itself now in the church and with us. May we declare today that Christ is all and that He is in all. He is in my patience, He is my gentleness. He is my love, for He is all. Now we look forward to that day when the Son of God is manifested to be all and in all. He indeed has the preeminence over all things, and then shall we know that the lessons we learn today are for use in this day.

May God bless us, A Prayer

Our Father, we are before You asking for grace. Lord, we confess that our eyes are so blind that we cannot see clearly. Things we know.

You, Lord, seem to be rather distant from us. Things look so real to us, while Christ Himself is not that real. Lord, we truly ask you to cause us to see. May Christ become real to us. Let things pass away, let life fill us. Father, we sincerely ask you to deliver us from objects which can be counted that we may know the Lord Jesus Christ who is a person. May the personal Lord be all our countable things. May everything in us be living and full of life so that people may see Christ when they see these things.

Father, cause us to understand how totally diverse are these two ways we are studying. How different is the way of the righteous from the way of the sinner; in like manner, how very

much different is the way of a true child of yours, Father, from that of a false one. There is need for much crushing. Crush us, Lord. Do not allow us to deceive ourselves, considering ourselves as having seen, though we see nothing, as having touched the Way, when we are far from it, as being full of Life whereas we are full of things. Father, touch us. Establish Yourself firmly in us that from our inside to our outside it may be Christ and Christ Himself.

Father, bless these words that they may bear fruit in bringing people-our family-back to You abundantly. What man fails to speak, may you speak. May You cover human weakness and forgive man's folly. May You get something for Yourself in our midst. We need to be laid bare. May this be the day of exposure to many people, that we may see ourselves as You see us. May a ray of light strike us which uncovers all falsehoods and distinguish Yourself from all substitutes.

Bless Your word and glorify Your name. In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen

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