

# VIGIL



*“Be sober, be vigilant, because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour.”*

*~ I Peter 5:8*

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**Worship**

## **Is There Any Harm in Instrumental Music** **Hugo McCord**

In the days of Jesus, the Jews washed their hand before eating a meal, not for cleanliness, but as a religious ceremony. An honest person could truly say, “I don’t see any harm in hand washing,” but God said, “In vain they worship me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men” (Matthew 15:9, NKJV), or “They worship me in vain; their teaching are but rules taught by men” (Matthew 15:9, NIV).

When a worshiper enters a church building, and walks up to a basin of “holy water” (hydrant water plus olive oil and salt), and dips his finger into it, and makes the sign of the cross by touching his forehead and then each of his breast, a passerby could say, “I don’t see any harm in the holy water ceremony.” But someone should ask, “Is the holy water ceremony among the “commandments” or “rules taught by men” or by God?”

When a worshiper holds a string of beads (called a “rosary”) in his hands as he prays, one could say, “I don’t see any harm in holding a string of beads in praying.” But someone

should ask, “Is the use of a rosary among the “commandments” or “rules taught by men” or by God?”

The lighting of prayer candles in church services or at funerals is done by sincere people. One could say, “I don’t see any harm in lighting prayer candles.” But someone should ask, “Is lighting prayer candles among the “commandments” or “rules taught by men” or by God?”

At Jesus’ last Passover meal on the table was a lamb “roasted in fire, with unleavened bread,” and, as a beverage, “the fruit of the vine” (Exodus 12:8; Matthew 26:29). If Christians today add to the unleavened bread and the fruit of the vine a leg of roasted lamb as part of the Lord’s Supper, one could say, “I see no harm in adding roasted lamb.” Would such a service be among the “commandments” or “rules taught by men” or by God?

But someone says, “Instrumental music is such a natural accompaniment to singing, no harm can be in it.” Similarly, one could say that “roasted lamb is such a natural

accompaniment to bread and drink, no harm can be in adding it to the Lord’s Supper.”

But, someone say, “To object to instrumental music is such a little matter no harm can be in it.” Similarly, one could say “Hand washing is such a little matter no harm can be in it.”

But, someone says, “Instrumental music is only an aid to the singing, and so no harm is in its use.” In the Old Testament instrumental music was not looked upon as an aid, but as part of the worship: Praise the Lord with the harp; make music to him on the ten-stringed lyre (Psalm 33:2). I will praise you with the harp for your faithfulness, O my God; I will sing praise to you with the lyre, O Holy One of Israel (Psalm 71:22).

Moreover, in today’s worship services, instrumental music is often heard, of as an aid to singing, but all by itself. And, when it accompanies singing, instead of being an aid, John Calvin wrote that it takes the “thought of the congregation from the words of the hymn.”

## EDITORIAL

### Is there Authority for Worship?

Hasn't Satan done a masterful job in confusing the world about worship? Is it scriptural for a woman to preach to an audience of both men and women? Is instrumental music acceptable to God in worship today? The questions could on and on. It all boils down to a matter of **authority**. By authority we mean, "the power of one whose will and commands must be obeyed by others" (Vines, p. 89). Christ said, "God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth" (John 4:24). Has God left worship up to our discretion? Absolutely not! Worship, that is pleasing to God, must be what He wants. Guy N. Woods wrote in his commentary on the book of *John*, "Thus, those who worship him in harmony with his nature and this is to do so 'in spirit and in truth.' Here, the three simple, but vitally important, aspects of true worship are set out: (1) We must worship God; (2) we must worship God in spirit, i.e., rationally, and sincerely; (3) we must worship God in truth, as his word directs (Colossians 3:17; John 17:17)" (83). Often you can hear someone say, "Where is the passage that say I can't do this or that"? That is a person who does not understand authority. The question must be, "Where is the passage that gives me the right or commands me to do this or that"! Paul told the church at Corinth, "For we walk by faith, not by sight" (2 Corinthians 5:7). This means we are acting according to God's directives. Authority is essential. There must be authority for everything we do in worship or our worship is vain. Christ said of the Pharisees and scribes,

"Howbeit in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men" (Mark 7:7).

God is the author of this authority. "And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven" (Matthew 16:19). Christ is the executor of this authority. "And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth" (Matthew 28:18). Unless we can find authority to do some act of worship, it is unauthorized and sinful!

Rebellious attitudes are prevalent when man is determined to do what he wants regardless of what God has said. You will hear, "Where does it say it is wrong", or "I don't believe God would mind if I played an instrument" or even "It doesn't seem to be that big of a deal to me". Apparently, what man might think is no big deal, God does! Take Nadab and Abihu for example. In Leviticus 10:1,2 we find that it was their responsibility to take their "...censer and to put fire therein and put incense thereon". They did this, **but they offered "...strange fire before the Lord"**. For this they were destroyed with fire. In man's thinking, some would say, "What was the big deal"? "Isn't fire, fire"? The big deal was they did something that was not authorized. Listen to the verse, they "...offered strange fire before the Lord, which he commanded them not". They went outside the commandment to do what they wanted. Unauthorized worship is huge to God. When God gives a command, it is not insignificant to disobey it. The Israelites were commanded how to carry the Ark of

the Covenant (cf. Exodus 25:10-16; Numbers 3:27-32). But one time when the ark was moved, they chose to do so by the means of a new cart and oxen (2 Samuel 6:3). When the oxen shook and the ark was about to fall, Uzzah reached up and touched the ark and **"...God smote him there for his error..."** (2 Samuel 6:7). Why was he killed? Because this attitude of doing things the way we want is serious. God summed it up when he said to Saul, "For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because thou hast rejected the word of the LORD, he hath also rejected thee from being king" (1 Samuel 15:23). The bottom line is when one doesn't something unauthorized it is a rejection of God and that my friend, is serious!

God recognized that man would have a propensity to do what he wanted. That is why He placed a warning in front, middle, and end of the Bible not to add to or take away from the word of God (cf. Deuteronomy 4:2; Proverbs 30:6; Revelation 22:18,19). The next time you hear a discussion about worship and someone suggests they are going to have a drama, play, musical, performance or what ever, it would be good to ask them, "Where is the passage that authorizes that action"?

Questions:

1. How do you define "Authority".
2. What roles do God and Christ play in authority?
3. What are three vitally important aspects of worship?
4. Why do you think Nadab, Abihu and Uzzah were destroyed?
5. What do you think is the bottom line when man chooses to do unauthorized acts of worship?

## **Singing in Worship**

### **Dale Hubbert**

Worship to God is one of the most enthralling and humbling experiences that God's children can participate in. It is imperative that God be consulted in order that our worship meets the objective of pleasing God and offering acceptable spiritual sacrifice. The vital elements of our worship have been revealed through God's word to facilitate our understanding of the areas that God has authorized. Specific instructions are provided as well as areas where human judgment is needful.

What kind of music does God authorize in worship in the Christian age? It is incorrect to say we don't have music in our worship. Music may be broadly defined in three areas. Music can be produced by instruments without singing to accompany it. Singing without instrumental accompaniment is a form of music. Singing and instruments played simultaneously provide a form of music. Only one of the three has spiritual authorization in New Testament worship. We are to sing and make melody in our hearts unto the Lord (Eph 5:19).

God is the object of our worship and affection. It would then seem logical to seek what God desires if our true fondness is to make our Maker happy. Our worship is to be charities by the proper attitude linked with truth - the revealed will of our Master (John 4:24). Singing with the spirit and the understanding fills that prescription.

Singing is the only time during our worship when all Christians are vocally participating. It is intended primarily to praise God even though there are blessings that those singing receive as well. What humanity thinks in regard to music in the church

should always defer to God's wishes. God wants us to sing. Anything more is too much. Anything less is not enough.

**Who is to sing?** Every member of the church is to sing. "Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord." (Eph 5:19). The command and privilege to sing is to all. There is no mention or implication in the scriptures of a solo, duet, trio, choir, or others specially selected to sing for the congregation. If less than the congregation sing, who are they singing to? God is the audience. Why then would some be left out? If someone can sing for me why can they not take the Lord Supper for me? Or why can someone or a group not give for me?

**Why are we to sing?** We are to sing because God commands and desires the fruit of our lips: "By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of *our* lips giving thanks to his name" (Heb 13:15). We sing because our singing teaches and admonishes those who are fellow worshippers (Col 3:16). Singing with the spirit and the understanding (1 Cor 14:15) reminds us of God's greatness and challenges us to be more faithful in service.

**What are we to sing?** Songs come in a variety of styles and content. Romantic, country, ballads, patriotic, and rap are only a segment of the type songs written and sung. Some songs are vulgar and/or suggestive in their content. These songs should not be sung (or listened to) upon any occasion. What songs are appropriate to be sung in worship? Fortunately we have God's word to

answer that question. "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs" (Col 3:16). Psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs are the type songs God wants brought before His throne in worship. Romantic ballads and patriotic songs may be well suited for other events but they have no place in worship to the Almighty. By sticking to the Book we will be safe and right.

What happens when we sing according to the scriptures? God is praised! Sinners are taught. Faithful brothers and sisters are edified. Struggling brethren receive strength. Our minds are focused on things above. Singing is the music of the soul that comes through the lips and blesses the ears of those who are listening.

Singing in our worship is directed and mandated by the One our praise is being offered to. There is much to be gained when we sing enthusiastically with the proper attitude and with the enthusiasm that worship should inspire. Singing in worship should never be polluted with any instrument other than the fruit of our lips and the melody of our hearts. No one can or should take our place in the singing of praise to God.

Questions for thought and discussion

1. What are the different forms of music?
2. What is the only form of music that God accepts in worship?
3. What can we do to insure that God is pleased with our service in song?
4. Will we be excused from singing if we cannot sing as well as others?
5. Is it possible to sing a lie?

## Prayer

### Chuck Webster

It is an unfathomable privilege to be able to speak intimately with God—the Creator of all things—as our Father. In a special way prayer reflects hearts that are truly focused on worshipping the One whom we adore and in whom we draw our strength. As with most blessings, however, we are tempted to neglect prayer’s efficacy by rushing through it, perhaps uttering a few hurried words out of ritualistic habit. Let us remember—each act of worship is crucially important, and none may be neglected without imperiling the primary purpose of worship: praising God (John 4:24).

Like the disciples of centuries ago, we turn to the One who makes prayer possible and ask Him, “Lord, teach us to pray” (Luke 11:1). His response via the Spirit-inspired Word is multi-faceted in nature. Prayer consists of multiple components and is best understood by studying its different elements:

**1. Prayer is ADORATION.** A cursory examination of passages dealing with prayer reveals an interesting link between an overwhelming sense of adoration for God and an expression of that emotion in prayer. We can sense Isaiah’s sense of frustration when he encountered a manifestation of God. Grasping for words he cried out, “Woe is me, for I am undone! Because I am a man of unclean lips, And I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; For my eyes have seen the King, The LORD of hosts” (Isaiah 6:5). In a similar way, Moses hid his face when he encountered God (Ex. 3:6). John saw four beasts who recognized the holiness of God and incessantly repeated: “Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come” (Revelation 4:8; cf. 15:4). The “new song” expressed adoration for the Lamb and His redemptive blood (Rev. elation 5:9,13; cf. 1 Peter 1:18-19; Colossians

1:12-15; Ephsians 1:3-7). John also heard voices praising the Lord for His creative power (Revelations. 4:11; 14:7; cf. Col. 1:12-17). A consistent pattern emerges: one chief component of prayer should be adoration, expressed in gratitude to God for His myriad benevolent acts.

**2. Prayer is INTERCESSION.** Prayer is primarily directed “vertically,” of course, but there is also a “horizontal” component. The Bible repeatedly emphasizes the “one another” emphasis of prayer: “Now I beg you, brethren, through the Lord Jesus Christ, and through the love of the Spirit, that you strive together with me in prayers to God for me” (Rom. 15:30). “Brethren, pray for us” (1 Thessalonians. 5:25; cf. 2 Thessalonians. 3:1). Paul urged us to pray for those in positions of authority (1 Timothy 2:1-2), and we pray for our families (Job 1:5), the sick (James 5:13-15), gospel preachers (2 Corinthians 1:11), all the saints (Eph.sians 6:18), our children (Matthew15:22), our friends (Job 42:8), our enemies (Matthew 5:44), and all men (1 Timothy 2:1). It is comforting to ask one another to “pray for me” and know that righteous Christians will be lifting up our particular needs before the throne of God.

**3. Prayer is SUPPLICATION.** In addition to its upward and outward focus, prayer should also have an *inward* component. In His model prayer, Jesus showed us that we should express our needs to the Father (Matthew 6:11). When we are hurting, we can “cast all [our] care upon Him, for He cares for” us (1 Peter 5:7). Hannah took her barrenness to God (1 Samuel 1:10ff). When David was “greatly distressed,” he “strengthened himself in the LORD his God” (1 Samuel 30:6). In the pit of despair, Elijah took his overwhelming concerns to God (1 Kings 19:4,10,14). Paul urged us to be “anxious for

nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus” (Philippians. 4:6-7). In other words, we should take our needs—whether physical, emotional, or spiritual—to God. He cares, He listens, and He answers.

**4. Prayer is CONFESSION.** Perhaps the character trait that reserved a special place for David in Israel’s regal lineage was his willingness to admit his sins. Convicted by Nathan of his sins with Bathsheba and Uriah, David said simply, “I have sinned against the LORD” (2 Samuel. 12:13). His spiritual sensitivity is further revealed in the penitential psalm he wrote soon after: “Have mercy upon me, O God, According to Your loving kindness; According to the multitude of Your tender mercies, Blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, And cleanse me from my sin. For I acknowledge my transgressions, And my sin is always before me. Against You, You only, have I sinned, And done this evil in Your sight—That You may be found just when You speak, And blameless when You judge” (Psalms 51:1-4). A key ingredient in our prayers should be confession of sins. When private, confession should be specific. Public prayer should likewise be characterized by a penitential spirit, but corporate prayer will usually be less specific. *Every* prayer, however, should be characterized by humility. The prodigal son was welcomed home because of his penitent spirit (Luke 15:21), and the publican’s prayer was accepted because he humbly recognized his unworthiness (Luke 18:13).

We know that James 5:16 is true: “The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.” Imagine, then, the tremendous power that is

realized when hundreds of Christians bow their heads and hearts simultaneously in public worship and

with one voice petition the Heavenly Father. The possibilities are beyond our comprehension, so may God's people

today rededicate ourselves to sincere prayer.

## THE LORD'S SUPPER

Kerry Richardson

During the late spring and early summer in the "Deep South," many people participate in an age-old tradition called "Decoration Day." Cherishing the memories of loved ones who have passed on into eternity, family members return to gravesites (often located by a church building) for the two-fold purpose of paying respect to the departed individuals and strengthening the ties that bind the current family together. As long as I can remember, my mother's family has observed this tradition on the second Sunday in June. Gathering together, we worship God that morning, eat a fellowship meal together, go to the Hatt Church of Christ for a singing, and walk among the graves of our departed loved ones. In participating in these activities during this special day, we are reminded of fond memories in the long ago while enjoying the fellowship of those who have yet to cross on into eternity.

In the pages of the New Testament, we observe a similar activity that was designed to accomplish the same kind of things: *the Lord's Supper*. Recorded by three of the four writers of the gospel account (*John excluded*), Jesus instituted this activity as He ate the Passover meal with His apostles (Luke 22:14-20). As a reader progresses through the New Testament, he will find this activity being frequently mentioned. One of the first things mentioned about the new converts from the day of Pentecost is the fact that they "continued steadfastly in breaking of bread" (Acts 2:42). In Acts 20:7, we observe the fact that the apostle Paul assembled on the first day of the week to "break bread" with the brethren at Troas. In addressing the church at Corinth, Paul highlighted the fact that the supper was being used to divide, not unify, the congregation (1

Corinthians 11:17-34). Yet, many do not understand the depth of the activity or the purposes of observing it with fellow believers each first day of the week. Thus, we seek both a greater understanding and appreciation.

As we examine the background of the Lord's Supper, we notice a similar feast that the children of Israel observed in obedience to God during the Mosaic dispensation: *the Passover*. While the events of the Passover week (Exodus 12:1-28; Deuteronomy 16:1-8) differ in many ways when compared to the Lord's Supper, they both share common ground: *God's people observed a memorial event through the use of articles of food*. The Passover meal (*meat, herbs, unleavened bread*) was an activity which helped the children of Israel remember God's mercy upon His people in the land of Egypt. Likewise, the Lord's Supper (*unleavened bread, fruit of the vine*) assists New Testament Christians in the remembrance of God's mercy that was demonstrated in Christ's sacrifice on the cross. With the numerous similarities between the two, many good Bible students conclude that the Passover meal serves as a "shadow of good things to come" (Hebrews 10:1) when it is examined in light of the Lord's Supper.

As Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper during the Passover meal with His disciples, the emblems that He identified were *symbolic* in nature. Taking the unleavened bread, Jesus indicated that it symbolized His body that would be given (Luke 22:19). The fruit of the vine would, according to our Lord, symbolize the "blood of the new testament," which is shed for man's sin (Matthew 26:28). Thus, the memorial feast was designed *primarily* to remind Christ's followers

of the great mercy and love that was demonstrated at the cross.

In the New Testament, it seems that at least one of the first century churches observed this memorial feast in the "context" of a fellowship meal (*like to that of Christ and His disciples in Matthew 26:26-29; "as they were eating"*). In fact, the abuse of this practice is addressed by Paul in 1 Corinthians 11:17-34. Though the memorial feast was designed to be *for the better* of the congregation, the manner in which these brethren observed the Lord's Supper actually was "for the worse" (verse 17). To solve the problems, Paul gave five mandates to the brethren. First, this practice originated with Christ, not man (verses 19, 23-25). In addition, the memorial activity looks to the past (*the Lord's death*) and to the future (*till He comes*; verse 26). Also, Christians should "examine" themselves to be certain that they are participating in a "worthy manner" (verses 27-32). Furthermore, the brethren should wait for one another and eat the Supper as a "whole" rather than "in part" (verse 33). Finally, and most important to the idea under discussion, is that the brethren were to "eat at home" if they were hungry (verse 34). Thus, Paul separated the "Supper" from the "common meal" because of a tendency to cause division within this church.

Today, it is sad to realize that many people participate in "Decoration Days" without truly understanding its great significance. However, a much greater tragedy occurs when we partake of this memorial feast without consideration of God's grace, Jesus' love, and the brethren who sit alongside us in the pews. May God help us realize the significance of this memorial feast that helps us commune with God and with one another!

## **QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION**

1. After being blessed, does the bread become the actual body of Christ? Does the cup become the actual blood of Christ?

2. Is the use of wine as the “fruit of the vine” acceptable to God?

3. How often should the Lord’s Supper be observed?

4. Is singing during observance of the Lord’s Supper acceptable to God?

5. Can a congregation acceptably use more than one cup or one parcel of bread?

## **Giving Ashley Kizer**

Some young students were discussing the topic of Lent during their lunch period at school. The common question that was being asked pertained to what each student was going to “give up” for the established period of time. After it seemed all had been told, one curious student turned to his teacher, who happened to be a Christian, and asked, “What are you going to give up, sir?” To this, the teacher replied, “I already gave up something a few years ago.” “What was it?” asked the student, “Can you tell me?” Nodding, the teacher said gently, “When I became a Christian, I gave up myself. Now, all that I have belongs to God.”

Truly, each Christian must “deny himself” and present his body a “living sacrifice” (Luke 9:23; Romans 12:1). For Jesus paid the ultimate price with His own blood in order to purchase us for the glory of God (cf. Acts 20:28; Romans 9:23). Our very bodies do not even belong to us (cf. 1 Corinthians 6:19-20). So, Paul said of his own experience in Christ to the brethren in Corinth, “I will very gladly spend and be spent for you...” (2 Corinthians 12:15).

In Paul’s statement, we can see an example of the twofold obligation of every Christian to give, not only of his possessions, but also of himself. We can also notice the attitude and the angle from which we are to give.

The first part of the verse denotes the proper attitude: “I will very gladly spend...” The ASV and the ESV both have it translated, “I will most gladly spend...” Paul was more than happy to sacrifice all of his time, effort, and thought for the brethren at Corinth. He concerned

himself with their welfare to the extent that he suffered mentally and emotionally (cf. 2 Corinthians 11:28). In the context of monetary giving, Paul later related this inspired truth: “...God loveth a cheerful giver” (2 Corinthians 9:7). Why does a *cheerful* attitude matter to God as long as He is receiving alms? The truth is that our attitudes are what God is most interested in! He is not in need of our service, nor does He need material wealth to see His plans through. Paul told the Athenians on Mars Hill, “God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands; Neither is worshiped with men’s hands, as though he needed any thing...” (Acts 17:24-25). The Psalmist wrote, “The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise” (51:17). That is why, “...though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing” (1 Corinthians 13:3).

The second part of 2 Corinthians 12:15 reveals, somewhat subtly, the proper perspective in giving. We might describe this as the angle from which we are to give. Did you notice that Paul specifically said, “I will...*be spent* for you...” (emphasis mine)? Paul was not going to spend himself because he had already been purchased with the blood of Christ, but God would certainly spend him! As he saw it, from this angle, his body was no longer his to give. Paul had become God’s slave, just as he told the Romans, “...being made free from sin, ye became servants of righteousness” (Romans

6:18). Albert Barnes has commented that the original Greek word for “spent” that Paul used means to be “exhausted and worn out” in labors. Surely, your work in Christ will leave you exhausted at times, but, as Solomon once wrote, “When thou liest down, thou shalt not be afraid: yea, thou shalt lie down, and thy sleep shall be sweet” (Proverbs 3:24).

Giving is, in essence, an expression of my relationship with God Almighty. Even the simple act of giving money to God shows a closeness between the two of us. That is why it can be done effectively in secret. As a matter of fact, Jesus commanded, “That thine alms may be in secret: and thy Father which seeth in secret himself shall reward thee openly” (Matthew 6:4).

Giving is an expression of both my faith in God and my love for Him. God tested Abraham’s faith when He commanded him to give up his own son as a sacrifice on a mountain in Moriah (cf. Genesis 22:1-2). The Hebrews writer noted the success of the patriarch when he said, “By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son” (11:17). When God wanted to express His love toward us, He offered up His Son in order to save us from our sins. “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3:16). Giving is an outward expression of one’s faith and love. Paul said to, “Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith” (2 Corinthians 13:5). Perhaps we should start by analyzing how much we give on a regular basis.

It may be beneficial for us to view giving as an eternal investment in our spiritual accounts. After all, Jesus put it this way to His disciples when He said, “But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal...” (Matthew 6:20). He told a parable of a certain rich man who placed his trust in material things because he had saved up so much wealth. “But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided” (Luke 12:20)? We should set goals that will help us to be “rich toward God” instead of laying up treasures for ourselves (Luke 12:21)

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