

DO YOU NOT KNOW?
PART 7

TEXT: 1 CORINTHIANS 6:9-20

September 2, 2012

INTRODUCTION/REVIEW:

In 1 Corinthians 6:9-20, Paul asks the Corinthians four questions, each beginning with, “Do you not know.” His questions function as a rebuke expressing his exasperation with the Corinthian’s immoral behavior. The problem with the Corinthians is that they didn’t know the gospel and they had not seriously considered its implications for their lives in regard to sexual immorality. So, in response to their unrestrained license, Paul seeks to reintroduce the Corinthians to the gospel and its implications, which alone has the power to motivate them to flee sexual immorality (v. 18a) and to glorify God in their bodies (v. 20b; i.e., keep the 7th Commandment; to fulfill the sexual ethic of God’s kingdom, cf. Matt. 5:27-30).

In vv. 9-11, we learned how Paul takes up the theme of the kingdom of God and applies it to the problem of sexual immorality in the Corinthian church. He asks (rebukes) the Corinthians:

- I. DO YOU NOT KNOW THAT THE UNRIGHTEOUS WILL NOT INHERIT THE KINGDOM OF GOD?
VV. 9-11

Second, in vv. 12-14, Paul appeals to the resurrection.

- II. DO YOU NOT KNOW THAT YOUR BODIES BELONG TO CHRIST BECAUSE THEY ARE DESTINED FOR RESURRECTION? VV. 12-14

Christ’s resurrection and consequently the believer’s resurrection confirm the fact that the believer’s body belongs to the Lord. The resurrection validates the moral importance of the physical body.

Third, in vv. 15-17, Paul appeals to the believers union with Christ.

- III. DO YOU NOT KNOW THAT YOUR BODIES BELONG TO CHRIST BECAUSE THEY ARE IN UNION WITH HIM? VV. 15-17

There is a sacred bond between the believer and Christ. In fact, this bond is so closely united that every act of sexual immorality by a believer joins Christ in that act. It is unthinkable that a believer would join Christ to that which is impure, defiled and unholy (i.e., in the context, taking Christ’s body and joining Him to a temple prostitute’s body). Such a close union with Christ leads us to confront the accommodations we have made to the idol of sex (see Andrew Purves, *Reconstructing Pastoral Theology*, p. 25).

Paul not only shows that we are legally united to Christ (vv. 15-17) but also vitally united to Christ (vv. 18-20). This brings us to his fourth question (i.e., third rebuttal/argument).

LESSON:

IV. DO YOU NOT KNOW THAT YOUR BODIES BELONG TO GOD BECAUSE THEY ARE HIS RIGHTFUL POSSESSION? VV. 18-20

Paul writes,

¹⁸ 'Flee sexual immorality!' 'Every sin a person commits is outside of the body.' –'but the sexually immoral person sins against his own body.' ¹⁹ Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, ²⁰ for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body" (**Note:** The NET, ASV and KJV translation of v. 18 are preferable over the ESV, NASB and NIV, which insert the word "other," which is not in the Greek text (see Denny Burk, "Discerning Corinthian Slogans through Paul's Use of the Diatribe in 1 Corinthians 6:12–20," pp. 117-118).

Throughout vv. 12-20, Paul has been confronting and correcting the Corinthians erroneous theological slogans, which they used to justify *engaging in* rather than *fleeing from* sexual immorality (cf. vv. 12-13). Here in vv. 18-20, Paul confronts and corrects one final slogan that the Corinthians were using to justify sexual immorality (i.e., frequenting temple prostitutes). His dialogue with the Corinthians is as follows:

Paul's command: "Flee sexual immorality!"

Corinthians' slogan/objection: [But why?] "Every sin a person commits is outside of the body."

Paul's reply: "But the sexually immoral person sins against his own body" (see Hays, *1 Corinthians*, p. 105).

Paul's proof: "Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price."

Paul's conclusion: "So glorify God in your body."

As evidenced by this last slogan, we see that the Corinthians were influenced by Greek dualism rather than the gospel and its implications. They reasoned that the physical body is morally insignificant and cannot be used as an instrument of sin (sin was "outside of (ἐκτὸς) the body."). However, Paul rebuts, "but the immoral person sins against his own body." In vv. 15-17, Paul argues that the believer who

commits sexual immorality sins against Christ's body (i.e., dishonors and defiles the body of Christ). Now, in v. 18, Paul states that the believer who commits sexual immorality sins against his or her own body (i.e., dishonors and defiles the believer's own body). Great damage then is done not only against Christ's body but also the believer's body (cf. 6:12a, "not all things are helpful."). In vv. 19a-20a, Paul gives proof of how tragic such damage is by showing that the believer's body belongs to God and is therefore of great moral importance.

Before looking at Paul's proof, we must first examine his command in v. 18a, "flee from sexual immorality." Paul's moral imperative means "to keep from doing something by avoiding it because of its potential damage, flee from, avoid, shun," (BDAG, p. 1052). Paul has already spoken to the destructive nature of sexual immorality in 6:12a ("not all things are helpful"). His command has been inherent throughout his entire argument. But, now in v. 18, he issues the exhortation clearly and forcefully (**Note:** Paul issues the same exhortation in 10:14 regarding idolatry perhaps because of the close connection between sexual immorality and idolatry. Idolatry and sexual immorality were closely connected in Israel's history (see Ex. 34:15-16; Num. 25:1-3; Ezek. 23; Hos. 4:12-15)).

Because the danger of sexual immorality is an ever-present reality, Paul's command is in the present tense. Keeping away from sexual immorality is to be an ongoing daily activity of the believer. The question is how? How does the Christian, who is daily immersed with sexual temptations in a sex-obsessed culture, continually keep away from sexual immorality?

The answer is that for Paul, the law ("flee sexual immorality") is never His final word (see Fee, *Galatians*, p. 261; One must note carefully how Paul's moral exhortation moves from indicative to imperative, see Hays, *1 Corinthians*, p. 106; As he has done, Paul's argument is based on the gospel-driven philosophy, "become what you are."). Thus, in order to motivate the believer to flee from sexual immorality the Apostle sets forth one final gospel-centered argument in vv. 19a-20a (Note: Verses 18-20 further expound on the truth in v. 13b, "The body is not meant for sexual immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body.").

Paul proves the believer's body matters because it is God's rightful possession by a double right: **(1)** Habitation, the indwelling of the Spirit, v. 19a and **(2)** Redemption, the redemptive work of Christ on the cross, v. 20a. With this context in mind, let's take a closer look at Paul's reasoning.

A. HABITATION: TEMPLE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT, V. 19A

Paul asks the Corinthians, "Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God?" It is clear from the Corinthians' immoral behavior that they had forgotten the work of Christ *for us* (the gospel) as well as the work of Christ *in us* (the fruit of the gospel). They were not self-consciously aware of a cardinal implication (fruit) of the gospel, which is this: The

believer's body belongs to the Lord because it is a sacred temple of the Holy Spirit. The believer's body is a holy habitation of the Lord and is therefore not meant for sexual immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. The temple imagery would have been immediately meaningful to the Corinthians (see Fee, *1 Corinthians*, pp. 146-147).

GOD'S TEMPLE AND THE CORINTHIAN (GENTILE) CONTEXT

Ancient Corinth and the surrounding area was filled with pagan temples and shrines (e.g., the temples of Aphrodite, Poseidon—ruler of the sea on which Corinth's commercial life depended), Apollo, Hermes, Venus-Fortuna, Isis, and the Pantheon, which was dedicated to "All The Gods"). Concerning the famous temple of Aphrodite—the goddess of love, William Barclay writes,

Above the isthmus towered the hill of the Acropolis, and on it stood the great temple of Aphrodite, the goddess of love. To that temple there were attached one thousand priestesses who were sacred prostitutes, and in the evenings they descended from the Acropolis and plied their trade upon the streets of Corinth, until it became a Greek proverb, 'It is not every man who can afford a journey to Corinth.' (*The Letters To The Corinthians*, p. 3).

Prior to their conversion, many of the Corinthian men were accustomed to frequenting these temple prostitutes. The problem Paul is addressing is that some were arguing for their "right" to continue participating in this widespread socially acceptable immoral practice (see vv. 12-13, 18 for the theological slogans used to justify their so-called "right."). Clearly, the gospel and its implications had not become paramount in their lives (cf. 1 Cor. 15:3). One can imagine Paul directing the Corinthians attention to the Temple of Aphrodite or perhaps the Pantheon and in exasperation saying,

Do you not know? The temple of Aphrodite is not where the presence of the living God dwells. Temple prostitution would never dwell in the presence of the living God who is holy. Such immoral behavior is not an act of consecration but rather desecration! Do you not know? There are not many gods as the Pantheon suggests. There is only one God and He, by His Holy Spirit, dwells in you. The indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit marks you off as God's people—His temple—in Corinth."

Paul is calling the Corinthian's attention to the fact that there is only one temple in Corinth, and they are it, both corporately and individually (cf. Fee, *1 Corinthians*, p. 147)! In chapter 3:26-27, Paul applies the temple imagery to the church as a whole. When the church is gathered corporately in Jesus' Name, He is in the midst of His people (i.e., the corporate gathering of the church is the place of God's dwelling; cf. 5:4). Paul then issues a chilling warning against anyone who would seek to destroy God's dwelling place—the church. He writes, "If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy him. For God's temple is holy, and you are that temple." In 1 Corinthians

5:4, Paul again confirms that Jesus is present among His people and that He endorses the disciplinary action of the church against unrepentant professing members of the church. Here in 6:19a Paul takes the truth of God's presence among His people and applies it to the individual believer.

The Corinthians became God's temple in Corinth at regeneration (cf. "washed" 6:11). Yet, since they had not self-consciously contemplated the implications of this truth, they were arrogantly tolerating and living in unrestrained sexual license. Gordon Fee writes, "As God's temple in Corinth, the church was to be His alternative to Corinth, both its religions and vices. But the Corinthians, by their worldly wisdom, boasting, and divisions, were in effect banishing the Spirit and thus about to destroy the only alternative God had in their city" (*1 Corinthians*, p. 148).

The temple imagery was not just familiar to the Corinthians. As a Jew, the temple imagery would have been exceedingly rich in Paul's understanding—perhaps more so than the Corinthians.

GOD'S TEMPLE AND THE PAULINE (JEWISH) CONTEXT

As a Jew, the temple imagery for Paul was rooted in the OT Scriptures and thus it was deeply rich in meaning and significance. In a Jewish context, temple imagery would immediately lead to thoughts of God dwelling with His people.

The Garden of Eden was the first dwelling place of God with His people (Gen. 2:9-14). "Eden," writes, Daniel Hyde, "was adorned with beauty as the temple of God, the first true Holy Land, anticipating Israel's tabernacle and later its temple (Ex. 25:3, 7; 1 Kings 6:20-22, 28, 30, 32, 35)," (*God in our Midst*, p. 20).

But, having broken God's covenant, Adam and Eve were banished from God's presence and sent out into bondage East of Eden. But, God, who is the God of promise and performance, immediately promises (speaks a word of grace/gospel) to once again dwell in the midst of His people (Gen. 3:15). In partial fulfillment of this initial promise (as well as the Abrahamic Covenant), God redeemed His people from slavery in Egypt.

Subsequent his redemption, God revealed His instructions to Moses for building the tabernacle (Ex. 25:1-31:11) and then led him to write an inspired account of its construction (Ex. 35:4-40:38; see Hyde, *Ibid*, p. 3). The tabernacle was to serve as the Lord's temporary dwelling place during Israel's forty-year wilderness journey and their first three hundred-plus years in the land of Canaan (cf. *Ibid*, p. 3). The tabernacle was referred to by several different names, which highlighted the presence of God among His people. For example, it was called "the sanctuary" (Ex. 25:8; 38:24) since it was the place of the holy presence of God. It was also called the "tent of meeting" (Ex. 27:21; 30:20; 40:32; Num. 8:24) since it was the place where the Lord met with His people (*Ibid*, pp. 3-4).

The Tabernacle was located at the center of Israel's camp since it was the sacred space where God dwelled in the midst of His people. Following the tabernacle era, the temple replaced the tabernacle. David expresses a desire to build a house for God (2 Sam. 7:1-3). Yet, God tells David that he would not build a house for the Lord but rather would *receive* a house from the Lord (2 Sam. 7:8-17)! In Deuteronomy 12, God says six times that He would "choose" the place where His Name would dwell (cf. Deut. 12:5, 11, 14, 18, 21, 26; Ibid, pp. 22-23). This is why God would choose both the place and the builder not David. And so God promises David (Davidic Covenant, "I will") that he will have a son—Solomon—who will build a temple and whose throne will be established forever (2 Sam. 7:4-12). Here we see the lesson of grace driven home in powerful way: God's dwelling among His people is a matter of promise/grace not merit/work and is an indescribable privilege (Ibid, p. 23).

Like the tabernacle, the temple is also to reside as the centerpiece within the Promised Land. Among other things, it was to serve as a witness to Israel and all the nations that God dwells in the midst of His people (1 Kings 8:41-43). When the ark, which symbolized the Lord's presence with His people, was brought into the temple the glory of the Lord filled the house of the Lord (1 Kings 8:1-11; Note: The ark also contained the tablets of the law, cf. Ex. 25:10-22; Deut. 10:1-5; Joshua 3-6)).

Following the high point of Israel's history and the David/Solomon temple era, the nation plummets to destruction and exile, just as the Lord warned in the Mosaic Covenant (cf. Deuteronomy 28:36ff). In Ezekiel 10:18, the prophet tells us that God executes the worst of all covenant curses: the glory and presence of the Lord goes out of the temple. God's presence goes to the east gate of the temple, thus typologically recalling how Adam and Eve had been banished east of Eden away from the presence of the Lord (Gen. 3:23-24; Ibid, pp. 26-27). And so the temple was left *ichabod*, without glory (cf. 1 Sam. 4:19-22).

When God's people return from captivity, they once again rebuild the temple (see Ezra, Nehemiah, Haggai). Yet, the second temple not only pales in resemblance of the former glory of the first temple but it—along with the tabernacle and first temple—is only a faint "copy and shadow" of "the Temple" that is to come.

After 400 years of silence, God comes again to dwell among His people. In John 1:14, John writes, "And the Word became flesh and *dwelt* among us, and we have seen His glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth" (emphasis mine). The word "dwelt" (σκηνώω) literally means, "pitched His tent" (i.e., Jesus "tabernacle" among us). John is unequivocally stating that Jesus is the fulfillment of the tabernacle and temple (i.e., God's dwelling among His people). In times past, God temporarily dwelled among His people in the tabernacle and temple. But, now God comes to dwell among His people in the incarnate Word, Jesus Christ. Just as God's glory filled the temple when the Israelites brought the ark into it, so John says that "we have seen His glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth" (cf. Heb. 1:3). The author of Hebrews in 8:5 and 10:1 says that the coming of

Jesus was the fulfillment of the OT shadows for God's dwelling with His people in the tabernacle and the temple.

This now brings us to Paul's use in 1 Corinthians. Christ promised His disciples that He would send His Spirit to dwell with His people (cf. Matt. 28:20; Lk. 24:49; Jn. 14:16-17). As the ascended conquering King, Jesus dispenses the spoils of His victory and sends the Holy Spirit to come and dwell in the midst of His people (cf. Acts 2). The coming of the Holy Spirit makes God's people into a temple both corporately when they are assembled (1 Cor. 3:16, "God lives in the midst"; cf. Matt. 18:15-20) and individually (the believer's body becomes God's temple, 1 Cor. 6:19). Just as the tabernacle and temple served as a copy and shadow for the presence of the living God, now the fulfillment has come through Christ. Furthermore, because the church is in union with Christ, the Temple, (6:15-17), they too become a temple (6:19a)!

Paul is driving home a powerful point: Through the indwelling gift of the Holy Spirit, the Corinthians are God's temple in Corinth. Each individual member constitutes the holy place of God's dwelling. Since the believer's body is now and forevermore the temple of the Holy Spirit (a dwelling place for God), he or she must not defile God's temple by engaging sexual immorality (cf. Rev. 21:22-27). Geoffrey Wilson writes, "The Christian estimate of fornication is thus categorically opposed to the heathen estimate. In the temple of Aphrodite prostitutes were priestesses, and commerce with them was counted a consecration; it is an absolute desecration of God's true temple in the man himself," (*1 Corinthians*, p. 255). Just as it was unthinkable to desecrate the tabernacle or temple so it is unthinkable that the believer would desecrate his or her own body, which is now the temple of the Holy Spirit.

REFLECTION:

As we reflect on Paul's teaching that every believer is a temple of the Holy Spirit, we learn a vital truth in regard to sexual purity: *The path to sexual purity is paved by self-consciously contemplating the implications of being God's temple—the dwelling place of the Holy Spirit.*

Robert Murray M'Cheyne said the gift of the Holy Spirit is God's "greatest of all the privileges of a Christian." This we learned from 2 Samuel 7 and God's unilateral covenant with David. John Calvin writes, "It is a great honour that God confers upon us when He desires to dwell in us...Psalm 132:14," (*Calvin's Commentaries*, vol. 20, p. 220). The Holy Spirit—God's empowering and purifying presence among His people—is the source of gospel-holiness. One of the great needs of the church in regard to the battle with sexual purity today is to recapture this gospel-centered vision of what it is by grace to be the temple of the Holy Spirit.

The reason the Holy Spirit comes to dwell in believers is to make them holy (i.e., in this context conformed to the sexual ethic of God's kingdom). As citizens of God's kingdom, we have been regenerated and indwelt by the Holy Spirit (6:9-11).

The Spirit leads us to live by a separate code of ethics—kingdom ethics (i.e., fulfillment of the 7th Commandment, see also Matt. 5:27-30). Thus, we are to be God’s alternative to both our culture’s religions and immoral ethics.

To be sure, believers need to live more holy lives, particularly in regard to sexual sins. Yet, progress in holiness does not depend upon oneself. The ultimate responsibility of sanctification belongs to the Holy Spirit (cf. 2 Thess. 2:13; 1 Pet. 1:2). In a message preached at St. Peter’s in 1837 on Romans 8:13, Robert Murray M’Cheyne spoke of the need to “mortify the deeds of the body.” He asked, “How are we to do this?” His answer, “It is through the Spirit—this is the secret of gospel holiness; never forget it.” He then went on to speak of the “fire” of sin, saying, “The only way to put out the fire is to let in the water of the Spirit” (*A Basket of Fragments*, p. 286).

Few temptations in life prove more overwhelming than sexual sin. In 1 Corinthians 7:9, Paul speaks of sexual temptation as burning with passion. As one author writes, “This powerful fire is easily lit and very difficult to extinguish” (Paul Barnett, *1 Corinthians*, p. 104). The only way to extinguish the fires of sexual passion is to let in the water of the Spirit. The question is how? What does it mean to let in the water of the Holy Spirit? We do this by living with a self-conscious awareness that our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit (i.e., the dwelling place of a holy God). When we are self-consciously aware of this gospel-implication, we would never desecrate our bodies by giving into sexual immorality. On the contrary, we will be driven by the gospel and Holy Spirit to consecrate our bodies (flee, v. 18 and glorify, v. 20!). Sexually immoral passion cannot burn in a river of gospel love that is poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit. In Romans 5:5, Paul writes, “God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.”

A gospel-driven perspective constantly informs us that our bodies are “a sacred shrine indwelt by the Spirit of God” and thus they are meant to belong to the Lord rather than sexual immorality (see Barnett, *1 Corinthians*, p. 103). This temple building work of the Holy Spirit is all based on the work of Christ for us. Christ has sent His Spirit to His church in this age to grow us into a holy temple in the Lord. Paul says God the Father has sent Christ into the world to redeem us (v. 20a) and He has sent the Spirit of His Son into our hearts to indwell and sanctify us (v. 19a; cf. Gal. 4:4-6).

The gospel is the ministry of the Holy Spirit (2 Cor. 3:8). The Holy Spirit uses the gospel to motivate us to live holy lives by leading us in gospel-love rather than driving us with legal-fear. In a sermon entitled, “The Love of Christ,” M’Cheyne writes, “No man was ever frightened into love, and therefore, no man was ever frightened into holiness.” The law is the ministry of condemnation but the gospel is the ministry of righteousness (cf. 2 Cor. 3:9). M’Cheyne thus concludes that God “hath invented a way of drawing us to holiness. By showing us the love of his Son, he calleth forth our love.”

As those who have been brought into union with Jesus, the Holy Spirit communicates to us Jesus and all His saving benefits to us. The Holy Spirit leads us to Christ and through the gospel shines the love of Christ like a floodlight into our hearts and thereby assures us of the Father's good pleasure and favor toward us. This is the source and path of holiness. Walter Marshall writes,

God does not drive you along with whips and terrors or by the rod of the schoolmaster, the law. Rather, He leads you and draws you to walk in His ways by pleasant attractions (Hosea 11:3-4). The love of Christ, of course, is the greatest and most pleasant attraction to encourage you to godly living (2 Cor. 5:15; Rom. 12:1)," (*The Gospel Mystery of Sanctification*, p. 236).

But, of course, Paul understands that when the alluring power of Christ's gospel-love fails to motivate us to holiness, we need to hear the warning of God's law (6:9-10; cf. Calvin, *Institutes*, 3.2.12.). Q. 115 of the Heidelberg Catechism asks, "If in this life no one can keep the ten commandments perfectly, why does God have them preached so strictly?" Here's the answer:

A. First, that throughout our life we may more and more become aware of our sinful nature, and therefore seek more eagerly the forgiveness of sins and righteousness in Christ. Second, that we may be zealous for good deeds and constantly pray to God for the grace of the Holy Spirit, that He may more and more renew us after God's image, until after this life we reach the goal of perfection.

Nonetheless, while the law has a critical role to play in the believer's life, "God," Calvin writes, "breathes faith into us only by the instrument of his gospel, as Paul points out that 'faith comes from hearing' [Rom. 10:17]" (*Institutes*, 4.1.5.). As the Holy Spirit breathes faith into us by the ministry of the gospel, our faith produces good works/obedience (i.e., obeying the 7th Commandment/living by the ethics of the kingdom as Jesus teaches in the Sermon on the Mount). This work of the Holy Spirit is exactly what was prophesied by Ezekiel concerning the new covenant,

²⁵ I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. ²⁶ And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. ²⁷ And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules.

What then is our response to Paul's teaching?

1. First, we must seek to live with a self-conscious awareness that our bodies are a holy temple of the Holy Spirit.

When we live with this gospel-centered perspective, we will follow Paul's command as those who are indwelt by the Holy Spirit. We will keep ourselves away from all sexual immorality and live as disciplined holy vessels fit for the Lord's service in His church.

2. Second, we must constantly pray, as the Heidelberg Catechism states (Q. 115), to God for the grace of the Holy Spirit, to transform us more and more into the image of Jesus Christ.
3. Third, we must seek to experience the love of God in Jesus Christ as we meditate on the gospel and the fruit of the gospel (i.e., the indwelling empowering presence of the Holy Spirit).

Assurance of God's love is the source and power for a holy life. Walter Marshall writes,

You cannot love God if you are under the continual, secret suspicion that He is really your enemy! You cannot love God if you secretly think He condemns and hates you. This kind of slavish fear will compel you to some hypocritical obedience—such as what Pharaoh did when he let the Israelites go against His will. However, you will never truly love God if you are compelled only by fear. Your love for God must be won and drawn out by your understanding of God's love and goodness towards you—just as John testifies in 1 John 4:18-19: "There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear, because fear consists of torment; The one who fears is not made perfect in love. We love Him because He first loved us. You simply cannot love God (pursue holiness/progress in sanctification—J.F.) unless you know and understand how much He loves you (*The Gospel Mystery of Sanctification*, p. 31).

We know how much the Father loves us through the ministry of the Holy Spirit—the gospel of God's son. And so the Holy Spirit—God's empowering and purifying presence among His people—is the source of gospel-holiness.

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