

THE PASTOR.

by

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BY THE

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This essay is in substance a Lecture which was delivered, by invitation of the Faculty, before the students of the McCormick Theological Seminary in Chicago. It is hereby respectfully addressed to young men who expect soon to be Pastors.

Princeton, Ills., March, 1887

M. C. W.

THE PASTOR.

The best and most significant title of the Gospel minister is *Pastor*. It is a comprehensive term, and all his varied functions can be included under it. While however the term *Pastor* is generic, and "Preacher stands related to *Pastor* but as part to the whole,"* yet for convenience sake, we have come to designate certain parts of our work in their distinction from other parts, as *Pastoral*. In this sense what is the *Pastor*? And what is *Pastoral* work?

Probably in popular estimation *Pastoral* labor in distinction from the service of the pulpit, means "making calls." It is time we correct and enlarge the sense of the term. I therefore make it include *all your service as a minister which is outside of the pulpit*.

In general then never forget that much, very much, of your labor lies outside of the church building and outside your study and pertains to other days than the Sabbath. In the minds of some young ministers the impression forms that their labor is entirely intellectual, and before public "audiences." That by a platform and oratory and "magnetism" they are to "take heed to the ministry" and "make full proof" of the same. I wish to modify this conception by pressing the *parochial* idea.† You are to be

* Vinet.

† "As a parochial minister, never be content with being merely a preacher. This word 'merely' is used in no disparagement of preaching. But the commission from our Master and from our Church is wider and manifo'd." —Canon Miller in "Clergyman's Magazine" — London.

related to, and solemnly inducted into charge of, not an audience but a Parish or Constituency. Your Sabbath audience never will be coterminous with your parish. Take your average congregation and you can always multiply it at least by two, when you want to get at the total number of souls under your jurisdiction. Keep a record of your church by family enumeration and not simply by the communicant roll, or by counting heads on a Sunday. Often only one of a family may be a communing member, or connected with you as an attendant on your preaching, when yet you may regard the whole household as under your pastoral charge. Then count up the aged of your people who can not belong to your "hearers," the sick and otherwise infirm, and the children too young yet to be taken from home, and the unconverted husbands and young men who while regarding you as the family Pastor are themselves careless about "church going." Also forget not those "outsiders," as they are popularly called, to be found in every community, seldom seen at a public religious service, but who as they will express it, "believe in churches," and who from some dim traditional bias, or because you once buried a member of their home, or because their children attend your Sabbath School or because they like you as a man, will tell you they "lean to your church." Some proportion of these and other outlying borderers, often well-nigh pagans under the very shadow of our Sanctuaries, may always be regarded as belonging to your oversight.

Thus you cannot fulfil your ministry simply by your Pulpit work. There are a certain few men belonging to exceptional classes whose work is bounded by the Pulpit: the popular Evangelists, for instance, who are heralds only, never assuming a pastoral charge; or now and then in the settled ministry a man of extraordinary gifts in oratory who gathers a large congregation; ("congregation" I

say and congregation only; a mere assembly of individual hearers rather than a compact and efficient church organism.) Also, those whose church membership is so large that it is impracticable to exercise, except in a general way, much of pastoral oversight, or even to know personally all their people. But to the average Minister, to nine-tenths of us, these conditions do not apply. Our usefulness and power must be seen, if apparent at all, in the various lines of pastoral labor concurrently with our preaching. We can not count on our one talent of public discourse being so exceptionally commanding that it will overlap our deficiency and neglects in other lines, or atone to the people for the one-sided development they would receive at our hands. And very few are the parishes, which either by their great extent or by the social conditions of city life, make this pastoral care impossible. In the whole state of Illinois, for instance, with its nearly five hundred Presbyterian churches, there are scarcely fifty which are not in rural districts or in villages and towns ranging in population from a handful to a few thousands. And the ministers in the smaller communities have an advantage in this respect, according to good Archbishop Leighton who commiserated the Clergy of London in that the size of their parishes disabled them from giving much attention to the individual soul.

The "good Shepherd knows his sheep" and "calleth each by name" and seeks after the one that is maimed or out of the way. Besides preaching to the multitudes on the Mount, on the sea shore or in the wilderness, much of our our Lord's ministry was in the line of private and personal interviews, either with single individuals or with small groups of Jews, or with his band of the Twelve. The discourses in John's gospel are largely of this kind. The Apostle Paul tells us his general practice of warning every

man, teaching every man that he might present every man perfect in Christ.* In his report of labor at Ephesus,† where for over two years he had been a resident Pastor, he claims to have taught "from house to house" as well as publicly,‡ and that he had "warned every one night and day with tears." And under his burdening sense of responsibility for them his comfort seems to have been the testimony of his own conscience to his pastoral fidelity, that thus he was "pure from the blood of all men." He bids the brethren of Thessalonica remember how he dealt with every one of them, or "each one" as the R. V. has it; how "we exhorted and comforted and charged *each one* of you."|| His habit of friendly, pastoral interest in individuals is further betokened in his epistles by his expressions of affectionate desire to see again their faces; by his discriminating salutations to one and another in the churches; and by the specific counsels he apportions according to his personal acquaintance with the varying wants and experiences of those to whom he writes.§

But the thought is often indulged that the intellectual demands upon the pulpit in this day preclude such minute and pains-taking care in the oversight of a church. Now I would regret exceedingly to be understood as disparaging the importance or the claims of the work in the Study. I urge that you carry your seminary habits of studiousness into your pastorates, and that you bring always well-beaten oil to the sanctuary. But I object to the unfortunate and unwise judgment that it is impossible for the same man to show a record of work ex-

* Colos., 1:28.

† Acts 20:18-35.

‡ While the disciples often held their services of worship in private houses, (Rom., 16:5; 1 Cor., 16:19), yet the contrast with "publicly" makes this most probably a reference to the Apostle's personal ministry within the homes. On this then take Bengel's remark: "*Ne apostolica quidem muneri tam late patenti publica predicatione satis fiebat, quid pastoribus faciendum?*"

|| 1 Thess. 2:11. - *ἑκαστον*

§ Rom., 16:1-10; Philip, 4:2,3.

tending in both departments of ministry which the Master can pronounce "well done." This does not necessarily imply a low grade of excellence in either line but it does imply a high degree of diligence and fidelity in both.* Pulpit work, preaching, is indeed our highest function. But is that style of sermonizing which takes on no coloring, and receives no bent from personal contact with the people, is that the best way of beating the oil? "At home among books but at sea among men?" All study and abstraction from the current of adjacent life will make you dull in one sense at least of the word, and I fear you would answer to the description given of a certain minister that he was "invisible six days of the week and incomprehensible the seventh."† Mr. Spurgeon gives the advice to preachers "stand in the stream and fish." Endeavor to be acquainted with your people in their secular life. Know what vocations they follow, what cares oppress them, what company they mingle in, and what sins do most easily beset them, and let your influence be felt in the social and family life of the congregation.‡ Seek skill in binding up the broken-hearted, and wisdom to drop a word in season to him that is weary, and grace to sympathize with those in adversity. Cultivate a compassionate spirit towards the poor, a tender thoughtful-

*"I do not envy a clergyman's life as an easy life, nor do I envy the clergyman who makes it an easy life."—Dr. Samuel Johnson in Boswell, Vol. III, p. 205.

†Or you might possibly be brought under the comical imputation, which as the story goes, once attached to the celebrated Bossuet, just after he had been appointed to a bishopric. Some of the people being asked how they liked him, said they would have preferred a man who had finished his education, for whenever they called at his house they were told the Bishop was at his studies!

‡Ryle in his "England A Hundred Years ago," tells of William Grimshaw, Curate of Haworth, that of nearly all of the several hundreds who belonged to his charge "he was as well acquainted with their several temptations, trials and mercies, both personal and domestic, as if he had lived in their families."

ness for the aged, a readiness in spiritual ministry with the sick, a winning manner with children, and great fidelity to the unsaved.

Settle it then in your mind that the sermon is only one of a number of co-operating forces in the Pastorate. You are not only to be Preachers, Heralds, Ambassadors with a message, but you are to be entrusted with oversight. People are to be looked up, looked after and overlooked. The most sagacious John Wesley left an observation which I wish every young Timothy would carry with him as he leaves the seminary. "By repeated experiments," he says, "we learn that though a man preach like an angel, he will neither collect nor preserve a society which is collected, without visiting them from house to house." And will you please adopt as a cherished aphorism the remark of Dr. Chalmers, "a house-going minister makes a church-going people."

I have said it is a mistake to conceive of Pastoral work as merely making calls. So it is. But equally is it a mistake to exclude that conception. I press its importance. It is often disesteemed and by some held in contempt. It has been "taken off" in derisive wit as "peddling civility round the parish," and as degrading the minister of the gospel into a mere "social roundsman" who has to distribute "attentions," and discuss in the homes of the people such trifling subjects as the weather, the childrens' colds and the incidents of the summer vacation! Yea, it has even been intimated more seriously, that the Pastor's call on a family in the absence of the husband is a matter of questionable propriety. How these critics would have been horrified by the reply a certain faithful, hard-working country curate in England once gave his Bishop. The Bishop wishing his clergy to be "well up" in the Patristic literature of the early church, asked

this clergyman if he studied the Fathers. "Not very much," he answered. "The fathers are generally out in the fields, but I study the *mothers* a great deal." Three fourths or more in our congregations are of the female sex, and we cannot ignore our pastoral relation to them because of prudish hyper-criticism. We do not forget however what careful decorum and delicacy are here demanded on the Pastor's part. Paul, in his Pastoral Epistles so replete with practical counsels to young ministers, has not forgotten to touch on this very subject. "Entreat the elder women as mothers; the younger women as sisters,"* that is, as being all alike to you in the relationship that is in Christ.† This counsel is the more significant by reason of the apostle adding the words "with all purity."‡ Need I say further that in reference to these and to many other delicate relations in which a Pastor stands, as in reference to his whole line of responsibility, he needs a fair measure of good sense. This endowment, desirable in any calling in life, is particularly so in the Pastor's. As a natural possession it is often of more practical avail than brilliant parts. To some extent it is like the poet's art, in-born and not acquired. So that John Brown, of Haddington, used to say to his students, "If ye lack grace, ye may get it by praying for it; if ye lack learning, ye may get it by working for it; but if ye lack common sense, I dinna ken where ye are to get it."

It is an easy thing surely to utter gibes about Pastoral visiting. Formerly it was lampooned as too grim and inquisitorial. Now the critics seem to have taken another tack and they deride it as too light and inconsequential a custom. At the caricatures of it *we* can be amused as well as

* I Tim. 5:2.

† Ellicott quotes *in loc.* the rule of Jerome; "omnes puellas et virgines Christi aut æqualiter ignora aut æqualiter dilige."

‡ Their reference is to the *νεωτέρας*.

they without our conviction of its real and earnest importance being in the least disturbed. Of course, by pastoral visits is not meant merely formal religious calls, but also the friendly "dropping in," the calls of civility and courtesy, the calls of sympathy, the calls of politeness to strangers and new comers, the neighborhood calls. All such, not purely social and not purely religious, but yet christian, and done in a familiar and friendly manner, in your capacity as Pastor, are pastoral calls, and can be tributary to your work. But further, we must not think of house *calling* of whatever kind, as the only method of week-day pastoral intercourse. Be not too ceremonious or too systematic. Think not that a personal communication on spiritual things can only be made by a gradual zigzag course of approach as if you were laying siege to a fortification. The casual remark, the tract, the wayside seed, the conference on the street it may be, the brief word in the business house or shop, the little note written in love and prayer; by these "out of season" as well as the "in season" methods, this sowing by all waters, thus too will you be illustrating pastoral diligence. Oh, these private interviews with the unconverted! Pastoral work indeed! No limit to it! There is danger of forgetting its importance. Baxter says he seldom dealt thus with men alone without their going away with some seeming convictions and promises of new obedience, and that he found an ignorant sot would get more knowledge and remorse of conscience in half-an-hour's close conversation than he did in ten years preaching.* And it is the famous ancient writer on rhetoric † who illustrates the same advantage by saying you are more likely to fill narrow-mouthed bottles by taking them singly by the hand and pouring water into them than to put them together and pour water upon the whole

*The Reformed Pastor, chp. 5.

† Quintilian.

collection. And these persons in our congregations expect us thus to approach them and wonder we do it so seldom. And thus doing you will often be surprised and stand rebuked for your misgiving and weak faith by finding, if not at once their obedient response, at least their grateful appreciation of your kindness and their increased esteem for you. And the benefit to yourselves, my Brethren in this hand-to-hand work, whether with the unsaved or with your experienced fellow-christians! It will refresh your own spiritual life, it will drive away "the blues," it will dispel the sometime rising shadows of doubt from your mind and will keep you in fresh and close contact with the simple truths of the Gospel.

In regard to such lines of pastor work as I have been indicating, certain counter-views lie perhaps unspoken but operative in the minds of some young ministers. They think of their vocation too exclusively from its intellectual side. Their chief conception of responsibility, it would seem, is in being "leaders of opinion," and in "keeping abreast of the times," and in bringing forth their "latest thought!" This state of mind will often interfere with a congenial appreciation of pastoral occupations. Then along with this, I fancy that in the minds of some of the brethren such services are ranked as very lowly and inferior, are associated with mediocrity of talent, and are thought not to comport with a "manly" and "forceful" character, or with the ambition of what is called a "brilliant career." May the Lord give us grace and reveal to us what be the first principles of the minister's calling! Who have been the eminent men, I will not say of the Pulpit, but of the Ministry? The most useful models for you to study are not the famous triad of the French court; nor the few illustrious preachers at the English universities, who in their freedom from parochial affairs

are called occasionally to prepare a great Pulpit "effort." As illustrating the homiletic art, their productions may be profitably studied; but for you, who expect to be ministers in parish charges, I would present another class of men.

Think, for instance, of Richard Baxter. Was he lacking in the strong elements of a man? A student of the scriptures in the original tongues, well versed in ancient pagan and scholastic philosophy, of extensive theological erudition, and the author of over one hundred and sixty publications, preaching or lecturing every day of the year, having six hundred communing members in his Kidderminster church; yet the most abundant and pains-taking in pastoral labors, visiting his whole congregation, looking after the children, the sick, the poor and the unconverted, and securing a family altar in nearly every home.

Or what would you say of Dr. Chalmers? Does he strike you as wanting in the fibre of intellectual or manly character? Well, he was the most remarkable Pastor of modern days—he whom Peter Bayne calls a "great mass of common sense." At the very time when living in a blaze of unparalleled popularity, with a fame for learning and pulpit eloquence which extended throughout the whole kingdom, the world "wild about him," he is pastorizing a Glasgow parish of two thousand families. Besides establishing schools and other measures for temporal good, we find him looking after barefooted children, and the servant classes; we see him diving into noisome kennels, feeling his way up dark, winding stairways, seeking out destitution and sin, bringing the truth and consolation of the gospel, and visiting personally all his families.

Or, turn to that other Scotch Thomas, Dr. Guthrie. No weakling was he, either. A man of intellectual standing and force of character. Aye, perhaps we might

apply to him as regards pulpit ability, that favorite adjective of to-day which expresses the popular ideal of excellence, "brilliant." Yet Guthrie was known as the "house-going minister."* It is written of him "he might have been met almost every day in the week visiting from cellar to garret, the crowded homes of his neglected parishioners," and his people of all classes prized him as their faithful Pastor, as well as admired him as a great Pulpit orator. The same use, if not in the same degree, could be made of Arnot and Norman McLeod.

But what say you to Frederick Robertson, of Brighton? In a different way from these Scotch compeers, yet while remarkable for the originality and highly intellectual character of his preaching, and at the same time a perfect type of soldierly manliness, he was in his own methods also an earnest pastor of men—visiting the homes, attaching to himself the humbler classes, promoting by week-day measures the interests of working men, training his Sunday-school teachers, with great patience and care preparing his confirmation classes of children, and studying to make the illest understand the elements of spiritual truth.

And very much of the credit and favor which the ritualistic clergymen in England are now receiving is due not to the sentiments they teach or the ceremonial forms of worship they introduce, but to their pastoral diligence. The Non-Conformist ministers likewise of the same country, as we learn, are as regular in this branch of work as in their Sabbath preaching. In our own land, too, could be named some of the foremost ministers of the present day, with a pulpit fame which is not only metropolitan but national, as far as churches and christian ranks are concerned, who are systematic and conscientiously diligent in the humbler work of household visitation.

*So dubbed by Chalmers. Life of Guthrie, vol. 1, p. 381.

I said at the outset that pastoral service did not mean merely making calls, or the matter of personal intercourse with the people, but that all the variety of ministerial work which lies outside the pulpit and the conduct of public worship is included in it. All these different features might be embraced under the general term *parochial administration*, and go to make up what Dr. Jas. Alexander called his "parochialia."* For one thing a Pastor should *know his field*. Like a merchant, often take invoice; know what you have got and have it well in hand. There are certain data, numerical and other kinds, which if ascertained would greatly aid you in forming an intelligent estimate of the state of religion among your people, and would furnish materials for a more precise and tangible report to the Presbytery than we generally get in the annual "narratives" on the subject. A Pastor of course knows the number of his membership, the average attendance on public meetings, and the size of the Sunday school. But why not, at the cost of some pains perhaps, inform^h himself on such other points as these: How many families^{ant} have the altar of prayer? How many church papers^{or} and missionary periodicals circulate in the bounds of the congregation? What is the character of the secular literature in the homes? What forms of worldliness are prevailing? Is the sanctity of the Sabbath maintained? Is religious benevolence growing? etc., etc.

For another thing let us remember that an organized church is not a mere collection of individuals and families. It belongs to a kingdom and is part of a working force and a marching army. Concerning all the details and with an eye to the general movement, the Pastor is expected to know and to suggest and to lead.

Among the Pastoral items is the *care of the children of*

* Forty Years' Correspondence. vol. II, p. 170.

the church. I refer now to instruction additional to that of the pulpit and the Sunday school. Old fashioned catechising, it is thought, is becoming one of the "lost arts," but the practice of bringing children into personal contact with the Pastor for instruction in the truths of the Bible should not be obsolete. You ought not conclude if, in these days of "optional studies" you can not induce them to take the Shorter Catechism, or at least an eclectic course in it, that there is no method of pastoral instruction of the youth. I have referred to Robertson's pains with his confirmation classes. The "confirmation" principle aside, why should not every minister have his class among the church youth for simple indoctrination, and thus also promoting on their part confidence and freedom with him. Call it "Pastor's Class," or "Young Communicant's Class," or, if you choose, by no name at all. Thus could we best watch the first buddings of the tender vines, and note the growing stages of that knowledge to discern the Lord's body and that faith to feed upon him, when we can say to them, "come with your parents to the communion table."

Then again, there is the Pastor's responsibility in reference to *discipline*. In Paul's counsels to ministers he charges them to be gentle, and averse to strife, seeking in meekness to instruct those that oppose the truth. But this is not to be confounded with weak-spiritedness, for the young preacher is told to "let no one despise him,"* and he is reminded that God has not given him "the spirit of fearfulness,"† and that there are times when he is to "rebuke sharply."‡ Reprimand and counsel failing, don't forget the power of the keys lodged with the Session. McCheyne tells us that at the first of his ministry he greatly depreciated the importance of church discipline and supposed his almost only work was to pray and preach, but

*Titus 2:15. †II Tim. 1:7. R. V. ‡Titus 1:13.

that afterwards, as a result of observation in certain cases when this painful process was required, a new light broke on his mind, and he saw that if preaching was an ordinance of Christ, so also is church discipline.*

The administration of *church charity among the poor* is another item in pastoral oversight. Wherever you go you will find, few or many, the needy and dependent—among your pious church people, to some extent, and largely in the outside community. In the pastoral epistles this subject is brought to Timothy's attention, and the germs and principles, easy to be expanded, are there given of a great subject, a subject which in the near future, and especially in our cities, must be more thoroughly considered by the Protestant ministry and the Protestant churches than it has ever yet been. "The poor ye have always with you;" "I was sick and ye visited me; naked and ye clothed me;" "visiting the widows and the fatherless." The spirit of these sacred behests is not fulfilled by county poor houses; neither is it by the desultory and diminutive work of our present Diaconate system. Uhlhorn's late book on the "Charities of the Early Church," illustrates what care of the poor *by the church* once signified. The day must soon come in this country, as it is already in other christian lands when Hospitals, Orphan Asylums, Relief Boards, Industrial Homes and such like eleemosynary institutions must belong to Protestant church organism as they do to the Romish. In its measure now each local church has responsibility of this kind, and to stimulate such benevolence and direct in its discreet and christian application will always be the part of the Pastor.

* Memoir by Bonar, p. 104.

Now, briefly, the Pastor in his personality. We sometimes protest against being regarded as of a separate order or class from our fellow-disciples. But as reasonable as our protest may be, society will always insist on drawing this distinction. The Pastor stands on a different level from the layman, and is judged by another standard. He comes to a community an utter stranger; his extraction, his antecedents, his personal traits entirely unknown. But he is not required first to earn respect and confidence. The people may be uncertain as to his talent and his diligence in work, but it never occurs to them to suspend judgment on the question of his character. They take for granted his uprightness and his purity. Where a business man, or one in the other professions, must slowly make his way and first prove himself worthy of confidence and social consideration, the Pastor and his family are spared this probation. They step at once into the favor and good will of all. But while such general confidence is thus spontaneously given him, there is this serious collateral fact that he may sooner and more irretrievably forfeit it than the layman. It takes much fewer and slighter deviations from rectitude to nullify his influence and destroy his name than with those in secular callings. Mathew Arnold says, "character is three-fourths of life." In the Pastor's case may we not say it is the whole of it? Good character is his reserve capital. If that be gone he is hopelessly bankrupt. "Be sure your example exhorts as well as your words," as Baxter says; or as Leighton writes, "either teach none or let your life teach."

The Pastor has many a care and vexation of spirit. But on the whole his can prove a happy lot; and I mean too in its comforts and rewards this side of Heaven. Only show yourself sincerely the servant of Christ and the people's servant for Christ's sake, seeking not their's but them, and

the glory of Him who sent you, aiming rather to make your ministry a blessing than "a success,"* and there is not a church in the land where, unless you are too nomadic in your pastorate, you will fail to receive that esteem and appreciation which will be a constant tide of refreshment to your spirit. You will meet a welcome every time you call at the homes of your people and will find yourself a guest whom they delight to honor. They will admit you to family confidences. They will tell you their joys and oh yes! their sorrows too. They will teach their children to cherish the name of him who baptized them, and when the marriage days come the bride will feel it would hardly *be* marriage unless solemnized by her own Pastor. At the family altar along with petitions for home and kindred they will pray for you. In times of affliction they will regard it as one of their chief comforts that they have your presence. You will be admitted to the sick room when perhaps the invalid can see no other friend, and your voice in the whispers of scripture hope and in the hushed tones of prayer will be among the last sounds to fall on the ear of the dying. And long after the sad funeral day, mingled with thoughts of the dear one gone will be a tender remembrance of the Pastor who stood beside the mourners at the grave.

In other respects too there will come much that is gratifying. Outside of your church families and throughout the whole community, unless your lot be cast in the large engulfing cities, your influence will ramify, your name will be known, and you will find yourself treated by all classes with the utmost respect and deference as an educated christian gentleman who identifies himself with the locality seeking to do good.

* There is a smack of carnality about this popular word in such connection, sufficient at least to suggest a preference for the other term which savors more of the divine seal and of "the honor that cometh from God only."

Domestically I believe the Pastor generally has more than the average of satisfaction and happiness. Despite his sometime anxiety in temporal things occasioned by the "*res angustae*" of salary, the Manse is one of the brightest and most cheerful homes in the whole congregation. Within its walls is seen more of innocent and rational enjoyment than in many a more pretentious house, while in the closet there are fewer of those skeletons which mean social disgrace and shame. And in the outcome of the minister's boys and girls, there is more that rejoices the hearts of the parents when they are old.

The Pastor. Scriptural office! Scriptural work! Scriptural name! Unto the church Christ has given pastors, ποιμεναι,* writes Paul. One notable instance of such appointment by the Savior was when after his gracious forgiveness of Peter, he said to him ποιμαίνε τὰ πρόβατά μου,† "feed my sheep;" that is nurture them, tend them, pastorize them. Did Peter thus charged retain ever a solemn and tender association with that particular word? And was it in part as expressing his sense of the grace of Him who entrusts his work to those who have for themselves first known his love, that long years afterward this Apostle addressing all fellow-laborers in the Gospel bids us Pastors think of that Lord, from whom we have our commission, as the ἀρχιποίμενος,‡ the "Chief Shepherd," THE PASTOR.

* Ephes. 4:11. † John 21:16. ‡ I Pet. 5:4.

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