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Evidence For Christianity Newsletter

A Visit to England, Scotland, India, Guatemala and El Salvador

Teaching trip to the UK and to India John Oakes, July 18-Aug 7

UK July 18-26

John spent eight days in the UK teaching classes for a number of churches. Two days were spent with the Thames Valley Church of Christ, including time with Tim Dannett and teaching on History, Archaeology and the Bible as well as visiting a church in Croydon. There I taught on a new topic: The Problem of Pain and Suffering. It became immediately obvious that this apologetic topic needs more attention. A highlight was spending time with my great friend James Grieg, getting caught up on what we have been studying.

Next, I spent three days visiting churches in Edinburgh and Glasgow, Scotland. Edinburgh is an amazingly beautiful city, with stunning architecture, topped off by the Edinburgh Castle. I taught classes on Saturday, including one of the Gospel of Judas as well as a sermon on The Problem of Pain and Suffering for a group of about one hundred, This topic was particularly appropriate in Edinburgh because the leader of the church there, Ben Brady, has had two surgeries for brain cancer in the past few years. We rushed to Glasgow for a class/sermon on the book of Daniel for a small group of Christians in that beautiful city, as well as a class on Science and God in the home of the leaders of this small group, Adam and Kirstie Birr. I got to hike in the Scottish Highlands, amidst many beautiful lochs before flying back to London.

There I had dinner with a good friend, Steve Wright. The next day, I met my daughter Elizabeth on a return trip from Barcelona. After a day at Windsor Castle, I taught my last class for a group in Reading on The Problem of Pain and Suffering.



Scottish Street



Edinburgh Congregation



Scottish Highlands



The Bradys Edinburgh Leaders



Windsor Castle, London



Liz in London

India July 26-August 7

From London, I flew to Bangalore, India. This city of eight million is the high tech capital of India. There I was privileged to teach at a retreat of men church leaders for fifty churches which have been established in India. I had a good opportunity to talk with Dinesh George, who oversees these churches. A great highlight was getting reacquainted with a good friend Raghu Katragadda. Classes included Science and God and false Christian teachings. On July 29.

Vol. 2 Issue 6, August 31, 2006

More Questions

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Maka a Gift

ATHENS INSTITUTE OF MINISTRY IN SAN DIEGO, CA

AIM West Course on WORLD RELIGIONS AND DENOMINATIONAL DOCTRINES

Date: 10/27/2006 - 10/28/2006

Time: 12:00 PM **Place:** Villa Portofino Clubhouse 10690 Escobar Drive San Diego, CA 92124

Teachers: Douglas Jacoby, Gordon Ferguson, and John Oakes.

The topic for the second AIM West Coast session will complement the April session on Church History. This will involve 2 days of teaching (four 75 minute classes a day). The exam will not take place on Saturday; students will take it a few weeks later and then mail it in

The cost for taking part depends on when you pay: \$125 if paid by September 15th, \$150 if paid after September 15th. Please mail checks, made out to "T&R," to ARS, 10747 Cariuto Court, San Diego CA 92124. For info email Jan Oakes joakes01@san.rr.com.

This is open to staff and nonstaff, men and women, members in San Diego as well as Los Angeles, Phoenix, AND anyone else who would like to come to San Diego for the session. Students will need to do some advance reading getting reacquainted with a good friend Raghu Katragadda. Classes included Science and God and false Christian teachings. On July 29, my daughter Katie arrived from the States after three days of traveling. We spent time meeting with leaders in the church in Bangalore, where we were shocked to learn that the leaders in these churches arrange the marriages of the members! I taught on From Shadow to Reality, on the Da Vinci Code and the Resurrection of Jesus on Saturday and Sunday for classes of well over one thousand. The lessons were translated into the local language, Kanada.

From there, Katie and I traveled to Chennai, on the East coast of India. This is a city of ten million inhabitants. It is the most "Christian" of India's cities, being the supposed location of a

the session. Students will need to do some advance reading, and will be expected to take the examination as well.

We hope that many of those who take part will decide to enter the AIM program as regular students.

Course Description
Registration Form

mission begun by the apostle Thomas himself. Here I taught on the Book of Daniel for the leader group, on church history and other topics for the staff of the church and on The Da Vinci Code and From Shadow to Reality for a group of several hundred on Monday PM. For this service, translation was in the local language known as Tamil. This is a very old Dravidic language. From there, we flew to the beautiful city of Hyderabadh.

Hyderabadh is a city of twelve million. The church we met with there is smaller than the others, but it is very warm and encouraging. I taught a class on the Da Vinci Code and on From Shadow to Reality. This time the message was translated into the language Telagu. Hyderabadh is on the border between traditional southern and northern India. For this reason, it has a great variety of peoples and religions. One sees many Muslims and Sikhs here. We visited the amazing 15th century Golconda Fort which was finally overcome by the infamous Moghuls in the seventeenth century. Katie and I did some shopping for pearls, as this is the most famous city in the world for the pearl industry.

On Thursday we moved on to the economic capital of India: Mumbai, formerly known as Bombay. This city of fifteen million is the most crowded city in India—occupying a single, long peninsula into the Indian Ocean. Here my talk for the church was translated into Marati, the local language. Katie and I visited the site of one of the recent train bombings at which a Christians for the church here was seriously injured. We also drove through the largest slum in Asia. Here one finds tens of thousands of people living on the sidewalks in stark and abject poverty. The streets are so crowded it is almost impossible to describe to a Western audience. I taught classes to the staff of the church on hermeneutics and on the Book of Daniel, as well as for the church and a group of seven hundred on the Da Vinci Code and From Shadow to Reality. The sights and sounds of Bombay—the bustling city

The last leg of our journey brought us to the capital of India; Delhi. This city of twenty million was laid out spectacularly by the Raj—the British rulers of India from about 1750-1948. Here, the language of choice is Hindi, one of the two official languages of India, along with English. The public streets, unlike in Bangalore, are well designed and in good condition here. I spoke on Science and God for a college and professional group of about three hundred on Friday. On Saturday, Katie and I traveled two hundred kilometers each way to visit the Taj Mahal. This was our only real opportunity to see the India countryside which is, after all, where most Indians live. We saw cows, horses, goats, sheep and yes, camels walking the streets and pulling loads. Ox carts are par for the course, along with the ever-present auto rickshaws, which are everywhere in India. Human-driven carts are not unknown here. The Taj Mahal was built in the early 1700's by a Mughal king as a crypt for his beloved wife. It is more stunning, even, than the pictures. Thanks to Humanchu and his wonderful wife for carting us all over north India. I spoke for a church and guests of well over 1200 people on Sunday on the topic From Shadow to Reality, after which Katie shopped and celebrated her 16th birthday with teen friends, while I taught a last couple of classes for the leaders of the church in Delhi. Thanks to friends, dozens of Bible reference books as well as a laptop computer were delivered to the different churches along our way. On Monday, two very exhausted travelers returned to San Diego and a long awaited journey home.







Questions and Answers By John Oakes

I just finished reading an article you wrote regarding the 'evidence' for an intelligent designer and I found it so intellectually dishonest that it inspired me to write you. I hope that someday you will come to see the 'folly' that comes with accepting ideas such as the 'anthropic principle.' Someday I think you will see that the universe does not exist FOR our benefit but rather that we exist more or less in spite of it's seeming 'brutality.' ;I believe that life exists more or less within a balance of harmony and disharmony and without the need for an intelligent designer offering us support. There simply is no evidence for such a being existing in spite of the clear evidence

designer offering us support. There simply is no evidence for such a being existing in spite of the clear evidence we have for needing such support. Tell me, what major discovery or explanation for how the universe operates was made assuming an intelligent designer? Gravity? the atom? Is it not clear from the Bible and other religious texts that this same 'intelligent' designer inspired man to write down erroneous statements regarding the nature of the universe? Was God simply 'checking' to see if we were doing some thinking of our own and not relying on his servants Moses or Joshua for our modern view of biology and astronomy? Certainly, there are things that were written which were later supported by the evidence but it's a mixed bag to say the least. To assume that our existence within this universe clearly points to ID would be highly dishonest a statement. Instead, I ask you to make a hypothesis that can be tested to prove or disprove this 'anthropic principle.'

Let me share with you a couple examples of discoveries which were made by assuming an intelligent designer. The first example is science itself. If you read the writings of Roger Bacon, Nikolai Copernicus, William of Ockham, Galileo and any of the very early philosophers of science, what you will find is that their starting point was the assumption that the universe is ordered, based on their belief in a single, unchanging God. In other words, the origin of belief in order and predictability in nature was belief in God—in the anthropic principle. It would be fair to say that this prediction of order in nature has proven to be true. To take it farther, based on his concept of God and of beauty, Roger Bacon predicted in the 13th century that nature would follow mathematically precise laws. Again, this prediction was proved true over time. I believe the reason his prediction has proved true is that the assumption he based his prediction on—namely that there is a single, unchanging God who created an orderly universe—is true.

You will find in my essay if you read it carefully that I freely state that the anthropic principle is not strictly "scientific" because it is not refutable and because it cannot be used to predict the results of specific experiments. I am being quite intellectually honest here. Given that I make such an open admission, I am confused that you accuse me of being intellectually dishonest. In fact you accuse me of making "a highly dishonest statement." Which statement is highly dishonest?

Let me make a "scientific" prediction using the anthropic principle. Here we go. In the next few decades scientists will discover hundreds of additional facts/constants about how the physical world works which, by "coincidence" happen to have what seem to be ideal values in order for advanced life forms to exist.

Let me make another prediction using the anthropic principle. This one is more specific, so it probably comes closer to being a hypothesis. In the next generation or so, neuroscientists will discover that the human brain is amazingly "designed" (to use a biased term) to allow humans to have religious/spiritual experiences. They will discover a number of facts about brain chemistry, structure and function which have relatively little evolutionary advantage, but which are of great relevance to the experience of "spiritual" reality.

I absolutely agree with you that the burden of proof for belief in God is on the believer. I have stated that many times in many places, including it my books. You are right about this.

It is my understanding that the anthropic principle is literally the only principle by which we can explain why the universe we live in has the properties it has. Of course, it is also possible that there is no reason for the universe to have the properties it has. It is possible that it is completely random. I will freely admit (and I do so in the article you read) that I cannot scientifically prove the anthropic principle. Nevertheless, the anthropic principle is clearly consistent with the data. For you to say that I am intellectually dishonest, you must show evidence that my thinking is not consistent with the data. The amazing luck of having a nuclear strong force exactly tuned to allow both hydrogen and heavier elements to exist, the long list of unique properties which only water has, without which there would be no life, the precision with which the energy of the big bang is matched to the gravitational force in order to allow for long-lived stars to form. All of these do not prove the anthropic principle in the sense that a scientific experiment can support the law of gravity. However, the fact is that this world view is in dramatic agreement with the facts. Is it possible that this is all just luck? I suppose so. However, this requires a coincidence of such magnitude that atheist physicists have been forced to speculate that there are an infinite number of universes. Now THAT is religious speculation. Just last year, Michael Flew, the world's most renowned atheist "converted" to deism because of the power of the anthropic principle. Of course, his change of mind does not prove anything. However, if you read his reasoning, I challenge you to accuse him of being intellectually dishonest.

A new edition of my book, "Is There a God?"? is coming out in three weeks. It will be available at www.ipibooks.com You will find there a challenge to your claim that the Bible has erroneous scientific statements. I have studied the Bible carefully for many years. I have a PhD in chemical physics. I fail to find incontrovertible scientific errors in the Bible. It is not a dishonest statement to say that the universe shows evidence of design. It is an extremely biased statement (although perhaps not dishonest) to say that the universe does not show evidence of design. I believe we should hesitate to accuse others of dishonesty unless we have evidence of willful intent.

Future Events

Christian Evidences Weekend in Austin, Texas

Date: 09/29/2006 - 10/01/2006 Time: TBA Place: Austin, Texas USA This will be a teaching weekend, with emphasis on apologetics, including a campus event and classes on the book From Shadow to

with emphasis on apologetics, including a campus event and classes on the book From Shadow to Reality. For event details, times and locations, contact James Gitre at jamesgitre@yahoo.com

AIM West Program Class on Denominational Doctrines and World Religions

Date: 10/27/2006 - 10/28/2006 Time: 12:00 Place: Villa Portofino Clubhouse 10690 Escobar Drive San Diego, CA 92124 USA This is the second in a series of classes by the Athens Institute of Ministry. www.douglasjacoby.com Teachers: Douglas Jacoby with Gordon Ferguson and John Oakes. For more details contact Jan Oakes at 858-505-8841 or joakes01@san.rr.com. Information on the reading requirements, class content and how to register, go to evidenceforchristianity.org and click on AIM registration

2007 International Apologetics Conference

Date: 06/22/2007 - 10/24/2007 Time: TBA Place: University of CA Irving, CA USA This teaching event will include a campus outreach lesson on Friday PM, apologetics classes on Saturday. Contact J Oakes01@ san.rr.com

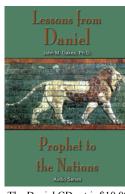
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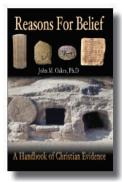
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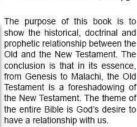
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IOHN M. OAKES, PH.D.

Without a doubt, faith is at the heart of Christianity. "Without faith it is impossible to please God" (Hebrews 11:6). This book is intended to provide a basis in fact for belief in the Bible as the inspired word of God. It will be helpful, both to deepen the faith of those who already believe and to establish a factual basis for belief to those who do not yet accept that the Bible is the inspired word of God.

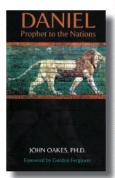
DETAILS - \$15.00 ISBN: 0-9767583-3-4, 256 pgs



Chapter subjects include: Prefigures of the Messiah; The Earthly Tabernacle and the Heavenly Tabernacle; Old Testament Ritual Sacrifice points to New Testament Sacrifice; The

Old Covenant Feasts Prefigure Specific Aspects of the Chrisitan Life; Prophecies in the Old Testament Predict Events in the life of Jesus Christ and much more. This book clearly demonstrates the divine authorship and undeniable unity of the Bible.

DETAILS - \$15.00 ISBN: 0-9745342-3-4, 288 pgs.



New Edition-Release Date: July 21

Of all the books in the Old Testament, none provides a stronger link to the New Testament and the book of Revelation than Daniel. Daniel has always been much loved for the practical examples of Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego as they face their persecutors, yet the prophetic and apocalyptic sections have often been misunderstood. This book is a reasoned attempt to unlock the prophetic message of Daniel, putting it in its proper historical context and includes appendices on the Apocrypha, angels and premillenial doctrine.

DETAILS - \$15.00 ISBN: 0-9776954-8-4, 240 pgs

Completely Revised Edition-Release Pate: July 14



The need for biblical evidence is greater in our generation than ever before. Secularism and humanism are rampant, the media and the educational system bombard us with half-truths and untruths about the meaning of life, and multitudes are confused about the fundamentals of human existence. This book attempts to help clear up that confusion. Chapter subjects include: How Old is the Earth?; Did the Universe Just Happen?; Is Life Just an Accident?; Where Did I Come From?, and much more. This book will help you convince others about God's reality and the truth of the Bible.

DETAILS - \$14.00 ISBN: 0-9776954-2-5, 200 pgs

A Note From The Authors

The Newsletter will be emailed in a PDF format as of the July issue. Back issues are archived on the Newsletter page of evidence for christianity org

The Newsletter will be emailed in a PDF format as of the July issue. Back issues are archived on the Newsletter page of evidenceforchristianity.org.

The newsletters contains questions and answers from that month, new articles, information about future events, and letters to the editors. Send letters to john.oakes@gccd.edu or reply to joakes01@san.rr.com. Send links to other sites, book reviews and the like, any suggestions or ideas for articles, format of the newsletter, ideas for the web site www.evidenceforchristianity.org or anything else are welcome.

The purpose of the Apologetics Research Society is to disseminate and discuss materials relevant to the evidence supporting faith in Jesus Christ and in the Bible. Relevant topics will include science and the Bible, historical and archaeological evidence, theological questions, answers to common criticisms of the Bible (such as supposed inconsistencies and errors), questions about the text of the Bible, prophecies, miracles, and others. Our goal is not necessarily to give THE answer, but to give out useful information, bring up a variety of points of view, and incite people to think about why they believe what they believe. We will remain as non-denominational and non-sectarian as we can.

ARS is incorporated, and is exempt from California state franchise or income tax. We expect to soon have IRS 501(c)3 tax exempt status. to raise funds to support the teaching ministry, the sending of apologetic materials to developing countries, translations and other projects. To help this ministry financially, please send donations to Apologetics Research Society 10747 Cariuto Ct. San Diego, CA 92124.

Apologetics Research Society
John and Jan Oakes 10747 Cariuto Ct. San Diego, CA 92124

Evidence For Christianity Newsletter

A Visit to England, Scotland, India, Guatemala and El Salvador

Teaching trip to Guatemala and El Salvador John and Jan Oakes August 10-18

Guatemala City, Guatemala August 10-15

Jan and I spent five days in Guatemala City and Antigua, Guatemala. While there, we were able to visit a school operated by HOPE Worldwide in an area of the city along an abandoned railroad track, where the poorest inhabitants live. The school is the only education available to these children who are not permitted to attend public school and are unable to pay for private school. It meets the needs of two hundred children. They have requested for us to send them some teachers who speak Spanish to hold a workshop for their teachers so that they can improve their teaching. Please contact us if you are interested. We were able to bring cash donations for the school as well as for three families in the church in Guatemala who are undergoing health crises. In addition, thanks to many generous donations, twelve boxes of clothes and personal supplies are being delivered to the needy in Guatemala. HOPE Worldwide operates medical and dental clinics in the city and many other outreach programs.

While there, I taught several classes, including one on From Shadow to Reality, one on God and Science for the campus and singles, and one of Freedom and Responsibility in Christ. Jan taught a class on the same subject for the women. The service on Sunday was very encouraging, with standing room only and about 1200 in attendance. We were very encouraged to make friends with Gilberto and Angelica Tello, Bill and Wendy Ellis, Jose Luis and Betty Estrada, Francisco Bedoya and many others. While we were there, a missionary group from Los Angeles, led by Pedro Garcia, was also visiting and encouraging the church in Guatemala City.

Jan and I also were fortunate to be able to visit Antigua, the old capital of Guatemala. This city was founded in the 1500's, but was damaged repeatedly by earthquakes and volcanic eruptions. It is full of ruins and remodeled ancient buildings. It is almost surrounded by volcanoes, and is a marvel to behold.

Guatemala City continues to be a dangerous place, with most of the disciples having been assaulted, mugged or extorted in some way. Many have had this happen to them several times. Two families have had to move from their homes quickly because armed men had come and said they wanted the house. Their family was threatened with death if it was not given over . Another family had their 15 year old son killed as he walked out the door. I heard gunshots in the night. We are now more thankful than ever for what we have in the United States.





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More Questions

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Outside HOPE School Guatemala



Neighborhood near HOPE School



Sunday Service



Antigua' Fire Volcano emits brown cloud







Antigua Guatemala Native girls

San Salvador, El Salvador August 15-18

We arrived in San Salvador after a four hour drive through the mountains by coach bus. Our constant companions in San Salvador were Marlon and Perla Fernandez. They have been leaders in the San Salvador church for three and a half years. After the cool weather in the mountains of Guatemala, the hot weather in El Salvador was a bit of a shock.

We were privileged to visit a school in a very rural setting near Suchitoto, the old capital of El Salvador. The school is supported by the church we visited in San Salvador. One of the members of the church teaches for this school, despite the two hour trip both ways over very rough roads. The school is in an isolated community in the FMLN-dominated countryside. The students are from extremely poor families. They have no books or other school supplies to speak of. Even drinkable water is scarce. School lunch is cooked over an open wood fire. The church in San Salvador helps the school by supplying uniforms and other necessities. Some of the money we were able to bring, as well as some of the eleven boxes of clothes and supplies, will be used to help the students in this school. We used donated money to buy play pens for the church children's ministry.

John taught a few classes, including one on Daniel and one on From Shadow to Reality. Attendance at the meetings was difficult because few Christians have cars and church service is limited by the public bus schedule which stops at 9:00PM. San Salvador is not a safe place at night. The people we met have very giving hearts, whatever the hardships.

Despite its problems, El Salvador is a wonderful little country. We enjoyed the national dish, which is papusas—a dish of fried corn flour with ingredients in the middle. The country has many dormant volcanoes. The people are both wary and friendly, as they are still recovering from the civil wars in the 1980's. We spent some time in the old center of the city. The crowded sidewalks, the old and mostly run down buildings, the vendors selling everything imaginable, the crazy traffic, the power wires going every which way, and the variety of people make this city a wonderful place to visit. San Salvador is a city of contrasts with rich and poor inhabitants, very modern malls, and antiquated buildings and services.



The Fernandez, John & Delmy Rivera



Students at lunch with their teacher



Oakes and Tello Family



El Salvador del Mundo monument "The Savior of the World" monument



Suchitoto Church and town center



Suchitoto Street



Tropical Fauna

Question

Why does God choose to deliver His begotten through a virgin when He has the ability to use another way, for example he could turn a rock into Jesus Christ?

It is always tricky to answer "why" questions about God when he has not answered the question for himself. This requires an educated guess at best, or speculation at worst. God did not answer this question directly, but I believe he did answer the question indirectly. The answer goes back to God's plan, as revealed through prophecy in the Old Testament. The first passage which is relevant to the birth of the Messiah is all the way back in Genesis 3:14-16. This is widely considered the first of the messianic prophecies. "So the Lord said to the serpent, 'Because you have done this.

relevant to the birth of the Messiah is all the way back in Genesis 3:14-16. This is widely considered the first of the messianic prophecies. "So the Lord said to the serpent, 'Because you have done this, cursed are you above all the livestock and all the wild animals! You will crawl on your belly and you will eat dust all the days of your life. And I will put enmity between you and the woman and between your offspring and hers, he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel." This statement is most likely a prophecy that the Messiah will be an offspring (a direct descendant) of Eve. Satan will strike Messiah's heel (Jesus will be killed), but the Messiah will crush Satan.

A more direct prophecy which is relevant to the birth of Jesus from Mary is found in Genesis in the promises to Abraham. "All the nations of the earth will be blessed through you." (Genesis 12:3) "Abraham will surely become a great and powerful nation, and all nations on earth will be blessed through him." (Genesis 18:18) "And through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed because you have obeyed me." (Genesis 22:18). As Paul points out in Galatians 3:15-18, the word offspring in Genesis 22:18 is in the singular. It is a single "offspring" of Abraham through whom God was to send salvation to the entire earth. That son, of course, was Jesus Christ. From these passages, we see God prophesied that because of the faith of Abraham, the Lord chose to demonstrate that salvation is by faith, not works, because God blessed the world through a direct descendant of Abraham. Thus, the Messiah had to be born of a Hebrew woman. There are a number of other clear prophecies which demonstrate that Messiah would be born through a direct descendant of David. Isaiah 9:1-7 has the Messiah reigning on David's throne. Isaiah 7:1 has Messiah born of a virgin. Isaiah 11:1,2 tells us that the Messiah will "come up from the stump of Jesse." Jesse was the father of David. Another relevant passage is 2 Samuel 7:12-16 in which God proclaims to David, "I will raise up your offspring to succeed you, who will come from your own body, and I will establish his kingdom... I will be his father and he will be my son... Your house and your kingdom will endure forever before me; your throne will be established forever. Again, the one through whom God is to bless the entire world is to be a descendant of David. Micah 5:2 tells us that Messiah is to be from Bethlehem, the birthplace of David and the home of Mary. Jeremiah 23:5 tells us that the Messiah is to be a "branch" of David. All these passages prove that it was God's plan all along to bring the Messiah into the world through a direct descendant of Abraham, through David.

This brings me back to your original question. Why did God decide to send the Messiah through a virgin? I believe that in the bottom line, it was because God wanted to teach us that salvation is by faith. This message comes through Abraham, who had a son Isaac by faith and through Mary, who had a son by faith. The message is that salvation is from God, it is by promise on God's part and by faith on our part.

John Oakes, PhD

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