THE TIMES.

A New Sermon by Pastor C. H. Spurgeon.

"Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity."—II Tim. 2:19.

This morning, with deep solemnity of soul I approach this text, and pray that the Spirit of God may bless it to us all. I see it in three things: the first, perhaps, is rather in the context; it is the lamentable overthrow of which the apostle has been speaking. He says that these two men, Hymenæus and Philetus, overthrew the faith of some. Secondly, we shall survey the abiding foundation—"the foundation of God standeth sure;" and then, thirdly, the instructive inscription upon the foundation-stone, "The Lord knoweth them that are His. And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity."

I. First, let us think for a little of *the lamentable overthrow* which the apostle so much deplored. The apostle observed with sorrow

A GENERAL COLDNESS.

It was in some respect coldness toward himself, but in reality it was a turning away from the simplicity of the doctrine of salvation by grace through faith. He says in the 15th verse of the previous chapter: "This thou knowest, that all they which are in Asia be turned away from me; of whom are Phygellus and Hermogenes," two men, I suppose, of whom he had hoped better things; perhaps persons who had professed a warm attachment to his person. Their departure was the unkindest cut of all. A great want of spiritual life and zeal for the truth is our trial to-day. Laodicea is not the only church that is neither cold nor hot. I am at this moment unwillingly compelled to believe that a very serious blight is upon many of our churches. From a wide correspondence I gather that a wintry chill is just now upon the church; possibly it is not to such an extent as in certain terrible periods, but still to a very saddening degree. There is not that firmness in the faith, that holiness of life, and that enthusiasm for the cross of Christ that one would wish to see. I view the immediate prospect with serious anxiety.

Furthermore, the apostle saw with much alarm that teachers were erring. He names two especially, Hymenæus and Philetus, and he mentions the doctrine that they taught—not needlessly explaining it, but merely giving a hint at it. They taught, among other things, that the resurrection was past already. I suppose they had fallen into the manner of certain in our day, who spiritualize or rationalize everything. They say, "This is mythical. This death of Christ is to be understood as the triumph of self-sacrifice. This resurrection of Christ means the revival of forgotten principles." Thus they hold an atonement which is no atonement, and a resurrection which is no resurrection. They appear to accept the great historical fact, and yet they reduce it to fiction. This is the subtlety of the old serpent.

TRAITOROUS PREACHERS.

Somehow or other these men manage to extract from the Gospel an attractive philosophy; but it is not the Gospel which God intended to be preached. They seek rather the wisdom of man's thought than the revelation of God's thought. You need not that I go into particulars, for all around us men are dealing craftily with the truth of God, adulterating it, and in heart denying it. These are by no means persons to be trifled with; many of them are keen, acute and thoughtful; and it is the great peril of the church at this moment that she numbers such among her teachers. These can stab under the shield. We care not for the besiegers without, but we are distressed because of the traitors within. God grant that this thing may go no further, but may His people become alarmed by the growing decline of the church, and resolve to be rid of this destructive influence, which eats as doth a canker.

In Paul's day many professors were apostatizing from the faith because of the evil leaders. Sheep are such creatures to follow something that, when they do not follow the shepherd, they display great readiness to follow one another. When Hymenæus and Philetus taught a highly intellectual doctrine, ever so many people, who fancied themselves to be cultured, must needs be of their mind. Hymenæus had discovered a method of being abreast of the times, so that the Christian teacher could figure in the heathen academy and be complimented for his liberal views. These "cultured" teachers looked down with contempt upon those uncouth fishermen who were so unlearned and ignorant as to believe that the teaching of Jesus meant what it said; for they themselves gave the Gospel a more rational meaning. They thought themselves profound and eclectic, men who could see the soul of things, and therefore they rejected the simplicity of the cross, and put in its place the theories of the philosophers. They took away the foundation facts under the pretence of building higher, and thus the faith of many was overthrown.

Paul also deplored that

UNGODLINESS INCREASED.

He says that the profane and vain babblings of his time increased unto more ungodliness. Oh, brethren and sisters, it is godliness that we want—the living of the soul with God, and in God, and to God. We need a holy fear of God, a sacred sense of God, a true delight in God. We want less of man and more of God. Less of mere creed-repeating, and more of vital faith in God; less following of men, and more following of God in Christ Jesus. More of union with God, living in God, and likeness to God. Oh, that He would work this in us! The world grows dark with accursed lust, and the Christian Church grows more conformed to the ungodly world. Persecutions unto death have ceased; it is easy and respectable to bear the Christian name, and hence the separation from the world, which is the glory of Christians, becomes less and less apparent. My heart is sore wounded with the sight of some who will come into God's house and undertake God's service during the Sabbath day, and yet during the week they are unjust, oppressive, graceless, and greedy—not servants of God, but servants of self and sin. By unholy professors the cross is dishonored, the Holy Spirit is grieved, and Christ is put to an open shame. All this vexed the heart of the apostle in his day, and it is our cross and burden at this hour. "Lord have mercy upon us! Christ have mercy upon us!"

II. Now let us turn to the subject which supplied Paul with consolation. He speaks of

THE ABIDING FOUNDATION:

"Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure." It is a joy to quit the ever moving flood for the firm, substantial rock, it is bliss to feel that there is something under your foot, something substantial, abiding, sure. Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure.

What is this foundation which standeth sure? Those who have interpreted the passage have given many meanings to it, but I believe that all those meanings are really one. For the sake of clearness I would give three answers to the inquiry: the foundation is, secretly, the purpose of God; doctrinally, the truth of God; effectively, the church of God; in all, the system of God whereby He glorifies His grace. The foundation is the divine purpose. Though men prove fickle, false, and wicked, and the church is thereby sorely grieved, "nevertheless" God's purpose is carried out; the covenant of grace is fulfilled, and the glory of God is revealed.

The apostle also meant the divine truth, which is the foundation of the Gospel. He had been speaking about certain truths which were spirited away by those two unworthies. Hymenæus and Philetus, and he says, "Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure." Interpreters have thought that Paul points at the doctrine of the resurrection. No doubt he does; but he includes every other doctrine which is a foundation truth of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Yonder is a man who has proved that Jesus is not truly God. Let him prove what he likes, since Jesus is God for all that. Another man has disproved the substitutionary atonement of Christ; let him disprove it if he pleases, for it is just as true. Rhetoric and logic can do wonders in appearance, but they can do nothing in reality. Brethren, the Gospel is none the worse for all the opposition which has surrounded it, though it has been as fierce as devouring flame. Only the additions of men have been burnt out of it. Everything that can be consumed ought to be consumed, and only that which cannot be burned is really God's eternal truth.

But, further, I think Paul meant here not only the purpose of God, and the truth of God, but God's divine work in the world in the salvation of His own. You look upon the church and lament that so many have turned aside; that so many others are very poor specimens of Christians; that so many more are sadly questionable; and that a certain company are evidently false. Well, it is very sad; but yet there is a remnant according to the election of grace: "The foundation of God standeth sure."

III. Now we are, in the third place, as we may be helped of the Holy Spirit, to look at this foundation and observe

THE INSTRUCTIVE INSCRIPTION.

The custom of putting inscriptions upon foundation-stones is ancient and general. In the days of the Pharaohs, *the royal cartouche* was impressed upon each brick that was placed in buildings raised by royal authority. The structure was thus known to have been erected by a certain Pharaoh. Here we have the royal cartouche, or seal, of the King of kings set upon the foundation of the great palace of the church. The House of Wisdom bears upon its forefront and foundation the seal of the Lord. The Jews were wont to write texts of Scripture upon the door-posts of their houses; in this also we have an illustration of our text.

The Lord has set upon His purpose, His Gospel, His truth, the double mark described in the text—the divine election and the divine sanctification. The seal is placed to declare that it belongs to the Lord alone, and to set it apart for His personal habitation.

If I might use another illustration, I can suppose that when the stones for the temple were quarried in the mountains, each one received a special mark from Solomon's seal, marking it as a temple stone, and perhaps denoting its place in the sacred edifice. This would be like the first inscription, "The Lord knoweth them that are His." But the stone would not long lie in the quarry, it would be taken away from its fellows, after being marked for removal. Here is

THE TRANSPORT MARK

in the second inscription: "Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity." The first seal marked it for the Lord, the second secured its removal from the common stones around it. First comes election, and sanctification follows. I want every professing Christian to have that double mark, and so to be Christ's man, known of all to be such by coming out from the unclean, and being separated unto the Lord.

The text teaches us that the Lord discriminates: "The Lord knoweth them that are His." Some who bear His name are not His, and he knows them not. He will say of them at the last, "I never knew you." They are supposed to be His, they suppose themselves to be His, they are taken into His Church as His, they continue throughout a long life nominally His; but they are discovered at the last. There is another and severer test than that of ministers, and elders, and church votes; the Lord discovers the secret things of the heart. He is not deceived, God is not mocked.

"The Lord knoweth them that are His" signifies that He is familiar with them, and communes with them. They that are really the Lord's property are also the Lord's company; He has intercourse with them. They know Him, and He knows them. He makes Himself known to them, and they make themselves known to Him. Oh, brothers, do you know God Himself? Does God know you? Will He ever say, "I never knew you"? When I have been cast down I have said unto the Lord, "Lord, Thou canst not say Thou dost not know me, for I have knocked at Thy door by the hour together; I have burdened Thee with my needs, and haunted Thee with my groanings. I have been Thy daily beggar, receiving large alms at Thy hands." It is a blessed thing to be sure that we are not unknown in heaven. At least we have the fellowship of asking and receiving, if no more.

The second seal is, "Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity." Observe how the practical always goes with the doctrinal in Holy Scripture. Those whom free grace chooses free grace cleanses. We are not chosen because we are holy, but chosen to be holy; and being chosen, the purpose is no dead letter, but we are made to seek after holiness. Note that the word is universal as to the persons of believers: "Let every one that nameth the name of the Lord depart from iniquity." This is

A SWEEPING PRECEPT

as to the thing to be avoided; let him "depart from iniquity"—not from this or that crime or folly, but from iniquity itself, from everything that is evil, from everything that is unrighteous or unholy. Oh, ye Christian people, be holy, for Christ is holy. Do not pollute that holy name wherewith ye are named. Oh, ye people of God, if you are indeed the Lord's, let no sin dwell with you. Do not say, "It is a constitutional sin." You are born again, what have you to do with the old constitution but to mortify it? Do not say, "Oh, but others do it." What have you to do with others?—to their own master they stand or fall. Depart from iniquity on your own account, even as Israel departed out of Egypt. Let your family life, your personal life, your business life be as holy as Christ, your Lord, would have it to be.

Brethren, I conclude with a brief but earnest appeal. Let us seek after the highest degree of holiness. Let us not be satisfied with being nominal Christians; let us aim at the greatest measure of godliness. Let us plunge into the stream of grace, immersing ourselves wholly into the life of God. How many professors appear to know nothing of the real force and energy of the Spirit of God in subduing sin and creating holiness! Theirs is a shallow life. Alas, how much they lose! They come under the obligations of the house of God, but they do not know the infinite privileges of that house. It is for the truly spiritual that God reserves the choicest of His dainties. Be

HALF A CHRISTIAN,

and you shall have enough religion to make you miserable; be wholly a Christian, and your joy shall be full. Walk with God in the light as he is in the light, and you shall have fellowship with Him, such as shall make earth akin to heaven. Take a little light and a little darkness, and attempt to make a mixture of them; seek to join the church and the world, and you shall have neither the pleasure of the world nor the comforts of the Spirit. It is a pity for a man to miss joys which an angel might covet!

What an injury such professors are to the church! Each one pulls his fellow up or drags them down. Every man in the church is either a help or a hindrance. No Christian man can live to himself. He may attempt to confine himself within his own ribs, and button up his coat, and fancy that what he does is to himself alone, and that his tongue and his heart are his own; but it is not so. An aroma steals forth from every man's life, and it is either like the spikenard of the alabaster box, or like the reeking of a dung-hill. God help us to remember our influence upon others.

SOLID METAL.

Think also how much the world is injured by Christians who are not Christians! Oh, friends, we want nowadays a sterling Christianity. We cannot do with German silver now; we must have the real metal. I was about to say I would sooner you had no religion, and made no pretence to having any, than to have the imitation of it. Sin is real to-day. We have heard enough of how sinners will go. Oh, for a Church of God that shall shake itself loose from the world! If we had but once such a church, there were hope for our age. God send it!

Last of all, how is Christ shamed and dishonored when we are not holy, but worldly, covetous, proud, and unloving! Oh, sirs, it seems to me that since the foundation of God was laid in agony and bloody sweat, and since God Himself became incarnate that He might lay the foundation of holiness in the world, we ought to take heed how and what we build thereon. We must come to it, for "other foundation can no man lay"; but it behoves us to come very solemnly to it, and to know what we mean by building thereon. True godliness is not to say, "I believe," but to believe; not to talk of repentance, but to repent; it is not to speak of regeneration, but to be born again; it is not to talk about consecration, but really to live to God; it is not to speak about the Holy Ghost, but to have Him dwelling in you. Be it ours to have truth in the inward parts and grace in the core of the heart. Oh, may God bring us to this! We ask it for our Lord Jesus Christ's sake. Amen!

Why Rev. Theophilus Hybrow did not Resign.

BY A MAINE MINISTER.

"It's of no use," said Rev. Theophilus Hybrow, as he sat in his study on Friday morning, with his half-finished sermon lying before him. "It's of no use. I must seek another and more congenial field. My people are kind and good in their way, but they do not appreciate me. Some other man who has not my literary tastes and intellectual ability will be contented and useful here, and I, no doubt, can find a more cultured and thoughtful community, where my best efforts will not be thrown away.

"Yes," he continued, "on Sunday I will read my letter of resignation, and on Monday I will write to my friend James, and ask him to put an item in the paper."

That night, after they had retired, Mr. Hybrow communicated his purpose to his wife.

"Now, Theophilus, I would not be too hasty in this matter," she said. "Have you made it a subject of earnest prayer?"

"Yes, I have prayed about it, and thought about it, and I can't stand it any longer. Let somebody else come here who can be satisfied to give this unsophisticated people the simple diet they require. My efforts are not appreciated.

"But, perhaps, Theophilus"—and his wife hesitated as if unwilling to go on—"perhaps the people have not been altogether to blame. You know I would rather hear you preach than anybody, but it has seemed to me sometimes when I have been listening to you, that if you would let the vexed question alone and preach the simple gospel, the good tidings of great joy, tell the old story of Jesus and his love, you might do more good. Of course you want to do all the good you can, Theo, dear."

"Oh, nonsense! It's a minister's duty to make the most of himself. He must bring the people up to his intellectual level, not degrade himself to their ignorance. Really I have too much respect for myself to get up on Sunday and indulge in pious platitudes to please anybody."

Mrs. Hybrow perceived that it would be as well not to say any more just then. Instead, therefore, of replying to this last remark of her husband's, she began to stroke his hair in a peculiar way of hers that seldom failed to have a soothing effect, and soon he fell asleep, and in his sleep he dreamed.

It was the Sabbath morning, a bright and beautiful morning, and the last bell was ringing for church. So taking up his hat and hymn-book, and a notice that had been sent in the night before, he stepped across the street to his study in the basement.

What was his surprise upon opening the study door to find a stranger standing in the room. For a moment Mr. Hybrow was inclined to be indignant at the intrusion. But only for a moment.

A second look, and indignation gave place to awe. There was an indescribable something about the stranger that left no room for doubt as to his identity. It was the Saviour, the Christ himself in mortal form. He was dressed in the ordinary garb of a man. Upon his face there was an expression of mingled gentleness and severity. And his eyes—they seemed to look the Rev. Theophilus Hybrow through and through.

"Be not surprised to find Me here," the Vision said. "Never a Sabbath morning has failed to find me here. Have you quite forgotten my promise to be with you always, even to the end of the world?"

"Nor am I here by your permission. For all that I see is mine. These books, this furniture, yonder pulpit, all are mine. And you are mine. I am the King. You are but my messenger and mouth-piece. I am here to-day to listen to the message."

"To listen to the message!" Theophilus began to tremble. What if the King's message had been tampered with by the messenger! And what if the King should interrupt, and in the presence of all the people, and in thunder tones, rebuke him for his meddlesome audacity.

The bell had now ceased to toll, the organ was about to begin to play and it was time to go upon the platform.

From the force of habit, he stepped toward the looking-glass that hung upon the wall of his study, when he saw, or rather felt, the penetrating eye of his guest fixed, first upon him, and then upon the floor where he stood; and looking down, he noticed, what had before escaped his observation, that the carpet in front of the glass was worn quite smooth. Theophilus felt the hot blood crimsoning his cheeks as he turned hastily away, and entered the door leading to the pulpit.

After the doxology by choir and congregation, and the Lord's prayer by pastor and people, and the opening hymn, came the Scripture lesson. Theophilus had selected the fifth chapter of Second Corinthians, because it contained the text for the day. But now as he read he wondered why he should ever have taken that text for that sermon. He could not see that it had anything to do with scientific discoveries, either past or future. And when he came to the words, "Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us; we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God," he thought it could not be that he had ever read the words before. They seemed in that Presence to be invested with such a new and strange solemnity and power.

Then came the "long prayer." On this particular occasion it was not very long. Never before had the Rev. Hybrow made such blundering work.

"I must be careful what I say, to day," he thought, as he tried to pray, "for there is not a word in my tongue; but lo, O Lord, thou knowest it altogether." And yet, have I not professed always to believe this? Have I been all these years praying to others, or to myself, and not to my King?"

And so, amid frequent pauses, and much embarrassment, and in a trembling tone, the prayer struggled on to its close.

Was time new for the sermon. Theophilus had dreaded to have the time come. He wished he had exchanged with a neighboring minister, as he had planned to do. He wished that he had brought some other sermon than the particular one he had prepared, and of which, he remembered, he had been so proud. Somehow it did not seem to him like a message from the King. He could not remember that there were in it any beseeching words for unreconciled sinners.

Scarcely lifting his eyes from his manuscript, turning the pages rapidly, omitting a paragraph here and there when he could, he hurried on to the end. Only once he stopped, when he heard behind him a deep sigh, as of pain, and looking back saw the stranger with a grieved expression upon his face, looking down upon his hands. And Theophilus perceived then, for the first time, that they had been pierced with nails, and that the palms were quite bloody. And he remembered how he had solemnly vowed to preach nothing save Jesus Christ and him crucified. And he shuddered, and had almost forgotten himself; and in the presence of the people cried aloud, "God, be merciful unto me a sinner!"

After the closing prayer, he was about to give out the hymn, as usual, when he heard a voice behind him say, in a tone so loud that it seemed as if all the people must hear, "Read the letter thou hast prepared!"

The letter of resignation! He had forgotten all about it. How could he read it? He wished that he had taken good advice, and not been so hasty. He thought of Pilate's wife, and her disregarded warning. Oh, if only he might take back all that he had said, and have space given him to profit by what he had now learned, and begin anew as a humble, faithful ambassador of Christ, and herald of the cross! He wept as he thought how proud he had been, and how unfaithful.

No wonder his people had found fault. No wonder, their hungry souls unfed, they had left him and gone elsewhere.

But the voice said "Read," and he did not dare to disobey. So he drew the paper from his book, and was about to begin, when a dimness came over his vision. He grew weak and faint, his knees trembled, and he staggered in his place. He seemed to see his people rising and reaching their hands toward him to keep him free from falling, and then he awoke.

His wife was speaking to him. "You have had a troubled dream, Theophilus," she said.

"Thank God, Mary," he exclaimed, with a deep sigh of relief. "Thank God, the Sabbath has not yet come. It is not too late. That paltry sermon is still in my drawer, and I shall never preach it."

"Why, what do you mean?"

"I mean," he replied, solemnly, that I have been in the presence of the King. My God the Saviour has been here. I have seen him, and I have seen myself. You know I never had great faith in visions, but I have had a vision to-night that I trust I shall not forget."

And then he told her all.

The next morning Mr. Hybrow put into his study stove the sermon on "Progress and several others of his "best efforts." When the Sabbath came he went into his pulpit and and taking for his text: "Thus saith the Lord," he told the people with tears in his eyes how guilty he had been; that he had been too proud to preach Jesus Christ and him crucified; and then he told them of his promise and purpose for the future, that henceforth he would endeavor to be a faithful ambassador of the Great King.

Every afternoon of the following week found the pastor out among his hitherto neglected flock. How surprised and glad they were to see him!

"What ails our minister?" said one old farmer. "Has he got the second blessin' that I heard 'em tell about last summer?"

Theophilus smiled when he heard of the remark. He had got a blessing that he was sure of.

On Saturday night about three months after this—a three months of precious revival—Mr. Hybrow said to his wife: "Mary, my dear do you remember what I said not not long ago about this people—that they did not appreciate me—I was too intellectual for them? So foolish was I and ignorant! It's rather humbling to acknowledge, but the fact about the matter was, I did not appreciate them."

Rev. Theophilus Hybrow has not yet resigned.—*Congregationalist.*

Secret Faults.

This may not mean so much faults concealed from others as those which are hidden from ourselves, Do you think this impossible?

Long ago a friend made the startling suggestion that men are usually ignorant of their greatest faults. Said my friend; "I did not make the discovery myself, but it was suggested by a minister, a man of much experience in life and in the world. It set me to thinking, and what I at first denied I afterwards concluded must be true."

In the first place, if we really saw a thing to be our greatest fault, if we had any true desire for improvement, the first impulse would be to correct that fault, and then it would cease to be the greatest. For our own sakes, we do not go on wilfully indulging what we know to be a fault or a blemish in our character, and one which others must recognize; our desire to stand well in their esteem is too strong for that.

Then we may mistake in our estimate of our own characters, and so remain ignorant. For instance, what others regard as obstinacy may appear to us but proper firmness, or perhaps fixed principles. Men do not always know themselves.

I have seen an avaricious man who called himself, and who really thought he was liberal and benevolent. He had generous impulses and was always going to do something at some future time. The only trouble was that he had so many schemes for gain, so many present uses for his money, that his generous plans were always in the future and receding. He loved benevolence, but he loved gain better. Nothing could have surprised him more than to be told he was not a liberal man. He was, and is, ignorant of his greatest fault.

I know a woman who is uncharitable and severe; she speaks out just what she thinks, and so says a great many hard things. Yet she does not mean to be harsh and hard; she considers it only commendable frankness, and would be surprised and led to an indignant denial if she were told that she disregarded the law of love. She does not mean to do so; she has kindness in her heart, but her severe judgment is stronger than love.

I know a person who is thoroughly selfish, and yet is exceeding kind to his own family or friends, and he thinks he does a great deal for others. But, indeed, he never puts himself out of his way, and what he does is done for those who are his own—his second self. He would be astonished if you accused him of selfishness. Said my friend: "Tell me my greatest fault, and see if I do not know it." "No; you would not believe it, and would only be disturbed; you could gain nothing, and I should not stand as well with you."

That is a hard case, if we are not only ignorant of our faults, but will not bear to be told of them. Then the help lies in this—there is One "who searcheth the heart." If we are truly desirous to be better, let us search and try our ways, and turn unto the Lord. Let us honestly pray, "Cleanse thou me from secret faults."

Not Bothered About Souls.

"Tom, you're the sort of Christian I like." The speaker was a young man of no religious profession. His companion was a church member in good and regular standing. "You're the sort of Christian I like. You never seem to bother yourself about a fellow's soul." The words were lightly spoken, but they pierced like an arrow. If we had listened at Tom's chamber door that night, we would have heard something like this: "O God, forgive me that I have seemed indifferent to the welfare of my friends! Help me to trouble myself more and more about them! Make me hungry and thirsty for the salvation of those about me! Give me a passion for souls." Kind reader, are you one of the members of Christ's church who are not bothered about souls? You have unconverted friends. You profess to believe in the Bible. It declares that all who reject Christ shall be cast forth into the outer darkness, where their worm dieth not, and their fire is not quenched. Yet you utter no warning, stretch forth no helping hand! One of two things must be true. Either (1) your profession of love toward your friend is mere pretence; or (2) your profession of faith in the declarations of Scripture is a serious error. May the Lord help us to believe in the great verities! If there is a hell, how should we pray and strive to deliver our friends from the danger of going there! If there is a heaven, how should we stretch out both hands to help them thither! But if heaven is nothing better than a dream, and hell a hoax, then, in "not bothering ourselves about souls" we are doing the correct and logical thing. Read Ezekiel iii: 15-21.—*Interior.*

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