

## **Book Reviews**

## January 2016

2 Corinthians, Second Edition. By Ralph P. Martin. Word Biblical Commentary 40. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014. ISBN: 978-1-4185-0773-2. 751 pages. Cloth. \$54.99.

Ralph Martin was a longtime professor of New Testament at Fuller Seminary (Pasadena, Calif.), a prolific author of New Testament writings (e.g., *A Hymn of Christ*) and commentaries (Colossians, James, Philippians, and 2 Corinthians), and the general editor of the World Biblical Commentary (WBC) series until his death (2013). Although the book was published posthumously, Martin oversaw the entire revision process—only production lag time prevented his seeing the final form in print. The commentary is more comprehensive than brief, making it representative of the serious Evangelical scholarship that characterizes the WBC series.

Like other WBC volumes, after the introductory matters (pp. 1–132) the commentary addresses each section of the biblical text with listed bibliography, an original translation, discussion of the Form/Structure/Setting, commentary on the Greek text, and an application-oriented explanation. More than some WBC commentaries, Martin devotes the lion's share of his energy to the commentary proper (vs. explanation). The commentary is little revised from the 1986 edition: aside from minor updates, new writing appears only in distinctive excurses (e.g., "The Collection in 2 Corinthians, 1985-2008," pp. 421-427) written either by Martin or an assistant. The resulting format has a disjointed feel—the commentary basically reissues the 1986 version with new thoughts inserted from Martin's career (e.g., some excurses are published essays of Martin's, included as is). That said, what makes the commentary worthwhile is the substance of the first edition: Martin's awareness of secondary material is profoundly extensive, his judgments on exegetical matters judicious, his engagement with the Greek text impeccable, his discussion of pertinent issues appropriate, and his interpretive analysis always constructive.

Martin's discussion of literary seams in 2 Corinthians concludes that 6:14–7:1 is Pauline, and that chapters 1–9 and 10–13 were originally separate writings. As an influential figure on the American scene from the post-WWII resurgence of British Evangelical scholarship, Martin's exegetical decisions are in agreement with Evangelical interpretation. For instance, he understands Paul's autobiographical descriptions in 2 Cor 11:16–12:10 as historical (vs. influenced by polemics), he does not question Paul's polemical sharpness as inappropriate, and he understands Israel's future salvation as entailing an embrace of the messiah (p. 449). All of these judgments are fair and argued, but they may address some readers'

concerns better than others'. That said, the care and judiciousness of Martin's interpretive work make his voice important for readers across the theological spectrum—scholars, pastors, and invested students of scripture alike. His exegetical work offers constructive conclusions, encyclopedic awareness of secondary sources, and a model balance between historical and interpretive concerns.

In sum, Martin's revised commentary is comprehensive but not overbearing and constructive in exegetical interpretation, making 2 Corinthians (revised) one of the finest lengthy commentaries on 2 Corinthians in recent times—also making it especially appealing to those invested in careful and precise exegesis. Although the revised version more or less reissues the 1986 version, Martin's voice still merits a careful hearing for reading and interpreting 2 Corinthians.

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*The Bible in Medieval Tradition: The Letter to the Romans*. Edited and translated by Ian Christopher Levy, Philip D. W. Krey, and Thomas Ryan. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2013. ISBN: 978-0-8028-0976-6. x and 329 pages. Paper. \$34.00.

The Letter to the Romans is the second volume in a series titled, "The Bible in Medieval Tradition," following The Letter to the Galatians which was published in 2011. The editors of The Letter to the Romans declare their intent is "to place newly translated medieval scriptural commentary into the hands of contemporary readers" in order to foster "academic study, spiritual formation, preaching, discussion groups and individual reflection." The editors aim to achieve these goals by dividing the chapters of Paul's letter to the Romans among eight medieval exegetes. Peter Lombard provides his prologue to Romans. An anonymous Cambridge Commentator examines Romans 1. William of St. Thierry comments on Romans 2. The third chapter of Romans belongs to Peter Abelard. The voice of Peter of John Olivi is heard discussing Romans 4, 5, and 6. The "Angelic Doctor," Thomas Aquinas, comments on chapters 7, 8, and 12. Nicholas of Lyra offers his interpretation of Romans 9, 10, 11, 13, 15, and 16. An anonymous "Commentator of Mount Saint-Michel» reflects on chapter 14. While a more traditional catena-style commentary might have enabled us to hear the rich variety of comments on Romans 3:24 or the opening verses of chapter 13, this method allows the reader to hear the unique voice of each exegete for at least one chapter. A very helpful introduction is provided preparing the reader to encounter each exegete in his own context.

The content is bountiful. While a contemporary reader may smile at the occasional display of pre-Enlightenment naiveté, that smile is soon wiped away by examples of sturdy scholarship. One finds grammatical analysis in William of St. Thierry at Ro-



mans 2:15 and in Peter of John Olivi at Romans 6:23. Peter Abelard engages in textual scholarship in Romans 3:10–19. All those who remember Thomas Aquinas as a theologian and philosopher will find here an able biblical expositor. Sometimes the content is just fun. Commenting on Romans 16:16, Nicholas of Lyra is anxious for us to get that greeting kiss just right: it is to be a *holy* kiss. It is not to be an "adulterous kiss by which Absalom kissed the people," or a feigned kiss "with which Joab kissed Amasa," or a betraying kiss "by which Judas kissed the Lord," or a shameless kiss "of the adulterous woman seizing and kissing the young man" in Proverbs 7:13.

The editors are to be commended. This is a delightful book and I recommend it to anyone interested in medieval exegesis, the history of our understanding of Paul's letter to the Romans, or the intellectual milieu from which Martin Luther emerged. This book would be a welcome companion in a seminary course in church history at the time of the Reformation. For Lutherans in particular, the theological assumptions found in the comments would provide rich material for classroom conversation.

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The Imposing Preacher: Samuel DeWitt Proctor and Black Public Faith. By Adam L. Bond. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2013. ISBN: 978-0-8006-9972-7. xi and 245 pages. Paper. \$29.00.

Adam L. Bond's revised doctoral dissertation provides an engaging and insightful narrative. Referred to as a physically *imposing* figure in the pulpit by George Dugan in the *New York Times*, Samuel DeWitt Proctor's ministry and life are here carefully examined. Bond demonstrates how Proctor was not only a physically imposing figure in the pulpit but also in the world. This is the story of a well-educated black preacher whose life experiences and faith led him to challenge the status quo and seek out a genuine community.

In the first chapter Bond examines social movements such as the civil rights movement, black theology, evangelicalism, and womanist thought. He introduces Proctor as a theological bridge between black social gospel theology and the emerging voices of black conservative ideology, black theology, womanist theology, and the black Christian political and economic "uplift tradition" of public faith in the post-segregation era.

Chapters 2 and 3 are mainly biographical, detailing the social-religious communities of Proctor's formative years. Specifically, Bond discusses Proctor's stable and nurturing environment, the church family who helped him connect theological and racial consciousness with moral and social achievement, formal theological education institutions, administrative positions, and pastorates—all of which prepared him to overcome vocational challenges and

become a public theologian.

The last three chapters present the central thesis of the book. These chapters explain Proctor's understanding of genuine community, the idea that guided his beliefs about change in American society. Proctor's definition of community consisted of three interrelated components: the affirmation of the personhood of all, removal of arbitrary impediments for individuals to attain full status in society, and the moral obligation of the "haves" to the disadvantaged members of society. Bond leaves the reader with the understanding that social Christianity, a black social gospel, and genuine community were Proctor's priorities in life.

This book affords a detailed understanding of how Christian faith can inform one's view and response to the ethical dilemmas of race relations in America. The *Imposing Preacher* is a must read for those looking for a model of pulpit activism and spokesperson for justice in the world. This clearly written book will challenge and inspire you to become a public theologian, and a socially conscious preacher or layperson.

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*Johannes Bugenhagen: Selected Writings. Volumes 1 and 2.* Edited and introduced by Kurt K. Hendel. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2015. ISBN: 978-1-4514-6555-6. Cloth. xiii and 1458 pages. \$70.00.

One of the fallacies of historical research involves overly focussing on certain "heroic" individuals, in this case Martin Luther, to the neglect of other key figures, whose contributions remain relatively unknown. That is clearly the case with Johannes Bugenhagen (1485–1558), who together with Philip Melanchthon played a monumental role in the emergence and ongoing stewardship of the theological movement emanating from Wittenberg. This deficit is now marvelously addressed by this English translation of major works by Bugenhagen, which makes his legacy accessible for study and scholarship in an unprecedented way on the eve of the Reformation's 500th anniversary. In the words of editor and translator, Kurt Hendel: "While historical scholarship has recognized him primarily as the organizational genius of the Lutheran Reformation, during the sixteenth century Bugenhagen was also a well-known theologian, pastoral leader, educator, and social reformer..." (xi).

Included in this extensive collection are writings organized according to four themes and in four parts: 1) The Man and His Times, 2) The Theologian, 3) The Exegete, and 4) The Pastor. Among his activities Bugenhagen participated in the planning of the Saxon visitation of 1528, including involvement in the preparation of the instructions for the visitors. Hendel comments on his participation in the visitation process: "Wherever he went on the visitation, Bugenhagen addressed ecclesiastical as well as educational



matters. With regard to the latter, he sought to promote an effective educational system throughout the duchy and certainly in the leading cities of the territory" (57). In his "Instruction Concerning Private Confession" Bugenhagen comments: "The preacher who teaches us and confesses that we become God's children and are saved only by the pure grace of God through Christ's death and merit without any contribution of our own natural strength or works is sent by God and truth is in him, and he is holy" (459).

We owe a profound debt of gratitude to Kurt Hendel for these exceptional volumes of in-depth historical scholarship and superb translation. Hendel's introduction, "Reformer beyond the Limelight," locates the works of Bugenhagen precisely in their historical context and provides expert guidance for interpreting their significance. Together with the recent book by Martin Lohrmann, *Bugenhagen's Jonah: Biblical Interpretation as Public Theology*, we have a new lens for appreciative inquiry into the contributions and struggles of the Reformers viewed through the life and writings of Bugenhagen. Fortress Press is to be applauded for making possible this outstanding publication at a timely moment.

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Luther on the Christian Life: Cross and Freedom. By Carl R. Trueman. Crossway: Wheaton, Illinois, 2015. ISBN: 978-1-4335-2502-5. 214 pages. Paperback. \$17.99.

Refreshing for its accessibility and focus on daily life, Carl Trueman's book would be a welcome addition to many church and personal libraries. A pastor in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church who teaches at Westminster Theological Seminary, Trueman has successfully brought Luther into a broad ecumenical conversation about the Wittenberg reformer, as the book's intended audience seems primarily to be American Evangelicals. Lutheran scholars Robert Kolb and Martin Marty frame the work with a foreword and afterword, respectively.

Trueman makes it clear that this book does not break new ground in Luther research. This brings the advantage that he can retell popular versions of Luther's life without getting bogged down in historical minutiae. A disadvantage to this approach, however, is that past narratives of the period are adopted uncritically, leaving newer scholarship on topics like Luther's medieval background or his relationship with Melanchthon untouched; for instance, despite much recent literature to the contrary, Melanchthon remains a timid second fiddle when he is mentioned here. Similarly, the book's early pages describe Luther as "flawed," thereby raising—but not answering—the question of what it means that this or that Christian is uniquely imperfect. Such critiques aside, the book offers a reliable and engaging presentation of Luther's life and work.

After an introductory chapter, Trueman begins his examination of Luther's theology with a chapter on the cross. Here he makes the important observation that Luther spoke of *theologians* of the cross rather than a *theology* of the cross. This rightly puts the emphasis on actual human relationships with God instead of impersonal, abstract theological systems. Later chapters deal succinctly and effectively with Luther's dynamic view of God's word, his liturgical and sacramental theology, and the importance of law and gospel.

Explaining these concepts for his audience, Trueman offers some important caveats to the idea that Luther and today's American Evangelicals would naturally be on the same page. For instance, Luther's view of the Christian life as a lifelong experience of law and gospel based in the promises of God does not easily fit with the frequent Evangelical emphasis on a single moment of conversion (131); on a related note, Trueman clearly explains the Lutheran understanding of infant baptism and its theological and spiritual importance. Also, Luther's insistence upon the Real Presence in the Lord's Supper remains at odds with the majority of American Evangelicalisms' symbolic, Zwinglian understanding of the sacrament (150).

On these and other points, Trueman accurately presents Luther's position and shows its value for personal and congregational piety to those of different backgrounds. This ability to interpret Luther's thought for non-Lutheran readers provides a great example of and contribution to public theology and ecumenical dialogue. In light of the coming 500th anniversary of the Reformation, it raises the possibility that "Luther and the Christian life" might prove to be an especially fruitful theme in ecumenical discussions of Luther and his value for today.

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Luther's Fortress: Martin Luther and his Reformation under Siege. By James Reston Jr. New York: Basic Books, 2015. ISBN: 978-0-4650-6393-2. xii and 260 pages. Cloth. \$ 27.50.

Reston's book was inspired by his 2008 work on European history from 1520 to 1536, *Defenders of the Faith*, as narrated in the "Author's Note" appended at the end of the book. A reader would do well reading this "Note," before engaging the main text. The book offers a biographical study of Luther, rich with psychological insights and attentive to the loaded political situation in which Luther was immersed, even as it offers not many insights into the theological reasons for the particular stances the Reformer was emboldened to take. The author is sympathetic to his central character, but does not spare him the portrayal of being obsessed with the reality of the Devil. *Luther's Fortress* is, nonetheless, a highly readable book with an agile narrative that often quotes Luther, though it lacks



sources and often misses contexts for the citations.

The ingenuity of the plot narrated is that it looks at Luther from the point of view of his yearlong reclusion in the Wartburg Castle from April 1521 through March 1522. The events that precipitated his sequestration and the ones that followed his return to Wittenberg are presented from the prism of his stay at the castle. The narrative style makes for a pleasant read even if sometimes short in accuracy, as in attributing to Luther's full mastery of Greek and only elementary knowledge of Hebrew. Greater clarity on the distinction between private and public mass as also the importance of real presence in the sacrament of the altar (even as transubstantiation is abjured) would have been helpful. There are other imprecisions and mistakes, which do not compromise the plot of the narrative or the alacrity of the author. This is an admirable book in presenting colorfully the main protagonist of the Reformation.

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*The Mission of Preaching: Equipping the Community for Faithful Witness.* By Patrick W. T. Johnson. Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity, 2015. ISBN: 978-0-8308-4070-0, 237 pages. Paper. \$25.00.

Amidst the proliferation of resources that seek to help the church address the cultural shift to postmodernity, Patrick Johnson provides a new voice. Herein readers will find not just a theory of homiletics, but a vision for missional, formational preaching.

Johnson first considers the influences of Tom Long, Anna Carter Florence, and David Lose upon postmodern preaching. While Johnson gleans contributions from each author, he prefers Lose's posture of confession as it fosters critical distance between the preacher, text, and congregation. Such distance preserves the separate integrity of preachers, listeners, and the God we proclaim while fostering a pursuit of truth that resonates with postmodern audiences.

The turn to Barth's *Doctrine of Reconciliation* grounds this work in a missional ecclesiology. Johnson draws particularly upon the witness of the reconciled community as a deeply missional theme. This chapter echoes Barth's focus upon twelve types of speech and action that point to God's reign, which represent the multiform witness of the church transformed by reconciliation.

Johnson then utilizes *Treasure in Clay Jars: Patterns in Missional Faithfulness* to explore the North American context of missional congregations, and in particular, to consider the practical implications of missional theology for preaching. As he highlights the eight categories of missional churches identified by the authors of *Treasure*, Johnson considers how preaching might help to fully establish these missional principles within the congregation's identity.

Lastly, Johnson sets all these voices in conversation to explore what new path they may inspire. Here we find Johnson's thesis and unique contribution, that faithful preaching confesses Christ, interprets scripture missionally, and intends to prepare the congregation for witness. He notes that preachers need not only be pastors, but may include any of the congregation who engage the community and the text with this paradigm in mind.

This theological synthesis of homiletics, ecclesiology, biblical studies, and missional theology offers a gift to many readers. Those with a vested interest in the aforementioned fields find a committed conversation partner who opens new possibilities of application. Johnson's respectful handling of each author's perspective, regardless of personal agreement, also provides a wonderful example of how to further discussion about delicate subjects within academic and church communities.

At reading's end, Johnson leaves this important question undeveloped: "How?" While he offers a compelling theology of preaching that encourages shaping congregations for witness and describes what those congregations might look like, little guidance appears about how to foster that change. Yet, because of the argument's construction, this seems more benefit than burden. While Johnson casts a vision and lifts up particular practices that embody that vision, local communities seem best fit to incarnate this missional approach to postmodern preaching.

Others may wonder whether this approach fits the paradigm of Gospel proclamation. Yet, as Luther points out in *The Freedom of a Christian*, the Gospel freedom we experience is a freedom for service, for witness. It is a purposeful Gospel, something Johnson understands and encourages preachers to consider for the sake of their communities. For those seeking insight into preaching sermons that engage scripture, form communities of witnesses, and lift up Jesus Christ, *The Mission of Preaching* is a wonderful resource.

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Redeeming a Prison Society: A Liturgical and Sacramental Response to Mass Incarceration. By Amy Levad, Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2014. ISBN: 978-0-8006-9991-8. 233 pages. Paper \$23.00.

This is a powerful book, comprehensive in its scope and practical in its suggestions for change.

Levad has a strong chapter on the current crisis in the U.S. criminal justice systems, how we came to practice mass incarceration, and how we became the first prison society in world history. It can be motivating to read this history, and to read that the U.S. currently incarcerates a higher number of people than any other such society in the world, both in terms of the absolute number of incarcerated individuals as well as in percentage of population.



One very powerful part of the book is that Levad addresses not only prison reform but also the broader context of criminal justice, namely social justice. Throughout the book, Levad notes that these two areas of justice are "fundamentally intertwined with each other" and the crisis of the U.S. criminal justice systems "contributes to and is exacerbated by" the crisis of social injustice in U.S. communities. And she has detailed chapters analyzing both crises and suggesting concrete and practical reforms/solutions/ corrections to them.

Levad writes as a Roman Catholic theologian, engaging a good deal of Catholic theologians along the way. She states her hope that "other Christians" may derive from her book "ways that foster possibilities for working together despite theological, ecclesiological, and practical differences between our denominations." Levad emphasizes the Roman Catholic sacraments of Eucharist, Penance, and Reconciliation. Though Lutherans have theological differences with Roman Catholics in their understanding of the Eucharist, I do not see that these come into play with what Levad does with the Eucharist in this book. She emphasizes that at the Lord's table, all are equal and included, without exception, and that Christians are summoned to work for a society where this holds true as well. And while Lutherans do not recognize Penance and Reconciliation as a sacrament, Levad briefly indicates the Protestant parallel with Confession and Forgiveness, which could enable Lutherans to join in this part of her conversation.

Levad correctly identifies, begins, and ends the book with the hope that people who are not in prison begin to learn to care about people in prison, to see them as fully human individuals who have the right to participate in the "dignity, unity and equality of all people." Levad's wish is that "through this book" we will learn so to care. Perhaps what would help in fostering that care in this book would have been more stories, heartrending stories of lives—individual, familial, communal—broken by the flaws and shortcomings of the U.S. criminal justice system. Levad has a sprinkling of such stories sporadically throughout her text, but the book is by and large a fairly dense read. Rather, the book gives direction, and powerful direction at that, for those who already do care to put that care into effective action, and to discern and articulate faith—and church-based reasons for so doing.

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The Tale of Frieda Keysser. Frieda Keysser and Carl Strehlow: An Historical Biography. Volume I: 1875–1910. By John Strehlow. London: Wild Cat Press, 2011. ISBN: 978-0-9567-5580-3. Cloth. xxxii and 1198. \$89.95.

This is a tale fondly told about pioneer life on the Australian frontier, based on the diaries of an impressive woman, Frieda Keysser. This massive account is written by John Strehlow, grandson of the subjects of this book, who began his investigation upon learning about the diaries of Frieda found in a cellar in Berlin, where they waited more than fifty years to be discovered.

Research on this project began already in 1994. This account begins with the early years of Frieda and Carl, their marriage, and their formative time in Hermannsburg. While Carl investigated the language, cultures, and belief systems of the Western Aranda and Loritja people, Frieda gave attention to the social problems facing these people, especially how they affected women, for example, infant mortality. Frieda kept detailed dairies and later in life wrote an overview of her biography, which were preserved in spite of the ravages in World War II Germany, to which the couple had returned in 1910. The diaries and this book provide a unique and remarkable perspective not only of missionary history but the history of Australia itself.

While the narrative is about the lives of particular individuals in the life of one fascinating family, their involvements are located within the larger sweep of nineteenth and twentieth century history. Of particular interest to many readers of this journal are the connections to Neuendettelsau and the legacy of Wilhelm Loehe. One chapter is devoted to the leadership of the theological seminary located there by Johannes Deinzer from 1874–1897, who served as the teacher of Carl Strehlow and others who became missionaries to Papua New Guinea and Australia (213–224). The ministry of Johannes Flierl, first missionary to Papua New Guinea, also provides an intriguing chapter (247–264).

The guiding thread of the volume, however, follows the needle of Frieda's colorful diaries. She wrote in 1910, the year of their return to Germany: "'Jesus lead Thou on, Till our rest be won' applies especially in this year, when we want to take the children to Germany, when our future will be decided, whether we stay in Germany or return here. Lord, show us the right way, for You have said: I will lead you with My eyes" (1068). This reflects the faith of the ancestors who ventured to unimaginable places among extraordinary people in service of their God.

The book includes many illustrations, which bring the story to life, and maps, which assist the reader in precisely locating the events described. This is truly a work of love for a family, for history, for the church, and for the mission of God.

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The Future of Evangelical Theology: Soundings from the Asian American Diaspora. By Amos Young. Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press. ISBN: 978-0-8308-4060-1. 252 pages. Paper. \$25.00.

Amos Yong, who teaches at Fuller Theological Seminary, says that the time has come for a revisioning of evangelical theology. This effort might not seem relevant to mainline Protestants, but the endeavor of Asians and Asian Americans to find their voice and place in Christian theology and to share their insights provides an opportunity for all Christians to examine mission from a new perspective.

In the past, evangelical theology has been understood methodologically "to be a-historical, a-cultural, and even a-contextual" (114). In fact, in its history, converts were expected to leave their cultural traditions behind. Still, there has been a definite cultural and historical bias in Christianity, that of the West. Hermeneutics, theology, and the interpretation of church history have not until recently reflected the viewpoint from the "underside of history." But recently the center of Christianity has been experiencing a shift to the global South.

The goal of Yong's book is to be a bridge to an interpretation of evangelical theology that sees the global context through an Asian

American lens. He points out that Jesus Christ, while a product of a particular location, transcends culture, as does evangelical faith in Christ, which he sees as localized yet universal. The Christian message is manifested contextually through the cultures that Asian immigrants and subsequent generations sprang from. How can Asian American evangelicals reconcile universalism in Christian mission with the celebration of local customs, languages, and history?

The answer is found in the Pentecost story, which reflects the multicultural and multilingual character of the reign of God. The theological method that grows out of Pentecost will reflect a three-way interpretation—of Scripture, what the Holy Spirit is doing in the world, and the context in which theology happens. These are emphases that are appropriate for all Christian theology, not just Pentecostal/evangelical.

Yong considers the next steps for evangelicals from the perspectives of immigrants, second and later generations, and women. In evangelicalism at least, there is a divergence of opinions and approaches in these areas. Still, the unifying focus must be, in Yong's words, that "the gospel is good news only within culture, even as the gospel is never captive to culture" (225). This should be a starting point for all Christian theologians, not just evangelicals and not just Asian Americans.

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