

*PANTHEISM.*

## III.

## THE RELATION OF GOD TO THE WORLD.

A SOLUTION of the problem of existence which has appeared so early in the history of human thought, which has persisted through all time down to the present moment, which has assumed so many forms, and which makes itself at home in all kinds of philosophical theories, must have some strange fascination about it, and must have something that commends it to the acceptance of men. What is the fascination of Pantheism, not only for the crude and impulsive, but for the giant intellects among the sons of men? The fascination of Pantheism is to be found, in the first place, in the satisfaction which it seems to give to many and apparently contradictory interests. Unlike Deism it seems to assert a unity of relation between God and the world, which enables the holder to make some kind of distinction between these ideas, and still assert their fundamental unity. It seems to do justice to the ultimate elements into which experience may be analyzed, and to recognize what is called mind, and what is called matter, and still to do justice to the underlying unity in which both may be said to merge. Unlike Deism or Materialism, Pantheism gives scope for the exercise of emotion, allows mystic depth to play on the imagination, encourages the play of religious feeling, and may give rise to the highest kind of emotion. As illustration of this fact we might refer to many sources, and specially to the religious emotion of the great Stoic leaders, and to the religious emotion with which they were endowed when they, as finite spirits, felt themselves to be in fellowship with the Universal Spirit which informed the universe.

The fascination, in the second place, is to be found in the

apparent universality of its recognition of the truth and goodness in all the systems of human thought and in all the aspirations of human life. The recognition of religious interests, and the endeavour to find satisfaction for them, is one source of its strength. In reference to Christianity in particular, we find specially in modern forms of Pantheism an attitude of professed friendliness. We find an apparent friendliness which, if a little patronizing and condescending, yet recognizes that religion is the Sabbath of the lives of the common people. Religion is simply the unreflective side of philosophy, and philosophy must justify and explain it. So a pantheistic or idealistic philosophy does not treat religion as a superstition as Atheism did, nor does it neglect it as popular philosophy did, it does not refuse to religion its mysteries, nor does it identify religion with ethics. On the contrary, it is forward to acknowledge that religion is the best and highest element in human nature, and that Christianity is the best, purest, and highest form of religion, and it strives to transform the truths of Christianity into philosophical principles. It claims to have transformed Christianity into philosophy. Perhaps the shortest way of stating this fact is to quote from Dr. Edward Caird. We quote from him, we might quote from the writings of his brother, the late Principal Caird, we might also quote from others, but space is limited : " Such Idealism has a close relation to Christianity : it may be said to be but Christianity theorized. It has often been asserted that Hegel's philosophy of religion is but an artificial accommodation to Christian doctrine of a philosophy which has no inherent relation to Christianity. If, however, we regard the actual development of that philosophy it would be truer to say that it was the study of Christian ideas which produced it. What delivered Hegel from the mysticism in which the later philosophies of Fichte and Schelling tended to lose

themselves, and led him, in his own language, to regard the absolute, 'not merely as substance but as subject,'—which made him recognize with Fichte that the absolute is spiritual, and yet enabled him with Schelling to see in nature, as the opposite of spirit, the very means of its realization,—was his thorough appropriation of the ethical and religious necessity of Christianity. In the great Christian aphorism that, 'he who loses his life alone can save it,' he found a key to the difficulties of ethics, a reconciliation of hedonism and asceticism. For what this saying implies is that a spiritual or self-conscious being is one who is in contradiction with himself when he makes his individual self the end. In opposing his own interest to that of others, he is preventing their interest from becoming his; all things are his and his only who has died to himself. But if this is the truth of morality it is something more, for 'morality is the nature of things.' We cannot separate the law of the life of man from the law of the world wherein he lives. And if it is the nature of things, as it is the nature of spirit, that he who loses his life shall save it, then the world must be referred to a spiritual principle, and the Christian doctrine of the nature of God is only the converse of the Christian law of ethics." (*Encyclopædia Britannica*, ninth edition, vol. xvi. p. 102.)

"To regard the Absolute not merely as substance but as subject" was, according to Dr. Caird, the great achievement of Hegel. Nor is this the only place in which Dr. Caird sets forth the ultimate unity which is both the starting-point and the goal of his system. He is speaking of the transition from Plato to Aristotle, and in the course of his exposition the following passage occurs. "If a philosopher be able to regard all nature as the realization of an immanent design, which becomes more and more completely manifested the higher we rise in the scale of being; if, further, he is able to view the imperfect life of the lower orders of creatures as

subordinated to the fuller existence of those which stand higher in that scale, it is natural to expect that in the last resort he will be able to regard all being as the manifestation or realization of the perfectly self-determined life of God." (*The Evolution of Theology in the Greek Philosophers*, vol. i. pp. 277-8.) One other passage may be quoted. "The consciousness of self and the consciousness of the not-self cannot be made intelligible, unless they are both referred back to that which is deeper and more comprehensive than either, the consciousness of God." (Vol. ii. p. 248.) Again he calls on us to regard "God as a principle of life and intelligence through whom all things are and are known, who is continually realizing Himself in all the infinite difference of the natural and spiritual worlds, and in whom all natural and spiritual beings find their end." (*The Evolution of Religion*, vol. i. p. 112.)

The fascination of Pantheism has never been better set forth than in the fluent pages of Dr. Edward Caird. As we read his works and yield ourselves to his exposition and glide easily down the liquid lapse of his onward movement, we seem to feel that all the interests of faith and philosophy are safe with him. But when we reflect on what is implied in his system we come to the conclusion that, however fluent and however graceful the exposition, and however he may in terms seem to save all the interests of religion, and of Christianity in particular, the God he leaves to us is after all only the final synthesis of subject and object. He is not a realized God. He is only the God who is continually realizing Himself in all the infinite difference of the natural and spiritual worlds, and all things and all being is only "the manifestation of the perfectly self-determined life of God." He states his thesis beautifully, he seems to recognize so fully the beauty and utility of religion, he is so gracious to Christianity, that we almost forget the consequences of his

theory, and we forget that on his view the world is as indispensable to God as God is to the world. We never find in Dr. Edward Caird's writings the brusqueness of Bradley, or the defiance which is thrust forth in other idealistic writers, but the underlying Pantheism is there all the same.

Whatever may be our estimate of the idealistic philosophy, and whatever criticism we may pass upon it, it may be well to state here that for a theistic faith it is absolutely necessary to insist on the distinction between God and the world, and while the world is dependent on God, God is not dependent on the world. The Christian conception of God insists that in Him there is no becoming, in Him there is no realization of Himself. In Him there is no darkness at all. God is perfect, He is the blessed God, in Whom all ideals are realized, a real, concrete, self-determined being, of Whom, and through Whom, and to Whom are all things. Now all idealistic, all pantheistic theories assume that God is in the process of realization, and that the evolution of the world is the evolution of God. Dr. Caird repeats this on every possible occasion, and never misses the opportunity of setting it forth. He exhausts the resources of poetry, and uses all the possible ways of describing the ultimate unity of things, until we are fascinated with the inexhaustible variety of his exposition, and yet we find that at the basis of it there is only the old vulgar pantheistic idea of unity, the unity which is at once the road and those who walk on it.

This is not the place to set forth the Christian conception of God. Nor can we dwell on the theistic conception of God, nor deal at any length with His relation to the world and to man. Not one, but many treatises would be required for that stupendous task. But it may be briefly said that it is not possible to set forth the idea of God in mere abstract terms. For God is concrete, determinate being, in Whom is

all fullness, in Whom there is no process of realization, in Whom there is realized Perfection of life and purpose. He is, and from Him all things have proceeded, but in such a way that they add nothing to His perfection. The world is a fulfilment of His purpose, the expression of His will, not a realization of His being. His is a self-determined life, and the form, the method, and the measure of the working of all other being are determined by Him. Hence from the theistic point of view, and especially from the point of view of Christian Theism, it is neither proper, nor adequate, to speak of God either as substance or as subject. If we speak of Him as substance, we are immediately landed in a discussion as to the nature of substance, as to its modes of manifestation, and as to the degrees in which it is realized in any particular being. In the long run it is impossible for us to avoid identifying God with the universal substance, and impossible to refuse to identify all being as one, without ultimate difference. Nor is it possible to think of God as mere "subject." For this immediately commands us to search for an object as universal as the subject we have postulated. What Dr. Martineau demanded "as an objective datum" comes back and imperiously demands recognition. This is the weakness of all systems of idealism. It is the fatal anthropomorphic element in all of them. They, in the final issue, simply magnify the one self with which they are empirically acquainted, and as that self demands a not-self, and that subject demands an object, so the absolute self-consciousness is made into the likeness of the individual self. Idealism is so far true, as it is a real account of the evolution of the finite self, as it depicts that self in the process of appropriating the riches of the world, making himself at home in it, and realizing himself in reaction against it, and becoming master of himself and of the world as the outcome of the process. But from that point of view all other selves

are simply means for the realization of the self, which is the subject of description. They are raw material to be worked up into the process of self-realization. But this is a universe of many selves, and the final unity must be of a kind which will recognize many selves in mutual relation, and idealism—if it be true—must provide for that necessity.

Again, to describe God as subject, not only demands an object, but it lays stress only on one aspect of reality, as reality is embodied in the individual self. It asserts the only relation between God and the world, as a relation between subject and object. It is the relation between a thinker and his thought, between a knower and what is known. There is, no doubt, a true relation between a thinker and his thought, between a knower and what is known. But a self is not a mere subject, nor is it a mere knower. A self is in a real world, a world which is not only perceived and known; it is a world of activity, and the self is also an active self. He has to recognize the ongoing of the world, and to find what is the particular "go" of everything in it. That is to say, the self has to recognize what are the ideas and the ideals which are in the world, and to act accordingly. It has also to recognize that it is a plastic world, a world ready to accept and to carry out his ideals if he knows how to make the world accept these. From one point of view the self recognizes the system of nature, and the thought which is there; from another point of view nature is the place and sphere in which he works out his own ideals, impresses them on nature, and adds to the thought which is there. In the one point of view he is a learner, he is receptive, he is conforming his thoughts to a standard; in the other he is a creator, an originator, one who can conceive ends, and take means for their realization.

Now it would appear that the idealistic philosophy, specially in the intellectualistic form of it which recognizes God

simply as subject, neglects altogether the active, causative side of the divine activity. It is constantly so occupied with the world as the content of the divine thought, as the object for the infinite subject, that it has no view of the possibility of a divine activity which contemplates ends and seeks to realize them. Consequently the activity of will is thrust into the background, and there is a constant tendency to minimize or to deny causation as a real linkage in the connectedness of things. Will is only the self-realization of an idea, and causation is only a subsidiary principle necessary only for the description, and not necessary for the appreciation of things in their wholeness. The reaction against the one-sided intellectualism of idealism has brought about a change, which has come to such growth in the writings of James, Schiller, and Dewey, the significance of which may be seen in James' latest work styled *Pragmatism*. Into that issue we do not enter at present.

What is insisted on here is that a philosophy which neglects Will, which minimizes causation, which eliminates the notion of activity, has neglected a fundamental factor of human experience and must retrace its steps, and seek a wider, truer synthesis. For Will is a real factor of experience, and must be recognized. Theism cannot dispense with it. We still have faith in the old saying, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." According to this statement there was a time when the heavens and the earth were not, and there came a time when they became. But the divine life was, and never began to be. In Christian Theism the life of God was not a life of mere substance, nor a life as mere subject, nor a life as absolute, nor a life which can be adequately described by abstract predicates. It is the life of the Living God, not an abstract life, but a life of absolute fullness in which there is oneness and difference, in which there is the absolute realization of all perfection, whether

that perfection is regarded from the metaphysical, or the ethical, or the religious point of view. Without entering into detail we quote the deepest words which have ever been written about God. God is Spirit, God is light, God is love, and in these three sayings there is more and truer philosophy than there is in all the speculations of all the idealistic schemers known to history.

It may be well here to quote from Professor Royce. "There is no escape from the infinite Self except by self-contradiction. Ignorant as I am about first causes, I am at least clear about the Self. If you deny him, you already in denying affirm him. You reckon ill when you leave him out. Him when you fly, he is the wings. He is the doubter and the doubt. You in vain flee from his presence. The wings of the morning will not aid you. Nor do I mean all this as a sort of mysticism. The truth is, I assure you, simply a product of dry logic. When I try to tell you about it in detail, I shall weary you by my wholly unmystical analysis of common-places. You cannot stir, nay, you cannot even stand still in thought without it. Nor is it an unfamiliar idea. On the contrary, philosophy finds trouble in bringing it to your consciousness merely *because* it is so familiar. When they told us in childhood that we could not see God just *because* He was everywhere, just because His omnipresence gave us no chance to discern Him and to fix our eyes upon Him, they told us a deep truth in allegorical fashion. The infinite Self, as we shall learn, is actually asserted by you in every proposition you utter,—is there at the heart, so to speak, of the very multiplication table. The Self is so little a thing, merely guessed at as the unknowable source of experience, that already, in the very least of experiences, you unconsciously know him as something present. This, as we shall find, is the deepest tragedy of our finitude, that continually he comes to his own, and his own receive him not, that he becomes

flesh in every least incident of our lives; whilst we, gazing with wonder upon His world, search here and there for first causes, look for miracles, and beg him to show us the Father, since that alone will suffice us. No wonder that we remain agnostics. 'Hast thou been so long time with me, and yet hast thou not *known me*?' Such is the answer of the Logos to every doubting question. Seek Him not as an outer hypothesis to explain experience. Seek Him not anywhere in the clouds. He is no 'thing-in-itself.' But, for all that, experience contains him. He is the reality, the soul of it. 'Did not our heart burn within us while he talked with us by the way?' And, as we shall see, He does not talk merely to our hearts. He reveals Himself to our closest scrutiny.'" (*The Spirit of Modern Philosophy*, by Josiah Royce, pp. 349-350.)

It is a curious passage, partly because of the use and the application of the language of Scripture and devotion, partly because of the emotion expressed in the passage, and partly because he passes from the infinite self to the Logos, and from the Logos to the living absolute as if these were one and the same. Still more curious is the fact that he uses the language descriptive only of a relation between persons, and applicable only when there is a sense of personal relationship, in order to set forth a relationship into which personality does not enter. Take away the personal reference in the words referred to by Professor Royce, and so far quoted as from the Gospels, and they become meaningless. There are certain emotions which arise only in relations between persons; and even when something like them arises in human hearts in other references, these arise only when the object is personified, and attains to a certain kind of personality.

One has to raise the question forced on us by the assumptions of pantheistic idealism, can a conscious self be part of an all-inclusive self? It is assumed on all hands that it is

both possible and conceivable. In fact the idealists assume it, while one seeks in vain for a discussion of it. Professor Pringle-Pattison asked the question, and denied the possibility of the assumption, and his question was ignored. At least any adequate discussion of it is unknown to the present writer. It may be well to quote from him. "Though selfhood, as was seen in the earlier lectures, involves a duality in unity, and is describable as subject object, it is none the less true that each Self is a unique existence, which is perfectly *impervious*, if I may so speak, to other selves—impervious in a fashion of which the impenetrability of matter is a faint analogue. The self, accordingly, resists invasion; in its character of self it refuses to admit another self within itself, and thus be made, as it were, a mere retainer of something else. The unity of things (which is not denied) cannot be properly expressed by making it depend upon a unity of a Self in all thinkers; for the very characteristic of a self is this exclusiveness. So far from being a principle of union in the sense desired, the self is in truth the very apex of separation and differentiation. It is none the less true, of course, that only through selfhood am I able to recognize the unity of the world and my own union with the source of all, and this is the incentive to the metaphysical use of the idea of a universal Self which I am criticizing. But though the self is thus, in knowledge, a principle of unification, it is, in existence, or metaphysically, a principle of isolation. And the unification which proceeds in the one case is, to the end, without prejudice to the exclusive self-assertion in the other. There is no deliverance or consciousness which is more unequivocal than that which testifies to this independence and exclusiveness. I have a centre of my own, a will of my own, which no one shares with me or can share—a centre which I maintain even in my dealings with God Himself. For it is eminently false to say that I put off, or can

put off, my personality here. The religious consciousness lends no countenance whatever to the representation of the human soul as a mere mode or efflux of the divine; on the contrary, only in a person, in a relatively dependent or self-centred being, is religious approach to God possible. Religion is the self-surrender of the human will to the divine. 'Our wills are ours to make them thine.' But this is *self-surrender*, a surrender which only self, only will can make." (*Hegelianism and Personality*, pp. 227-9.)

The quotation denies in terms the possibility of the assumption made by almost all the modern absolute idealists. And it seems that Professor Pringle-Pattison is right. The absolute, the universal self, the single life, the one experience, to use the various descriptions of the one assumption, alone truly is, and all other beings are subsumed as predicates of it. But how can a consciousness be treated as an attribute of another consciousness? Every self combines and relates together a succession of experiences, each of which is unique, and these in their uniqueness and in their totality are for the individual self alone. The self has its own experience, and that experience is its own. The real being of a self is that it exists for itself, not for another mind which may know it. Now philosophy must take cognizance of this uniqueness of every self, and recognize that the living, concrete, present, conscious experience of a self is unique. True, there may be an experience common to many selves, but that arises when we neglect the individual experience in its concreteness and lay stress on the abstract universal attributes, taken in abstraction from the particular selves whose experience they are. No self is a part or an attribute of any other self. An absolute, inclusive self-consciousness is unintelligible.

There must be room in the world for a system of self-conscious beings, for they are there. Our philosophy must

not explain facts away, it must recognize them. But a pantheistic scheme does not recognize the uniqueness of the self. If we are to recognize the uniqueness of a self, much more must we recognize the uniqueness of the self-conscious Spirit from Whom all things are. If we do, then to describe God as the Absolute, as Substance, as Subject, is to use inadequate language. If God be self-conscious spirit, then He is not the Absolute. Is there no other form of unity than the unity of one block ? is there no other solution save one which identifies God with the sum of being ? Is there not a unity of a system which shall include God and all other consciousnesses, and relate them all to one another in some way which will conserve the meaning, worth and reality of each self, and yet make them so related as to form a spiritual system ?

A full answer to this great question cannot be given here, but any adequate answer must make provision for selves in all their uniqueness. The unity of the absolute, of substance, of subject, or of any one abstract category will not suffice. It must be a unity which will make room for self-centred beings in mutual relation, which will respect the uniqueness of each self, and yet make provision for their subsistence in one system. But this Pantheism in any of its forms cannot do. Metaphysically, epistemologically, psychologically, from whatever point of view one regards Pantheism, we find it burdened with inadequate regard to truth and fact. But the gravest defect of Pantheism appears when we view it from the ethical side. We must grant to them this, that they have the courage of their convictions. They boldly minimize evil. "The very presence of ill in the temporal order is the condition of the Perfection of the eternal order." (Royce, *The World and the Individual*, vol. ii. p. 385.) "The absolute is the richer for every discord, and for all the diversity which it embraces." (F. H.

Bradley, *Appearance and Reality*, p. 204.) Other references might be given, and while philosophers are thus explaining away the fact of evil and of pain, men are groaning under the misery of their lot, and are painfully conscious of the fact of sin and evil. The main objection is that this conception runs counter to all the ethical convictions of man. It jumbles together the moral, the non-moral, the physical and the spiritual worlds. All tumbles together into an indiscriminate mass, in which all moral differences disappear, and one thing works as well as another to enrich the harmony of the Absolute. Frederic Harrison is right when he says that "No force can amalgamate in one idea tornadoes, earthquakes, interstellar spaces, pestilences, brotherly love, unselfish energy, patience, hope, trust and greed." (*Pantheism and Cosmic Emotion*, p. 4.) But on the view of Pantheism these moral values vanish, and evil has its place in the Absolute. There can, on these terms, be no abiding distinction between good and evil, virtue and vice, right and wrong. These have their home in the Absolute; and however wide the discords may seem to the moral consciousness, they ultimately serve only to enrich the Absolute, and however great may be the ill of the temporal order, yet that ill is only the condition of the perfection of the eternal order. Yet these moral values abide, and the good, the beautiful and the true do belong to the temporal order. Any philosophy which obliterates moral values, and which apologizes for ugliness, evil and sin, and makes these to be essential to the perfection of the eternal order, is under the necessity of revising its procedure, and of bringing its conclusions into something like harmony with the moral convictions and aspirations of mankind.

We quote here from Professor Howieson. "If the Infinite Self *includes* us all, and all our experiences,—sensations and sins, as well as the rest,—in the unity of one life, and includes

us and them *directly* ; if there is but one and the same final Self for each and all, then, with a literalness indeed appalling, He is we, and we are He ; He is *I*, and *I* am He. And I think it will appear later, from the nature of the argument by which the Absolute Reality as Absolute Experience is reached, that the exact and direct way of stating the case is baldly, *I am He*. Now, if we read the conception in the first way, what becomes of our ethical independence ?—what of our *personal* reality, our righteous, i.e. reasonable responsibility—responsibility to which we *ought* to be held ? Is not He the sole real *agent* ? Are we anything but the steadfast and changeless modes of His eternal thinking and perceiving ? Or, if we read the conception in the second way, what becomes of *Him* ? Then, surely, He is but another name for *me* ; or for any one of *you*, if you will. And how can there be talk of a Moral Order, since there is but a single mind in the case ?—we cannot legitimately call that mind a person. . . . Judging by *experience* alone,—the only point of view allotted by Professor Royce to the particular self,—judging merely by that, even then the experience is not direct and naïve, but comparatively organized, there is no *manifold* of selves ; the finite self and the Infinite Self are but two names at the opposite poles of one lonely reality, which from its isolation is without possible moral significance.” (*The Conception of God*, pp. 98–9.)

In order to bring out the underlying quantitative nature of all the pantheistic views we have been considering, we quote from Strauss, who, perhaps more than any other, has the merit of bringing into the light the ultimate nature of Pantheism. “ If reality is ascribed to the idea of the unity of the divine and human natures, is this equivalent to the admission that this unity must actually have been manifested, as it never has been, and never will be, in one individual ? This is indeed not the mode in which Idea realizes

itself ; it is not wont to lavish all its fullness on one exemplar and be niggardly towards all others—to express itself perfectly in that one individual, and imperfectly in all the rest : it rather loves to distribute its riches among a multiplicity of exemplars which reciprocally complete each other—in the alternate appearance and suppression of a series of individuals.” (*Life of Jesus*, English Translation, pp. 779–80.) The quantitative character of this proposition will be noticed. It is worth looking at. The assumption is that for the Idea to lavish all its fullness on one individual is to be niggardly to the rest. Is this so ? Is it not the fact that the way to enrich all individuals is to lavish fullness on one individual in order that all others might have a pattern to follow, a type to emulate ? Does it make me any poorer to think of the mathematical genius of a Newton, of the poetry of Homer, Dante and Shakespeare ?—of the systematic thinkers of the world, like Plato, Aristotle, Kant and Hegel ? Strauss has transported the material idea of wealth into the sphere of wealth of another kind. In the spiritual world wealth is kept by giving it away, and the more we give away the more we have. In this spiritual world persons count. A great personality enriches the whole race, and the greater he is the more he enriches them. Intellectual wealth, moral wealth, spiritual wealth can be given away and kept; great and true thought rightly expressed enriches the whole world. “ A thing of beauty is a joy for ever ” ; a scientific conquest of nature, a thought which harnesses the forces of nature for the use of man, is an abiding possession of man. A true thought is not the exclusive possession of any one mind, it may become a common possession. Suppose that the idea should have realized itself in one exemplar, suppose one in whom the ideal of humanity was perfectly realized, would not that exemplar be the glory of every individual who could see and understand it ? A perfectly realized self would

enrich every self in the world. Along this line of thought one can trace the outline of a kingdom of God, in which can be seen the Father of all, and the spirits of just men made perfect; and on the one hand the Father gives fully to these spirits the wealth of His own thought, life and grace, but what He gives is not quantitative, and the giving does not make His less, for the language of quantity has no meaning in this sphere. On the other hand the spirits of just men made perfect receive out of the fullness of God grace for grace, and the more they are able to receive the more do they become themselves. Yet God is God, and man is man, and there need be no confusion between the two, nor any merging of one into the other, if we realize the nature of spiritual giving and receiving. The unity thus reached does not merge a self into a mere quantitative obliteration of differences. It recognizes differences. It maintains self-identity throughout, but in such a way that there may be perfect communion and spiritual union in the kingdom of God. It only needs that we recognize persons, and the worth of persons, and their continued oneness of being, and also recognize the fact of their oneness in spiritual communion, to justify for ourselves the possibility of such a kingdom of God. But such a unity is not yet, it is the goal not the starting point of the activity of God. History describes for us the making of such a world, and Scripture enables us to see the process of the work. It is not an easy task to make such a world, nor is it easy to make rational beings in such a way as to make them make themselves. To describe the process is another task, but pantheistic thought has misstated the problem, and has so confused the issues as to make a solution impossible.

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