

The First Received Prayer and the Bible **(A study on Biblical repentance – metanoia n. /metanoeo v.)**

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Sin forms a barrier between man and God. Each sin is woven into an impregnable veil - and it becomes a bit thicker with each passing day. “*Your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God ... so that He does not hear*” (Isa 59:2). Prayers either hit this barrier and bounce straight back, or else ascend and become hopelessly entangled in that sin covering. However, there is one particular prayer that pierces this barrier. and ultimately destroys it.

The First Prayer - “Metanoia n.”/“Metanoeo v.”

The prayer that first pierces this barrier - the first prayer God receives from an individual - is the powerful prayer *from* repentance v., or you could say, “*of* repentance” or, “*as a result of* repentance.” The word of interest here is “*metanoia*” (the noun) which is commonly translated, “*repentance*” and “*metanoeo*” (the verb) translated, “*to repent.*” So, what is the content of that prayer? This is an exceedingly important matter as one’s sin barrier is either going to stay intact - or else be pierced and demolished. This is the difference between eternal life and eternal death.

The noun, “*metanoia*” is a compound word, “*meta + noia*” - a preposition and noun. It literally means, “*after mind.*” It is a “*changed mind.*” So, some previously held conclusion has been revisited - reassessed - and then abandoned. The verb, “*metanoeo*” is “*meta + noeo.*” It is *the activity* of the person - “*an after perception - a change in perception.*” Unfortunately, three additional words are usually welded to these words when expounded upon ... “***from your sins - apo humon hamartion.***” Though these Greek words are readily available for use, they are never attached to the words “*metanoia/metanoeo*” in the New Testament. Toward the end of this article, I will have a further insight about this for you.

Once “*metanoia/metanoeo*” become unentangled from “*apo humon hamartion*” (*from your sins*) interesting insights begin to emerge. Bottom line: this “*changed mind*” or “*change of mind/perception*” can be about anything - and toward anything. *Context* determines what is rethought and what new conclusion is embraced. The focus of these words is on the mind - one's thinking. The changed mind has been exposed to new information that challenges previous information and its conclusions. Priorities then embraced, or behavioral modifications then made *follow* this changed mind. This is a bedrock point.

Having said this, I am the first to say that all calls from God to a “*changed mind*” are ultimately calls from sin to righteousness. But, the focus of that “*changed mind*” is often something other than ***one’s particular personal misdeeds*** (what we normally think of as “*our sins*”). The best way to demonstrate this is to examine each use of “*metanoia/metanoeo*” in the New Testament and and follow those words with “*a changed mind - n*” or “*change of mind/perception - v*”.

This may be a tough reprogramming on your part ... as I am calling you to “*change your mind*” about “*metanoia/metanoeo*” - and what God may be calling one from - and to! But, I am confident you will find this worth the effort. So, let’s go through all uses of “*metanoia*”(n) and “*metanoeo*”(v) and see how each one reads.

Changes of Mind – Some Open Ended Calls

These passages do not define what new conclusion is to be embraced. That does not mean there isn’t one. God does not call for a “*changed mind*” ... to then embrace a void. But, I believe these are

purposeful “*open ended*” calls. The reason for such ambiguity will be discussed in the section following the read through of all these passages. Do not add the phrase, “*from your sins*” to any verse.

“*And (the disciples) went out and preached that men should repent (change their mind/perception - v)*” (Mk 6:12).

“*God is now declaring to men, that all everywhere should repent (change their mind/perception - v)*” (Ac 17:30). Paul was preaching Jesus and the resurrection and also discussing their idols, etc.

“*(Jesus) is the One whom God exalted to His right hand as a Chief and Savior; to grant repentance (a changed mind - n) to Israel, indeed, forgiveness of sins*” (Ac 5: 31). This may be an emphatic use of the connector, “*kai*” meaning, “*indeed*” in this verse. I will discuss the connector, “*kai*,” in a moment.

“*Well then, God has granted to the Gentiles also **the** repentance (the changed mind - n) that leads to life*” (Ac 11:18). The bolded, “**the**” is a demonstrative article – not “*a*” repentance – but **the** repentance. We really need to know what that is - as **it** “*leads to life*”!

“*Or do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance (a changed mind - n)?*” (Rom 2:4).

“*The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance (a changed mind - n)*” (2Pet 3:9).

“*... but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent (change their mind/perception - v)*” (Lk 16:30).

“*For the sorrow that is according to the will of God produces a repentance (changed mind - n) **without regret**, leading to salvation*” (2Cor 7:10). In its context, this statement had a Corinthian sin situation as its catalyst (a son “*having*” his father’s wife). But, I think there is a much broader implication, and application, than just this particular situation. On page 11, I will comment more on this.

Likely Open Ended Calls

“*Thus it is written that the Christ should suffer and rise again from the dead the third day; and that repentance (a changed mind - n) for forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in His name to all the nations ...*” (Lk 24:46,47). This may be just a direct reference to believing the gospel message. It probably is. Note: What Jesus did makes “*forgiveness of sins*” possible. I can repent “*of my sins*” forever and that repentance/change of mind about them cannot pay for a single one. Only His blood can expunge them. Again, this will be explored more fully later in this article.

“*In the same way, I tell you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents (changes his/her mind/perception - v)*” (Lk 15:10). While this may be in reference to personal misdeeds, it might be a description of a renewed mindset where one's thinking has entirely changed – where God is now front and center of everything. That's what happened with me. One day, “*God*” was little more than a fleeting stray thought (if even that) ... the next, constant awareness of Him. Forty three years later – awareness of Him is a constant. This amazes me. It really does.

“Then He began to reproach the cities in which most of His miracles were done, because they did not repent (change their mind/perception - v)” (Mt 11:20). The miracles validated that **His message** was from God. So, this is an indictment that they did not embrace - whatever He had declared among them. And Jesus taught on a lot more than just one’s personal misdeeds.

“ ... if the miracles had occurred in Tyre and Sidon which occurred in you, they would have repented (changed their mind/perception - v) long ago in sackcloth and ashes” (Mt 11:21 and Lk 10:13). Those in Tyre and Sidon would have yielded to His message – similar to the passage just cited above. While the sackcloth and ashes could be grief over personal sins (like Nineveh at Jonah’s preaching), it could also be grief that they had not believed God’s declarations on any number of topics – as Jesus now expounded on them. The miracles were *“an announcement”* that Jesus’ teachings had the weight of God behind them (Jn 5:36). So previous unbelief is what is being grieved – that they had deemed God untrustworthy and dismissed His values and promises as unworthy of attention.

“Repent (Change your mind/perception - v), for the kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Mt 4:17). Jesus does not define exactly what is to be repented of. Is it about personal misdeeds? About who you think He is? About who is to be in control of your life? He states **the reason** for this change of mind, but not the specific subject matter of the repentant/changed mind. This is also the exact wording of John the baptizer in Matthew 3:2. I have placed all of John’s material together further down - and will explain why there.

A Change of Mind About Outside Matters - Some External Subject

In Koine Greek, the conjunction *“kai”* is often a simple connector between independent phrases. But, it is also commonly used as an ascensive (a step up in intensity) - meaning, *“even.”* That means the second phrase builds upon the first phrase. But, in many of the following passages, a case could be made for understanding *“kai” as emphatic* ... even stronger than merely ascensive ... and translated by, *“indeed, really, in fact.”* I will place the translation choice for *“kai”* in parentheses below. Know that **any** choice is linguistically legal (*“and,” “even,” “indeed,” “really,”* or *“in fact”*). Translators make their call based upon context, the author’s common use of a word, etc. That is why translating from one language to another is an art as well as a science.

“The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: Repent (change your mind/perception - v), (indeed) believe in the gospel” (Mk 1:15). If *“kai”* is translated by the emphatic, *“indeed”* - then it is describing what the repentance is about - believing in the gospel! If God had added *“from your sins - apo humon hamartion”* after *“repent”* then *“kai”* would just function as a simple connector. The words, *“apo humon hamartion – from your sins”* were fully available to the Holy Spirit but He did not use them. If He had, this paragraph would not exist. As an aside, I am not sure this was yet the full gospel message of 1Corinthian 15:1-11, but who knows ... it might have been. Jesus did know it.

“But, the things which God announced beforehand by the mouth of all the prophets, that the Christ should suffer, He has thus fulfilled. Repent (Change your mind/perception - v) therefore (indeed) return, so that your sins may be wiped away ...” (Ac 3:18,19). Ascensive or emphatic, the emphasis is over returning (to God) so that, or, *“in order that”* (*“eis to”* introduces a purpose clause) one’s sins might be wiped away. Don’t impose *“from your sins”* on repent. This is about changing your mind about Christ’s pre-proclaimed purpose as the Lamb of God.

“Repent (Change your mind/perception - v), (and) let each of you be baptized ...” (Ac 2:38). This follows a tremendous declaration about who Jesus was and is - and what those listening Jews had done to Him. The call was to change their mind about Him – who He is.

“Consequently, King Agrippa, I did not prove disobedient to the heavenly vision, but kept declaring both to those of Damascus first, and also at Jerusalem and then throughout all the region of Judea, and even to the Gentiles, that they should repent (change their mind/perception - v), (indeed) turn to God, performing deeds appropriate to this repentance (changed mind - n)” (Ac 26:19,20). If that “*kai*” is meant to be ascertive or emphatic then the whole call of repentance is one to put God at the center of one's life. Deeds will automatically follow. During that chapter of one's life, personal sin patterns will be addressed and abandoned as “*deeds appropriate to this repentance*” and the continuation of a Christian's sinning can not go hand in hand. This is all post-salvation, sin addressing activity. This will be explained more fully on pages 12-16 below.

“I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable, and teaching you publicly and from house to house, solemnly testifying to both Jews and Greeks of repentance (a changed mind - n) toward God, (indeed) faith in our Lord Jesus Christ” (Ac 20:21). This is a repentance that looks **out** toward God – not **in** toward our sins. It is not a call to navel gaze.

“But I have this against you, that you have left your first love. Remember therefore from where you have fallen, and repent (change your mind/perception - v), (indeed) do the deeds you did at first; or else I am coming to you, and will remove your lamp stand out of its place - unless you repent (change your mind/perception - v)” (Rev 2:5). Change your mind about having abandoned *the deeds done at first*. The focus is on that – not your sins. It's as though this is implied: “To be sure, your sins are keeping you from those activities and must be abandoned – but focus on those first deeds which you have since abandoned and the value they held.” That is what needed to be reviewed with a persuasion as to why they were better than one's present course and why one should recommit to them. So, I think this is a call to look at those deeds and their value – and get back to functioning in that vein.

“I now rejoice, not that you were made sorrowful, but that you were made sorrowful to repentance (a changed mind - n)” (2Cor 7:9). This was a congregational change of mind as the “*you*” is plural in both places. One of their number had taken his father's wife ... as wife? A step mother probably ... I hope (as opposed to the other option: see 1Cor 5 - whole chapter). Paul was appalled by their errant “*tolerance*” of that sin. He confronted them – and they changed their minds about it being okay.

“For in the case of those who have once been enlightened ... and then have fallen away, it is impossible to renew them again to repentance (a changed mind - n), since they again crucify to themselves the Son of God, and put Him to open shame” (Heb 6:4,6). God has little patience - maybe none - with double-mindedness on this matter. The changed mind is about Jesus and His work. “*But, as God is faithful, our word to you is not yes and no. For the Son of God, Christ Jesus, who was preached among you by us ... was not yes and no, but is yes in Him. For as many as may be the promises of God, in Him they are yes*” (2Cor 1:18-20). For one to declare, “*Jesus is the answer!*” - to then later say, “*But then again, ... maybe not*” - these are exceedingly dangerous waters. Go slow, dig deep, count the cost, and emerge **with convictions** ... not “*beliefs*.”

“For you know that even afterwards, when he desired to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for

(Esau) found no place for repentance (a changed mind - n from his father, Isaac), though he sought it with tears” (Heb 12:17). This is a unique use of “*metanoia*” - as it is man to man. Repentance “*from one's sins*” **cannot** be part of this word's meaning. Isaac was not being petitioned about changing his mind about his own sins. Esau was trying to get Isaac to change his mind about having given his birthright to Jacob!

“You also have some who ... hold the teaching of the Nicolaitans. Repent (Change your mind - v) therefore; or else I am coming to you quickly, and I will make war against them with the sword of My mouth” (Rev 2:16). Whatever that **teaching** was ... it was to be reassessed quickly and abandoned immediately. That was the repentance call. I hope they dropped it before His “*visit.*”

“Remember therefore what you have received and heard; and keep it, and repent (change your mind - v)” (Rev 3:3). This is a call for one to abandon newer, contrary-to-God information and positions and get back to fundamentals they had known earlier.

“I advise you to buy from Me gold refined by fire, that you may become rich, and white garments, that you may clothe yourself, and that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and eye salve to anoint your eyes, that you may see. Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline; Be zealous therefore and repent (change your mind - v)” (Rev 3:19) ... about thinking you are rich and clothed and able to see. But, Jesus ... corrected the record. They were called to change their minds about their spiritual state – and conclude they were indeed poor and naked and blind. This is another glaring example where the Holy Spirit could have easily added the words, “*apo humon hamartion – from your sins*” after “*repent*” - and this paragraph would not exist. And as far as buying His “*gold refined by fire*” - the focus there is not on our sins - but on His possessions.

“And men were scorched with fierce heat; and they blasphemed the Name of God who has the power over these plagues; and they did not repent (change their mind - v), so as to give Him glory” (Rev 16:9). The word, “*glory*” could be translated, “*honor.*” The repentance called for is to honor Him. This is a sin of **omission**. The blasphemy would indeed stop, but their minds were to be changed in seeing He should be honored – not blasphemed.

“... with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition, if perhaps God may grant them to repentance (a changed mind - n) leading to the knowledge of the truth” (2Ti 2:25). This can be applied to myriads of areas, but I did not place it in the open end category as it does identify the target - “*the truth.*” But, this is as open ended of a call as one can imagine because it can embrace **any** subject matter – one's worldview, claims of other religions ... anything in opposition to His positions. And, as we all know, all changes in mind, authored by God, end in “*the truth*” - and that is the focus of this repentance call.

“Therefore leaving the elementary teaching about the Christ, let us press on to maturity, not laying again a foundation of repentance (a changed mind - n) from dead works ...” (Heb 6:1). Are “*dead works*” limited to personal misdeeds? Can it not include one's entire career thrust, or humanitarian efforts outside of Christ? “*He who is not with Me is against Me; and he who does not gather with Me - scatters*” (Lk 12:30). All “*building*” outside of Him are dead works to be burned up (1Cor 3:10-15).

A Change of Mind About Personal Misdeeds

There are some passages where one's personal misdeeds are the view of the changed mind. Let's now examine those.

*“Do you suppose that these Galileans **were greater sinners** than all other Galileans, because they suffered this fate? I tell you, no, but unless you repent (change your mind/perception - v), you will all likewise perish. Or do you suppose that those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them, were **worse culprits** than all the men who live in Jerusalem? I tell you, no, but unless you repent (change your mind/perception - v), you will all likewise perish”* (Lk 13:2-5).

*“And if he **sins against you** seven times a day, and returns to you seven times, saying, ‘I repent (changed my mind/perception - v),’ forgive him”* (Lk 17:4).

*“Repent (Change your mind/perception - v) **of this wickedness of yours**, and pray the Lord that if possible, the intention of your heart may be forgiven you”* (Ac 8:22). Simon the Sorcerer had offered money to the apostles so he too could have authority to impart the Holy Spirit to others.

*“And they gnawed their tongues because of the pain, and they blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores; and they did not repent (change their mind/perception - v) **about their deeds**”* (Rev 16:10,11).

*“There will be more joy in heaven over the sinner who repents (changes his/her mind/perception - v) than over ninety-nine **righteous persons** who need no repentance (change of mind - n)”* (Lk 15:7).

*“I am afraid that when I come again my God may humiliate me before you, and I may mourn over many of those who have sinned in the past and not repented (changed their mind/perception - v) **about the impurity, immorality and sensuality which they have practiced**”* (2Cor 12:21).

“The men of Nineveh shall stand up with this generation at the judgment, and shall condemn it because they repented (changed their mind/perception - v) at the preaching of Jonah; and behold, something greater than Solomon is here” (Mt 12:41 and Lk 11:32). The king of Nineveh called upon all to *“**turn from his wicked way and from the violence which is in his hands**”* (Jonah 3:8).

*“Be on your guard! If your brother **sins**, rebuke him; and if he repents (changes his mind/perception - v), forgive him”* (Lk 17:3).

*“... you tolerate the woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, and she teaches and leads My bond-servants astray, so that they commit acts of immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols. And I gave her time to repent (to change her mind/perception - v); but she does not want to repent (to change her mind/perception -v) **of her immorality**. Behold, I will cast her upon a bed of sickness, and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation, unless they repent (change their mind/perception - v) about her deeds”* (Rev 2:21,22). Because of the reference to idols, all this may be about spiritual adultery - like James 4:4.

*“And the rest of mankind, who were not killed by these plagues, did not repent (change their mind/perception - v) **about the works of their hands**, so as not to worship demons, and the idols of*

gold and of silver and of brass and of stone and of wood, which can neither see nor hear nor walk; and they did not repent (change their minds/perceptions - v) about their murders nor of their sorceries nor of their immorality nor of their thefts” (Rev 9:20,21).

“I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repent (to a changed mind - v)” (Lk 5:32). But as we are all grouped as “sinners” in our natural state, this may actually be an open ended call. But as it is contrasted with “righteous” I have it here as referencing personal misdeeds.

John, the Baptizer’s, Calls to “Metanoia”/ “Metanoeo”

Quite honestly, I do not fully understand the Bible’s materials on the subject of baptism. I am not saying I know nothing about this subject - and I probably do need to write an article exposing what I know to be erroneous teaching. But starting right here, with John, what is an “*immersion of repentance - an immersion of a changed mind?*” Even if one errantly adds, “*from your sins,*” the phrase - and concept - still makes no sense to me. What is interesting to me is my attitude about such a confession. I am confident the problem is with *my* understanding of the material - not the material. If I understood Jewish history and tradition at that time, or understood the words better, or just had my mind opened by the Lord so as to “*understand the scriptures*” (Lk24:45), then, I would get it. But currently, Paul’s statement comes closest to helping me “get” John’s activity.

“And Paul said, ‘John baptized with a baptism of repentance (a changed mind - n), telling the people to believe in Him who was coming after him, that is, in Jesus’” (Ac 19:4). To totally believe in Christ - being fully immersed in that - well, I get that. The water would represent a spiritual truth. At least, ... I think I got it. But, as you will see, I go downhill from here.

“John, the baptizer, appeared in the wilderness preaching a baptism of repentance (a changed mind - n) for the forgiveness of sins” (Mk 1:4).

“And (John) came into all the district around the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance (a changed mind - n) for the forgiveness of sins” (Lk 3:3).

“As for me, I baptize you with water for repentance (a changed mind - n) ...” (Mt 3:11).

“You brood of vipers, who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Therefore bring forth fruit in keeping with your repentance (changed mind - n)” (Mt 3:7,8 and Lk 3:8).

“John had proclaimed before (Jesus’) coming, a baptism of repentance (a changed mind - n) to all the people of Israel” (Ac 13:24). So, a change after Jesus’ coming? But, Jesus’ initial proclamation (Mt 4:17) was identical to this next verse - by John. Anyway,

“Repent (Change your mind/perception - v) for the kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Mt 3:2). This is a somewhat open call. One is told *why* to change his/her mind - but not the specific subject(s) to be changed. But, maybe that *is* the subject to be reconsidered and embraced ... that the kingdom of heaven is at hand – not some far off reality.

Why the Open Ended Call: Repentance/Changes of Mind - Leading to the First Received Prayer

I ask for your careful intention on this next section. In many ways, it is the heart of this matter. I

will recount my own journey of repentances - "*changes of mind*" (**plural**) - that culminated in the ultimate "*change of mind*" leading to my first received prayer. This will simply serve as an example.

About a year before I became a Christian, I had a dream. For years, I had been struggling with the injustices this world produces. In this dream, I was sitting, looking down, and in frustration said, "*This shouldn't be like this, it should be like this! And this shouldn't be like this, it should be like this!*" There was someone sitting beside me, just a little higher than me. His face was a blur, he never said anything, but I could sense a benevolence and calm agreement with each assertion I made. "*And this shouldn't be like this, it should be like this! And this shouldn't be like this, it should be like this!*" This "*friend*" continued his silent, but full assent. I continued my contentions until all complaints were exhausted. Then, after a momentary pause, I sighed deeply, my body sagged, and I said, "*But, that's just not the way it is.*" With that, my dream immediately ended. The next morning, I was different. I no longer believed justice would be found, or attained, in this life. Even though a disappointing determination, I had a strange sense of peace. That reassuring, friendly presence beside me - made me feel like I was not really all alone. I wrote this dream down and then continued my life journey ... but with a changed mind ... though I still continued a deeper and deeper descent into sin.

About a year after I became a Christian, I was looking through my old notes. I then came across the entry about that dream. As I read it, the importance of that change of mind - at that time - flooded me. My response was immediate, "*Lord, that friend ... was You!*" I am confident He will affirm this suspicion when I appear before Him. That repentance/change of mind was not the ultimate one, but it was an important one as it helped me abandon a dead end road - finding justice in this life.

Sometime after that dream, I experienced another important pre-Christian "*change of mind.*" It involved ... pollution. Man's careless defilement of this phenomenal environment weighed heavily on me. I cannot describe the anger and frustration wrought in me the more I learned of man's recklessness. I had just begun reading the Bible (for some reason starting with The Revelation) and came across this statement: "*Thy wrath came ... to destroy those who destroy the earth*" (Rev 11:18). That arrested me. I thought, "*If He made all this, wouldn't pollution anger Him?*" I read the verse again. This opened my mind to an entirely different option on how this issue would be handled. God Himself would take care of this reckoning. Polluters will not escape the One who made this earth. My mind changed at that moment (a proper definition of "*repentance*") - and a huge weight lifted off of me. I could literally feel it. That passage created a great desire to learn more of the Bible's contents.

Not long after that, I read Job 28. That chapter discusses man, and all his pursuits, mentally and physically. Then comes two questions. "*But where can wisdom be found? And where is the place of understanding? Man does not know its value, nor is it found in the land of the living*" (Job 28:12,13). The chapter then continues recounting more of man's search for the real substance of life - with no results. Then this declaration: "*God understands (wisdom's) way and He knows its place And to man He said, 'Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding'*" (Job 28:23,28). Proverbs 9:10 refines this even more: "*The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.*" That chapter (and all the parts I did not quote here) concluded the matter for me. **Man did not have the answers to life.** This chapter confronted my growing suspicion of man's limitations and then stated, in a matter-of-fact manner, where life's answers do reside. I still did not know what the answers were, but I knew **Who** had them. I wanted in. At that moment, everything in me pointed **due north** - toward "*Mount Zion, in the far north, the city of the great King*" (Ps 48:2). With this "*change of mind,*" I totally abandoned man as the source for wisdom on the substantive issues of life. I resolved to search for "**God**" - whoever, whatever or wherever He was. This was a critical turning point - a total change of mind - a phenomenally momentous act of repentance. But, I still had not arrived at that first received prayer - that most powerful change of

mind ... the mother load. Incidentally, forty plus years later, everything in me still points due north because “*all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge*” are hidden in “*God’s mystery, that is, Christ Himself*” (Col 2:2,3). I am now in ... but, I want more ... and more ... and more ... and more

Well, after that Job 28 internal about-face, a series of “*changes in mind*” unfolded over the next two months. They led to this declaration ... to the woman I was living with (unmarried), “*There are only two things I know for sure; Satan is real, and I am going to Hell forever. I’m quitting my job, and you can have everything ... I have to sit here and read this Book!*” ... which I did. This phenomenal change of mind occurred six weeks prior to reaching the ultimate “*change of mind*” - the target. And in that six week period, numerous other changes in my mind occurred - too many to recount here. But, I was getting ever closer to the mother load.

The Point of This Recitation

I needed my mind changed on a whole host of issues before I could arrive at that **one** change of mind that destroyed sin’s barrier over me. The reason many of God’s calls to repentance are open ended (where He does not specifically identify the subject matter of the change of mind) is because each person has a different set of issues that must be confronted before arriving at the big “*change of mind.*” **You** might *not* need your mind changed about hoping for - and even expecting - equity, justice and fairness in this life. I did. **You** might *not* need a change of mind on the issue of world pollution. I did. **You** might *not* need a change of mind on sexual activity. I did. But one thing I do know. Everyone outside of Christ ... **needs a mind overhaul.** To the saints He says, “*you were formally alienated and hostile in mind*” and indulged in “*the desires ... of the mind, and were, by nature, wrathful children, even as the rest*” (Col 1:21 and Eph 2:3). Not too flattering. God, in His infinite wisdom, knows exactly what thinking needs confronted - in what order - and at what time - to bring down an alienated, hostile mind. What inscrutable wisdom is necessary - in timing and content - to accomplish such a feat. Fortunately, once broken down, “*a smoldering wick He will not put out*” (Mt 12:20). He relights one’s mind ... with a different fuel.

You Ask: “So, what do I need to change my mind about?”

I don’t know. Let me throw out some possibilities. Maybe you need to ...

- Change your mind about blaming God for some ill that has befallen you. That can be a tough one (Pr 20:24).
- Change your mind about how you approach your Creator and your “*rights*” before Him (Heb 10:19,20).
- Change your mind about God’s ownership claim to everything under the heavens - including your money, your possessions, your abilities, your business, your health ... you (Job 41:11).
- Change your mind about being a self-made success. If you allow Him, He will remind you of those “*lucky breaks*” - and the unseen Hand behind them. “*You would have no authority ... unless it had been granted you from above*” (Jn 19:11). That statement rattled Pilate.
- Change your mind about previous escapes from death (Ps 68:20). I always credited, “*my lucky star.*” What a dope.

- Change your mind as to the perilousness of your situation (Heb 10:31).

I do not know what areas you need confronted on - but He does. You can always ask Him ... like the rich young ruler did (Mt 19:16-22). He will respond. He will confront you with your particular point of insanity/error and call you to change your mind. All this will be a precursor to ...

The Big “Change of Mind” - The Ultimate “Metanoia”/“Metanoeo”

Paul was commissioned to solemnly testify “to both Jews and Greeks of repentance (a change of mind - *n*) toward God, (indeed) faith in our Lord Jesus Christ” (Ac 20:21 - an emphatic “*kai*”). The ultimate “change of mind” is for one to believe the testimony of the Father about the Son - His person (God in the flesh), His life (no sin), His purpose (to die for ours), and His resurrection (that He physically walked out of the tomb alive and appeared to hundreds of people over a forty day period before ascending off this globe into heaven, [1Cor 15:1-11]). One is called to change his/her mind and believe this good message. Even John, the baptizer, prior to the cross, was “telling the people to believe ... in Jesus” (Ac 19:4). **This** is the mother load – the change of mind that changes everything.

The Powerful Prayer from “Metanoia”/“Metanoeo” - the initial view on this side

When an individual finally arrives at this point and for the first time approaches God through this changed mind, ... some “things” happen. One of the most marvelous things about God is the stealth and humility He so often exhibits. This first prayer that pierces the veil of one's sin covering is usually a very simple, private, even quiet affair ... on this side. The publican “was even unwilling to lift up his eyes to heaven, but was beating his breast, saying, ‘God, be merciful to me, the sinner!’” Jesus informs us, “This man went down to his house justified” - right with God (Lk 18:13,14). It is highly doubtful that publican had any idea what just occurred ... on the other side. When the thief on the cross said, “Jesus, remember me when You come into Your kingdom!” (Lk 23:42), no one else around may have taken much notice. They did not observe anything out of the ordinary with that exchange ... on this side. He was still hanging on a cross next to Jesus. In fact, a few hours later, the guards came and broke his legs to speed his death - and then unceremoniously dumped his broken corpse. While I am confident the thief did experience some internal assistance in meeting his “end,” there is no way he himself knew what was occurring ... on the other side. He was ... preoccupied. Incidentally, there is no way that nameless thief could know how his prayer from his changed mind about who Jesus was would impact a man two thousand years later on the opposite side of the globe ... me. God is still using him here and now. And speaking of me, when I finally bowed under all the pressure, alone in my living room, and asked the Lord to come into my life, I didn't sense **anything** out of the ordinary on this side at that moment. I had no idea of the massive power of that prayer ... and of the eruption ... on the other side. You see, ...

“There is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God ...”

... when a sinner repents (changes his/her mind/perception - *v*).” Now, stop for a moment ... and look closely at this passage. When one lowly, little sinner changes his/her mind - repents - and believes His message ... that very second, on the other side ... God **Himself** is rejoicing. On this side - relative quiet ... on that side - a nuclear explosion. Even comparing this to a nuclear explosion is woefully short of describing the power that bursts in the corridors of eternity when that prayer ascends. And with that outburst of energy ... massive fallout descends. Here are the first two gifts.

- The blood of Christ is applied for “the forgiveness of our trespasses” (Eph 1:7).

- The righteousness of Christ becomes “*our righteousness*” (Jer 23:6 and Ro 3:21).

But that is just the beginning. All the promises of God are activated. And gifts are showered directly from His Hands in response to this prayer. How any other prayer will ever accomplish more than this one ... well, I just don't see it. Here is a cursory glimpse of a tremendously incomplete list of God's action in response to this powerful prayer following “*metanoia.*”

- One is “*delivered from the domain of darkness and transferred ... into the Kingdom of the beloved Son*” (Col 1:13).
- One is given eternal life (Jn 3:15,16,35 and Jn 10:28, etc.). Eternal life!!
- One is made a Royal Priest (1Pet 2:9).
- One is indwelt by the Holy Spirit - thus becoming *a temple of God!* (Rom 8:9 and 2Cor 6:16).
- The granting of spiritual gifts probably occurs at that moment (1Cor 12:11).
- One is adopted as a son/daughter in His family with an inheritance beyond our comprehension - even though I am trying to tell some of it! (Rom 8:15-17 and 32).
- An immortal body is guaranteed (1Cor 15:50-54).
- A place in the new heavens and earth is being prepared (Jn 14:2).
- Eternally substantive work is created for one in this age. Thus, real purpose for this life is granted and predetermined (Eph 2:10).
- Access to all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge (hidden in Christ) are now available to the believer (Col 2:3).
- Angelic beings are assigned to assist the believer (Heb 1:14).

But, even a complete list would just consist of “*things*” that are simply fall-out from this explosion of God. To be sure, it is all ***incredible*** fall-out, but since He gave His cherished Son to die for us ... there is nothing He will now withhold. None of these gifts hold a candle to ... The Gift.

A Tree in the Forest

As a philosophic aside, just because those in this age do not hear this explosion of God – that does not mean it does not happen. If a tree falls in the forest, with no man around to hear it - the power and the crashing noise is still fully present. For man to think otherwise is a display of arrogance and insanity. Man's perception of reality has no effect upon its reality. That is genuine Philosophy 101.

No Regret

God always leads one into “*a repentance (a change of mind - n) without regret*” (2Cor 7:10). There is not ***one*** change of mind, authored by God, I have ever regretted. In fact, here is an interesting

“change of mind.” Initially, I would fight His challenges to my way of thinking until I finally broke under the weight of truth. But years later - when lucid and thinking sanely - I long for God to challenge my errant positions and change my mind to agree with His mind. *“I will stand on my guard post and station myself on the rampart; I will keep watch to see what He will speak to me, and how I may reply when I am reproved”* (Hab 2:1). The choice is between being set free from the narrow-mindedness of man's and Satan's darkness ... or not. Here is the basic process on how this happens. Man's position (or my position) on an issue is fully set forth - and then analyzed from God's perspective. Man's position is then abandoned ... with the ability to refute it by forwarding God's position *with its heavier weights*. To wrestle like this on some specific issue is an exercise of inexpressible privilege and honor. It is my hope God will see fit to continue such unmerited favor toward me. *“For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways,” declares the Lord. ‘For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts’*” (Isa 55:8,9).

But, in His normal humility, all of these changes in mind do more than just produce no regret. They produce thanks. They produce allegiance. They produce worship. I will never be able to fully demonstrate my gratitude for His patience and commitment in bringing me out of the hell hole of my natural mind. I am glad He has granted me eternity ... to try.

An Unfortunate Question - “Does Repentance Come Before Believing?”

This paragraph reveals the biggest reason I have written this article. Those caught in this question, *“Does repentance come before believing?”* are asking, *“Do you turn from your sins - first - **and then** believe the gospel ... or do you believe first? Which is the **right order**?”* The question in this header is built upon the false notion that *“metanoeo v”* (and somehow by extension also the noun, *“metanoia”*) means, *“repent - **from your sins.**”* That phrase would be, *“metanoasate apo humon hamartion.”* As referenced earlier, this phrase was fully available to the Holy Spirit (I just wrote it) ... but He never used it. *Not once* in the entire New Testament. Adding these three words to *“metanoeo”* reduces this great call of God - to a solitary focus on one's personal misdeeds ... **looking inward**. That reduces *“metanoia/metanoeo”* to an exclusively narrow, self-centered exercise. As we are so naturally self-centered, this type of teaching/preaching is quite natural. It is still *“all about me.”*

As is so often the case, one error invariably causes other errors - in this instance, bigger errors. Biblical repentance is most often a great challenge from God *to look outside oneself* at some great issue He has forwarded. It is a call to *investigate* the declarations about Jesus Christ - and change your mind about Him. It is a call to *examine* God's assertions about man's nature and condition - including yours - and change your mind about humanity's standing before Him. It is a personal call to *study* His message about securing a right relationship with Him ... and change your mind (if you are of another mind). The calls of *“metanoia/metanoeo”* are calls to aggressively interact with God, looking away from one's own self, toward His *spectacular, eternal, spiritual matters* - not a call to look at one's belly button.

But What About our Sins – Our Actual Misdeeds?

When you hear some declaration you should *“repent of your sins and believe in Jesus,”* or *“accept Jesus,”* or *“receive Christ”* etc., what do you think is meant here about *“your sins”*? Isn't the proclaimer saying, *“turn away from your sins and ...”*? There are two main problems here, and I hope you find this worthy of your consideration.

Problem One

God's *first goal* in communicating with us about our sins ... is to *convict us* of them. Not some call to turn from them, but *to convict us* about them – and the trouble we are in because of them. God

does indeed have other goals in our relationship with our personal sins, but first things first. When speaking to the disciples about the role of the Holy Spirit (who was coming after the crucifixion and resurrection event), He said, “*And He, when He comes, will convict the world concerning sin, and righteousness, and judgment ...*” (Jn 16:8). The word, “convict” is, “*elegcho*” - which means, “*to put to proof, to test, lay bare, expose, confute, refute.*” The noun means, “*a trial in order to proof*” - not to prove something is true, but to test it and validate its assertions as true. While I do not fully understand Jesus' remarks following this statement (see Jn 16:9-11), I do know that the Holy Spirit does initially “*lay bare*” our sin before us, “*expose*” our lack of righteousness, and “*lay bare*” our impending, personal judgment ... through which we have no hope of passing successfully. Why this process ... this formula? Jesus said, “*It is not those who are well who need a physician, but those who are sick. I have not come to call righteous men, but sinners to repentance* ('metanoia', 'a changed mind')” (Lk 5:31-32).

So, the first order of business is to change our mind about our spiritual “*health*” before Him. We have violated His standards and stand condemned. Our sins have put us in this position and He makes it clear ... these sins have been *against Him*. This is a critical point He drives home as of first importance. Death is the penalty, an earned lot - and that is why death now hangs over us. And once we reached accountability before Him, we began piling up a massive “*certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us which (is) hostile to us*” (Col 2:14). This personal death warrant ... is a cataloguing of each misdeed we have committed. He then immediately informs us - we have no remedy we can come up with to solve this issue, this breach, this death sentence. We could turn away from all our sins and never sin again, but that will do *nothing* to solve/expunge/make up for our past sins. Along with this bleak picture, He also displays, to some degree, the righteousness He expected from us ... and our woefully clear shortfall. And adding insult to injury (though all insult and injury is correct and earned), He states, “*... it is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment*” (Heb 9:27). Sin, righteousness, and judgment ... that's the order.

The entire package just presented is God's first mission with us about our sins – and resultant problems from those sins. Once we become convinced of the accuracy of the information just forwarded (and there are many tailored mixtures of the above matters for each sinner), it is then we know we are sick, and cannot heal/fix ourselves or our situation. We need a savior, a deliverer ... and that is where Jesus enters the picture. It is then the Holy Spirit reveals Who He is, and what He did to provide full remedy for the hopeless morass of sin in which we have found ourselves.

Let me stop right there. How many people *believe* the statements just forwarded in the last two paragraphs ... is indeed true? It is just simple Bible information. That brings home the point. We all need *our minds changed* on several of the issues I just rattled off – actually all of them. That process is the required, and called for, “*metanoia*” – “*change of mind,*” or “*after mind*” of the gospel call. We are to revisit previous conclusions – say ... about sin, about righteousness, about judgment and about the person and work of Christ - and change our mind ... which is repentance! And this is just the beginning of our minds being changed on a host of issues. The Christian journey starts with information, then proceeds in additional information ... with more information always stretching out in front of us. Sometimes the material is entirely new, having never crossed our minds, but many times the material challenges some faulty notion we presently hold. We are to “*grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ*” (2Pet 3:18). His knowledge extends into all areas of human endeavor, i.e., finances, work, sex, science, civil law ... the list is endless. Each change in mind – is repentance!

As an example, someone may not believe there are other dimensional beings now active in our realm – angels, or Satan in particular. God will challenge that. On the other hand, one may believe in Naturalism's (Evolution's) longevity models with the universe being billions of years old, with earth

about four billion of that, and also believe our entropy laws were present from the start. So, stars have always been dying, magnetic poles dying and when life later popped up, it too has always been dominated by death. God will challenge that embrace. Or one may believe that once an addict, always an addict - even if no longer participating in the addictive behavior. God will challenge that. Or one may adamantly believe that a woman has a right to her own body and she can, with no accountability to God, allow a lethal assault on a member of the preborn population growing inside of her. God will challenge that. As one is challenged and persuaded of the accuracy of the Bible's claims on a host of issues, repentance, upon repentance upon repentance – or changed mind, on top of changed mind, on top of changed mind – will mark our journey. If we could envision each change as a marker beside the road of our journey to glory, we would look back from our present position, and see a road marked with many such signs. And the more signs we would see, the healthier our present state would be. But let's come back to our personal sins.

Problem Two

Does God want a person to turn away from his/her sins? Yes, yes and yes. But this is *a fruit* of one's salvation. In other words, *turning* from one's sins is a secondary, yet indispensable, part of genuine Christianity. We do not turn from our sins to get right with God, we turn from our sins *as a result of* getting right with God. The first issue with our sins was the legal conviction and doom just referenced, with God pointing to the only legal remedy for our sins - the cross. This scene ... stands alone. It is as though time stops, and our problem, with its sole solution - calls for a total halt to all activity - awaiting our response. If we say, “yes” - and call on Him, believe in Him, receive Him, etc., it is then the race *against our sin* begins!

An Evidence of Salvation

There are some activities that are *evidences* of salvation. For example, a desire for His word is one. A new and vibrant prayer life to God the Father through the Son is another. A desire to seek His agenda for one's life (works) is another. But, another evidence of salvation is a turning away from, abandoning, and even attacking, one's personal sin. There are several words for this activity. The word “*strepho*,” means “*to turn*,” and compounded versions of this word are clear calls of turning from specific sins. For example, “*apostrepho*” (“*turn from*”) is found at least twice this way (Ac 3:26 & Ro 11:26) and “*epistrepho*” (“*turn about*” or “*turn around*”) is even more prolific in this use – at least nine times a call to turn around from one's sin. “*Anastrepho*” is another compounded word that is often translated “*lifestyle*,” or “*conversation*,” pointing toward a way of living that is consistent with one claiming to be in a genuine relationship with the Author of the Bible – His moral positions. This word is found in such a use at least ten times. Bottomline: Christians are called to turn from their personal sins. The operative word there is “*Christians*.” The letters in the New Testament following the Book of Acts are filled with calls for proper Christian conduct - sex matters, lawsuits, money handling, family directives, speech, government, etc. I think every area of human activity and attitude is addressed – and God's expectations of His children! But this is “*in house*” instruction ... for those who have already called upon the Lord and have been transferred into His Kingdom. “*For what have I to do with judging outsiders? Do you not judge those who are within* ([*the church*] – this is a rhetorical question with a “yes” response already in the question.) *But, those who are outside, God judges*” (1Cor 3:12-13).

One other very important note on the personal sin issue. Sin runs so deep in each of us, there is no way God opens our eyes to all of it all at once and then calls us to turn from everything. We would be immediately crushed by such a task. In His great love and understanding, He begins a lifelong process of peeling back the layers of an onion. It is important to ask The Teacher as often as possible

what areas He wants addressed – in our conduct and even in what we are learning about the faith. We grow with a growth that is from God (See 1Cor 3:6-7). I've seen many try to grow themselves and that never ends in true spiritual progress. For example, I have known many who immerse themselves in end times teaching (eschatology) only to miss what they probably should be learning in his/her everyday life – like finances, work ethic, sexual issues, child rearing, etc., in other words, personal sin areas that need address.

But What About Christians Who Turn Back To Sin?

So, why is it that some “*turn from their sins*” ... and yet at some later point turn around and go right back into them? This is often called, “*backsliding*.” God states it a bit differently. “*It has happened to them according to the true proverb, 'A dog returns to its own vomit,' and, 'A sow after washing returns to wallowing in the mire'*” (2Pet 2:22). If you don't know what “*mire*” is, look it up. So, why does this happen? The answer is really quite simple. The only way some sin will be eternally abandoned (turned from) is if *the mind* has been changed about that sin. So, *there is* a legitimate application of “*metanoia*” (repentance) toward sin. This is worth closer examination.

No one will turn from any sin unless they first become convinced that “*sin*” is a legitimate concept. Next, the particular activity under consideration must be determined - as wrong. In other words, decided upon as actually evil. Finally, one must also have some grasp that there will be negative consequences for participating in that activity - from God Himself. All these matters become mental conclusions. So, there are several parts to this abandonment of one's personal sins ... several changes in mind ... several “*metanoia*”/repentances!

It is a process for a Christian to work through this. But if it happens in the correct way, that sin does become history. But if there is a short circuit somewhere along the way, eternal abandonment of that sin *will not* occur. Somewhere, inside the individual's thinking, there is still some justification for acceptable participation in that sin.

Now if one has abandoned some sin for a time ... and then returns to it, this is a place of great danger. The best case scenario is for that person to be deemed by God as “*blind or short-sighted, having forgotten purification from his former sins*” (2Pet 1:9) ... not the dog or pig above. But there is no way the one returning to sin can know for sure where he/she stands at that time. This is a true messing with fire.

One reason this is so dangerous is because abandonment of sin is based upon *the belief* that the activity is indeed wrong and there will be negative consequences from God Himself for participation in it. In other words, abandonment of sin is a fruit of *belief*. And it is by believing God, or *faith*, that one will stand or fall. All sin has some degree of unbelief mixed in with it. Where the short circuit exists, only God knows with certainty. And the classification of the one who returns to sin is in His sole jurisdiction. If one inwardly thinks, “*I am just 'short-sighted' and will turn from this sometime later*” - this is a sin of presumption and is a bad internal calculation. The way David addressed this tendency was to say, “*Also keep back Thy servant from presumptuous sins: let them not rule over me; then I will be blameless, and I shall be acquitted of great transgression*” (Ps 19:13).

In Paul's day, there were some who taught, “*let us do evil so that good may come ... for where sin increased, grace increased all the more*” (Ro 3:8 & 5:20). Paul refuted this adding, “*their condemnation is just*” (Ro 3:8). The writer of Hebrews stated, “*For if we go on sinning willfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a certain terrifying expectation of judgment ...*” (Heb 10:26-27). The reality of such a posture is that the person has not really changed his/her mind about that particular sin – that it really is ... evil.

So, Where Does All This Leave Us?

“*Metanoia*” concerning one's sin, *is the Christian's lot* from conversion until departure from this age. But, that is not the call to the unsaved. They see that as a moralization call to clean up their act – a call to some type of moral reform. The gospel call is that ... it is too late for that. One already stands condemned with no hope for a moral comeback of some sort. Sinners are in need of a deliverer from this iron clad state – and there is but One. Once this transaction occurs, it is then the pursuit of godliness begins.

It is a disservice to the unbeliever to blur this line. By keeping the line bright, any thought that one must *first abandon sin - and then* can turn to the Lord - will be abandoned ... and rightly so. I could change my mind about each sin I had committed, but that has no power *to pay for* even **one** of those sins. God requires life for each sin - not sorrow, regret, or a changed mind over a sin committed. It is precisely the one *in sin* who can get right with the Lord, but not one that has gotten out of it *first*. If one can get out of the sin problem by turning from it, then the one so healed has no need of a physician or deliverer.

Conclusion

God Himself orchestrates the necessary changes of mind for each individual - culminating in this ultimate change of mind. “*From infancy you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation which is through faith in Christ Jesus*” (2Tim 3:15). Depending on an individual's starting point, and depending on his/her particular problems, there will be a series of changes in mind - that finally leads one to this ultimate change of mind - resulting in a person uttering his/her first received prayer.

I would love to change your mind about God and His claims and positions. But, I know I cannot. Even the disciples, who had witnessed Him perform more miracles than they could record (Jn 21:25), when marveling at the risen Christ before them - still needed Him to “*open their minds to understand the Scriptures*” (Lk 24:36-45). I guess that is why God instructs Christians not to be “*quarrelsome, but kind to all, able to teach, patient when wronged, with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition, if perhaps **God may grant them** repentance (a changed mind - n) leading to the knowledge of the truth ...*” These mind changes are gifts from God. The verse continues, “*that they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, having been held captive by him ...*” (2Tim 2:24-26). Of course, none of Satan's captives ... believe they are. That is the whole point.

So, what changes in your thinking need to occur? Are you clinging to some old dead bone ... afraid to let go? Paul, after listing his pedigree and impressive accomplishments, said, “*I count them but rubbish - **dung** - in order that I may gain Christ*” ... and “*the surpassing value of knowing*” Him (Phil 3:8). Every person who abandons some contrary-to-God position for His way, always looks back and says the same thing Paul did. In fact, the further one moves from one's dung, the greater the embarrassment of having valued it so. God is in the business of changing minds.

You may have noticed that I have not written some “*sinner's prayer*” for you to repeat after me ... so that you will have then uttered the most powerful prayer you will ever utter - your first received prayer from “*metanoia/metanoeo.*” The publican said, “*God, have mercy on me, the sinner!*” (Lk 18:13). But, ... you are not the publican. The thief on the cross said, “*Jesus, remember me when You come in Your Kingdom*” (Lk 23:42). But, ... you aren't a thief on a cross. I said, “*Lord, I do believe You were laying there stone cold dead, and then did rise from the dead. This is impossible for man, but not for God. I believe those who wrote about this, wrote what they saw. And for You to have been framed and murdered - when You did nothing wrong - and to now be on the other side of death's door as the Judge of all men ... that makes sense to me. You earned that place. Lord, I need You to please*

come into my life and take over” But, ... you are not me. You see, it’s not required that you be that long-winded. **You** utter what **you** need to utter as a result of **your** changed mind. Those words will be the product of what is now ... a changed heart. The Explosion in the corridors of eternity before the angels of God ... will then occur.

Maybe right now would be a good time to say something to Him. What else are you doing that is more important? Perhaps your mind is a bit different than it was a short while ago. Maybe it’s time to utter your first received prayer - the prayer of *“a changed mind - a changed perception.”* What else could you do in this moment ... that would accomplish more?

* * * * *

Major writings: "No Tithe for the Christian," "Love and the Bible," "Death and the Bible,"
"Abortion:..." and "Capital Punishment and the Bible."

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