



# Regional Newsletter

Advancing the Kingdom of God Through Christian Education

December 2017

## Christmas: The Great News in an Age of Fake News



*“The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth”(John 1:14).*

“A lie can travel halfway around the world while the truth is putting on its shoes,” said Mark Twain. Today, thanks to the internet, a lie can travel much farther and faster than that, even before the truth gets out of bed. And that points to one of the sad realities of our time: the inescapable fact that much of what we hear, read and watch has been altered to reshape society according to someone’s secular, often anti-Christian perspective. “The Word” that came to us “full of grace and truth” on that first Christmas day is consistently edited out of public consciousness and replaced by unattainable Xmas fantasies of materialism-based happiness. It’s “fake news”, it’s insidious and it shows up even in popular entertainment.

This past week Ginny and I went to a movie that dramatized one of Charles Dickens most remarkable accomplishments: the penning, printing and publishing of his masterpiece, **A Christmas Carol**, in just six weeks. The film was well written and thought provoking. The actors portrayed their characters effectively—Christopher Plummer was especially good as Scrooge, and the plot was entertaining. But the troubling part, the part that unapologetically advances popular media’s anti-Christian bias, was the film’s title. It was called, **The Man Who Invented Christmas**, and by “The Man,” it clearly meant Charles Dickens, not the incarnate Christ.

Charles Dickens *invented Christmas*? Now that is fake news! And here’s why:

- The first recorded Christmas celebration was almost 1500 years before Dicken’s birth, 336 A.D., during the reign of Emperor Constantine. But centuries earlier various councils debated the calendar day upon which Christ was born. The fact that the debates raged on, shows that first and second century Christians did at least **celebrate**

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## Brampton Christian School Celebrates 40 Years of Ministry Congratulations!



Four previous principals: Mark Kennedy, Bob Boshart, Ralph Andrews, and Alex Abdunour. Current principal: Andy Cabral.

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## 2017 Maritime World Concerns Conference

By Dr. Marsha Boyd Mitchell

We had a wonderful Maritime World Concerns Conference on October 18th at Kingswood University. About 350 students from Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island came together for this event. In the opening session at the Kingswood Chapel, the university’s student Worship Team set the tone for

Christmas albeit not all on the same day.

- The word “Christmas” itself, comes from the Old English “Crīstesmæsse”, meaning the Festival of Christ’s Birth, a phrase first recorded in 1038 A.D.
- Christmas trees, Christmas pudding, mistletoe and Christmas carols have non-Dickensian roots. And the popular Yuletide image of Santa Claus is a blend of poet Clement Clarke Moore’s “A Visit from St. Nicholas” (a.k.a. “Twas was the Night Before Christmas”) and artwork from the advertising department at Coca Cola Ltd, not from the creator of Olive Twist and David Copperfield.
- Dickens himself would have been appalled at even the suggestion that he invented Christmas. Despite some of his peculiar theological ideas, he had no trouble acknowledging the real source of the celebration. In his book, **A Christmas Carol**, one character expressed it plainly. Tiny Tim, said he “hoped the people saw him in church, because he was a cripple, and it might be pleasant to them to remember upon Christmas Day, who made lame beggars walk and blind men see.”
- It’s no surprise that that line didn’t make it into the current film. For over two millennia, the reality persists: “Though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. He came to that which was his own but his own did not receive him” (John 1:10,11).

Fact is that some people, especially some powerful, influential people, make significant efforts to suppress truth and promote their favourite fantasies. As Malcolm Muggeridge said, “People do not believe lies because they have to, but because they want to.”

Take the bizarre case of the Hamilton Children’s Aid Society. In April 2017 the CAS shut down a local foster home because the Christian couple in charge refused to tell their children that the Easter bunny is real! It would be kind of funny if it was a joke. But it isn’t.

Official efforts to silence truth and replace it with fiction is driving Christians, Christian ministries and especially Christian schools to our courts. And maybe that’s a good thing. Reading through the Book of Acts, I can’t help noticing how often the Apostle Paul found himself defending his hope in Christ before a variety of legal and political authorities. Why did God allow opposition to the Christian message to get that far? Certainly not because those authorities were the final arbitrators for right and wrong. But the legal system then and now has the potential to sort out false accusations (at least the most blatant ones) from reality. And it gives believers a prominent platform to publicly present our faith.

For many decades now, a speciality of North American pop culture, news and entertainment has been to direct our attention towards things that are eternally irrelevant about

the day. Great to see our middle/high school students led in worship by young adults who are so passionate about serving God!



Mike Gordon was the plenary speaker. His opening and closing messages concerned the biblical teaching “Who is My Neighbour?” The breakout sessions had students tackling topics including: gender dysphoria, aboriginal suicide rates, sharing Christ in honour/shame cultures, social media and social justice, no child for sale, sex trafficking concerns in the Maritimes, and tools for ministry.

Students came away with a deeper understanding of issues plaguing our world because of sin. May this event stir them to prayer and action.

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### Ontario Board/Administrators’ Conference @ Peoples Christian Academy, 245 Renfrew Drive, Markham

February 3, 2018—9:00 a.m. to 3:25 p.m.

We are very pleased to announce that the main speakers at the Ontario Board/Administrators’ Conference on Saturday Feb 3, 2018 will be:



**Dr. Alan Pue**, President of the Barnabas Group, and author of two ‘must read’ books for Christian school leaders, **Rethinking Sustainability** (about advancing Christian school finances) and **Rethinking Strategic Planning** (about how Christian school boards can best operate effectively).



**Albertos Polizogopoulos**, Partner at Vincent Dagenais Gibson. Albertos is a legal representative in the current Supreme Court Trinity Western Law School case. Albertos will be discussing the kinds of policies and statements in parent documents that schools need to give a degree of legal protection especially on current ‘hot button issues’.

#### ALSO:

- Lorne Jackson, of **Advisors With Purpose**, an organization that has already worked to direct more than \$1.5 million in legacy funding to 9 participating Christian schools through our ACSI Eastern Canada/Advisors agreement.
- We are also seeking a rep from the Ministry of Ed to discuss present and future high school course accreditation requirements. (We welcome suggestions for a suitable person.)

Christmas and away from the one thing that truly matters—the opportunity for people to become “children of God” thanks to Christ birth, death and resurrection. At least for now, we in Christian education are free to help students distinguish between the two. Especially when it comes to Christmas, it’s a matter of great news vs fake news.

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**A Report on the Recent Halifax Cardus Meeting** By Dr. Marsha Boyd Mitchell, ACSI Eastern Canada Board Member

***Education bridges our private and our public worlds. It cultivates our deepest held religious, moral, and ideological convictions, and so shapes our relationships with others in our society. It looks both inward and outward, forming the next generation to think, to love and to learn (Cardus, 2017).***

“Isn’t all education public education?”—the Cardus Research Team



“Cardus (Latin root: ‘cardo’ meaning a pivot or hinge) is a think tank dedicated to the renewal of North American social architecture. Drawing on more than 2000 years of Christian social thought, it works to enrich and challenge public debate through research, events, and publications, for the common good” ([www.cardus.ca/research/education/about](http://www.cardus.ca/research/education/about), 2017).”

This think tank continues to collect data on a variety of faith related topics. Most pertinent to us is information about school choice outcomes. This fall Cardus hosted roundtable discussions in four Canadian cities: Vancouver, Calgary, Ottawa, and Halifax. I attended the Halifax roundtable led by Dr. Beth Green on behalf of my school (Sussex Christian School) and as an ACSI Eastern Canada board member.

Cardus has not included Atlantic Canada in its research because the organization has largely been centred in Western Canada. The round table in Halifax announced that the next research project **might** include the Maritime Provinces if finances permit. The studies spearheaded by Cardus are extremely helpful for school leaders, parents, and policy makers. Participating in this type of study means we can lay aside “what we think is happening” and measure “what is actually happening.” As educators I encourage all of you to read the entire Cardus Report found at: [www.cardus.ca/research/education](http://www.cardus.ca/research/education).

Measuring the impact of school choice has value for all Canadians. The Cardus Group seeks to compare graduates of Protestant Christian schools with graduates of public, Catholic, secular private and home schools regarding their church/faith connections, political ideas, philosophy of community, career choices, and use of volunteer time. The

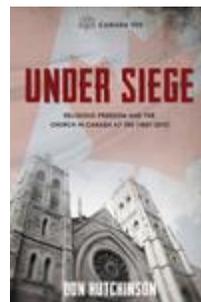
These speakers will be addressing critical issues for school board members. Please make sure to urge your board to attend. Quite frankly, one of the most serious threats to Christian schools in our region is untrained school board members. This conference will equip your board with the sort of knowledge and skills they need to advance the mission of your school and the Christian school movement!

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**A Review of the Book Under Siege: Religious Freedom and the Church in Canada at 150 (1867–2017)** (Word Alive Press 2017,

Winnipeg) By Don Hutchison, Retired General Legal Counsel, Vice President and Director of the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada’s **Centre for Faith and Public Life**. (You may recall that the author spoke at our Ontario Board/Administrators’ Conference last year.)

**Under Siege** should be essential reading for Christian leaders across Canada. It gives an accurate picture of the current legal and societal status of evangelicals and evangelical organizations and clarifies the current legal challenges that churches and para-church groups face, citing specific precedent setting court decisions. Then it advances biblically sound attitudes towards these challenges along with strategies to help us move forward. In short it tells where we are now, how we got here and how we ought to face the future.



**Canadian statistics:**

- **About the changing faith based composition of Canadian society from 2001 to 2011 based on National surveys:**

	% of the Population	
	In 2001	In 2011
All Christian related groups combined	75%	67.3%
Roman Catholics	43%	38.7%
Protestants	29%	25.9%
Other Christian	2.6%	2.7%
Muslim	2%	3.2%
Hindu	1%	1.5%
Sikh	1%	1.4%
Buddhist	1%	1.1%
Jewish	1.1%	1%
No religion	16.5%	23.9%

- **About the percentage of Canadians who are evangelical Christians:** Citing a somewhat outdated survey by Canadian sociologist Reginald Bibby, in 2001, evangelicals composed 8% of the national population, whereas a survey taken 11 years earlier by Canadian historian George Grawlyk put the figure at 12%. The decline is worth noting.
- **About the change in Canadian perceptions about evangelicals:** In a **2006** Ipsos Reid poll, 56% of Canadians

outcomes from previous research were incredibly favourable to Protestant Christian Schools in Canada, to God be the glory.

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## Legal Matters

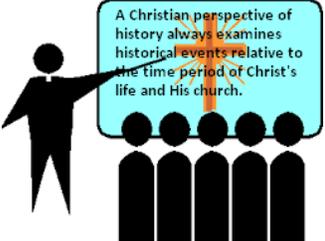
*The obvious reality for Canadian Christian schools, is that we will face legal challenges of many kinds in the very near future. They won't all be about our teachings on human sexuality and the family either. Consider this: **How to Lose the Right to Hire Christian Teachers***

Arguably, Canada's foremost lawyer defending the rights of evangelical Christian organizations is Albertos Polizogopoulos. Currently he is representing Trinity Western University and its law school before the Supreme Court of Canada. Previously he represented a variety of other Christian organizations in many pivotal, precedent setting cases, including our recent human rights victory.

At the October Maritime Board/Administrators Conference, he raised a significant legal point:

*As you know, just about every Canadian Christian school is committed to hiring only Christian teachers at every grade level and in every subject. But what if a Christian school just teaches or **says it teaches**, the government curriculum (plus Bible classes)?*

According to Albertos, if someone takes a Christian school to court, challenging its right to hire only committed Christian teachers, **the school would have to prove that its actual**



**curriculum material, including sample lesson plans, is distinctly different from the standard public-school model!** If the course material is not demonstrably Christian, then there is no legally compelling argument for hiring only Christian teachers. So, for example, if a school can't prove that it's history course presents a Christian worldview, it would likely lose the right to employ only believing Christians to teach history!!

**More than a bit of a paradox, there, the secular courts expecting Christian schools to teach their subjects from a distinctly Christian perspective while some Christian school leaders do not!**

Forty years ago, pastors challenged their congregations with statements like this: "If someone accused you of being a Christian, would there be enough evidence to convict you?"

Now there's a Christian school version of that question: "If someone accused your school of teaching a secular curriculum the same way the public schools do, is there enough evidence to declare your school innocent?"

agreed that evangelical Christians make an important contribution to society and 53% said that people with strong religious views should press their views on political issue. **7 years later** in an Angus Reid poll, only a third of Canadians view Evangelicals as contributing positively to society and over 80% "are inclined to see religious beliefs as a private matter to be practised in their home and place of worship."

- **About the place of the Bible in Canadian society:** "According to Rick Hiemstra's 2014 report, **Confidence, Conversation and Community Bible Engagement in Canada:** 14% of Canadians read the Bible at least once a week with the vast majority of Canadian Christians seldom or never picking up the sacred text that is foundational to our faith....Only 18% of Canadians agree strongly that the Bible is the Word of God....Only one in seven Canadians and one in four self-identified Christians regard the Bible as relevant to everyday life. Two thirds of Canadians think that the Bible is equivalent to other sacred texts in its teachings."
- **About the beliefs of newcomers to Canada:** "The 2011 National Household survey indicates that of the 2.1 million immigrants to Canada over the previous decade, the most significant immigration growth in the Christian church was in the Roman Catholic (475 000) and Orthodox (110 000) communities...Bibby goes into greater depth on immigration growth in his free downloadable 2012 book, **A New Day: The Resilience and Restructuring of Religion in Canada.**"
- **About the percentage of self-identified homosexual and transgender people in the population (This is significant because many current legal challenges against Christian organizations involve our right to hold and teach the biblical understanding of human sexuality):** "Statistics Canada reported in 2015 that just under 1.7% of Canadian adults identify as homosexual (gay or lesbian) and 1.3% as bisexual, a number that is up from 1.1% homosexual and 0.9% bisexual in the 2010 report based on its every five-year Canadian Community Health Survey. Neither statistic approaches the Kinsey percentage (over 10% in the 1948 Kinsey Report, **Sexual Behaviour in the Human Male**) which was long ago debunked by asking good questions."

Miscellaneous Quotes from **Under Siege:**

"Martin Luther astutely observed, 'There are three conversions necessary: conversion of the heart, conversion of the mind and conversion of the purse.' Perhaps today, we find conversion of the purse the hardest of the three." Richard J. Foster, **Money and the Spiritual Life** as quoted in **Under Siege**

- **On excluding people of faith from participating in public decision making:** "Let us reject the post-Enlightenment myth that religious belief and practice is a purely private matter best

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## Has the Guest of Honour Been Invited?

“Teeder Kennedy Day”—that’s what the officials in his hometown called it. About a dozen years ago the town council decided to celebrate my father’s hockey career by declaring a day in his honour. According to Dad’s after-the-fact rendering of the affair, they must have done it ‘up to the nines,’ bringing out lots of his memorabilia, photos, etc., displaying them at the Teeder Kennedy Arena and holding an evening gala that featured celebrities, various local politicians and other notables. I wasn’t there so can’t say how it went or when the awful truth dawned on everyone, but the scenario may have gone something like this:

In my imagination I picture three or four rows of politicians and VIPs plus Dad’s sister, my Aunt Jessie, all nicely dressed and seated on the platform at the north end of the arena. They and the townsfolk crowding the stands are waiting for festivities to begin ‘festivating.’ But the scheduled starting time comes, goes and nothing happens. On top of that, there’s one conspicuously empty chair in the middle of the front row of the dais. People begin to fidget and murmur. Some squirm, especially the organizers.

“Where’s Teeder?” I can imagine the mayor asking his



deputy who shrugs uncomfortably, turns to an alderman and asks, “Where’s Teeder?” The unanswerable

question wafts from organizer to organizer like an increasingly foul odor until it reaches the lady at the end of the back row, my dear Aunt. “I don’t know,” I can picture her saying. Then, in keeping with her practical good sense, she adds, “Who invited him?”

Whispered words swiftly reverse direction across the platform. “Did **you** invite Teeder?” proceed from one dignitary to another in increasing tones of panic until they finally reach the mayor’s ears and the awful truth becomes plain. The organizers forgot to invite the guest of honour.

That isn’t necessarily how the sequence of events went. I may have gotten it wrong but, there’s one fact of which I am sure. My father had no idea it was Teeder Kennedy Day in his hometown. He was visiting us then, some 230 kilometres away from the site of the event and there was nothing anyone could do about it.

‘Has the guest of honour been invited?’ A good question, that, especially for us in Christian schooling.

Of course, I know we all ‘get it’ about the need to have the word “Christian” in our school’s name or at least prominently declared in our promotional literature and legal documents.

kept out of the public realm. This is historically inaccurate. It is theologically wrong. And above all it robs from our fellow citizens the ability to actively participate in what can be tens of thousands of conversations, encounters, friendships and transformative actions that will strengthen and continue to build our country.” Andrew Bennett, Former Canadian Ambassador for the Office of Religious Freedom.

**On pseudo tolerance:** “A society that does not admit of and accommodate differences cannot be a free and democratic society—one in which its citizens are free to think, to disagree, to debate and to challenge the accepted view without fear of reprisal. This case demonstrates that a well-intentioned majority acting in the name of tolerance and liberalism, can, if unchecked, impose its views on the minority in a manner that is in itself intolerant and illiberal.” **British Columbia Court of Appeal, in its 5 to 0 ruling in favour of Trinity Western University Law School, article 193, November 2016**

**On the Place of God in Canada’s founding:** “Whereas Canada is founded upon the principles that recognize the supremacy of God and the rule of law...” **Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms**

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## Defending Christianity with and for Children

Resource list provided by Wesley Huff

W.L. Craig's "What is God Like?" Children Book Series & "The Defense Never Rests" a fill-in-the-blank workbook for kids:

[www.reasonablefaith.org/apologetics-resources-for-your-children](http://www.reasonablefaith.org/apologetics-resources-for-your-children)

[www.reasonablefaith.org/rf/the-defense-never-rests-book](http://www.reasonablefaith.org/rf/the-defense-never-rests-book)

Lee Strobel's "A Case for... for Kids" Series:

Case for Christ

[shop.focusonthefamily.ca/Kids/All-Kids/The-Case-for-Christ-for-Kids-Updated-and-Expanded.html](http://shop.focusonthefamily.ca/Kids/All-Kids/The-Case-for-Christ-for-Kids-Updated-and-Expanded.html)

Case for a Creator: [shop.focusonthefamily.ca/Kids/All-Kids/The-Case-for-a-Creator-for-Kids-Updated-and-Expanded.html](http://shop.focusonthefamily.ca/Kids/All-Kids/The-Case-for-a-Creator-for-Kids-Updated-and-Expanded.html)

Case for Faith

[shop.focusonthefamily.ca/Kids/All-Kids/The-Case-for-Faith-for-Kids-Updated-and-Expanded.html](http://shop.focusonthefamily.ca/Kids/All-Kids/The-Case-for-Faith-for-Kids-Updated-and-Expanded.html)

"Young Defenders Series"

[www.apologia.com/261-young-defenders](http://www.apologia.com/261-young-defenders)

"Fact or Fantasy: A Study in Christian Apologetics for Children"

[www.amazon.com/Fact-Fantasy-Christian-Apologetics-Children/dp/0962955906/ref=sr\\_1\\_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1334960273&sr=1-1](http://www.amazon.com/Fact-Fantasy-Christian-Apologetics-Children/dp/0962955906/ref=sr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1334960273&sr=1-1)

Our teachers, office staff, administrators and board members all have to be believers. We teach the Bible and may even have the audacity to use some Christian textbooks. Those things are the basics, just what ought to be expected in any North American Christian school. But the critical issue, the one that must set us apart, leaving an indelible testimony in the minds of our students, is the welcomed and honoured presence of the living Christ in every classroom and in every teacher's life throughout the school. Then Christ does the great things, transforming minds, hearts and lives, sometimes to our absolute astonishment. (How often we Christian school old-timers have seen seemingly hopeless, gleefully hedonistic students become courageous, faithful Christ followers while some of our former 'bright light students' fade as adults.)

Acknowledging and honouring Christ's presence isn't a 'well of course that goes without saying' thing. It doesn't just happen automatically because of a school's history or gush naturally out of its advertising literature, or operational policies. And it's not the boastful product of advanced teaching skills or sparkling teacher personalities either. Personal or corporate ego and pride are enemies of Christ's work in any ministry.

That welcoming invitation needs to be an intentional and daily choice for Christian school educators. It should show up in Spirit-lead relationships with students, colleagues and those in authority. It should guide instructional practices, student evaluations and classroom discipline. It may even appear in curriculum content. (Can you imagine anything more foolish than Christian schools leaving the creator and sustainer of the universe, the source of all truth, out of academic courses about the world He created?")

A theologically-minded friend once challenged the idea of actively welcoming our 'guest of honour.' "God is always here," she said. "We don't have to welcome Him." Paul said something like that to unbelievers in Athens—that God "is not far from any one of us" (Act 17:27). But the point for the Athenians and for us is similar. Of course, it's true that God is always near us. The question is whether we choose to acknowledge and honour His presence. It's easy to forget, too easy sometimes, even for Christian school educators.

J. Warner Wallace's "Cold-Case Christianity for Kids" & "God's Crime Scene for Kids"

[www.coldcasechristianityforkids.com/](http://www.coldcasechristianityforkids.com/)

"Big Thoughts for Little Thinkers:

The Trinity:

[www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/089221614X/bettwowor-20](http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/089221614X/bettwowor-20)

The Gospel:

[www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/0892216174/bettwowor-20](http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/0892216174/bettwowor-20)

Scripture:

[www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/0892216158/bettwowor-20](http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/0892216158/bettwowor-20)

The Mission:

[www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/0892216166/bettwowor-20](http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/0892216166/bettwowor-20)

Kathryn Slattery's "If I Could Ask God Anything: Awesome Bible Answers for Curious Kids"

[www.amazon.com/If-Could-Ask-God-Anything/dp/B004HB1BQ0/ref=sr\\_1\\_5?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1334960273&sr=1-5](http://www.amazon.com/If-Could-Ask-God-Anything/dp/B004HB1BQ0/ref=sr_1_5?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1334960273&sr=1-5)

A Parent's Guide to Intelligent Design"

[www.evolutionnews.org/Parent%27s%20guide%20web.pdf](http://www.evolutionnews.org/Parent%27s%20guide%20web.pdf)

RZIM's "ASK Curriculum"

[rzim.org/study/introductory/ask](http://rzim.org/study/introductory/ask)

RZIM's "Foundations of Apologetics" DVD

[rzim.christianbook.com/foundations-of-apologetics-all-digital-version/9781612562124/pd/1314BD?item\\_code=WW&netp\\_id=901496&event=ESRCG&view=details](http://rzim.christianbook.com/foundations-of-apologetics-all-digital-version/9781612562124/pd/1314BD?item_code=WW&netp_id=901496&event=ESRCG&view=details)

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### Quote

*"The angel Gabriel is tasked with several of the major conversations in the nativity story,...and his appearance is clearly disconcerting as the first thing he has to say on each occasion is*

*"Do not be afraid." It's telling that words of reassurance such as "fear not" or "do not be afraid are some of the most commonly repeated phrases throughout the entirety of the Old and New Testaments—God seeking to reassure and comfort humans" (Daily Advent Devotional, Walton United Church).*



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