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The Believer's Byline

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AREQUIPA, PERU - Those with any familiarity with my missionary writing will remember the names of my two dear friends Jason and Sarah Sheets. I have had the privilege of being a part of their lives for over 20 years now, and in all that time, their commitment to the Lord has always been undeniable. Both have had a heart for missions and a goal of serving on the foreign mission field for as long as I have known them.

In 2012, they were accepted as missionaries with The Evangelical Alliance Mission (TEAM), and a few years later their journey overseas began. Ultimately, their ministry brought them to Arequipa, Peru for a church planting project in the nearby community of Ciudad de Dios.

I was able to visit them in Arequipa for the first time this past June. Though I have had an open invitation for years, many things seemed to always stand in the way - not the least of which was COVID-19. However, on June 17, 2022, with packed bag, vaccination card, and passport in hand, I finally touched down on the mountainous slopes of Arequipa.

This edition of The Believer's Byline, "Hope in the Highlands", will chronicle my Peruvian adventure as well as provide a firsthand look at the ministry of the Sheets, several of their friends, and Iglesia Biblica Cristiana - Ciudad de Dios. Please scan the QR code on page 7 for video and photo highlights of my experience.

LATAM AIRLINES - Jet lag is no joke! After catching a red-eye flight from Miami and navigating customs in Lima at dawn, I was quite exhausted when I finally made it to Arequipa. Nevertheless, you don't simply sleep through an adventure like this, so when the Sheets greeted me at the airport, I was quite eager to get Peruvians were restricted to their caught up.

On the ride to their house from the airport, I got to see much of the breathtaking natural beauty that surrounds the city. Arequipa is an ancient city founded over 480 years ago, back in 1540 AD. It is flanked by three towering volcanoes, Arequipa is no stranger to seismic activity. The city itself sits at an quarantine in Florida lasted two elevation of 7,661 feet – with months, and I was still able to leave surrounding villages like Ciudad de my property. Believers in Peru were Dios sitting even higher still. Since I put to the ultimate test, so when I basically live at sea level in a very arrived, it was encouraging to see that humid climate, adapting to the dry the ministry was still thriving. climate and heights of Arequipa took some doing, especially for my breathing, but eventually I acclimated.

Once I was settled into the Sheets' home, Sarah gave me the highlights of their life over the last few years. Any foreign missions calling is bound to have its difficulties, but during the time of COVID-19 those increased exponentially. In Peru, the lockdowns were extreme. The Sheets and most homes for a full seven months. Only essential workers were allowed to leave their property regularly, and for the Sheets family that meant only Jason left the house during that period to get food for his family and to carry on whatever aspects of the ministry and were still possible.

By way of comparison, my



Helado (cheese ice cream, though also had several opportunities to

After I had time for a brief nap, we decided to take a walk and see a few of the local sites. I got to try Queso

there isn't actually any cheese in it) and empanadas (meat, cheese, vegetables, salsa, etc. filled pastries). We also went to visit the church that trained and sent the Sheets to their church plant in Ciudad de Dios. I

practice my Spanish, though it is still very much a work in progress. In all, my first day in Arequipa was great, but it was only the beginning of the amazing things the Lord had in store for me on this adventure.



SAN CAMILO MARKET - One of the things I learned very quickly on my trip is that Peruvians, especially Peruvian believers, are very welcoming. I, a "gringo" foreigner and complete stranger, was greeted with many hugs, and they were most gracious to me as I practiced my limited Spanish. Two of the first new friends I met were Emilio and Ayde, local Peruvians and dear friends and disciples of the Sheets. Ayde wanted to share her community with me, so we set out exploring. Something you also quickly learn about Arequipa is that walking is the most efficient way of getting around. The traffic problems are enough to test even

the most patient drivers, and public transportation, well...more on that later.

So off we went – Ayde and her two sons, Sarah and her youngest son Andrew, and myself. Our trek began down the Ejército, the main street on the Sheets' side of the city. We stopped by a few monuments, including one depicting the popular bull fights and another representing Don Andrés Avelino Cáceres Dorregaray, a president of Peru during the 19th century and national hero.

However, what were the most impressive were the cathedrals, the most stunning being the Basilica





Cathedral of Arequipa, which we toured later that week. These towering and ancient stone structures are works of art in themselves, and Arequipa has several of them. As the Sheets explained, Arequipa is full of religious beliefs, including Mormonism, Jehovah's Witnesses, Animism, and Catholicism to name a few. In fact, Sarah recounted one point during the height of the pandemic when the image of the Virgen de Chapi, a sacred image of Mary, the mother of Christ, was flown over the city by helicopter. Thousands make

By David Scott Fields II

pilgrimages to this icon each year to pray for healing, but because most were restricted to their homes, the statue was flown over the city for people to pray up to from wherever they were.

Unfortunately, no religious practice outside of biblical Christianity provides the true means of salvation - faith in Jesus Christ. As Ephesians 2:8-9 explains, "For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast" (ESV). Acts 4:11-12 also

relate, "This Jesus is the stone that was rejected by you, the builders, which has become the And there cornerstone. is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved" (ESV). As I saw all the various idols and icons in the cathedrals, the worship of which the Bible forbids (see Exodus 20:4-6), it was hard to believe the faith of most in Arequipa was properly placed.

Eventually, Avde led us to the San Camilo Market. The best way



to describe it would be as a huge flea market with everything from vegetables to souvenirs to animals for sale. It was an incredibly exciting place, and for the avid souvenir hunter, one need look no further to find some of the best keepsakes from Peru. I personally wasn't ready to buy souvenirs at that point, but we couldn't leave before I was introduced to the animal market. One type of animal for sale there was the Guinea pig – which is actually a Peruvian delicacy, but I never quite worked up the courage to try it!





By the time we were finished at San could do to keep from falling out of the Camilo, we were all pretty tired. We had walked several miles by that point, so Ayde and Sarah thought it best that we seat, but with all the bumps, hills, take public transportation back home. blasting horns, and defensive driving, The next thing I knew I was jumping traffic in Arequipa is definitely not for onto a bus packed to the brim with people with only standing room available (and that just barely). I, of course, snagged a spot standing right in the open doorway as we bumped and bustled our way through the crowded city. It was all I



moving bus back out onto the street. Thankfully, I eventually got to take a the faint of heart!

We made it home safe and sound that day, and getting to spend time with my new friend Ayde was a true blessing - the first of many such blessings I would experience in Peru.

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CIUDAD DE DIOS, PERU f

- Though being a tourist is great, I had a much different reason for visiting Peru. It seemed like before I left the States everyone had a suggestion of what I should see - Machu Picchu being at the top of the list. However, my primary purpose for this trip was to see and encourage my dear friends Jason and Sarah Sheets, and to experience their ministry.

When the Sheets were sent to Arequipa by TEAM, it was with the intention that they would partner with a local church, Iglesia Bíblica Cristiana de Arequipa, to plant a new church in Ciudad de Dios. As the TEAM website explains, "Ciudad de Dios, which means 'City of God,' is a poor area on the outskirts of Arequipa. It is here and in other areas like it where many people from the highlands of Peru have settled as they search for a better life in the city. The streets are made of dust, the homes have no running water or sewer systems, and the people work hard just to live. But in the midst of this difficulty, something beautiful is

By David Scott Fields II

J forming."

I saw that beauty in IBC - Ciudad de Dios. The church's facilities are simple. won't find an You architectural masterpiece here. Rather a simple L-shaped concrete building with a tin roof comprises the main structure. The "sanctuary" is an open-air breezeway under the cover of an awning. The property is enclosed by a brick wall, has a small garden, and is protected by two guard dogs - Goofy and Chuleta. Just north of the property a range of mountains looks down almost protectively on a ministry that is desperately needed in this community. Of course, the true protector of Ciudad de Dios is the Lord Jesus Christ Himself.

The first Sunday I visited happened to be Father's Day, and the church made a special point to recognize the fathers in attendance. Jason, the lead pastor at IBC - Ciudad de Dios, preached on John 3:14-21. Perhaps most believers, if not most people, are familiar with arguably the most famous verse in the Bible found in that passage - John 3:16, which reads, "*For God*

so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life" (ESV). Jason's message drove home the point that salvation is through faith in Christ alone. It is not a result of personal works. In a culture whose religions emphasize works as a means of salvation, this remains a message of vital importance. For surely everyone who boasts of his own works to the Lord on Judgment Day will hear the horrifying words, "I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness." (Matthew 7:23 - ESV). Jason's message was eternally impactful and yet simple enough for a community of largely biblically illiterate people to understand. In fact, though the message was all in Spanish, I also understood it quite well, which is saying a lot for a novice Spanish student!

Jason, Sarah, and their entire team are doing an amazing job in Ciudad de Dios, despite all the hardships these last few years have brought. It was a privilege to get even a small taste of their ministry during my ten days in Peru. I can't wait to see what the Lord has in store for this ministry in the years to come.



buenas obras, las cuales Dios dispuso de antemano a fin de que las pongamos en práctica. — Eresios 2:10 MM



El nos libró del dominio de la oscuridad y nos trasladó al reino de su amado Hijo, - COLOSENSES 1:13 NVI

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Parallel worlds. Alternate histories. Same eternal faith!

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CARMEN ALTO VIEWPOINT

- Following my first Sunday at Ciudad de Dios, the Sheets family had a week of adventures planned for me - adventures that served both to show me the beautiful city of Arequipa and allowed me the chance to meet more missionaries involved in sharing the Gospel in Peru.

Monday began with a question - "Have you ever been ziplining?" I had, but only once before during a school trip to Georgia. I have reasonably good memories of that experience, despite having to scale an artificial rock wall just to reach the zip line, so I agreed to give Peruvian zip lines a try. And, of course, the Sheets kids encouraged me saying, "It's easy! You just walk

to the edge of a cliff and step off!"

Despite these soothing words, the morning of Monday, June 20, 2022, I found myself on the Carmen Alto Viewpoint overlooking the Chili River in a lush and green gorge, far - far - below! Jason joked with me as I was fitted into my harness, "You'll notice they don't ask you to sign any kind of safety waver!" Those words weren't exactly reassuring, but a few minutes later I was zipping across the valley. (After I let the Sheets go first, of course. One must not forget to be *polite!*)

As I coursed over the river, I was reminded that the local churches often use it to baptize new believers, and I wondered what it would be like to witness the very



CAPUA FALLS - Monday after we finished ziplining, as we huffed and just to get there, but it was well puffed our way back up from the worth it. bottom of the valley, Sarah assured me, "Tomorrow will be easier!" She was referring to our upcoming hike to Capua Falls the next day. The missionary friends of the Sheets. It jury is still out as to which hike was is actually easier, but it did turn out to independent, and even in ministry be an epic Tuesday.

reaches of the famous Andes Mountains of Peru. Our hike involved plenty of river walking, or two - to say nothing of the

perilous roads we had to drive on

One of the things that made the day so special was that it gave me the chance to meet three additional very American to be we can often find ourselves Capua Falls is located in the lower isolated. However, that was never God's intention for us. As the scriptures make clear, "Whoever isolates himself seeks his own boulder scaling, and a scrapped knee *desire; he breaks out against all* sound judgment" (Proverbs 18:1 -



By David Scott Fields II

first baptisms at Ciudad de Dios, who literally holds the universe in His scheduled to happen later that week. The experience also turned my mind back to Jason's sermon and the paramount importance of faith. Flying over the vast valley you quickly realize how small you really are, and your very life hangs on the security of a single wire. No doubt there are countless individuals who would leap at the chance of the adventure of a zip line, putting their full faith in the integrity of that wire. Yet they would never dream of entrusting themselves to the true God

hands.

In a way, it was humbling flying over that valley, for even a true believer can quickly put his trust in earthly things and yet waver when it comes to trusting the Lord. Probably without even realizing it, the Sheets gave me that powerful reminder. For as the scriptures say, "And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek *him*" (Hebrews 11:6 - ESV).



By David Scott Fields II

ESV).

to be true among the missionaries I met were treated to dinner out, and then a

celebration. Three of us in the group I was pleased to find the exact opposite had birthdays within the week, so we

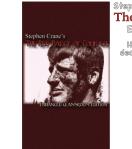


day. These included TEAM that missionaries Seth and Jessica Malec and (SAM) South America Mission missionary Allison Lee. There was an evident bond between the Sheets and these partners in ministry, and they all made me feel incredibly welcome. In fact, after our hike we had a bit of a

time of fellowship and birthday cake.

During my time in Peru, I was reminded that the life of a missionary is far from easy. So it was gratifying to know my friends are blessed with such fellowship in ministry. May every believer be so blessed!





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BASILICA CATHEDRAL - "Aim High" was the theme of Wednesday's adventures in Arequipa, since the Sheets and I climbed not one but two bell towers - one attached to a monastery and one to a cathedral.

The cathedral was the Basilica Cathedral of Arequipa. This massive religious site can be seen from all over the city. We made a mad dash across town to make it in time for the last tour of the day, but it was well worth it.

For starters, our tour guide graciously did the tour in English so I could understand it (though my Spanish comprehension got better with each day in Peru). And then under her expert guidance we learned more about the site.

Construction began on the cathedral in 1540, the same year Arequipa was founded. Though the facilities have faced near destruction on many occasions from fires, earthquakes, and

volcanic eruptions, the cathedral has always been rebuilt. Its most recent partial destruction was on June 23, 2001 when an 8.4 earthquake devastated the region.

Within the cathedral are works of art and many priceless treasures - so priceless in fact that we were not allowed to take pictures of them for security reasons. Down the main aisle of the expansive sanctuary, pillars displayed statues of each of the 12 apostles (with the exception of Judas who was replaced by Matthias). However, perhaps the most popular statue is that of the "Winged Devil," a wooden icon in the shape of Satan

with a pulpit built directly over it so the priests could literally trample Beelzebub as they preached.

After the tour of the interior of the cathedral (which also included a massive pipe organ) we made our way to the roof and bell towers. From those heights we were able to admire the beautiful city spread out before us. There is no questioning the cathedral is impressive, but as we made our way home a question lingered in my mind. Were the people who worshipped in the cathedral, as they looked to their icons, truly worshipping the Lord in spirit and truth?





CUMPLEAÑOS! been ;FELIZ

- During my unforgettable trip to Peru, I had the privilege of birthday, and it was a blast!

After an adventure packed week, we took a day to rest and relax. However, that did not stop the day from being filled with delicious food and great fellowship.

For lunch we had Adobo think pork chops in a Peruvian marinade. It was excellente! I couldn't help going in for a second serving, which I have play all sorts of classic games

told is huge а compliment to Peruvian cooks. Then I got a surprise getting to celebrate my 41st birthday cake prepared by the Sheets' daughter Evelyn all by herself. Ironically, I somehow never even noticed it was being prepared, so it was the perfect birthday treat.

I was also introduced to the Nintendo Switch that day. Alas, I pretty much left my video game days behind me decades ago, so I was not very good. But I did learn you can

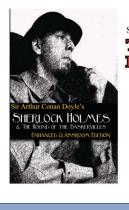
on the Switch, so it was a fun trip down Memory Lane.

Later that night for dinner we had Anticuchos - (which is cow heart on a stick) - another gourmet treat. (I was more than a little spoiled in the food department on my trip).

In all, my birthday was amazing and a cherished time with my dear brothers and sisters in Christ. Hopefully visits to Peru are something I can make a regular birthday tradition!







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By David Scott Fields II

ROCOTO RELLENO - I was in Peru for about a day before I realized how much good food means in that culture. However, this particular dish, Rocoto Relleno, is so important that it warrants its own statue right in the middle of downtown traffic! This, of course, made more sense when I learned the dish actually originates in Arequipa itself. I had to give a chuckle when I saw the statue, but my mouth was also watering at the memory of one of my favorite Peruvian dishes! Rina prepared Rocoto Relleno for the Sheets and me on my fourth day in Peru, and like all of her meals it was magnificent!

First, be warned, the rocoto pepper can be hot! The intensity tends to vary from pepper to pepper, so one can never be quite sure what to expect. The pepper I got was probably more of a medium heat, but go in expecting something hotter than a jalapeño. The rocoto, a uniquely

ADOBO - One day while riding back from IBC – Ciudad de Dios in the Sheets' family van, a Peruvian friend riding with us asked me, "¿Qué cosas nuevas has probado?" Translated this means "What new things have you tried?" And, of course, the first thing to burst out of my mouth was "¡Mucha comida!" Everyone in the car gave a hearty laugh at that, but it was no less true. During my time in Peru, I was treated to the chance to try so many new foods. Many of them were prepared with the expert skill and love of the Sheets' house helper, Rina! Her kind heart and dedicated service to the Sheets home and their ministry left a lasting impact on me and her cooking certainly made my taste buds happy. So as a bit of a tribute to Rina, I would like to share the recipes for a few of the meals she shared with me. The first dish is called Adobo!

Please note that due to space limitations, these recipes will be abbreviated and will not

include specific measurements. My hope is that these descriptions will whet your appetites, but for full instructions please consult your favorite cookbook or culinary website.

The Adobo I was served was a pork-based dish. Pork sirloin comes highly recommended, but various parts of the pig can be used. Begin by creating a marinade consisting of chopped garlic, chicha de jora or vinegar, chili powder, paprika, oregano, cumin powder, bay leaves, salt and pepper. Next chop up some red onion, garlic, tomato, and add peppercorn balls. Add your choice of pork to the marinade and refrigerate overnight, but no longer than 24hours. When ready to serve, remove the meat from the marinade and brown. Add the veggies to the marinade. Heat the marinade until hot and then add back the pork. Cook for about 30 minutes. Prep your favorite sides (rice and sweet potatoes are great choices). When ready, serve and enjoy!

Peruvian pepper, looks like a tomato and is equally thick and juicy, and it also a perfect pepper to stuff. Common stuffings include beef, onions, peanuts, garlic, olives, boiled egg, and cheese. Before stuffing the rocotos, prepare a mixture of water, sugar, salt, a clove, a bay leaf, and vinegar and then boil. Add the pepper and cook for about three minutes. This process can be repeated as desired and helps reduce the natural spiciness of the peppers.

Next, prepare your preferred stuffing items. Once prepared add the ingredients to each pepper, top with a piece of cheese, and restore the peppers' tops. Organize the peppers in a cooking pan, and fill the pan with a mixture of beaten eggs, milk and salt. Cook for about 15 minutes at 300 degrees. Serve with your favorite side and enjoy! (And don't forget the water; it's going to be hot!)





SALCHIPAPAS - In fairness, my trip to Peru this summer was not my first encounter was this simple and tasty dish. I actually first tasted salchipapas at my Peru themed 40th birthday party. I had originally planned to be in Peru at that time, but COVID lockdowns in Peru prompted the Sheets to return to the States for several months. I went to visit them in Oregon, and quite unexpectedly and to my delight the Sheets and another dear family, the

Salchi means sausage and papa means potatoes. Thus the dish is simply French fries and hotdogs (or sausages). It is a popular street food in Peru, but also works as a meal with friends when served with your favorite side. During my 40th birthday, the dish was served with stir fried peppers and rice. This year we had our salchipapas while dining out, and I got to sample several sauces popular with the dish, including aji chili sauce. Salchipapas can easily be made with prepared ingredients from your local grocer, but in Peru cooking from scratch is always the way to go. However you prepare them though, Salchipapas are a quick, simple, and delicious culinary delight. Enjoy!

Hostetters, threw me a Peru themed birthday party. Salachipapas was the main course, and needless to say when I had the chance to try it again in actual Peru, it brought back a very fond memory.

Salachipapas are as simple as they look.



Alaba, alma mía, al Señor, y no olvides ninguno de sus beneficios. - Salmos 103:2 NV



Todas las promesas que ha hecho Dios son «sí» en Cristo. Así que por medio de Cristo respondemos «amén» para la gloria de Dios. - 2 CORINTIOS 1:20 NVI



¿Por qué gastan dinero en lo que no es pan, y su salario en lo que no satisface? Escúchenme bien, y comerán lo que es bueno, y se deleitarán con manjares deliciosos. – Isaias 55:2 NVI

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By David Scott Fields II

CIUDAD DE DIOS, PERU - A father seeing his children coming to know Christ and being baptized is perhaps one of the greatest joys there is. But a father getting to baptize his own children has to be even greater still. Just before my return from Peru, I was witness to such a great joy as my friend Jason was privileged to baptize his two eldest children, Nathan and Evelyn, as well as Nazareth, the daughter of their dear family friends Emilio and Ayde, in the very first baptismal ceremony at IBC - Ciudad de Dios.

Baptism is a Christian sacrament that all genuine believers are commanded to participate in. It stands as our first public profession of Jesus Christ and identifies us with His death and resurrection. Unfortunately, it is not always given its due respect. For some professing Christians, baptism is something they would rather not bother with, and some have even gone decades never taking the

plunge. Many others receive the right of baptism enthusiastically, but later fall away from the faith, having never genuinely believed in the first place.

As such, it is critical that pastors and churches take great care before baptizing anyone, and I was pleased to see such care being taken by Pastor Jason and the leadership at the church plant. Nathan, Evelyn, and Nazareth are all now teenagers able to clearly think through the gospel and its implications. After professing faith and desiring baptism, Jason led them through a course on the fundamentals of the faith, and each had a personal interview with him in which they formally shared their testimony. These things occurred in the days leading up to the baptism ceremony.

On the day of the ceremony, Sunday, June 26, 2022, there was much enthusiasm. At services the previous week, Jason had told everyone about the baptisms and encouraged them to invite their friends and family. Since Ciudad de Dios is a fairly new and rather outdoors church plant, a small children's swimming pool filled with a garden hose served as the baptismal. If you had asked any of the kids being baptized, they might have exclaimed, "¡El agua estaba muy fría!" But that did not stand in their way.

After a sermon in which Jason clearly defined what baptism is, the kids stood before the congregation and personally shared their salvation stories. Though every salvation journey is different in terms of what ultimately leads one to repentance and faith, the means of salvation is always the same. As the scriptures explain, "...if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved" (Romans 10:9-10 ESV). Having made this profession, Nathan, Evelyn, and Nazareth were baptized.

I can only imagine the joy of Jason, Sarah, Emilio, and Ayde as their children were baptized. Having known the Sheets for decades, I know I was beyond excited for their whole family, and I will be praying for them constantly as the kids continue to grow in sanctification and knowledge of the Lord. As is fitting, the day ended with plenty of food and fellowship.

And on this incredibly high note, my trip to Peru came to a close. I will never forget my time in this beautiful country. I made many new friends, was immersed in a beautiful new culture, and shared in a thriving ministry. Lord willing, I will jump at any chance I have to return one day.











Trivia:

After being baptized, this false convert offered to pay the Apostles money in order to have the power to share the Holy Spirit. Hint: See Acts 8 TriVia: This early Christian baptized the Apostle Paul in the city of

Damascus.

Hint: See Acts 9

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highlights of my

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Packing for Peru

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	(plural noun) so I	(action verb) to the
	(place) to	(action verb) some. When I
got home my	(adu	lt relative) told me to put the
	(family possession)	in my suitcase so we could all
	(emotion) it together. H	Finally, I decided I wanted to wear
a	(noun), a	(noun), and a
	_ (noun) on our trip so I	packed them last. I know we are
going to have a	(ad	jective) trip to Peru!



Thrive Christian Press Author David Scott Fields II. presents...





Umagination



Faith, friendship, and family all

Great Missionaries of History

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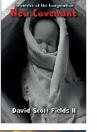
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