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February 27, 1995

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**Southern Baptists exceed
'We Can Help' project goals**

**Baptist Press
2/27/95**

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. (BP)--Woman's Missionary Union members across the country issued the call and Southern Baptists responded.

The "call" was for church members to contribute a can of food plus 25 cents to help feed the hungry in their communities. While the food and money collected by a local church would be distributed at its discretion, a national goal of 1 million cans and \$250,000 was established for the project, called "We Can Help."

Southern Baptists answered the call by contributing a reported 1,023,466 cans of food and \$311,281.90. Of the 28 state WMU offices which have called in a count to WMU, only seven have tagged their report as complete.

"We are ecstatic," said Trudy Johnson, WMU special projects coordinator. "When the Project HELP: Hunger Task Force first proposed a national goal of 1 million cans and 25 cents per can, I knew it would take all of our 1.2 million members working together with their pastors and church families to make it a reality -- and we did it!

"This project has given us a tremendous opportunity to see what we are capable of accomplishing together," Johnson said. "It has encouraged us as we plan future ministry projects.

"It also opens the door for witnessing opportunities as local hunger needs are met," she added. The Kansas-Nebraska WMU reported, for example, three churches started new food banks while another church's collection revived a local food bank that had been drained of its food supply.

Referring to a researcher's conclusion that "WMU may be not only the missions conscience of the SBC, but also its loving heart," Johnson said, "The response to our first national ministry project demonstrates that WMU members are motivated to action by their loving hearts."

A state-by-state tabulation will be released by WMU when totals are complete, Johnson said.

Regents elect Robert Sloan
from dean to Baylor presidency

By Ken Camp

DALLAS (BP)--Baylor University regents elected Robert B. Sloan, dean of the fledgling George W. Truett Theological Seminary, as Baylor's 12th president, ending an 18-month nationwide search by promoting from within the university's ranks.

He will assume the presidency of the world's largest Baptist university June 1, succeeding Herbert H. Reynolds who retires May 31 and becomes Baylor's chancellor.

Sloan, 46, was interviewed during a special session of the 36-member board of regents, Feb. 23-24 in Waco, Texas. Strong consensus developed for Sloan, and the board was united in his selection, according to chairman Gale L. Galloway of Austin.

After interviewing four other candidates -- Gerry Gunnin, president of the Children's Medical Foundation, Dallas; Max Lennon, president of Eastern Foods, Inc.; William D. Hillis, executive vice president at Baylor; and Donald D. Schmeltekopf, vice president of academic affairs at Baylor -- the regents called Sloan back into their meeting after 5 p.m. on Feb. 24 to announce their decision.

In accepting the presidency, Sloan said he was committing himself "to the historic mission of Baylor, pledging to continue our pursuit of academic excellence within the traditions of a Christian worldview and the great principles of our Baptist heritage."

Sloan's appointment comes at a time when the 150-year-old university is adding a number of degree programs, moving into the Big 12 athletic conference and shoring up its Baptist identity in the wake of the 1990 decision to distance itself from governance by the Baptist General Convention of Texas.

Baylor's trustees on Sept. 21, 1990, had revised the university's charter to establish a self-perpetuating board of regents with sole responsibility for governing the school. Previously, Baylor's charter provided for university governance by a board of trustees elected by the Texas Baptist convention.

Last November, the regents came close -- reportedly within one vote -- of electing as the university's president Thomas J. Corts, president of Samford University, Birmingham, Ala.

Corts was said to have been rejected because he lacked ties to Texas Baptists and Baylor, and he was too closely tied to "fundamentalists" within the Southern Baptist Convention.

Sloan, by contrast, is a native of Coleman, Texas, a Baylor graduate and a popular preacher among Texas Baptists, having preached the annual sermon at the 1991 state convention. He currently serves as interim pastor of First Baptist Church, Amarillo, a prominent "moderate" congregation, and has been dean of the alternative Truett Seminary since its founding in 1990.

Sloan holds a master of divinity degree from Princeton Theological Seminary and a doctor of theology degree from the University of Basel, Switzerland. He conducted post-graduate research at the University of Bristol, England.

He has served on the Baylor religion faculty since 1983. In addition to his duties as seminary dean, he also holds the George W. Truett Chair in Evangelism. Sloan served previously as theology instructor at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth, and as an adjunct instructor at Hardin-Simmons University, Abilene, Texas.

He and his wife, Sue, who is also a Baylor graduate, are members of First Baptist Church, Lorena, Texas. They have seven children. Two attend Baylor and a third is scheduled to enroll next year.

**NOBTS search committee
seeks recommendations**

NEW ORLEANS (BP)--Recommendations for president of New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary will be accepted until March 15, according to the seminary's presidential search committee.

All recommendations should be sent in writing to Morris L. Anderson, First Baptist Church, P.O. Box 98, Pigeon Forge, TN 37868-0098. Anderson is chairman of the search committee.

The new president will succeed Landrum P. Leavell II, who retired Dec. 31, 1994. Leavell, 68, has agreed to remain as interim president until a successor is chosen. He has been NOBTS president since 1975.

The seminary's board of trustees will hold its semiannual meeting on the New Orleans campus March 14-16.

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**SBC leaders acted unlike
Baptists, Moyers says**

By Tom Strode

Baptist Press
2/27/95

WASHINGTON (BP)--Southern Baptist Convention leaders who announced their opposition to U.S. surgeon general nominee Henry Foster acted more like political partisans than Baptists, commentator Bill Moyers said on "NBC Nightly News" Feb. 23.

Such a response from Moyers, a frequent critic of Southern Baptists in recent years, should have been expected and signifies the announcement hit its target, said a SBC Christian Life Commission spokesman.

Moyers' comments, which are a regular feature of NBC's weeknight news program, came one day after Christian Life Commission Executive Director Richard Land announced the agency's opposition to Foster. SBC President Jim Henry also expressed his opposition in the same Nashville, Tenn., news conference. In explaining the CLC's position, Land cited Foster's performance of abortions, support of condom distribution and association with Planned Parenthood Federation of America. Henry pointed to the SBC's pro-life resolutions during the last 15 years in his statement.

"The free exercise of conscience is the heart" of Baptist faith, Moyers said. "No one can speak for all Baptists. But in the last decade, the Southern Baptist Convention was captured by a political posse allied with the Republican Party. Their hierarchy wants to impose conformity on the churches.

"Suddenly, the 39 legal abortions performed by Henry Foster, which he says he did reluctantly, are a theological sin and a political opportunity," Moyers said. "Despite studies showing Southern Baptists hold varying opinions about abortion, the hierarchy has pronounced all 15 million of them opposed to Foster's nomination."

Moyers also said, "Suppose that instead of reading National Review, New Republic or the Nation, God reads only the human heart and looks with mercy on mortals like Henry Foster making hard choices in the anguished trenches of life. Would God then vote yea or nay on the nomination? I don't know, and neither does any other Baptist."

The CLC's James A. Smith said, "The empire strikes back. Apparently our action has caught the attention of people in high places. I am encouraged that the opposition is so concerned by our action that they felt compelled to have one of their friends in the media attempt to discredit us. We wear their scorn as a badge of honor.

"I would not expect the liberal media elite to share the mainstream values that most Southern Baptists do," said Smith, the CLC's director of government relations in Washington, "and therefore I am not surprised that Bill Moyers would disagree with our decision to oppose the Foster nomination."

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Land and Henry did not attempt to speak for all Southern Baptists in opposing Foster, Smith said. "Any objective review of the press conference would demonstrate that," he said.

Moyers, a member of Democratic President Lyndon Johnson's administration in the 1960s, has been a Southern Baptist in the past. On the Feb. 23 program, he identified himself as a Baptist. A call to NBC's offices in New York seeking that information was not returned to Baptist Press before its deadline.

In another development, leaders of the nation's largest black denomination, the National Baptist Convention U.S.A., announced its endorsement of Foster Feb. 23. "I think he's committed to helping young people," S.C. Cureton, vice president at large of the 8-million-member organization, was quoted as saying. "And I think his record speaks loudly on programs that he has sponsored keeping young ladies from getting pregnant as well as teaching young men."

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Art Toalston contributed to this story.

T.C. Pinckney tells seminarians
to 'heed, feed, lead and recede' By Norman Miller

Baptist Press
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WAKE FOREST, N.C. (BP)--Southern Baptist Convention Executive Committee secretary T.C. Pinckney urged students at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary to "display in words and actions to whom ultimate loyalty belongs."

During a Feb. 16 chapel service, Pinckney, a retired Air Force general from Virginia, referred to Aldrich Ames, the CIA employee who turned over sensitive, classified material to KGB agents. "What went wrong within Ames to cause him to commit treason? He was one of us. He was trusted, assumed to be working for the good of the United States?"

"Let me suggest that Ames adopted a different set of values," Pinckney said. "He acted upon his own authority rather than upon the established authority of the United States Government."

Applying the Ames' debacle to pastors and others, Pinckney said, "Once you alter your authority orientation, your entire life assumes a different thrust, a different character. So I suggest you firmly settle your authority orientation."

Pinckney said Christians must "display in words and actions to whom their ultimate loyalty belongs." He asked, "Does your loyalty belong to your congregation? They pay your salary. To your director of missions? He may determine whether or not you move to a better church. To your state convention? It offers recognition and status. To your retirement account? It has prospects of comfort and ease. To yourself? This world insists we fulfill ourselves.

"Or does your loyalty belong to Jesus Christ, dead, buried, risen again and seated at the right hand of the Father? He offers eternity."

When setting goals for ministry, Pinckney said, "Be sure the vision is God's, not your own. If you want to be known as the prince of preachers, if you seek to pastor the largest church in your state or in the SBC, if you are entranced with the mellifluous flow of your own words, the aptness of your illustrations, the fervor of your finale -- all these are carnal motivations."

Comparing his military experience as an Air Force pilot to a pastor's life, Pinckney asked, "Are you a lover or a fighter? If you were not a fighter in Vietnam, you were in the wrong line of work and could get yourself killed. But as a pastor, this is a very real issue. Most pastors want to love and be loved. It is natural to the calling. But there are dangers here."

Pinckney said always shunning confrontation means a pastor has "traded ministry for a job, proclamation for paycheck, faith for fellowship and 'thus saith the Lord' for 'thus saith the deacons.'"

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When issues concern the Word of God or God's honor, "There can be no wavering, no compromise," he said. "But when it involves the pastor's ideas, that is another matter. There is a difference between leadership and dictatorship. It is not important that you always be center stage; it is important that Jesus always be center stage.

"You must heed, feed, read, lead, and recede," said Pinckney. "First, you must heed the inerrant, infallible, perfect Word of God as your constant and fundamental authority. Second, you must feed his sheep. Remember, your job is to feed his sheep, not slaughter his lambs. Third, you must read your spiritual wristwatch carefully and determine when to stand and when to compromise on decisions and leadership issues. Fourth, you must lead the flock to Christ to biblical standards. Finally, you must recede and say with another well-known Baptist, 'He must increase, but I must decrease.'"

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Christian witnesses venture
onto information superhighway

By Ken Walker

Baptist Press
2/27/95

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (BP)--Jesus told those who believe in him to go and make disciples of all nations -- including a new world popularly known as Cyberspace. But Christians who use their computers to witness via high-tech bulletin boards warn this mission frontier can be emotionally bruising.

"Christians are getting more attuned to computers, but I'm afraid Cyberspace has been the province of the irreligious and the irreverent for so long they have the upper hand," said Steve Brown, a member of Highland Baptist Church in Louisville, Ky.

"Unless you're persistent and are prepared to confront deep issues of the faith, it can be a scary world."

"I have yet to see anyone come to the Lord," added Norm Miller at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, Wake Forest, N.C. The editor of Southeastern's alumni magazine began sending gospel messages last summer over America Online (AOL), but hasn't been as active lately.

"Actually, it can get pretty discouraging," said Miller, a member of West Oxford Baptist Church, Oxford, N.C. "Those who want to do this better be prepared for the worst. If you hang out in the lobbies (on-line discussion groups), the discussions drop to the gutter level or worse. It's made me aware of how sick our society is."

Computer bulletin boards are a radically different world, agreed Jim Gallagher of Lewisville, Texas. Saved in the 1960s during the Jesus movement, he has 25 years of ministry experience as a youth pastor, Christian school principal and officer of a Bible software company.

"I led a lot of people to the Lord on the streets 20 years ago," said Gallagher, a telecommunications columnist for Christian Computing Magazine. "But in the modem world it doesn't work that way. Modem users are 'lurkers.' They wait to see what's there and they don't jump in if you try to witness.

"Mass witnessing never works. The only way is one-on-one. When you get people alone, they're not so bold. You need to get voice or direct contact. Get them isolated and 'talk' things out. If it's a smart punk, he'll usually back down."

While on-line services like Prodigy, CompuServe, AOL and the giant Internet generate most of the publicity, witnessing doesn't require monthly fees. Brown began six years ago after trying out his modem by dialing up the Louisville Free Public Library's bulletin board. He now calls three area systems regularly and has a password on a dozen, all free of charge.

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A contract specialist with the Army Corps of Engineers' district office, Brown is a graduate of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. Although the Jeffersonville, Ind., resident didn't set out trying to evangelize, he discovered his theological background came in handy during on-screen chats.

"Eventually, no matter what the subject, it would come around to a religious, or anti-religious, statement," said Brown. "I would say, 'Have you considered that another viewpoint is true?' They would ask 'Who are you to say that?' and I said, 'I'm a graduate of Southern Seminary and an ordained Baptist minister.' Once I advertised that, I got all kinds of questions."

However, it may be best not to start out talking about religion. For example, Brown often gets involved in discussions on law, politics and the Constitution. Starting slowly with any topic and building on that will often open doors, he said.

Electronic witnessing also requires perseverance, according to the former pastor. Brown invited one correspondent who had suffered a miscarriage to services; the woman also attended a church picnic and a seminar. But just when she appeared ready to make a decision, she dropped out of sight and off the bulletin board.

"It's a Johnny Appleseed approach," Brown said. "You put out comments and answer questions, but you may never see the harvest. I consider it important that I'm part of the Cyberspace world. I can also talk to young Christians and encourage them. When a new caller calls up the bulletin board for the first time, three or four old-timers bombard him with things and can scare him away."

Miller saw that the gospel tends to be the scariest subject for many AOL correspondents. Twice he carried on lengthy correspondence, with a 25-year-old graphic artist in New York and an insurance man who called himself "Heretic." But when he finally tried to get them to accept Christ's sacrifice, they backed away.

Once, the woman in New York saw a single drop of water beaded up on her bus's window and asked God if that meant Miller really cared about her. Although he assured her that was true, she eventually disappeared. When he checked the membership directory recently, her on-screen name had vanished.

"We discussed issues in her life, but when I asked her tough questions, I got pop psychological answers," he said. The same thing happened with the "heretical" respondent. "When I raised issues, he wouldn't answer them. I haven't had a letter back from him for about six weeks."

Despite his frustration, Miller has had some triumphs, too. Last Christmas, he decided to save a list of names from a discussion group's "lobby." Then he composed a short message talking about the real meaning of Christmas and mass mailed it to that list.

Although some people replied with rude put-downs, there were many non-Christians who expressed interest in what he said. About half those who responded to the mailing were fellow believers who encouraged him to keep spreading the gospel. "This has served to challenge me to witness more and to recognize the needs of the lost," Miller said.

Brown's computer experience has prepared him to be more bold about sharing his faith at work. While opportunities are limited to lunch hours and occasional chats, he wasn't as open five years ago.

"For all the teaching and preaching I like to do, I'm not as comfortable in one-on-one settings," said the Highland Baptist deacon. "In part through electronic communication, I've learned there's nothing to be afraid of. This has shown me I can do it anywhere, not just at the keyboard. If someone asks you a question, it's because they honestly want to know."

Still, spreading the gospel over computers requires the same biblical background, skill and expertise as live witnessing, Gallagher noted.

"I don't want to see people going on the Internet screaming, 'You need to be saved,'" he said. "You have to lead them with sensitivity. I don't go out looking for scalps; I go out looking for the Lord to lead me."

**High-tech witnesses
offer suggestions**

By Ken Walker

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (BP)--High-tech witnessing poses a frustrating, sometimes intimidating challenge. But believers say worldly people aren't timid about sharing their interests via the modem, and Christians shouldn't be afraid to speak out either.

Norm Miller, editor of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary's alumni magazine, said he got the idea for mass "E-mailing" a reminder about the meaning of Christmas when he dialed up America Online and found an unwanted mail message waiting. "Why play around here where you can't say everything you want?" it began. It turned out to be an invitation to call a conference where a "sex chat" would be held.

"Perverts are doing evangelism of their own," said Miller, who reported the offending group to system monitors. "That's another reason for Christians to witness."

However, that experience also forms one of the watchwords for electronic witnessing: Check the regulations regarding E-mail messages with the bulletin board or commercial service you use.

Here are some other guidelines these users recommend:

-- Avoid sounding like you have all the answers. If you come on too strong, you are likely to get "flamed" -- computer lingo for nasty put-downs -- said Steve Brown, a contract specialist with the Army Corps of Engineers' district office in Louisville, Ky., and member of Highland Baptist Church. Or "spammed," where another computer user aims a ton of unwanted E-mail at your box.

-- Never intentionally offend anyone.

"They're going to be shooting real bullets at you and you have to put your spiritual bullet-proof vest on," Miller said. "You can't witness about the love of Christ if you're flaming others."

-- While some get saved via bulletin boards, successes are likely to represent a tiny fraction of your efforts.

"It's not something that happens real often," said Jim Gallagher, who once led a skeptical teen-ager to salvation. "The modem is an impersonal device. It's like a weapon. People say nasty things and then they disappear," said Gallagher, of Lewisville, Texas, a telecommunications columnist for Christian Computing Magazine.

-- Have a solid grasp of the Bible.

"If someone's out to score points on someone of the Christian faith, they'll jump on someone who's too timid," Brown said. "You have to know Scripture. People will ask things like, 'Why did God tell Israel to kill all the Amelikitites? What kind of a God would tell people to kill children?' You have to know."

-- Be secure in your faith.

Brown compares bulletin boards to venturing into the ocean in a rowboat. You have to be prepared to handle the onslaught of difficult waves that will come at you, he said.

-- While not breaking any Christian codes of conduct, use every possible method of witnessing.

Despite some of the off-color chats on AOL, there are numerous discussion groups on everyday topics, said Miller. He advises checking them and looking for an opening to share or as a way of starting a private "conversation."

-- Witness at various times of the day.

"The later at night it is, the tougher the crowd," Miller commented. "The real creeps stay up late. Unless you have the fortitude and the patience, you're better off not doing it late at night."

-- If your children use the computer, check the "parental lock" options to block access to offensive material. Even with guidelines against profanity, it goes on unless someone turns in the guilty party, according to Miller.

-- Choose an unusual screen name that may open doors.

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One AOL user goes by "Radical for JC," Miller said, and he's been thinking of using a new name like "King's Kid." Originally he wanted to be known as "Grapho," Greek for "I write." Since that was taken, he added a "w" to the spelling to qualify for using it over AOL.

"When people ask what Graphow means, I tell them I love to read and write, and read the Bible," he said. "I'm always looking for an angle."

--If you find yourself getting provoked by nasty messages, cool down before you reply.

Throughout the years, Brown said he has managed to hold his temper in check but sometimes has to get up, walk away from the computer and pray before he responds to a nasty comment. "People slam you and slam and slam you," said Miller. "They want you to respond (nastily) so they can say, 'You're just like we are, so why should we listen to you?'"

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FIRST-PERSON

'On-line minister'
works from his home

By Mathew R. Horn

Baptist Press
2/27/95

SHOREWOOD, Ill. (BP)--Since the beginning of the technological breakthrough known as the computer, people have been discovering ways to communicate with each other. This is how we have come to the point where there are services such as CompuServe, America Online and others. As a computer user, I would like to point out there is a great ministry opportunity waiting for someone to get in on.

These services have an area called a "chat room." This is an area where several people can be on-line at the same time and communicate with each other, not just leave messages back and forth. When you have the luxury of talking to someone one-on-one in the computer environment, you not only get a wealth of information about that person, but you can also give a wealth of information in return.

Since I am a member of America Online (AOL), I get the chance to talk to people and spread the gospel in such a way that it has a greater impact on people and their lives. It has been said that if you can bring the gospel into a person's house, then they may be more willing to listen. This is the best way to do it.

I have frequently been called an on-line minister by my peers who are on there with me. Recently some of my on-line friends have labeled me an AOL evangelist. It is an honor to be called this, because of the implication it carries. I'm not afraid to go into other chat areas, which I frequently do, to tell them about Jesus and his love for us. Just the other night, I popped into the area called Atheists Online and proceeded to answer questions which they had about the gospel and about the Bible in general. While people may huff and puff about not wanting to listen to someone talk to them about the Bible or about God in general, I have discovered that these people are more interested than what they appear to be. When someone takes the time to "sit down with them" and handle a barrage of questions, and be able to answer them, they are more impressed than turned away. This is a great ministry opportunity. Those who are willing to take the time and confront people in this manner will make great strides for the gospel.

Let us not forget to mention the other Christians who are on the system and other areas of doctrinal and theological discussions. There are two AOL areas set aside specifically for discussion of religion and Christianity. In fact, those are the names of the areas. The Religion Forum has static message areas for Christians, Jews and Catholics; even Mormons have an area. There is also a chat area here called Th Front Porch, for scheduled discussions. In the area called Christianity they have The Fellowship Hall. Discussions here are fast, furious and occasionally heated. Get a Pentecostal, a Seventh-day Adventist, a Southern Baptist and a priest in this place and you would be able to light a small city from the heat of what is being said.

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This is occasionally dangerous, because you never know when that one unbeliever might pop in and be forever turned away because of your arguing over a stupid "major theological point." This is the only deterrent which I see that comes from this open type of system. However, you have to have it open, or else people will think that you have something to hide and will therefore stop thinking about God altogether yet again.

What is true CyberMinistry? It is using the computer to tell those who are unbelievers about the gospel, about Christ and about God in general. It is answering the questions of those who wish to know more but are afraid to go to their local clergy. This can literally be taking the gospel to the world, and you don't have to leave your home to do it. Think about it.

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Horn is a member of Westview Baptist Church, Shorewood, Ill.

Computerized gospel
presentation available

By Sarah Zimmerman

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ATLANTA (BP)--Looking for a way to witness to high-tech friends? Try giving them the Eternal Life tract on disk.

The contents of the witnessing booklet are available in the Home Mission Board library of SBCNet, the Southern Baptist on-line computer system. The file name is "Eternal Life Booklet for Windows."

Computer users must have Windows 3.1 or higher and at least a 386 processor to download the program, said Bill Gordon, HMB associate director of interfaith witness.

Gordon added the Eternal Life tract to the computer library in hopes Christians would copy it to a disk and give the disk to a non-Christian. "Some people who wouldn't look at a tract will run a program on a computer," he said.

The computer version is "word for word, graphic for graphic" like the printed tract, Gordon said. The only difference is that the computer version is in color.

The booklet begins by asking, "Do you know for certain that you have eternal life and that you will go to heaven when you die?" The tract goes through a series of questions to explain the plan of salvation.

The printed version, available in 16 languages, is sold for 10 cents each. Copies can be ordered from HMB customer services 1-800-634-2462.

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