

Sermons
New Testament
Mark 1:2-8

1

Date written: December 20, 1947

Theme: Heralds of Christ

Proposition: All Christians should be **heralds** of Christ.

Text: Mark 1:3

Sources: The Methodist Hymnal, 1944, no.482. Scriptural references.

Places preached: *Huntsville, Ala., 12/21/47*

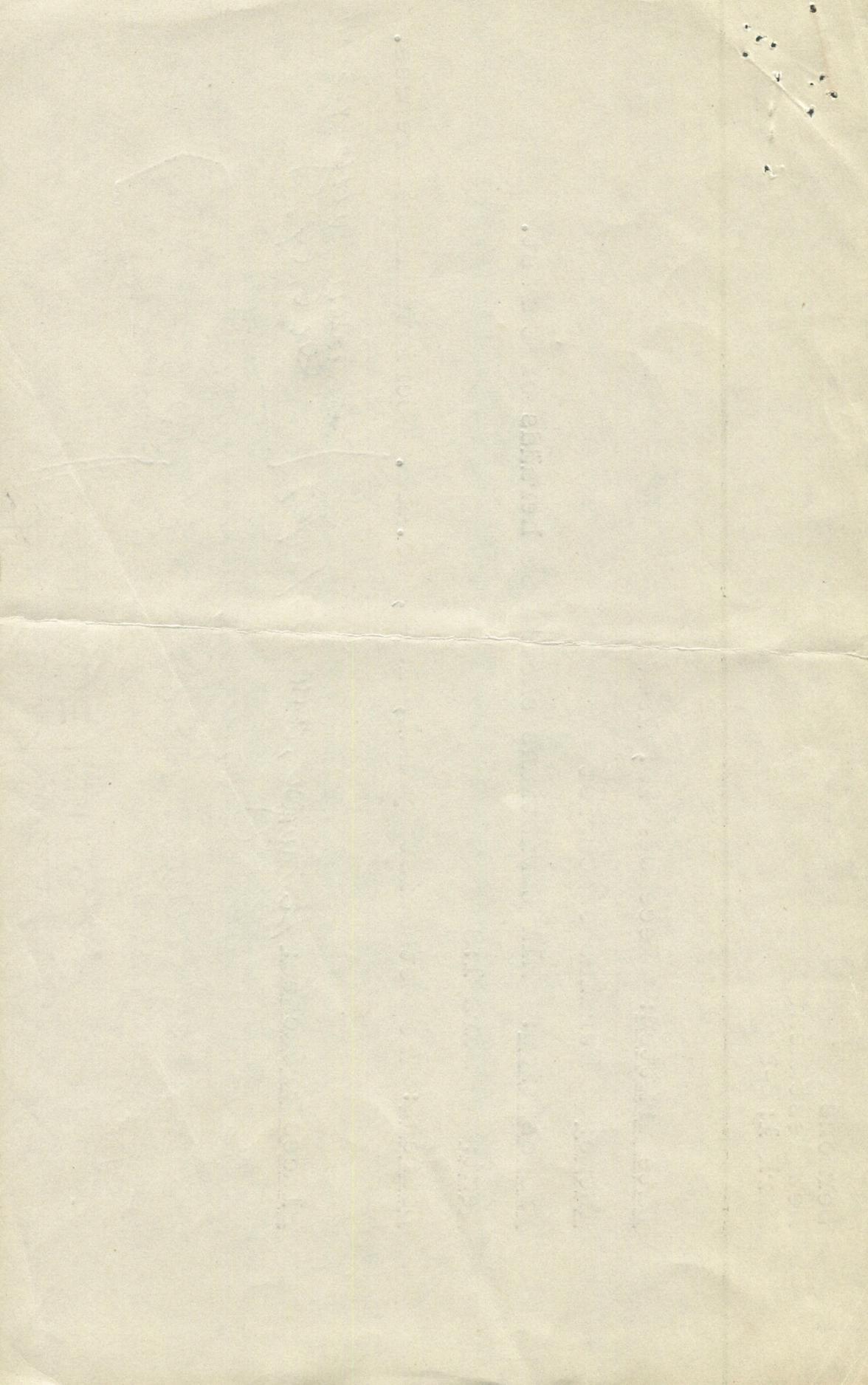
*slender, miss., 9:30 11:15
Dec 6, 59.*

Cravston + Kennerly, miss., June 24, 1950

Camp Rucker, Ala., 7 Dec 52 (Biggs, cos F 80)

~~*F. C. C. C. C.*~~
Southwest, Latham, Ala 52

Wheatland, Ala, P.M., Jan 16, 55



2
Mark 1:2-8 As it is written in the prophets, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face which shall prepare thy way before thee.

The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.

John did baptize in the wilderness, and preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins.

And there went out unto him all the land of Judaea, and they of Jerusalem, and were all baptized of him in the river of Jordan, confessing their sins.

And John was clothed with camel's hair, and with a girdle of a skin about his loins; and he did eat locusts and wild honey;

And preached, saying, There cometh one mightier than I after me, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to stoop down and unloose.

I indeed have baptized you with water; but he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost.

Mark 1:3 Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.

Heralds of Christ

Heralds of Christ, who bear the
King's commands,
Immortal tidings in your mortal hands,
Pass on and carry swift the news ye
bring:
Make straight, make straight the
highway of the King.

Thro' desert ways, dark fen, and deep
morass,
Through jungles, sluggish seas, and
mountain pass,
Build ye the road, and falter not,
nor stay;
Prepare across the earth the King's
highway.

Lord, give us faith and strength the
road to build,
To see the promise of the day fulfilled,
When war shall be no more and strife
shall cease
Upon the highway of the Prince of Peace.

--Laura S. Copenhaver, ~~1888~~
(music by George W. Warren)
(in Methodist Hymnal, 1944, no. 482)

Introduction:

3

1. While I was a student in Duke University, during my first year there, the school's football team played an undefeated and untied schedule, and consequently won the championship of the conference of which it was a member -- the Southern Conference --, as well as received an invitation to play the University of Oregon in the famous Rose Bowl game.

Just prior to receiving the invitation to play in the Rose Bowl, the word was about the campus that Duke was definitely considered as a participant in the Rose Bowl contest, but that certain other schools might yet be asked. Excitement ran high. Pep meetings were held on the campus, supposedly to demonstrate the confidence the students had that there was no possibility of any other team being invited from the east, except Duke.

At one such pep meeting, interest seemed to be waning a bit, and probably even the cheer leaders felt that Duke might not, after all, be asked. Suddenly, there appeared on the chapel steps, speaking to the cheer leaders, ~~xxxxxxx~~ students who were members of the university newspaper staff, and who had been keeping in close touch with the progress toward a Rose Bowl bid from Duke. The cheer leaders turned around to the group and yelled something like "it's here. We play in the Bowl," and with that the students went wild. From then till Jan. 1 following, when the Bowl game was played, Duke was an armed camp of football.

2. The members of the Duke campus paper, seeming^{ly} played a not too important part in bringing about the jubilation and the preparation that followed their speaking to the cheer leaders. However, theirs was a very important part. They brought the news, transmitted the message which without them would have come slower. They were heralds, in the true sense, for they proclaimed, announced, introduced, gave tidings of the Rose Bowl invitation for Duke,

3. Every important bit of information that comes into lives has to be brought there by someone, directly or indirectly. Those who proclaim, announce, introduce or give tidings of some important information or person are heralds.

4. Thus, those who proclaim Christ are heralds of Christ. It is to such heralds that we wish to turn our attention here.

I. Biblical heralds of Christ.

1. ~~The third Sunday in Advent we talk about the part of the prophets in preparing the way for Jesus. The Old Testament prophets were the first human heralds of Christ, for they prepared men for his coming and foretold his coming.~~

2. Of course, God acted through all the heralds of Christ, but ~~through~~ ^{through} he acted by speaking to the parents of John the Baptist, telling them of the part their son was to play in proclaiming the Messiah.

Sermons
New Testament
Mark 1:2-8

through
angels

5.
3. A star served as a herald of His birth to the wise men.

4. Again, through angel voices the Scripture tells us the shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flocks by night, learned of the coming of the Christ and of his mission of peace, good will.

5. Finally, John the Baptist, whose work in proclaiming Christ is well known to Christians, ~~and for whose work this Fourth Sunday in Advent has been set aside to honor in Christian tradition,~~ is presented by Scripture as ~~xxxx~~ a herald preceding Christ's earthly mission.

6. Thus, we find that the Scriptures record clearly how God prepared through the use of heralds, ~~xxxx~~ for the birth of the babe in the manger.

II. Present-Day heralds of Christ.

While in college, I went one evening to a church in another college town nearby. I went with a close friend, but the minister of this particular church was a man of whom I thought a great deal. After the service, I asked my friend what he thought of the sermon, which I had enjoyed a lot. He said, "Oh, it was a good sermon, but just as good for the middle ages as for today."

Some things are timeless, but even timeless, eternal things must be presented in a way which can be understood by the present and each succeeding generation. God does use heralds of Christ today, just as truly as he did prior to Christ's birth. Some of them are:

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1. Our reading of the traditional Christmas Scripture at the Christmas season is a recognition of the place of the Bible in proclaiming Christ to us. In the Bible is the most authentic record we have of what he was like in his life on earth. In the Bible we find a character-sketch of him, as it were, which prepares us so we may recognize his presence in our hearts. The Bible is an eternal, yet very present, herald of Christ to the present day.

6

2. There^{was} is an old woman, past 80, blind, restricted to a wheel chair back in Virginia, who, whether she knows it or not, is a herald of Christ. Though of the Methodist tradition, she has a Christlike influence on young people of that, others, and no tradition. She still writes her own letters, though to read them they give the appearance of some child scribbling. Of course, she has to have the letters she receives read to her.

This old lady for years now has kept up with each of a group of boys, all now grown and going their various ways, who first became acquainted with her through the interest of two of them in her granddaughter. Though both boys are married to other people, and her granddaughter was married even before the boys, "Grandma", as they affectionately call her, still keeps up with them, and they with her, writing, sending Christmas greetings, etc.. Whenever possible, they go by to see her.

7

One of these boys, partly because of an unhappy home life, has always been what is usually called a bit "wild". At one period he drank quite a lot, and bragged about it quite a lot. He has called himself an "atheist" for quite a number of years. However, in the period that he has known Grandma, he has always talked frankly and unreservedly, without fear of betrayal, with her. She doesn't give much counsel, and that which she does give is usually concealed in a kind word of understanding. In the period of time that this particular "wild" boy has known Grandma he has gradually become less cocky, gradually come to put more value on worthwhile things, gradually is turning from the bad habits he had. He still says he is an atheist, but with nothing like his former conviction, and without the resentfulness he once had if you challenged him on his lack of belief.

In other words, to my mind, Grandma is a real herald of Christ, though she would probably deny it and the boy not recognize it. She stands for Christianity at its ripest and best in this life, and is influencing the boys she keeps in touch with through her own life.

The faith and works of older Christians, of people who have been in the faith a good while, do herald Christ, for they show us what acceptance of him does in our lives.

8

3. In these days in which there are so many terrible things happening every moment, man has good occasion to stop and repent of his sins. Each person sins at least some, and knows it. Each person has some share of the responsibility for the sins of his or her government, for world wrongs. A feeling of true remorse and repentance for personal, community or world wrongs is a true herald of Christ, for until repentance comes, Christ can't enter.

4. Not only the faith and works of older Christians, but the professional Christian workers, such as missionaries, ministers, consecrated musicians and artists, the volunteer workers in the Sunday Schools and the church, all are heralds of Christ, for all or much of their time is devoted to the institution dedicated to bringing a knowledge of Christ to men. They proclaim Christ, and are therefore heralds of Christ.

III. How individuals can be heralds of Christ.

There are Biblical heralds of the Lord, and there are present-day heralds of other types, we have discovered.

Jesus gave his 11 disciples what we now call the great commission "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; Teaching them to observe all things, whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world."

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The disciples took this commission seriously, and became true heralds of Christ. Acts 5:42 tells us that "daily, in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Christ."

~~Further~~ The next verse following this one, Acts 6:1, gives evidence that Christ really came where these heralds went, and that the ones to whom he came also became teachers, preachers, heralds. The words are "And in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplied," ~~xxxxxxx~~

We could find other evidence that the early Christians were really heralds of Christ. If we, too, would herald him, let's briefly consider some of the avenues open.

1. Live faithfully by our beliefs as to God's commands.

In an old cemetery at Winchester, Virginia, there is a monument to the Confederate dead. On it are cut these two lines

"Who they were none knows,
What they were all know."

One who strives to be Christlike, doing his best to obey God's commands as he understands them, is known by all who meet him. He is not only a witness for Christ, he is a herald, one who announces what Christ can do in a human life.

2. Have a sense of the responsibility which we have to bring Christ to others. Again, a Christian can do no other, for Jesus gave the second great commandment essential to eternal life as "thy shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." (Matt. 22:39)

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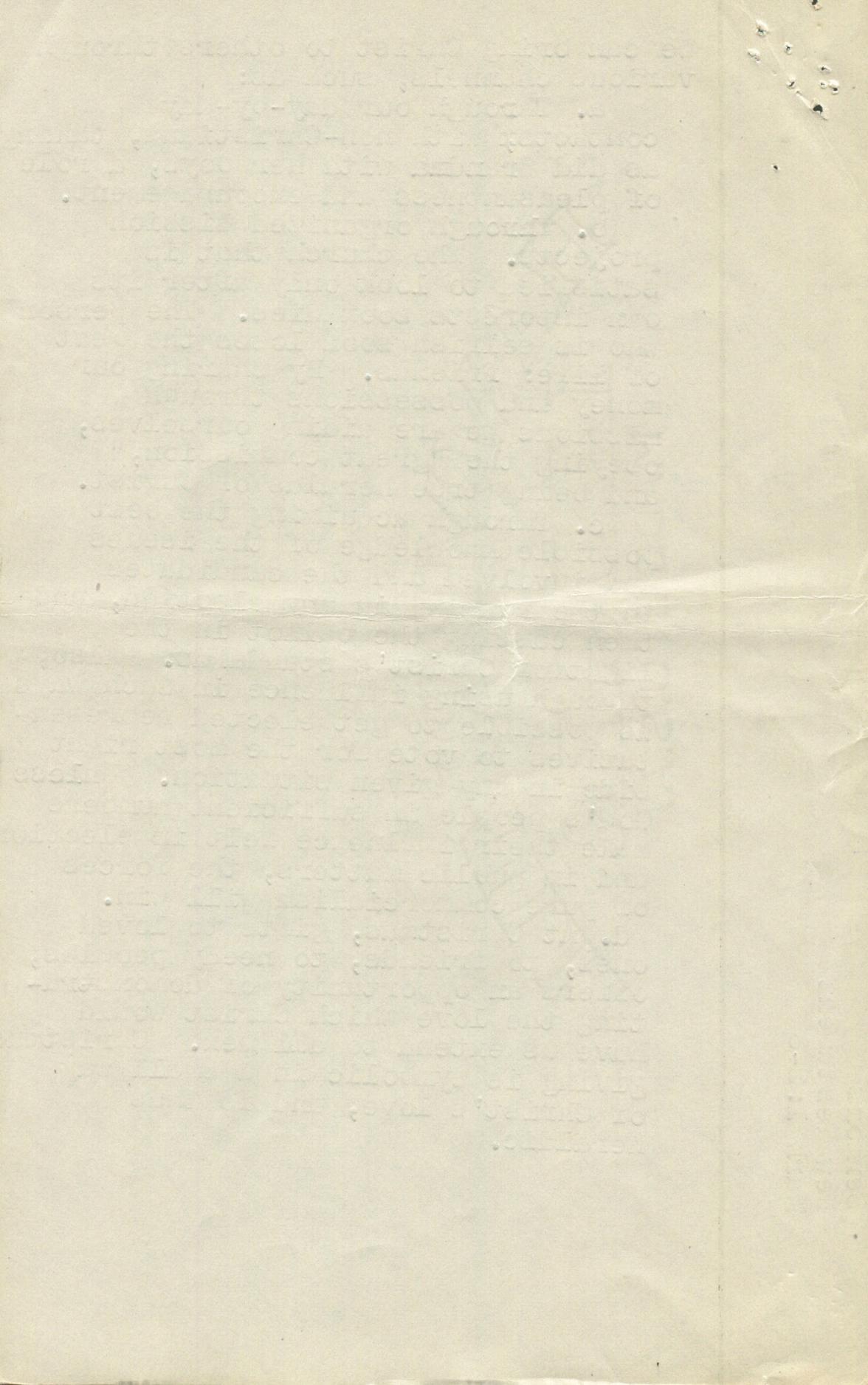
We can bring Christ to others through various channels, such as:

a. Through our day-by-day contacts with non-Christians, taking as did Grandma with her boys, a role of pleasantness and encouragement.

b. Through organized mission projects. The church that is satisfied to look only after its own interests soon dies. The person who is selfish soon loses the best of life: friends. By sharing our money and possessions through missions we are aiding ourselves, obeying the "great commission," and being true heralds of Christ.

c. Through acquiring the best possible knowledge of the issues and involved and the candidates in the running in any election, and then casting the ballot in the light of Christ's standards. Also, through using influence in such ways as possible to get elected representatives to vote for the most right side in any given situation. Unless God's people in sufficient numbers make their influence felt in election and in public matters, the forces of pure commercialism will win.

d. At Christmas, gifts to loved ones, to friends, to needy peoples, offers an opportunity of demonstrating the love which Christ would have us extend to all men. Christmas giving is symbolic in a small way of Christ's love, and is thus heraldic.



11
Conclusion:

All Christians should be heralds of Christ.

1. God used men -- prophets -- to prepare for Christ's birth as a baby on earth.

2. God used men all through the ages to herald the coming of Christ to men's hearts.

3. God through Christ and his disciples has commanded us to be heralds, proclaiming the coming of Jesus, his willingness to enter, every human heart.

"Make straight, make straight
The highway of the King."



PROVISIONAL

1865

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