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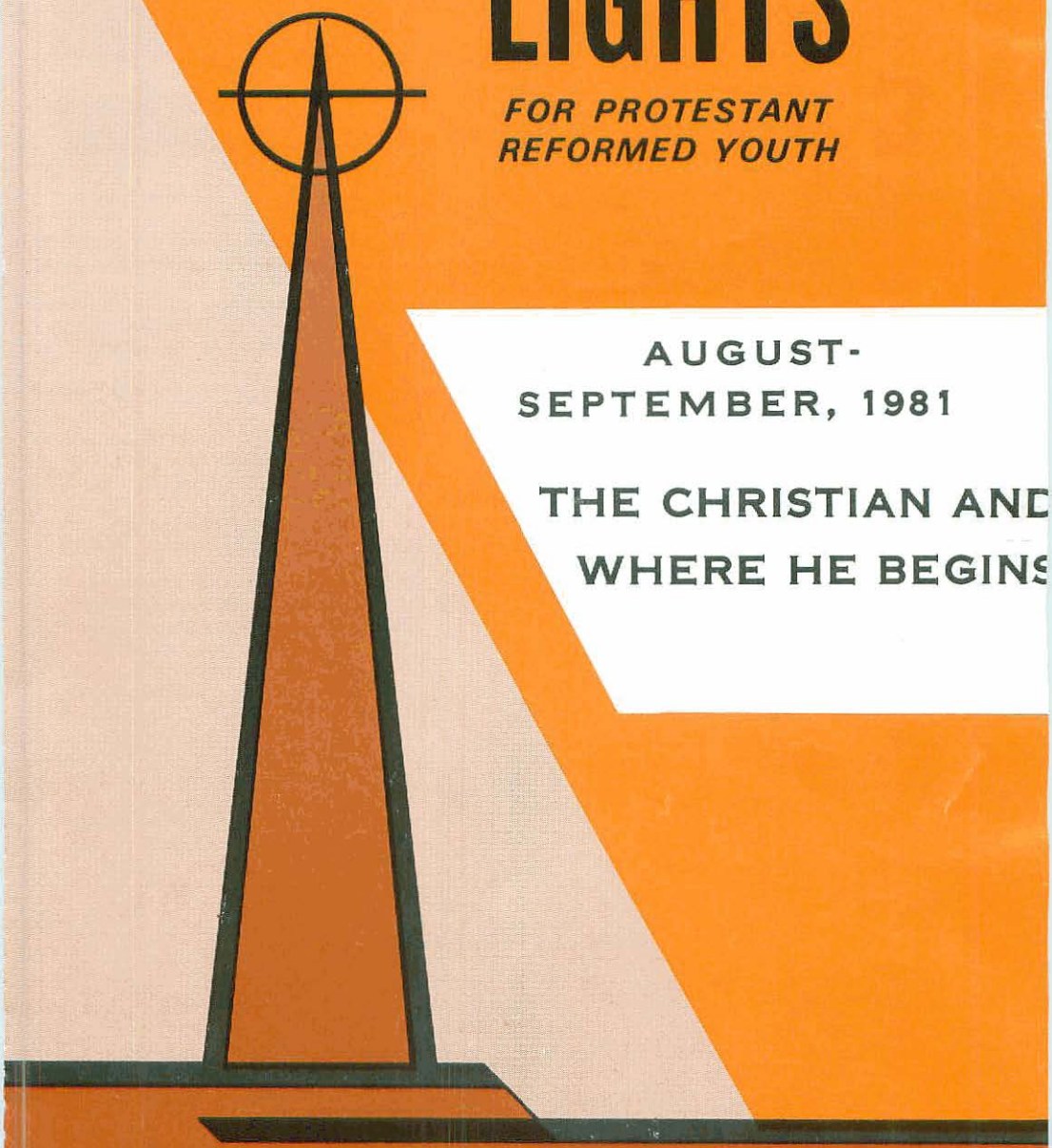

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EDITORIAL

Proverbs for Young Pilgrims:
THE GOLDEN RULE AND MURDER

by Ed Lotterman

Young Pilgrim, having indicated to you in a previous editorial that I would again write concerning the Golden Rule and the second table of the Law, we will proceed to study the Sixth Commandment. Our purpose in this editorial is an achievement of a better understanding of murder, its causes and prevention, and how this relates to our lives. In connection with this study, you do well to review for yourself exactly what we believe the Scriptures teach concerning the Sixth Commandment. You can find this summary in the Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Day XL, questions and answers 105-107.

Often we think of murder as an intentional ending of one's own or another's life. We would limit the concept of murder to the physical aspect. This is partly why abortion is acceptable to so many today. Many do not view the fetus as an individual being, but rather as a dependent type of organ in the mother's body. As such, the fetus then becomes something which may be discarded if the patient (mother) does not wish to be bothered by it.

But murder is much more involved than something that is simply physical. Murder involves the nature of man. Murder involves enmity against God and His Law. And God's Law concerns not only our love of God, but also our love for the neighbor, our fellow man, if you will. So we see that added to the physical aspect is the spiritual.

What are the causes of murder? Hatred against God and neighbor! The entire second table of the Law is encompassed. If we violate the Fifth Commandment and rebel against one in authority (parent, teacher, elder, policeman), we also violate the Sixth Commandment and commit murder. Have you ever rebelled in love? Impossible! If we violate the Seventh Commandment and do that which is unclean, we also violate the Sixth Commandment and commit murder. Is it possible to do in love that which is accursed of God? Likewise the Eighth and Ninth and Tenth. Can you in love take to yourself that which belongs to another? Can you in love speak that which is false? Can you in love delight yourself in the violation of God's commandments?

There is also the desire for revenge which causes the transgression of the Sixth Commandment. The desire for revenge also comes from a selfish attitude. If one becomes offended and seeks to avenge himself, let him know the Scripture: "Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place

unto wrath: for it is written, Vengence is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord." Romans 12:19.

If because of wounded pride there is desire for revenge, it will also manifest itself in envy and hatred. (And so it is with abortion also. The fact is that the mother hates the unwanted child. But then our mothers are not always so pleased about pregnancy either.)

As far as envy is concerned, Young Pilgrim, do you see yourself in the picture? Have you ever been discontent because another person has an advantage over you? Do you have an ill feeling toward another person because of his position in life? Maybe he made the team and you didn't. Perhaps you are envious of another person's possessions? Possessions include not only material goods, but also, for example, an IQ!

The question which confronts us is: Which one of us is exempt?

There is still more involved. We have become expert at executing the sneak attack! We do not reveal to the victim our hatred, envy, anger, or the desire of revenge. Oh, no! Behind the victim's back, we reveal it to others! Often this is accomplished by the spoken word. Do you know what James writes concerning the tongue? "And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity. . . ." James 3:6

Our deeds and actions illustrate our intent of murder also. Sometimes even our "practical jokes" or "teasing" leads to the ridicule and subsequent hurt of our neighbor. Everyone laughs, even the victim, but deep down he is hurt! Isn't that a type of sneak attack? Such are the causes and means of murder.

We now deal with the prevention of murder.

Who among us is exempt from violating the Sixth Commandment? Are we not all depraved sinners? Do we not believe that total depravity is our lot in life? Yet the Heidelberg Catechism mentions the prevention of murder in Question and Answer 107, which you have just read as I suggested at the beginning of this editorial. (You did read it, didn't you?)

The prevention of murder lies in the Love of Christ which reigns within our hearts. The Love of Christ compels us to Love our neighbor. Our desire is not for revenge against our neighbor, but for obedience to God. And remember the Proverb for you, Young Pilgrim: "Say not, I will do so to him as he hath done to me: I will render unto the man according to his work." Proverbs 24:29. This leaves no room for revenge!

The Love of Christ which reigns within our hearts also manifests itself in various ways.

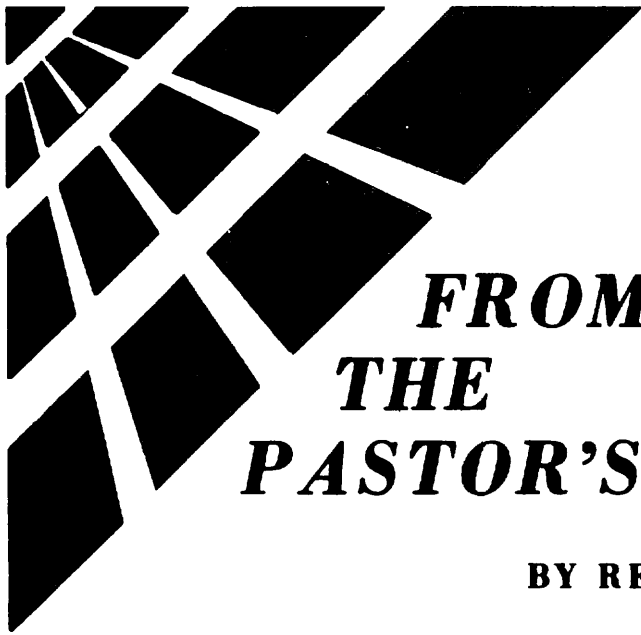
Consider kindness: Eph. 4:32 — "And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you."

Consider peace: Romans 12:18 — "If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men."

Consider hospitality: I Peter 4:9 — "Use hospitality one to another without grudging."

For your own personal study and development in a sanctified walk, I would

encourage you to search out other passages of Holy Scripture that speak of Christian virtues. Discover what the Proverb means in your life. As your sanctified walk in this pilgrim life develops, may you, by God's grace, reveal to others the Love of Christ in your heart.



FROM THE PASTOR'S STUDY

BY REV. G. LUBBERS

Sanctification By The Mercies Of God

"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service." Romans 12:1

I am addressing you, covenant young people, as those who have been promised the Holy Spirit no less than it was promised to your parents. If I did not address you as such, could not address you as such, you would not even be

fit people to address. In a word, you would be as the children of this world: uncircumcized Philistines, outside of the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, without hope and without God in the world.

But now I do address you as "brethren" in the Lord Jesus, as those of whom God is not ashamed to be called your God, whereas He has prepared for you a city! You belong to that peculiar people, that royal priesthood, called out of darkness into God's marvelous light.

So take the shoes from off your feet with me and draw near and hear this beautiful admonition from God's Word.

Now I will ask you a very important question. Did you know, and do you realize, that you, in distinction from the children and young people of the world, are called and exhorted to walk as reborn children of God? Is it not blazoned upon every page of Scripture to you as well as to your parents and grandparents: "be ye holy because I (am) holy" I Peter 1:16; Lev. 19:2; 20:7 That is your and my privilege and sacred duty in our liberty in Christ.

Another question I would ask you: do you realize that this call to a holy walk follows from God's sovereign and all-wise counsel, because we have been elected from eternity in Christ, ere the worlds were made by the Word of God? Do you realize that this election in turn is rooted in God's having foreordained us unto the adoption of children through Jesus Christ, and that God adopted us unto Himself to be children who live unto the praise of the glory of God's grace? If not then read carefully and prayerfully Ephesians 1:3-5.

We who have been adopted into God's family must know that this is the will of our heavenly Father "even our sanctification. . . ." (I Thess. 4:3) God did not call us efficaciously out of sin's dominion that we should live in fleshly uncleanness, but He has called us unto holiness. (I Thess. 4:7) Now the marvelous thing is, in this mystery of God, that this calling to live a holy life flows forth from the sovereign election of God, and that these fruits in our life are the infallible fruits of election, by which we make our calling and election sure. (II Peter 1:5-10) This great truth of the Bible is sometimes miserably misunderstood by God's people; not seldomly is this grace of election neglected, or what is worse, trifled with by young as well as by the older in the congregation. Then the just judgment of God comes upon such rash presumption, such idle trifling with the grace of election. (Canons I, 13b) Then people turn the Scriptures to their own destruction, saying: let us sin, that grace may abound, whose judgment from God is just. (Romans 3:8) Such carelessly and blatantly affirm: let us do evil that good may come forth.

Now all such wanton babbling is cut off with one stroke of the Holy Spirit when He connects our sanctified walk of dedication to God, when He joins our "reasonable service" with the great and rich and sovereign mercies of God! It is the Lord's mercies that we are saved, and it is the Lord's mercies that we are kept in the faith, and it is the Lord's tender mercies, His bowels of compassion that we are not consumed. (Lam. 3:22) The Lord will have compassion according to the multitude of His mercies. (Lam. 3:32) Only because of these

sovereign mercies can and will we be walking in godliness, presenting our bodies a living sacrifice to God, holy acceptable to God. It is of these mercies, of these bowels of compassion that Paul speaks repeatedly: (I Cor. 1:3) God is called the Father of all mercies and of all consolation, and in His fear we are to put on bowels of mercy and compassion toward one another. (Phil. 2:1; Col. 3:12)

God's mercy is a sovereign mercy upon the vessels of mercy! Salvation is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God who shows mercy. That is the great lesson of the ages. Moses needed to learn that lesson profoundly at Sinai after the making of the golden calf. (Ex. 33:19; Rom. 9:15) Wherefore, when Paul united our walk of godliness with the overflowing of the "mercies" of God he cuts off all human and wicked pride.

On the one hand, this cuts off all possibility of *work*-holiness, all attempts by works, and thus purges the last vestiges of the leaven of Phariseeism from our thinking and aspirations. Paul underscores here the great truth of the warning of Jesus to His disciples "beware of the *leaven* of the Pharisees". (Matt. 16:6, 12; Luke 12:1) This teaching of the Pharisees is like an evil leaven; it permeates all the doctrines of Scripture, making man and not God the author of salvation. Then justification is based upon a holy walk of man's achievements and not sanctification based on the justification in the blood of atonement, the perfect righteousness of the crucified Lamb of God. But when connected with these "mercies of God" all is sovereign elective mercy. And also the exhortation is *based* upon the doctrine of elective mercy.

On the other hand this connecting of the exhortation to walk in godliness, presenting our bodies a living sacrifice, cuts off all vain prattling, ruling out exhortations, precepts of the Gospel, the Law of the Kingdom of heaven as a rule, *goad* and *incentive* by the Spirit unto good words. For then the basis of all exhortations becomes for us what Christ has merited for us on the Cross and what He has wrought for our salvation in His mighty resurrection in which is powerfully revealed the Son of God. Here we must not attempt to equate this with God's sovereignty and man's responsibility as if they were a contradiction and an insoluble mystery. But here we have God's sovereign love and mercy, and His sovereign will to effectuate this work in our life and walk. For here is not the law which works wrath, but the precepts of the Gospel, which the Holy Spirit so uses that they are *His* means of grace. These are what God has joined together in His wisdom for our salvation and, therefore, we must not tempt God in the church by separating these two: the *working of God's grace* and the *means of grace.* For all the glory is God's both in the means and in the fruit.

Now this may have taxed your thinking just a bit, my youthful reader. You may have to read it two or three times, and do a little reflecting on it, and praying about it. But I did not write the Bible. And I cannot water it down very much, can I? And I may not dilute it either, may I?

Now take your Bible in hand once more. What do you see? You will see that Paul begins this text as the start of a new section in this great letter to the Romans. But in beginning he connects what he will say here with what he has

taught in the first eleven chapters. Really all is summed up in the grand doxology in Rom. 11:32ff. "For God has concluded them all in unbelief, that he might have *mercy* upon all." And then that final verse "for out of him, and through him, and unto him are all things: to whom be glory and honor forever". (Rom. 11:36) Yes, all are under sin, all come short of the glory of God. There is none that doeth good, Jew or Greek. Then Paul shows the marvel of grace in Christ, without works of law. (Rom. 3:19, 20 and 20-31) And now Paul will show what this means for the life of sanctification and godliness for an erstwhile heathen people, who had used their bodies in the service of idolatry and fornication, yes, in all kinds of homo-sexuality, sodomy and lesbianism. But now they are to present their bodies not in the brothels of sin, but in the service of God, upon God's altar of total consecration.

This is a call to "service". This means that they are to place their members, their bodies, their eyes, ears, hands, feet, mouth in the public and reverential service of the heavenly temple of God. For this temple of God are we, the church! The covenant young people are living members of this church, living stones in the temple of God. Here alone they can and do remember their Creator, saying: I believe in God, the Father, Creator of heaven and earth.

Such is our reasonable service.

This service is *reasonable*. The Greek term real speaks of a *logical* service. There is a certain divine logic in Scripture in connection with God's *sovereign mercies* and the Christian walk of the believers. It is the logic of God's holiness which requires us to be holy. It is the logic of a consistent pattern. Such is the logic of the "therefore" in this text. It is the logic which is the very opposite of the "logic" of sin. The logic of sin is that one is under law and the curse of the law, and that the law is the power of sin, and that sin can only become more sinful by the commandment. But here is the logic of grace, whereby we are no longer under the dominion of sin. It is the logic of the free-gift of grace, whereby we rule by one Jesus Christ unto life eternal. It is the logic of no longer being a servant of sin, but that now we obey a form of doctrine whereunto we have been delivered. (Rom. 6:13) It is the logic of Christ's resurrection life, as this follows from Christ's having died unto sin and from Christ; who now lives unto God. It is the logic of clinging to the Head Christ from whom all the body fitly framed together makes increase by every joint which supplies, so that every member is perfected finally in his own place in the Body in final glory.

That is the logic of not conforming to this world, but being completely transformed into the perfection of the upward calling in Christ Jesus. This is no mere morality; it is not legal precepts, but it is obedience to the Gospel-precepts in Christ Jesus, by which we are more and more conformed to the image of God.

Such are the powerful and sovereign mercies of God by which we present our bodies holy to God, an acceptable offering, well-pleasing in God's sight. It is the new life of heaven here upon earth, a life of thankfulness to God for His great redemption.

WHAT'S WRONG WITH ROCK?

II. The Negro Influence

by Terri Garvelink

It was the music of the American Negro which brought about rock 'n' roll! This fact becomes very clear as we trace the origin of rock music. But in addition to the evidence presented to you in our consideration of this subject in the two previous installments of "What's Wrong With Rock?" we would like to further drive this point home with a number of quotations from other sources:

"In a very real sense rock was implicit in the music of the first African brought to America." 1)

"Throughout the twentieth century the music that has flowed from the black community has been the dominant influence in American music. The most recent example of this influence has been the rock 'n' roll revolution, which continues to dominate popular musical expression in America." 2)

"Today, we can hear this echo of Africa (rock 'n' roll) which welled up through the bloody experience of American blacks, all over the world." 3)

". . . rock is a direct, straight line development from the blues. . . . It was only when white kids started playing the music (R&B) in the early fifties that they began calling it something else. . . . Nashville called it 'nigger music' when Elvis Presley first exploded out of Memphis in 1954, and wanted nothing to do with it." 4)

"Little Richard . . . was the reason that much later everyone realized there wasn't one thing in those feverish rock years that wasn't copped straight from what was then known as 'race music'." (R&B) 5)

Having established the fact that rock 'n' roll finds its main source in the American black, we need to be cautioned lest we jump to wrong conclusions. What we need to see is this: the problem with the origin of rock music does not lie in the fact that it is to be found in the music of the American Negro but rather that *it is to be found in the music of the American Negro who remained essentially pagan, or, who has slid back* [*sometimes temporarily*] *to pagan ways*. What's more, not only Christian blacks but also many middle and upper-class, more educated, blacks have, especially in years past, looked upon the music which led up to rock 'n' roll with disapproval and even embarassment, considering it to be a disgrace to their race. This is an important point and one we feel needs to be made *and* supported before we

move on to the beat - the musical aspect - of rock D.V. next time.

As you and I well know there will be black brothers and sisters singing the song of the Lamb in heaven with us: "out of every nation, tribe and tongue" Christ gathers His church. But it is not the music of our black fellow-saints in Christ we are speaking of in our consideration of the origin of rock. Among blacks as well as among whites a distinction can be made between sacred and secular music. We are aware that this subject is a complex one especially in the case of black music. There is the connection between rhythm and blues and gospel, for instance, the powerful rhythm they often have in common, and the drifting in and out of the church by the musicians and singers of both types of music. There is the fact that black religious music often has an element of protest in it. There is the difficulty of defining "soul" in this context. Nevertheless, without going into any great depth, we will attempt to clarify this issue somewhat, and we will do so by quoting some comments and opinions from a number of sources - *mostly Negro* - first from a general, and then from a Christian perspective.

"Jazz, in its initial stages, was the secular music of the American blacks." 6)

"The underworld milieu of gamblers, gunmen and whores . . . is the same one that brought forth the earliest urban blues." 7)

"The average Negro family did not allow the blues, or even the raggedy music, played in their homes. The earthy blues were considered to be sinful songs." 8)

"Ragtime pianist Luckey Roberts recalls that by the early 1900's, the blues were not allowed to be played in the parlors of many 'decent' Negro homes." 9)

"The performing tradition (of ragtime) . . . was associated with all the lowlife images of the sporting district, and with some reason . . . . It was a fast-paced life stimulated by drinks and drugs. People who died of drug over-dose, of syphilis-deaths in their early twenties were not uncommon for this sub-culture." 10)

"Eubie Blake (a black jazz pianist) around 1900: 'I'm in there ragging . . . out of 'Traumerei' on the organ and my mother opened the door and laid down the law, 'Take that ragtime out of my house! ' " 11)

"Jelly Roll Morton's grandmother kicked him out of the house when he was fifteen for playing in Storyville. She loved music, but said people who played in such places were bums, and she didn't want him to be a bad influence on his sisters." 12)

"Blatant, abandoned, full of driving energy and imagination, often outrageous, inventive, this was a music calculated to shock the sensibilities of genteel America. This was the kind of music that resounded in . . . notorious pleasure places. . . ." 13)

"Pianist Henry Rages, . . . was, in one of the unfortunate jazz traditions, an enormous drinker. . . ." 14)

". . . with his music and dance . . . the Negro projected . . . a powerful

sensuality, his pain and lust, his love and hate, his ambition and his despair. The Negro projected into his music his very Body.'' 15)

''This (R&B) was music that middle-class and upper-class black society tended to look upon as disreputable.'' 16)

''The practice of couple dancing - which had become the rage in the (eighteen) sixties and the scandal of most rural areas towards the close of the ninteenth century - stimulated the *worldly* folks (emphasis mine) of the Negro community to create the far more erotic dances of blues and jazz . . . involving freely sensual movements . . . . Dancing in this way the 'Devil's chillun' of the Negro community defied the (black) preacher and his respectable following.'' 17)

(Comparing the blues to spirituals) ''. . . the emphasis was less on man's relation to God and his future in God's heaven, and more on man's devilish life on earth.'' 18)

''Unlike gospel, blues is not a music of transcendence; its equivalent to God's grace was sex and love.'' 19)

''Calling jazz an 'agency of the devil' the pastor of the Calvary Baptist Church in New York said in 1926: 'Jazz, with its . . . appeal to the sensuous, should be stamped out.'

''In 1939 the Pittsburg Courier, a Negro paper, received many letters protesting the 'swinging' of Negro spirituals. The secretary of the Antioch Missionary Baptist Association wrote . . . : 'We . . . protest this insidious evil. Music as it is now sung, in gin shops, dance halls, on records . . . is truly a disgrace to the entire race!' A music teacher in an Alabama high school for Negroes wrote: 'The sacrilegious desecration of our spirituals . . . is entirely wrong and out of place!' '' 20)

''In 1958, in an airplane in which fire broke out, he (R&B/rock singer Little Richard) fell on his knees promising God he'd give up 'the devil's work' and devote himself to the gospel if he survived.'' 21)

Finally, to quote something pertinent to the attitude of both individual black church member *and* congregation of *more recent* years (late 1960's), a few paragraphs from the book ''Listen to the Blues'' by Bruce Cook:

> ''Annie Pavageau, widow of a jazz bassist of some reputation, used to play and sing the blues some . . . . 'I was a young woman when I was playing and singing the blues, I wasn't a church member at that time, not even a church goer.'
>
> Does she still play the blues? She shook her head emphatically, 'No', she said, 'I just like church music, religious music. I don't like blues and I don't play it any more at all. I quit. I didn't believe I could play all that ragtime music and still serve God in truth and spirit.'
>
> I asked about her husband's relation to the church. Was he accepted by the (Baptist) congregation? 'Sure', she said, 'the congregation would accept a blues singer or player as a member of the congregation - if he give it up . . . . You can't serve God and Mammon, too. Everything that doesn't pertain to God is sinful.'
>
> Annie Pavageau had made quite plain an attitude among blacks of which

many whites are completely ignorant. . . . The official attitude of the black church . . . is that the blues is the Devil's music. It is not just the music alone that they are against . . . the blues is roundly . . . condemned by the black church because of the way of life it represents - the milieu of hard drinking, loose sex, and quick violence in the city bars and country juke joints where the music is played. And the black church as a conservative, stabilizing force in the community, has been fighting against this way of life right from the start. . . ."

These comments, made over a period of time from the late 1800's to around 1970, seemed to us to be helpful to keep from generalizing and to get a more complete and accurate picture concerning the matter of the Negro influence on rock 'n' roll.

Next time, the Lord willing, the BEAT!

1) Robert Palmer, Rolling Stones Illustrated History of Rock 'n' Roll
2) John Rublowsky, Black Music in America
3) Ibid., quoting Eldridge Cleaver
4) Bruce Cook, Listen to the Blues
5) Lillian Roxon, Rock Encyclopedia
6) John Rublowsky, Op. Cit.
7) Bruce Cook, Op. Cit.
8) Willie (the Lion) Smith, Music on my Mind
9) Nat Hentoff, Essay in the book "American Music" by Charles Nanry
10) James Haskins, Scott Joplin - The Man who Made Ragtime
11) Frank Tirro, Jazz - A History
12) Ibid., quoting Buerkle and Barker, Bourbon Street Black
13) John Rublowsky, Op. Cit.
14) Barry Ulanov, A History of Jazz in America
15) John Rublowsky, Op. Cit., quoting Eldridge Cleaver
16) David Ewen, All the Years of American Popular Music
17) Alan Lomax, Folk Songs of North America
18) Barry Ulanov, Op. Cit.
19) Greil Marcus, Mystery Train
20) Morroe Berger, Essay in the book, "American Music" by Charles Nanry
21) David Ewen, Op. Cit.

1981 SINGSPIRATION SCHEDULE

September 20	Hope
November 22	Faith
December 20	Hudsonville

WHAT ABOUT THE CHILDREN?

by Ben Wigger

Now that I have become just a little bit older than most of you, it seems that my point of view has changed just a little. Or maybe it is simply the fact that I have become a parent, and all of the responsibilities and duties that go along with that important God-given calling are crowding in around me, making me more aware of the needs of children. But no matter, because what we are about to consider together is important for all of us, not just those who are parents.

In fact, you may find that you feel much the same way I do. Since we are all of the household of faith, it follows that our concern and feelings for and toward children would be the same.

In today's world there seems to be an ever widening exploitation of children, and this exploitation does not always have a good result on the development and growth of the child. Today's children are aided by an almost from birth bombardment of different stimuli. In fact, today's children may very well be the brightest children in history. But what is this world doing to them, and what are they being turned into?

For one thing, it seems that today's child is expected to grow up much quicker than he or she had to in the past. We see signs of this around us every day, perhaps so much so that most of it escapes our attention.

Take the whole area of the school for one example. Now I know that it could be me, but it seems that today's children on an average learn more difficult things than I ever had to. I was not the world's greatest student, it just seems that today's second and third graders seem to be far more advanced than I was when I was in those grades.

Not only that, but take the whole area of sports. It seems like each year those who participate in sports programs at the world class level get younger and younger. You notice this especially in the areas of swimming and gymnastics, where the contestants quite often are just into their early teens.

And remember, to become a world class gymnast, at say age 13, takes years of practice.

Not only that, but it seems that children catch on to games and amusements so much quicker. I for one, still haven't figured out how to play computer baseball, while children who are one third my age seem to have no trouble with it at all.

I have also known an eight year old who not only learned quite a few of the ends and outs of chess after just a couple of games, but went on to teach others in the family the game. How do they do it? Or is it just me?

As I heard it said by one individual recently, "Is society taking the child out of children as it has taken the Christ out of Christmas?"

Today's child is not only expected to grow "old" much sooner, but the world also expects the child to play the role of sex objects; for example, in advertising. Children are made the villains in horror movies and novels. And there is also the stomach turning child pornography industry in this country which is gradually beginning to expose itself. There are also the child murders, most notably the 33 young men who were murdered by John Gacy in Chicago in 1977, and the 27 young people who have been found murdered by a killer or killers unknown in Atlanta.

There is nothing so wonderful as the love that is shared between a child and parent. There is just so much that binds them together that there are no words with enough meaning which could really express it. It has to be experienced to really be understood.

Speaking for myself, it is just a wonder of God's love, that I thank Him for daily, that He has allowed me to experience the joys of parenthood. And just let me say in passing that what really overwhelms me is that God's love for me, and you and all of His children is infinitely greater than my love for my children.

But knowing within myself how I feel towards my children, it is truly hard for me to fathom the corrupt soul of the world that seemingly hates children. All of the evidence points to that one fact, the world hates its children. There is a word for this type of person, he is called a misopedist. I will be the first to admit that that word is not exactly a household word yet. But I am afraid that its meaning affects every household, every neighborhood, and every community in our nation.

Misopedia can be defined as the abnormal hatred of children. And there is a shocking epidemic of it running through this nation of ours.

These stories can quite really make us sick. It seems to be the one area that can still get a reaction from us. We have become a shockproof nation almost across the criminal board, with the exception of crimes against children.

We turn our eyes from the T.V. news when a beaten and battered child is shown. We find it almost impossible to read more than just a few lines of any account in our newspapers that involves a sordid crime committed against a child without getting sick to our stomachs.

We get that horrible sinking feeling when we hear the radio report another

case of a missing child. When we read or hear about children murdered, raped, abused, or starved, the bile in the pit of our stomach sours.

There is so much more that could be said. If one just looks at the facts and figures that are kept on all of these crimes, the immense size of the problem begins to come into view.

Once again we see all too clearly the evidence of the total corrupt state man finds himself in. He is completely given over to sin and all his thoughts and actions are only evil.

These crimes against children have always been with us, but never to this large an extent. Man is sinking ever lower and lower into the mire that he has made this world.

No doubt having received children from the hand of God makes me more aware of the danger that can befall them, and there is nothing that makes me angrier than the thought of someone hurting them.

Our world is about to fill up its cup with sin. Ask yourself, how long will God allow it to continue?

QUESTIONS FOR PROF. HANKO

The following is a series of questions and answers similar to the ones which appeared in the April issue of *Beacon Lights*. This time we have focused our attention on the Theological School of the Protestant Reformed Churches and specifically Prof. Herman Hanko. Questions of general interest were chosen and we hope you will find the answers which he gives to them of interest also.

by Prof. H. Hanko

Professor Hanko is a member of the faculty of the Theological School of the Protestant Reformed Churches.

1. Professor, what area of study do you enjoy the most?

If you had said, "What work do you enjoy the most?" I would have to answer that preaching is still my most enjoyable work. But I presume you refer

to my work in Seminary. Then I would have to answer that exegesis is most enjoyable because it involves working directly with Scripture.

2. What would you say is the most important course that a student takes during his time in Seminary?

This is not so easy to answer. A student is trained to be a preacher; and so the goal of all the instruction is to teach the student to preach. Every course is geared to this, and a case can be made for many of the courses. For example, Homiletics is instruction in sermon making. Hermeneutics is instruction in Biblical interpretation — an essential for preaching. But I would probably have to say that Dogmatics is the most important. The student receives three solid years of Dogmatics. In it he learns the historic Christian faith, the Reformed faith. He learns the doctrine which he must teach and preach. He learns the concepts of Scripture which form the heart of all his teaching and preaching. All in all, I would have to say that Dogmatics is the most important.

3. If a young man came to you and said he felt called to the ministry, what would you tell him to do?

I would probably quiz him a bit first to find out why he thought he was called. I would try to correct any misunderstandings he might have about the nature of the call. But it would be especially important to impress upon him that God finally reveals His will through pursuing his studies and through a call from Christ's Church. So he must be urged to begin his studies so that the Lord may show him whether the way is opened for him to work towards the ministry. I would surely urge him also to pray much that he may be subject to God's will and learn to walk as led by God's hand.

4. Do you foresee the Theological School growing in size?

There is, I am convinced, a great deal of potential for growth. We receive a number of inquiries every year from students outside our Churches, and these indicate that there are students who are looking for a Reformed Seminary education along the lines of an education which we offer. But it is our experience that most theological students are looking for a degree-granting program. This we do not have. I firmly believe that we ought to investigate this matter more fully and work towards this end.

However, as our needs within the denomination grow, our need for students will also grow and we hope our school will expand with it.

5. Do you think the young men who enter the Theological School now have a basic knowledge of the Bible equal to those who entered twenty-five years ago?

There seems to me to be a decline in education in general to some extent. Our students, on the whole, do not have a broad education in many fields with a broad knowledge in the liberal arts as once they had. Education seems to be narrower. Nor does there seem to be as disciplined an education any more. There does not seem to be the discipline in thinking and in study habits as once there was. This has affected knowledge of Scripture too to some extent. I may be wrong, however. It is always easy to glorify the past.

6. Are there specific areas of study that are stressed more or less as the ecclesiastical climate changes?

Our curriculum has remained basically unaltered since the beginning of our Seminary. We offer the traditional Seminary courses for the most part, and these are the time-tested subjects. Our curriculum undergoes periodic consideration and there are discussions from time to time concerning possible changes. We have made some such changes also when they were warranted and when we believed they were improvements in the instruction. But we have not changed much. Other Seminaries have altered their curriculum, sometimes radically, in keeping with their views on the changing role of the church and the minister. But many of these changes are not improvements and are rooted in erroneous ideas concerning the calling of the Church.

We do put forth effort to make the specific content of the courses relevant to the times. This is done in the teaching, in assigned reading in contemporary theology, in required studies of significant books and articles and in requiring research in various areas.

Next year, the Lord willing, our Seminary will be expanded to a four-year course. Actually, not very many new subjects will be taught as required subjects, but electives will be offered in various subjects and there will be opportunity for students to pursue independent studies in various areas, to attend Seminary type courses, and to have more time for research. We think this will be a great improvement and we are looking forward to putting the program into practice.

7. It is often said, "As the Seminary goes, so go the Churches." How true is that saying?

History proves that this is true from a negative viewpoint. Heresy often starts in the Seminary. But heresy can also appear in the Churches even though the Seminary is sound, as is evident from our history in the split of 1953. But it nevertheless remains a fact that ministers trained in the Seminary will take their training, for good or for ill, into the Churches.

8. What place do you see the Protestant Reformed Theological School having

in the extension of the gospel throughout the world?

There are several areas to consider here. In connection with a possible degree program which I mentioned earlier, it would be possible to train men from other Churches who would preach the gospel also in other Churches and denominations. In the second place, we are broadening our curriculum in the area of Missions especially with a view to giving special instruction to those who want to prepare themselves specifically for this work. Thirdly, already our literature (Seminary publications and *Journal*) goes all over the world and we receive a great deal of interesting response. Finally, there are several possibilities which could be further considered. One is the organization of tape courses which would be used throughout the world. Another idea is the organization of conferences among our ministers and officebearers and others from other denominations. But I do think that the most important is the expansion of our enrollment is the most important and we ought to give this matter some thought and study.

9. How best do you think parents can encourage their sons to see if the ministry is their calling in life?

Several suggestions can be made, most of which seem to me to be obvious. Parents ought always to have a proper attitude towards the ministry, speak with respect and thankfulness about it, and pray for it. They ought to surround their children with good literature and encourage them to read it. They ought to insist that children take a proper attitude towards worship and church activities. All of these, of course, pertain to any covenant home and the instruction of all the children, but they are so often lacking in our day that they must be encouraged. The most important is that parents lead a child to consider his life's calling before the face of God asking, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" And in this connection the needs of the ministry ought to be considered.

10. When you sit in the pew and the minister is one of your former students, is it difficult to be just another listener?

Yes it is. I would be less than honest if I said it was easy. But the point is that we must not only be *listeners*, but worshippers. If we learn to worship, then we can listen as well.

11. What in your opinion is the most dangerous spiritual foe against which the youth of the Church of Christ must guard in the world today?

It is very difficult to say because there are many weaknesses and they often go hand in hand. But perhaps one could say that the most dangerous spiritual foe is spiritual and ecclesiastical lethargy and indifference.

Truth vs. Error

REV. ROBERT C. HARBACH

The Christian and Where He Begins

In the last two issues of *Beacon Lights*, Rev. Harbach has been focusing our attention in "Truth vs. Error" on various subjects relating to the Christian and his earthly pilgrimage. This month's contribution is the third on this subject and will be continued in the next several issues.

"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." Could you possibly conceive of a more beautiful, concise and fitting statement prefacing, not only the Bible, but also the whole of existence? It is simply incomparable! It is absolutely unique in its expression. No other religion, no philosophy at all has such a sublime introductory statement. It must be our starting-point. Here is the basis of all thought, action, plan, design, aim and aspiration.

A perfect statement, but it is spoiled when one says something like this: All well and good, but isn't it more logical first to set about determining whether there is a God? Then our next step would be to systematically arrange the evidences of His existence in order to fortify ourselves against the attacks of atheism. But you must see that this procedure is utterly wrong since it assumes that there is a place to begin before the beginning. For God is always first. Here He first reveals himself in the fulness of His being. That is as it must be. God cannot be prefaced. He prefaces all things. He introduces himself. For there is none else. God alone is God. He who inhabits eternity made all things. Before the creation there was nothing but God. Physically and materially there was neither light nor darkness, neither sound nor silence. These things would come into being, because God who is essentially light and in whom is no darkness at all, would create them on the first day. He sat in His

eternal dwelling-place not in solitude and silence, for He, the triune, covenant God, in three co-equal persons of the Godhead, conversed in a communion of love. He broke the silence of the universe with His, Let there be light! Now, on the stage of the world He shows His eternal power and Godhead.

So God *is* always first. He is first as to His word and its divine inspiration. For the word came not in old time by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as moved (carried along) by the Holy Spirit. 2 Peter 1:21. He is first in salvation, for the Son of God as the Lamb was foreordained before the foundation of the world. 1 Peter 1:20. He is first in the New Creation: "Behold, I create a new heaven and a new earth, and the former shall not be remembered, nor come to mind." Isaiah 65:17. We choose Him because He first chose us. Ephesians 1:4. We repent because He first granted us repentance. 2 Timothy 2:25b. We believe because He first gave us faith. Ephesians 2:8,9. We love Him because He first loved us. 1 John 4:19.

"In the beginning God!" This is neither human speculation nor the result of human investigation. This is irrepressible truth. Science cannot establish the truth, but true science must and will here find its only origin and foundation. For science of itself knows admittedly nothing about origins. Biology knows nothing about it, nor zoology, nor geology, no, nor paleontology. Science, if it would take all the facts into account, as it must if it would still be called science, must take the Bible into account as the only infallible divine revelation. Science, where its findings are valid, will coincide with the divine record. "In the beginning was the Word." All things must conform to the Word, every thought and imagination, every technique and enterprise. It is not, first confirm the Word, then conform to the Word; but be conformed to it and know in that conformity that it is the self-confirmed Word. John 7:17, ASV. For "Thy Word is forever *settled* in heaven." Earth must settle *itself* in conformity to heaven. It is not, first analyze the Word, evaluate and substantiate it. Our first response to God and His Word must be to hear, read, believe and worship. That, too, is how we must study the Holy Bible. Searching and researching its matchless pages we "inquire in His temple." This we do, not to arrive at faith. This we do out of faith.

Then this opening sentence of God's revelation is no human invention. For it exposes every fallacy man has devised concerning God and the origin of the world. It leaves no room for atheism, for it presupposes God and His existence. It declines materialism, for it positively distinguishes between God and His material universe. It denies pantheism, for it immediately introduces the infinite, omnipotent personality of God. It refutes the abstract, impersonal first cause of philosophy, for no finite cause or being can create out of nothing, nor call the things not being into being. It is an utterly wrong and dangerous method to begin with man, to assume, in any shade of thought, "in the beginning, *man*," thence to work up to God. We must begin with God, with the doctrine of God, thence work backward to man and to the Bible doctrine of man. (This is really going forward and the only way to progress, as in the first chapter of Genesis.)

By "In the beginning God" we are brought immediately into the presence of God. This is true for the individual creature and for the entire creation alike. For God is behind all things, in all things, around all things and over all things. Neither in this statement, nor anywhere in the Bible, do we have argument for the existence of God. We have no theistic proofs. God reveals himself. That's it. That is enough for those who come unto God, for they believe that He is. God right at the outset declares His own infinite, incomparable superiority with "In the beginning God created."

"*In* the beginning." What was *before* the beginning? God was! The Son was! He is before all things. All things were made by Him. The Holy Spirit was! He is the eternal Spirit. Hebrews 9:14. The atonement was before the beginning, for the Lamb was slain before the foundation of the world. Election of the chosen ones was before the beginning. Ephesians 1:4. Then redemption of the elect was no afterthought, no patch-up of man's fall; but was God's eternal purpose. That world of the redeemed was before the beginning, and, consequently, was and is the best of all worlds. What was the beginning? It was the creation of the stage on which God's attributes would be exhibited and His foreordained counsels would be executed. There the chosen ones would be brought forth, live, come to know the Lord to glorify and enjoy Him for ever. So that *at* the beginning the Lord God began to bring to pass what He had ordained from eternity.

"In the beginning God created." Here is more than God's calling the things that are not as though they were. Also suggested is the relation between Creator and creature, the Creator-creature relationship. That relation is inevitable, inescapable, indestructible. All science and theology must proceed within the bounds of that relation. To think and work without it, as though it does not exist, is to insanely depart from reality. It is to commit intellectual suicide. It is to place the functioning world "out in the blue" of abstract nothingness. It is to turn the universe into a dream-world of utter impossibility. Man originally did recognize that he was a creature. Since the Fall, the natural man has lost this recognition. Now he denies that he is the creature of God. He rather thinks that he himself is all the god there is or that needs be. But it is plain that if man will not live, think, work and worship within the frame-work of the Creator-creature relation, he is headed for trouble. What he does, then, with his every breath, is to wipe God right out of existence. He had been created a king-servant of God, but fallen he wants no more to serve in that relation. By choice he is a playboy-autocrat. He now says of himself and all his, "We are lords; we will come no more unto Thee." So he denies his creaturehood. He aspires to something higher. But he can never advance beyond creaturehood. He is a worker in God's workshop. He cannot go on strike and leave — unless he commits suicide. But then only death terminates his apprenticeship or ends his labor in trade or profession. So there he remains in God's world-workshop. But in it he likes to think of himself as Owner of All. Deeming himself sole proprietor of the universe, he fires God, putting Him out of His own workshop! He will run things as He pleases. That is why the world

is in such bad shape. Man is "playing God." Where man does not begin with God there is chaos and despair. His ways, which are wisdom's ways, are ways of pleasantness, and all His paths are peace. His paths are clearly marked with the sign-post, "In-the-beginning-God." These paths, then, take us up to eternity to encircle the heaven of heavens and all the universe. Back of all that is around us is God! Back of the stars, the sun, the galaxies, the planets, the earth and all that therein is, is God. Back of our bodies, fearfully and wonderfully made, is the Maker of heaven and earth. Back of all reality is the mind and will of God. The Lord hath made all things for His own end, His own purpose. Proverbs 16:4, margin. He is the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the ending. Everything is in His almighty hand. Man shall not have a say even at the end. God has the last word. Man will not be the one to blow up (or burn up) the world. God alone will bring about the great conflagration. 2 Peter 3. "When I begin, I shall also make an end." 1 Samuel 3:12. When we know and realize these things, there will flood into the depths of our souls a peace of mind such as we've never known before.

Darwin's principle was "the survival of the fittest." The Reformed believer's principle is, "the survival of those afore prepared to glory." Marx's opinion was that "religion is the opiate of the people." But everyone in the world certainly now knows that *opiates* are the opiates of the people. Ironically enough, Marxism had much to do with making the world a drug-enslaved society. But before Darwin (d. 1882) and Marx (d. 1883), before them, Voltaire (d. 1778), Rousseau (d. 1778), Kant (d. 1804) and Hegel (d. 1831) believed and propounded these wicked absurdities. Then why should Darwinism and Marxism be lauded as marvels of interpretation of reality? They only popularized ancient shop-worn ideas. Then we may say, Whatever is true is not new, and what is new is not true.

Professional people often ask, Which is the chicken; which the egg? meaning: which is the most basic aspect of the problem? Or they ask, Which is first, the chicken or the egg? Every creationist finds that easy to answer (especially from Genesis 1:11, 20, ASV, 30; 2:19a). The chicken explains the egg, not the egg the chicken. Ignore the doctrine of creation and reality is not faced; it is lost. To reject the doctrine of creation is to, ostrich-like, hide one's head in the sand of the real world to deny the real world. Christianity, therefore, is not bolstered by the best of humanism. Christianity has a theistic basis. Christianity is *Christian* theism.

"In the beginning God" is the essence, the seed of all truth. Without the truth we famish and die. The truth (John 14:6) is our true food (John 6:55, ASV, note). It was Winston Churchill who said, "I live from mouth to hand!" Spiritually, that is true of the Christian. He can say, "When I looked, behold, an hand was sent unto me; and lo, a scroll was in it." Then "the word of the Lord came unto me saying . . . Hear the Word at My mouth . . . eat this scroll . . . So I opened my mouth and He caused me to eat that scroll . . . Then I did eat it; and it was in my mouth like honey for sweetness" (Ezekiel 3:16,17; 2:9,10; 3:1-3).

NEWS from, for and about our churches

Marcia Hanko

BIRTHS

Mr. & Mrs. Jeff Slager of Hope — a daughter, Melissa Ann
Mr. & Mrs. Paul Zandstra of Hope — a son, David Paul
Mr. & Mrs. Jon Engelsma of Hope — a daughter, Dena Lynn
Mr. & Mrs. Bob Looyenga of First — a daughter, Julie Marie
Mr. & Mrs. Bert Wories of South Holland — a daughter, Valerie Joy
Rev. & Mrs. Koole of Randolph — a daughter, Catherine Elizabeth, on April 19
Mr. & Mrs. Rich Regnerus of Randolph — a daughter, Jacelyn Joy, on May 8
Mr. & Mrs. Tom De Vries of Loveland — a daughter, Rebecca Hope
Mr. & Mrs. Daniel Lanting of Loveland — a son, Aaron Daniel
Mr. & Mrs. Jon Bol of Faith — a daughter, Audra Beth
Mr. & Mrs. Bill Clason of Faith — a daughter, Esther Michelle
Mr. & Mrs. David Griffioen of Faith — a daughter, Jennie Marie
Mr. & Mrs. Fred Haney of Faith — a daughter, Alexia Jill

CHURCH MEMBERSHIP

First Church has received the membership of Mr. & Mrs. Charles Wiersma from Seventh Reformed Church.

YOUNG PEOPLE'S ACTIVITIES

A Hamburger Fry was held at the parsonage for the Loveland young people.

A Rollerskating Party was sponsored by the Young People of First on June 10.

Southwest Young People sponsored a program of quartet music and other special numbers on June 7. The collection was for the 1981 Convention.

A Singspiration was held at Faith Church on May 17.

Hudsonville Young People sponsored a Pancake Breakfast & Car Wash on Saturday, May 16, at Hudsonville Church. Donations were for the 1981 Convention.

A Soup Supper was held in South Holland Church on May 22 for the 1981 Convention.

OTHER ACTIVITIES

A Spring Lecture was held at Jenison High School. Rev. S. Houck spoke on "The Return to Historic Calvinism."

Faith Choral Society gave an Easter Program on May 29.

TEST YOUR MEMORY

1. What prophet was blind in old age? I Kings 14

2. What king was lame in old age? I Kings 15

3. Paul was accused of belonging to what sect? Acts 24

4. Who was called "the Evangelist"? Acts 21

5. Who said, "This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner"? Acts 4:8,11

6. Did Jesus baptize people? John 4:2

7. When the multitude was fed, was there any fish left over? John 6:13

8. Where in the Bible will you find the words, "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly"?

9. Finish this verse: "Blessed are the poor in Spirit....." Matthew 5:3

10. What king took Naboth's vineyard? I Kings 21:6

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