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**MANAGING CHRISTIAN INSTITUTIONS  
THROUGH A FOCUSED VISION**

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## **MANAGING CHRISTIAN INSTITUTIONS THROUGH A FOCUSED VISION**

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## I. INTRODUCTION

Christian institutions are God's instruments for perpetuating His vision. When Christian institutions do not have a focused vision directed in God's way, they face a lot of conflicts in managing the institutions. These conflicts come from external and internal forces which affect meeting their objectives for example; emulating other institutions, government policies and speedy enrolment of students with diverse faith making them not to understand the direction and eventually the institutional core values (unity, quality of life) are eroded. Below is the case of University of Arusha (UoA), a Seventh Day Adventist Institution, with its vision and mission:-

**Vision:** *"A Christian university that exists for excellence in wholistic education, professional development, research and consultancy services"* The University of Arusha (2007-2009)

**Mission:** *"To provide an accessible and affordable wholistic education which will empower individuals to continue, learning and serving the church, the nation and international communities"*. The University of Arusha (2007-2009) the vision and mission of the university are connected to the grand vision and mission of Seventh - day Adventist church which is an identity of Christianity.

**Church Vision:** *"In harmony with the great prophecies of the scriptures, we see as the climax of God's plan the restoration of all His creation to full harmony with His perfect will and righteousness"* Year book (2007:8)

**Church Mission** *"To proclaim to all peoples the everlasting gospel in the context of the three angels' messages of Revelation 14:6-12, leading them to accept Jesus as a personal Saviour and to unite with His church, and nurturing them in preparation for His soon return"* Year book (2007:8)

Christian institutions accommodate and train people from diverse backgrounds and share their values and beliefs in building a common goal in Christ centeredness.

Recently, the University of Arusha (UoA) experienced one of the challenges regarding its institutional values. As a Christian institution, it stands as a model in representing the Seventh Day Adventist (SDA) operation rendering service to its stakeholders mainly the students, teachers and administrators. Students logged their grievances to Tanzania Commission for Universities (TCU) in Tanzania Government to be considered so as not to attend church worship services. The team agreed with the students and supported the idea using the government constitution that the UoA is forcing students to attend church worship services and impede students not to have the freedom of worship. The team from TCU suggested that only Seventh Day Adventist (SDA) believers should worship and follow church principles and regulations by attending worship but not students.

Examining this case the problem might have occurred because of the following reasons: -

- Probably the values, vision and mission were not well imparted during the entry of students.
- Probably the workers (teachers and administrators) do not communicate the values to students not only in spiritual affairs but also mentally and physically which entails “wholistic human development”

### **Statement of the Problem**

God created man to establish a continuous relationship through partnership. However, man sinned and marred God’s vision. But it was not the end of him, for God made a way to redeem this human being in order to foster a relation and shared vision with man to practice the potentials bestowed by God. However, Christian institutions do not habitually reflect God’s vision of restoring and maintaining a continual relationship.

### **Purpose of study**

This paper seeks to show how Christian institutions can adhere and follow a focused vision that God intended for them from the beginning as an ideal plan.

## **II. MANAGING A VISION IN BUSINESS AND BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVES**

### **(a) The purpose and Development of a vision**

Institutions or organizations when established they need people to build in sharing mind and action and follow a predetermined direction. This direction is the picture a vision where an organization wants to be. Thompson and Martin (2002:466) state that “*The vision or idea is inadequate; the leader must persuade others-customers, partners, employees and suppliers-to see it, share it and support it*”. However, there are setbacks and challenges that entail proper orientation in order for people to work harmoniously and develop a coordinated relation and minimize challenges and conflict and attain the desired end.

This harmony is seen in behavior that needs a well defined environment to enhance a clear purpose, create shared power, efforts and work with effectiveness in realizing a vision. Chief Executive A.G Lafley Kanter, (2008:70), Montgomery (2008:58) say that “*What hold them together is one purpose that gives direction...A business has to give a clear purpose, well understood. It serves as both a constraint on activity and guide to behavior*” By practicing and understanding both parties of interests and agree through a standard of behavior, a successful pattern is created despite the fact of different backgrounds.

Studies have been undertaken about the essence of having a vision. For instance

Qubein (1997:70, 71) asserts “*It is all a matter of forming a vision committing yourself to that vision, and creating harmony with the vision. The power of visioning has been statistically demonstrated. Harvard University once surveyed a class of its alumni over a twenty-year period to learn what distinguished the successful ones from the unsuccessful; it found that 97% of the wealth of that*

*class was concentrated in only 3% of its members. The ultra successful 3% had one thing in common; all of them were clear about their goals, had written them down, and reviewed them daily”*

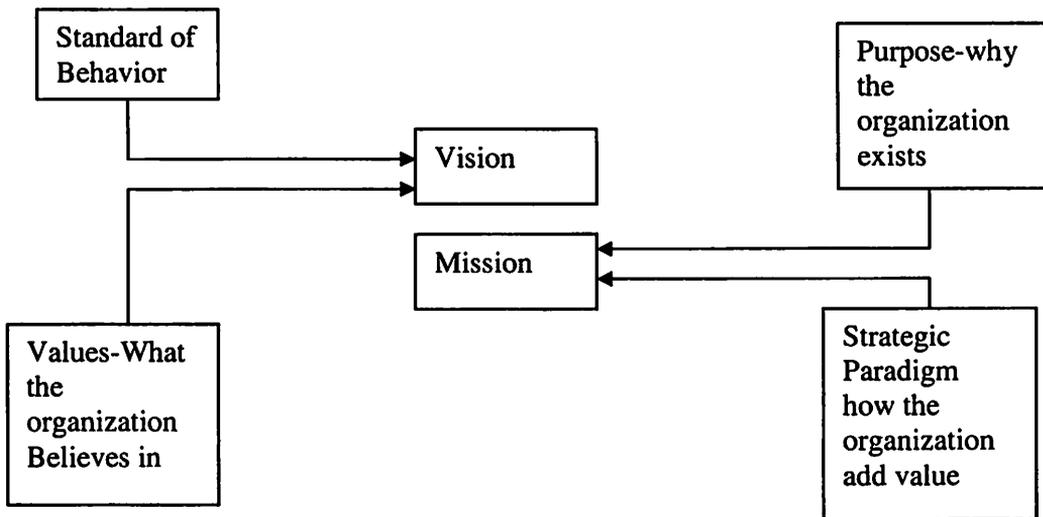
In contemporary world, vision has also been seen as a spirit that drives the achievement of organizational goals. Organizations or institutions which are visionary can be inspired to moral values, self denial, and hard work and innovation for the success of future generations.

Focused vision comprises of proper planning, organizing, coordination, control, leading, implementation and evaluation. Planning is an activity which involves decisions about ends (organizational aims/objectives), means (plans), conduct (policies) and results. It is an activity which takes place against the background of external and internal strength and weaknesses.

Organizing is a plan to be put into operation. It involves detailed organization and coordination of tasks, human effort and material. Controlling on the other hand evaluates and monitors those established policies and standards practiced. In an institution or organization where such aspects are practiced eventually a matching behavior has to be experienced through a vision. Without standard of behavior and beliefs institution/organization experiences misalignment were people become heterogeneous in objectives and unaware of organization direction.

Thompson and Martin (2002:66) illustrate in the diagram the components of vision and mission that creates a focused direction by understanding why the organization exists.

*Fig no. 1 Vision and mission statement Thomson and Martin (2002:66)*



When values and beliefs are combined through a proper management, they yield a live vision that constitutes a mission which explains why the organization exists, and well established vision will direct and lead organization with minimal conflicts.

### (b) Steps in Managing a vision in Business perspective

Challenges and obstacles are evident in achieving any objective(s). Being consistent and following guiding rules and principles is an aid in getting through those challenges. In business perspectives Kreitner, (1995:441) has stipulated six stages that can enhance a group relation in achieving its objectives and realize a focused vision.

**Stage 1: Orientation** -is the period of honeymoon when a relation is formed and members in an organization generally want and accept any leadership. At this stage mistakes are not detected easily and criticism on each other is minimal.

**Stage 2: Conflict and challenge** - is the period when emergent leader's philosophy, objectives, and policies become apparent, and awareness is broadened and politics is exercised strongly that creates conflicts and challenges to individuals or group members. This stage takes time as members try to reconcile their role, and seek alternative course of action. Many groups never continue past stage 2 because they get frustrated due to emotionalism and political fighting that hinders them not to accomplish their goals.

**Stage 3: Cohesion**-The shifts in power started in stage 2 are completed, under a new leader or the original leader with a new consensus on authority, structure, and procedures. A "we" feeling becomes apparent as everyone becomes truly involved and differences are resolved.

**Stage 4: Delusion**-. A feeling of "having been through the worst of it" prevails; issues and problems that threaten to break this relationship are dismissed. Members seem to be committed to fostering harmony at all costs.

**Stage 5: Disillusion**- Those with unrealized expectations challenge the group to perform better and are prepared to reveal their personal strengths and weaknesses.

**Stage 6: Acceptance**- It is usually a trusted and influential group member who is concerned about the group to step forward and help the group move from conflict to cohesion. This individual, acting as the group catalyst, is usually someone other than the leader. Members are encouraged to test their self-perceptions against the reality of how others perceive them. Greater personal and mutual understanding helps members to adapt situations without causing problems. At this stage people in a group tend to be highly effective and efficient.

In the business perspective the six stages or steps exist in any relationship pertaining to goal achievement. In order for the vision to be realized and grow these stages are evident. Educating group members or employees in an organization creates a positive awareness to understand each other and work harmoniously with efficiency despite the fact of existing conflicts.

Regarding the advantage of experiencing these states Kreitner (1995:442)

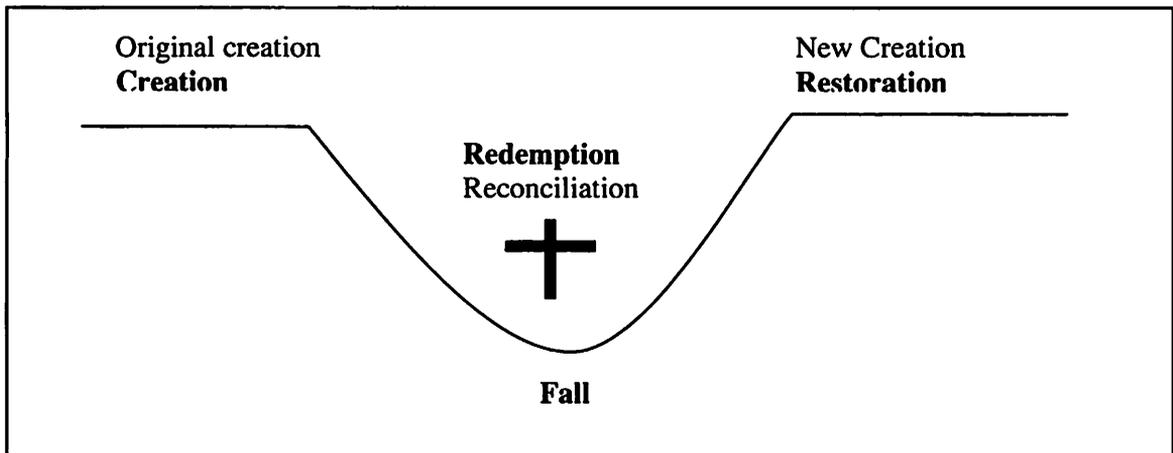
*“Time wasting problems and inefficiencies can be minimized if group members are consciously aware of this developmental process. Just as it is impossible for a child to skip being a teenager on the way to adulthood, committees and other work groups will find that there are no short cuts to group maturity. Some emotional stresses and strains are inevitable along the way”.*

### (c) Steps in Managing a vision in Biblical perspective

God is the initiator of vision because in the beginning He envisioned a beautiful world and created one. *“The world was null and void and without form and darkness was over the face of the deep”* (Genesis 1:2). Out of this void God created the world and partnered with man to develop a relation in sharing skills and knowledge, having mutual relationship and perpetuate His vision. Unfortunately, God’s vision was marred by sin-the fall of man. His vision was to have a mutual close relationship with the man that he had created, but yet God made a plan to redeem and restore His relationship with man. He sent Christ as a sacrifice to die in man’s place.

During the time of Israelites, God used the nation as an illustration and model in perpetuating His vision and creating an identity of sanctuary to show a relation with man. Despite the fact that there were out growing generations, God desired, maintained and managed His vision to be partner with man, as it was in the beginning, medieval and in the contemporary world. Saffold (2005:137) asserts that *“Vision is the only characteristic of effective leadership that is universal...skilled leaders help to... create a focus and direction for organizational efforts”.*

The diagram below shows the trend of God’s vision on how He managed His vision by creating man to develop a relation and be partners.



*Fig no.2 Model developed to demonstrate how God managed His vision in relation to business perspective.*

In Biblical perspective these stages discussed in section II (b) can be compared in contemporary management as discussed below. God created the world as the first institution and established a relation with man in achieving a predetermined destiny. As man violated the agreement, God took steady steps in bringing back the picture of original creation. White (1952:22) states that *“The Garden of Eden was a representation of what God desired the whole earth to become, and it was His purpose that, as the human family increased, in numbers, they should establish other homes and schools like the one He had given”*

### **Creation**

In biblical perspective we see the stage of orientation, compared to creation when God gave Adam and Eve a defined destiny through principles, rules and precepts by instructing how to uphold those principles. He also created an environment for them to be happy, enjoy and glorify Him, *“You must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat it you will surely die”*. (Genesis 2:15, 17).

They became custodians in behavior and power in ruling the world and to making it fruitful. This education was to teach them to become keepers of a culture that is to be inherited not only by them but also to the future generation. Custodianship is a principle of upholding what is best for all people; it is not in interest of oneself. The International English Dictionary defines custodian as, *“a person with responsibility for the care, protection or maintenance of something”*. We became partnership with God as the director and man as a manager, God wanted us to achieve a shared objective while on earth through accountability of principles, values and beliefs that qualified us to be in the same standards. Maxson, (2005:99) states *“God has a dream. It is a dream full of power and vision! It is a vision of what He wants to create in His Church-His people; and it all focuses on relationship”*. While Rees (1995:7) also supports *“Stewardship is a relationship-the relationship that every person bears to his Creator”*.

### **The fall**

In biblical perspective we see a stage of conflict and challenges as the stage of fall in the Garden of Eden when sin entered and brought conflict within and outside the Garden of Eden and created misunderstanding between God and man and between Adam and Eve (man and man). The result of this sin made Adam and Eve to exit the Garden of Eden. This happened when the devil entered and advocated in seducing man to disobey the power and authority of God. Man was still growing in knowledge and the choice of discriminating evil from good was limited with the devil’s advocacy. This situation can also happen in Christian’s institutions when people are recruited and after becoming familiar with environment many ideas come from within and outside that can create misunderstanding and eventually employees leave their job and students transfer because of such misunderstandings. On the other hand, God had made Adam and Eve aware through obeying His commands in order not to fall. However, after a rebellious choice, God decided to discipline Adam and Eve through death penalty which was already clear to them.

This disobedient choice that broke the friendship, fellowship between God and man is also confirmed by the magazine *Towards Wholeness: The Special Character of Adventist Education* states (2003:4):

*“A rebellious choice in Eden shattered the open relationship humans had enjoyed previously with their Creator. As a consequence, they found themselves and the world plunged into a conflict of cosmic proportions, with their capacity to reflect the image of God well nigh destroyed”*

At the same time God focused on continuing a relation which was already established. God examined His plan and reinvented the strategies to achieve and realize the dream with difficulties of man as a sinner. God with patience and love made a bridge of His only begotten Son to die in place of man, and man to continue a partnership with His creator.

### **Redemption (Reconciliation)**

After the vision was distorted a redemptive plan came which also is compared in business perspective as cohesion and disillusion when group come back to unite and have a relief from the worst struggle. Through the plan of redemption God's vision was aligned when His Son redeemed the world and made human being not to perish. He came to resolve the conflict between God and man, and between man and man through reconciliation

John 3:15 *“Whosoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life”*. Also Downing (2008:15) states that *“From all that we know about God's plans and purposes for His creation, perishing was not part of the original deal. We were created with life and everything necessary for its continuance. But we know what went wrong. We have notion of the events that broke the life chain...”*

As part of His plan of reconciliation and restoration, God chose Abraham and his descendants to be a special people that would work in partnership with Him. The Lord wanted them to emulate His character and taught them to adhere to His standards and be models to the surrounding nations. However, when the descendants of Jacob were made slaves of the Egyptians, they almost forgot their high calling, engaging themselves in wrong teaching and beliefs. So God found a way to redeem them from slavery and led them to the promised land of Canaan. The journey of Canaan was set for the purpose of restoring the image of God in them.

For that reason God decided to be their teacher and taught them the rules and laws and balanced them socially, culturally, mentally and physically for they had limited knowledge in him connecting their limited knowledge. White (1952:30) observes that:

*“They had little knowledge of God and little faith in Him. They were confused by false teaching and corrupted by their long contact with heathenism. God desired to lift them to a higher moral level, and to this end He sought to give them knowledge of Himself...It was His purpose to set before them, in the precepts of His law the standard of character to which through His grace, He desired them to attain.”*

God's teaching was not easy for them to understand and follow because they had their own ways of behaving that were adopted from Egyptians. Nevertheless, God was patient in the process of healing and taking them out from the bondage.

### **Restoration of a lost Image**

The stage of restoration is also the same with Disillusion and Acceptance where people work and understand each other regardless of the mistake. They bear with one another in fulfilling the objectives and a leader who stands as a catalyst motivates the people to press with determination. Jesus as a mediator stands between God and man and leads us with the aid of the Holy Spirit. Eventually we become perfect and effective Christians as we accept Jesus in our all endeavors. Through redemption the lost image is restored to reflect God's character and man again enjoys what was intended during the creation. "Towards Wholeness, The Special Character of Adventist Education (2003:4) asserts that *"God, through Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit, answered the problem of sin with a plan to restore human beings to God's image, and the universe back to its original state of perfection, love and harmony"*. (John 3:16; Rev 21:1, 3,4,27, 22:3, 4) A stage of restoration is a continuous process, and it is the stage human being are assured and not abandoned, it is a re-creation with God.

## **III. INTERGRATING FAITH AND LEARNING**

### **(a) Managing Christian Institution**

Christian institution is a God's center of learning where knowledge, skills, beliefs and values are carried forward from the beginning to the present. God showed consistency in the plan of establishing the world as the institution by transmitting His values and beliefs to Adam and Eve. This transmission of values is important for the survival of keeping the Christian culture in its inception to maturity. In Christian institutions, teachers are the main people that aid in transmission of those values to students. Beardsley states (2008:8) *"...The teachers at a university are key to the transmission of values"*, and Safford (2005:145) also adds:-

*"Christian institutions draw their values from their Bible, their theological traditions, their leaders and their organizational history...The end values of the members will shape their vision of what that future should be...will influence both the organizations sense of identity..."* Focusing on one's desired vision is as imperative to successful management of Christian institutions as is the hard work required to achieve it. This is to emulate God on how He developed a focused vision in establishing a relationship with a man and preparing him to be in likeness of Him and inherit the Kingdom of Heaven by meeting a standard of behavior. It took years to demonstrate this character and standards in the beginning, in time of Israelites and it takes time even today.

Despite the fact that Israelites were slow in learning, God managed using different ways to demonstrate these characters to educate them. It symbolizes a sign of redemption and restoration of the lost image that God had intended in the beginning.

### **(i.) Understanding Christian Institution Identity**

Christian institutions need to understand their destiny on what they believe and why they are in existence. This is done through leaders who are well vested with Christian's values and keep the values to next generation, and continuing partnering with God.

This concept or view has been confirmed by the Stewardship Department says that (2006) *"The vision of the church will, to a great degree, determine the direction and effectiveness of stewardship...This vision has to be understood and owned by the rest of the church, especially the leadership"*. Jesus created a consonance with His disciples in practicing values, beliefs through inspiration and daily teachings. He accommodated and made them to be unified in their thinking and purpose toward the vision.

In Luke 9:18-20 Jesus asked the disciples whom do they thought He was and Peter answered and said He was *"The Christ of God"*. He wanted to know if people understood and accepted His identity. The example from Jesus can be demonstrated in our Christian Institution that when we recruit our students, teachers and administrators we should make sure they know our identity and orient and make them understand why Christian institution are in existence so that they will also be able to demonstrate to others and share the vision that operates in church. Korniejczuk, (2008:8) states that *"The Institution finds its defining center point in its beliefs and the operational phase starts with its vision"*.

Jesus was able to make His disciples understand the purpose and the vision before He was crucified. When He was crucified on the cross He conquered the world through patience, obedience, long suffering and prayer which are values of behavior that creates a desired identity. His suffering stands as an indicator of human kind to practice the management of a vision in aligning and bringing the focus. Despite the fact that there are challenges, we are compelled to overcome and find an alternative way of making a vision to progress and yield an outcome that has been desired.

### **(ii.) Establishing Destiny**

Christian institutions need to establish an identity that will be shared to our shareholders (students, faculty, board, donors, and its alumni) to understand our desired image of Christianity and be portrayed in an institution. Different backgrounds should not discriminate us but be a target of establishing a partnership and help students to understand the institution operations explicitly in order to be Disciples of Christ. This is exercised through a curriculum that yields a relationship between students and teachers focusing on predetermined destiny. Dockery and Thornbury (2002:344) assert that

*"Professionals at Christian college must also contribute to the student's ability to be a better follower of Jesus Christ. Such vision for student life entails a twofold strategy...get student involved in the co-curricular second provide student with opportunities to think critically and Christianity about the world"*.

## **(b)Managing Environment of Christian Institution**

Environment is significant in human existence. It states nature, values and the resources that are in it. Understanding environment is to manage the challenges that come from outside and inside. We may have much influence on internal forces but not to external ones. In this section the focus is on environmental values of an institution and the emphasis is that the only strategy is to practice and manage well the values and principles regarding the institutional operation during the turbulent times that they will not be eroded by any intruders and keep the culture for future generations. Generation comes with different operational ideas but values that sustain the vision will not change because it carries the core beliefs of institution for years. Beardsley (2008), states that *“No generation can bequeath to its successor what it has not got...Education is only the most fully conscious of the channels whereby each generation influences the next....”*

Teachers need to teach and lead students at the individual level to understand values and integrate them at an institutional level through counseling. Ultimately they will spread the Christian values to reach the society at large by means of preaching, teaching or healing. In the Christian world view, education is a tool used as a channel in redeeming and restoring the lost image of God. (White 1952:30) comments *“In the highest sense the work of education and the work of redemption are one, for in education, as in redemption”*.

### **Keeping and inseminating Christian culture**

The teachings and the principles of God are ever the same. Since from Genesis God continues to make a man a co-worker and partner, He wants this teaching to be imparted in every student who passes in Christian institution.

Teachers play a role of inseminating the knowledge and cultivate it to those who have limited knowledge and faith. Accepting the role, the teacher should emulate the character and portray the image of God, as Jesus incarnated His image in us, to understand Him.

It is challenging especially in the modern world but the atmosphere of God of operation had no compromise. A teacher is the model of his or her followers. White (19:52) asserts that *“The great principles of education are unchanged... The teacher who accepts this aim is in truth a co-worker with Christ, a laborer together with God”*

Christian education is preparing us and restores God image on us by demonstrating the acts through relationship with God. It uses education to restore the lost image and align the diverse thinking of students. The acceptance of values and beliefs are manifested in curriculum of wholistic development. This is to harmonize students, teachers, and administrators with sharing beliefs, value and principles that are directed to Christ centeredness.

The Christian institution reflects its service through church that stands and demonstrates the restoration of all creation.

#### **IV. CONCLUSION**

Christian institutions are God's instruments for perpetuating His vision. Having a focused vision is to fulfill God's purpose by establishing a relationship through people with diverse backgrounds and behavior that can be molded to create a unified behavior through sharing belief, and values in reflecting God's character and be partners. The unified character is brought by a development that needs every individual or members in an institution to be aware and deploy a creative way in achieving stated end. However, conflicts are evident; we are compelled to overcome and be role models as God did in managing the world and established an identity.

Therefore this paper is recommended to Christian institutions to adopt the group development that has been explained in business and biblical perspectives in establishing a mutual relationship that will aid achieving the stated goals in an institution. Christian institution need to evaluate and exercise what God had intended for us from the beginning to portray His image through a curriculum that will carry Christian values and beliefs, imparting knowledge to different believers and make them understand our existence as Christian institutions.

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