



*"Watchman,
what of the night?"*

*"The hour has come, the hour is striking, and striking at you,
the hour and the end!"*
Eze. 7:6 (Moffat)

XXVI

8(93)

STEPS TO LIFE RESPONDS TO ISSUES

TWO ERRORS DO NOT MAKE ONE TRUTH

Following the publication by the North American Division of Issues: The Seventh-day Adventist Church and Certain Private Ministries, most of the "Certain Private Ministries" responded with a rebuttal. The first received by this Foundation was published by Steps to Life. It was bound by the same color of cover stock and the title printed in gold ink letters as was the North American Division publication. It was authored by Dr. Ralph Larson. The title was also similar, Issues: The Real Issue, the Side Issues and the Pseudo Issues. It is as seriously flawed as was the Division publication, and more detrimental to the spiritual well-being of sincerely concerned Seventh-day Adventists, because by most of the supporters of the "Private Ministries," it will be accepted without question. The devotion to men rather than devotion to truth still dominates the thinking of the vast majority of Adventists whether they be in the regular church, or have become a part of the dissident movement.

Two major premises are set forth by Dr. Larson in the Steps to Life publication. In Chapter IX under the caption of "The Pseudo-Search for Historic Adventism," he writes - "We understand and use the term 'historic' to refer to the truths that were held by virtually all Adventists before the book Questions on Doctrine appeared in 1957." (p. 39) Further, on the same page, he wrote - "It is to the common faith of the pre-1957 era that we have reference when we describe ourselves as 'historic Adventists.'"

In examining what Larson designates as "The Straw-Man Technique," he writes that instead of defending personal opinions as charged, "we are actually defending our historic faith as set forth in SDAs Believe..., etc." (p. 54) This statement presupposes that the book SDAs Believe... rectified the deviations from the "historic" faith

in the book, Questions on Doctrine, and thus restored the pre-1957 faith. These two premises, we shall examine.

In discussing why the axis of dissident leadership - Larson-Grosboll-Osborne-Trefz - "have preferred to call themselves 'historic Adventists'," Larson writes:

"We are not ignorant of our church's history. We are well aware that the formation of our doctrines was a gradual process, with major principles being established in the early years and further refinements coming later. We are also aware of the difference between 'landmarks' and 'pillars' of our faith and the less important items." (p. 39)

Let us examine our church history in the light of the Divine Guidance afforded this church through the ministry of Ellen G. White. She clearly defined the landmarks. (Ms. 13, 1889; Counsels to Writers & Editors, pp. 30-31) She also warned - "We must not think, 'Well we have all the truth, we understand the main pillars of our faith, and must rest on this knowledge.' The truth is an advancing truth, and we must walk in the increasing light." (R&H, March 25, 1890) Concerning the "pillars of our faith," she wrote - "If the pillars of our faith will not stand the test of investigation, it is time that we knew it." (TM, p. 107) What Larson refers to as "further refinements coming later," Ellen White wrote - "We have many lessons to learn, and many, many to unlearn. God and heaven alone are infallible. Those who think that they will never have to give up a cherished view, never have occasion to change an opinion, will be disappointed." (TM, p. 30)

The problem that has accentuated the crisis in

Adventism is two-fold: 1) We did not in our history do as advised - learn and unlearn - but rested satisfied in a false sense of doctrinal security. We did not experience God's design for His people, that of "constantly obtaining a clearer understanding of His word," and discerning "new light and beauty of its sacred truths." But rather, as spiritual life declined, we rested "satisfied with the light already received from God's word, and discouraged any further investigation of the Scriptures." 2) God had a remedy. He "will arouse His people; if other means fail, heresies will come in among them, which will sift them, separating the chaff from the wheat." (5T:706-707)

This has occurred. What has been the response? We have compromised our faith instead of cleaning up our act - unlearning - so as to have pure basic truth unencumbered with traditional error. Now what is the cry? Stay with "historic" Adventism instead of doing what the Lord counseled through His messenger - learn, and unlearn. So we place ourselves back where our immediate past leadership was when God permitted "heresies" to come in among us. Instead, we should be growing in grace - advancing in truth, and walking in increasing light.

The directions given were clear and specific. They read:

"The Lord has made His people the repository of sacred truth. Upon every individual who has had the light of present truth devolves the **duty** of developing **that truth** on a higher scale than it has hitherto been done." (Ms. 27, 1897; emphasis supplied)

If we had been following counsel, and had developed the truth committed to our trust, learning what "increasing light" God had for us through a deeper study of the Holy Scriptures, and unlearning the errors that had become tradition, we would have been able to stand up to the attacks that the Evangelicals made upon our unique perception of the types of the sanctuary services and related prophecies.

The answer to ISSUES, is not the slogan, "Stay with 'historic' Adventism," and pin-pointing that Adventism to be perceptions of doctrine held at a particular point of time. To do so is to place concerned Adventists back into the same position the Church was prior to 1957, when they could not defend their positions on the Incarnation and the Sanctuary truth against the questioning of Barnhouse and Martin. Since that time, the

Church has had to face the attacks of Dr. Desmond Ford in regard to the Sanctuary truth in particular. His attacks are also a part of the onslaught which concerned Adventists have to likewise face because of their identity with the corporate body of truth committed to Adventism. A few years back, I listened to a series of tapes of an exchange between Dr. Ford and Dr. Colin Standish. Ford actually made Standish look as "sick" as Walter Martin made Johnson look on the Ankerberg Show. Yet Standish is still not willing to study the Scriptures to be adequately prepared to meet Ford's positions. The only answer to the present crisis is to follow the counsel we have been given. Is it being done? The answer is clearly - No! That is the real issue!

A Lesson from History

In 1620, a group of Pilgrims were embarking from Leyden, Holland, to sail for the New World. Their Pastor, John Robinson, in a Farewell Message plainly told them, "The Lord has more truth yet to break forth from His Holy Word. I cannot sufficiently bewail the condition of the reformed churches, who have come to a period in religion, and will go at present no farther than the instruments of their reformation. Luther and Calvin were great and shining lights in their times, yet they penetrated not into the whole counsel of God. I beseech you, remember it - 'tis an article of your church covenant - that you be ready to receive whatever truth shall be made known to you from the written Word of God." (Source Book for Bible Students, 1922 edition, p. 528)

This evaluation of the condition of the reformed churches in 1620, that they had "come to a period in religion," is exactly what Larson would have the concerned Adventists do. Put a period - 1957. Call the beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist Church prior to that date - "historic" Adventism, and there abide. We need to ask ourselves some searching questions. Does God have no more truth to break forth from His Holy Word? Does the message of Peter actually read - "We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until 1957." (II Peter 1:19) Is the path of the just no longer "a shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day." (Proverbs 4:18) Did the light stop in 1957?

I recall in the golden-age of Adventist evangelism, when in visiting interested attendees at the meetings who were contemplating whether

to make a change from the church of their forefathers into the Adventist Church, we told them that they were merely walking in the advancing light of truth. We assured them that indeed Luther, Wesley and others were great and shining lights in their day, but God was now giving them additional light and truth. Has this ceased? Are we now going to tell God's concerned people there is no more advancing truth for today, that that advance stopped in 1957?

Ellen G. White's comment on this incident from history is noteworthy, After commenting on the Covenant the Pilgrims had taken to which John Robinson referred, she wrote - "Here was the true spirit of reform, the vital principle of Protestantism." (Great Controversy, p. 291) If this were truly believed, there would be the removal of Catholic orientated concepts from the teachings of many of the "independent ministers." There is a great enthusiasm to distribute The Great Controversy, when in reality some of those so promoting would do well to do some reading in it themselves.

Seventh-day Adventist Believe... (SDAB)

Dr. Larson, in Steps to Life's reply to Issues, makes the claim that "our historic faith" is "set forth in SDAs Believe." (p. 54) Let us check some of the teachings as found in this book, and see if they accord with the Scriptures, or the Writings. We shall select three examples of the book's teaching.

1) The Atonement, when completed? In the chapter discussing Belief #23 of the 27 Fundamentals of the Church, we read the following:

"The atonement, or reconciliation, was completed on the cross as foreshadowed by the sacrifices, and the penitent believer can trust in this finished work of our Lord." (SDAB, p. 315)

Then in discussing Belief #26, we find this added comment - "Christ, in the heavenly sanctuary, has been ministering the benefits of His completed atonement to His people." (ibid., p. 365) Is this what was believed - a completed atonement at the Cross - prior to the publication of the book, Questions on Doctrine?

2) Did Moses write the Ten Commandments? In the discussion of Belief #18, we find this incredible assertion:

"Moses wrote the Ten Commandments, with other

explanatory laws, in a book called the book of the covenant. (Exodus 20:1-24:8)" (ibid., p. 237)

Noting the Scripture reference given, one finds the record of the giving of the Law from Mount Sinai, besides various "judgments" and ordinances which God instructed Moses to present to the people. These "judgments" were written in a book which formed the basis of the Old Covenant which God made with Israel. The clear statement in SDAB is that Moses wrote in this book, the Ten Commandments, as well as the judgments. Now carefully consider the following from the Writings:

"Moses had written - not the ten commandments, but the judgments which God would have them observe, and the promises, on conditions that they would obey Him." (Spiritual Gifts, Vol. III, p. 270)

You can now draw your own conclusions in regard to the book, Seventh-day Adventists Believe... But one must keep in mind that Dr. Larson has unequivocally written over his signature - "My theology is precisely and specifically the theology set forth in the book Seventh-day Adventists Believe." (The Tithe Problem, p. 3)

3) The Incarnation - What nature did Christ assume? The insert placed in the Nov. 7, 1991 issue of The Adventist Review, not only discussed tithe, but also stated there were three beliefs regarding the nature that Christ assumed in humanity current in Adventism today. These three are: 1) Christ took the nature of Adam before the Fall; 2) Christ took the nature of Adam after the Fall; and 3) "He took a nature that in certain respects was like Adam's before the fall, but in other respects was like Adam's after the fall." (Tithe Insert, p. 3) The fact is that this third concept was first published in Seventh-day Adventist Believe... under the affirmation that this book "represents an authentic exposition of Adventists beliefs." (SDAB, p. viii) This third belief was adopted from the Anglican divine, Henry Melvill, who considered his position, "the orthodox doctrine" on the Incarnation. (SDAB, p. 57)

The book also teaches the second belief that Christ took the post-Fall nature of Adam (ibid. p. 46 col. 2) While the pre-Fall position is not specifically stated, the book teaches that Christ's "human nature was created" (ibid., p. 46, col. 1) adopting the teaching from the late L. E. Froom who can be listed among the advocates of the pre-Fall nature of Christ at the time of the controversy which resulted from the publication

AN INSIGHTFUL LETTER

Editor's Note: We receive frequent letters from our readers; some of which take issue with what we have written. For the most part, however, the response is favorable. Of the recent issues of WWN, none has produced the large and appreciative response that the May issue - "What is Basic Adventism?" - did. One letter, though rather lengthy, detailed the problem, and we are happy to share it with our readers.

6 June 1993

Dear Elder Grotheer:

This is to both commend and thank you for your May WWN message on "Basic Adventism." I think you have hit the center of the doctrinal and theological crisis both in the official church and in the independent ministries. Within the official church, you find confusing doctrinal and theological pluralism being presented from its pulpits and from its books and magazines. Among the various independent ministries promoting "historic Adventism," you also find a confusion which makes it dangerous for your spiritual welfare to look to them. For example, in one five day period around the middle of May, I received brochures or letters from five independent ministries (among them: Hope International, and Steps to Life). Upon reading their information, it was obvious that no two of the ministries were in close harmony with one another. Most of these groups profess to be standing for "historic Adventism" yet it was painfully obvious there was a lack of unity among them. This lack of unity was clearly assessed in WWN, January, 1992, by Pastor Richard Sutton of the Remnant SDA Church of Nora Springs, Iowa.

Perhaps the various independent ministries and their leaders (Spear, Ferrell, Gibson and Rafferty, J. Grosboll, Marcussen, etc.) each of which promotes their own "brand" of "historic Adventism," would do well to consider the following verses:

1. "For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace..." (I Cor. 14:33)
2. "Is Christ divided?" (I Cor. 1:13)
3. "There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all." (Eph. 4:4-6)

4. "Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ... that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel." (Phil. 1:27)

It is greatly alarming that many independent ministries and their leaders claim to be led by the Holy Spirit, and yet these ministries have conflicting, contradictory, and confusing positions on righteousness by faith, prophecy, the ordination of "ministers," and the use of and the interpretation of Mrs. White's writings (to name only a few) with one another. This problem merits the most serious consideration by the independent ministries and their supporters.

Furthermore, with the passage of almost a century and a half since 1844, it is painfully obvious that "historic Adventism" is simply not sufficient to prepare the church to bring about the close of human history and usher in the return of Jesus to this earth.

For example, from about 1855 to 1888, the SDA church believed and taught "historic Adventism." However, "historic Adventism" was not sufficient to prevent the rejection of the 1888 righteousness-by-faith message and messengers - Jones and Waggoner - by Butler, Smith, and their followers. "Historic Adventists" fought both the message and messengers for over a decade and a half and finally turned the church against the message and also Jones and Waggoner.

Around 1905, after the 1888 righteousness-by-faith message had largely been rejected and the messengers had left the church, the denomination and its leaders reverted back to "historic Adventism," which reversion lasted up to about 1955 - in other words, around 50 years. But "historic Adventism" was not sufficient to prevent Anderson, Froom, and other church leaders from making compromises and concessions to Barnhouse and Martin during the 1955-56 SDA-Evangelical Conferences. Nor was it sufficient to prevent the publication of Questions on Doctrine in 1957. "Historic Adventism" also did not prevent the development and expansion of the SDA-Ecumenical connections during the mid and latter 1960s.

Around 1970, under the Pierson administration, church leaders once again embraced "historic Adventism." However, once again, "historic Adventism" was not sufficient to prevent the development and growth of very serious problems within the church. For example, during the time from 1970 to 1978, the Davenport financial scandal was developing. Church leaders in the

EEOC v. PPPA case proclaimed the G.C. President was a "first minister," the church structure was "hierarchical," and the church's teaching on the papacy and Roman Catholicism had been "consigned to the historical trash heap." In May 1977, Bert Beach gave the late Pope Paul VI a church medallion. "Historic Adventism" also did not stop the spread of Fordite heresies in the pulpit and on Adventist college campuses.

With the retirement of Pierson, many church leaders began drifting toward evangelical - and even liberal - theological positions on the atonement, prophecy, and righteousness by faith, to note only a few areas.

"Historic Adventism" has been taught in the church for 90-plus years. It has not been sufficient to prepare the church to bring about the return of Jesus; neither has it been adequate to prevent apostasy and corruption from entering and overtaking the church. Therefore, the time is here for those independent ministries and their leaders who are shouting "stay with historic Adventism" to confront this most serious situation and do some very serious soul searching. Based on past church history, there is no real reason to believe that 25 or 50 more years (if time lasts that long) of preaching what is called "historic Adventism" will produce any different results than it has in the past.

Equally as important as "What is Basic Adventism" is "What is the True Church?" or maybe "What is a True Adventist Protestant and His Church?" There are far too many conservative Adventists or "historic Adventists" who have essentially a Roman Catholic mentality. "Historic Roman Catholics" look to the priests, bishops, archbishops, cardinals, and pope for spiritual direction and guidance. They look to their church leaders to define for them their beliefs, theology, and conduct. They tend not to question the actions, conduct, and policies of their church leaders. "Historic Catholics" look to ceremonies, forms, or rituals, like attending the mass or performance of some or all of the so-called Seven Sacraments, for salvation.

Unfortunately, many "historic Adventists" are not much different than "historic Roman Catholics." Some "historic Adventists" look to their pastor, local conference president, union president, division president, or General Conference president for spiritual direction and guidance, while other "historic Adventists" look to the leaders of independent ministries for their spiritual direction and guidance. Many "historic Adventists" look to their leaders - whether within

the denomination or in an independent ministry - to define for them their beliefs, doctrines, and theology. "Historic Adventists" seldom question the actions, conduct, or policies of their chosen leaders - whether denominational or independent. Many look to their adherence to certain standards of diet, dress, or entertainment as a means - full or partial - toward their salvation.

The problem here is not that the "historic Adventists" are right and the "historic Catholics" are wrong. The problem is they are BOTH WRONG! In both cases, the "historic Adventist" and the "Historic Catholic" end up looking to and depending upon something, someone, or some group in place of Jesus and the Scriptures.

These strange parallels between "historic Roman Catholics" and "historic Adventists" should serve as a warning that many SDAs - including "historic Adventists" - are in danger of receiving the mark of the beast - UNLESS they learn to be PROTESTANTS. True PROTESTANTISM does not blindly and unquestioningly follow a hierarchy - whether denominational or independent - nor does it ignore apostasy and corruption within the denomination or an independent ministry. Unfortunately, many "historic Adventists" have been indoctrinated by their parents, pastors, school teachers, and church leaders not to think for themselves, but instead to follow their leaders, don't ask questions and don't rock the boat. This Roman Catholic mentality must end if Adventists - including "historic Adventists" - do not want to receive the mark of the beast.

Finally, I would like to bring to your attention this flier that I received from Marcussen. Note the return address name - "M.V. Society of Seventh-day Adventists." I feel this is gross deception since he has no official connection with the church. The "straight testimony(?)" does not require this kind of deception and prevarication. Note the mailing permit location - Troy, MT.

Continue to fight the good fight.

Name Withheld
Eastern USA

"If controversy engenders many evils, as I see to my great sorrow, it is the fault of those who first propagated error, and of those who, filled with diabolical hatred, are now seeking to uphold it."

Philip Melancthon

LETS TALK IT OVER

There can be no question that the follower of the Way, guided by the Spirit of truth, will "grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." (II Peter 3:18) Such an experience will be progressive. He will understand that "the truth is an advancing truth, and we must walk in the increasing light." (R&H, March 25, 1890) At no point in such an experience can one say, "Here is where I pitch my tent; here is where I shall abide." This is the problem involved in crying, "Stay with 'historic' Adventism."

On the other hand, there are some serious problems also. To walk in "the increasing light" means that there will be what could be called, "new light." How do we relate to "new light"? Some quickly dismiss that question by saying that all "new light" will conform to, and not contradict previously known truth. This is a true conclusion. But what about our "cherished views" and the "many, many [lessons] to unlearn"? Our cherished views could be in contradiction to "increasing light." Which would we accept, and which would we give up? Human nature being what it is, we would probably hold to our "cherished views" and reject the light. This is our present danger, with eternal consequences involved.

This is why we must go back to the basics, and build upon that firmly established platform of "present truth". Upon those who have received "present truth devolves the **duty** of developing **that truth** on a higher scale that it has hitherto been done." (Ms. 27, 1897) Note the words we have emphasized - "duty" and "that truth." Not only is it a duty to be progressive in one's study of truth, but it is "that truth" not some fanciful interpretation that is to be developed. Let us illustrate in one area of Biblical studies which seems to have become the playground of those suggesting they have "new light" - prophecy.

When our spiritual forefathers set forth the first basic principle of Adventism - "the cleansing of the sanctuary transpiring in heaven, and having a decided relation to God's people upon the earth" - they based the prophetic part of that conclusion, "the passing of time in 1844," upon the historic method of interpretation clearly revealed in the book of Daniel. That tool of interpretation is a part of basic Adventism. Yet today there are those who would continue to teach the book of Daniel by that tool, but when

they begin to explain the book of Revelation, they adopt the Jesuitical method of interpretation known as "futurism." We need to settle it once and for all time that "advancing light" does not come via Jesuitical methodology.

Then there are those who would question the basic understandings of prophetic truth in the book of Daniel itself. The fundamental prophecy of Daniel 7 with its beast symbols coming up before Daniel in succession, one following the other, is made to teach that all these powers arose simultaneously. Then a fanciful modern interpretation is placed upon them. This is inferred as "advancing truth." Any so-called "light" which destroys previously defined truth is a deception.

But a study of this chapter also reveals wherein "historic Adventism" fails those who hold to "cherished views." Too many are prone to put a "period" after verse 10, and skip to verses 13-14. But the vision speaks clearly of events which were to occur after the judgment began in 1844. The text reads - "I beheld **then** because of the great words which the horn spake." (7:11) We have placed all the "great words" as being spoken during the 1260 prophetic days, but if one looks carefully at the explanation found in verse 25, the word, "great" is supplied. We have not given consideration to the weight which heaven put upon the words after 1844 in contrast with the words spoken during the "time and times and the dividing of time." It is true that if we did so, we would have to give up a "cherished view" or two, and unlearn some lessons. But in so doing, we would not destroy the basic truth of Daniel 7, but rather develop it to "a higher scale."

What is interesting about this whole question is the fact that most of this counsel regarding "advancing truth," and "increasing light" was given in connection with the Righteousness-by-Faith message of 1888. To put a period in the on-going advancement of Adventism, and state categorically that we are going to stop and stake out our theology as perceived and understood prior to the events of 1955-56 - the SDA-Evangelical Conferences - is reactionary. Actually the major setting forth of Seventh-day Adventist theology at that point of time was done in the 1952 Bible Conference - and it conformed to "historic" concepts. But behind the scenes of this conference was an attempt to set forth the message of 1888 so as to blunt the force of the original presentation of Wieland and Short to the Leadership of the Church in 1950. In others words, it was still a church in rebellion against "advancing truth" and "increasing light."

To stake out one's position in that setting, and say, "Stay with 'historic' Adventism," is tragedy compounded. But this is exactly the message of the booklet written by Larson and published by Grosboll which we received in the first article. Further, within the very emphases of many of the proponents of "historic" Adventism is to be found the theology of Butler, Smith and Morrison, rather than "the precious message" brought by Waggoner and Jones.

In the next issue of WWN, we plan to do a detailed presentation on the 1952 Bible Conference.

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AN OBSERVATION

In discussing certain teachings as found in the book, Seventh-day Adventists Believe..., we noted the emphasis on the "completed" atonement at the cross. (p. 315, col. 2; 365, col. 2). In the presentation of Belief #9, it is stated - "In the sanctuary services, however, atonement not only involved the killing of the sacrificial lamb but also included the priestly ministering of its shed blood in the sanctuary itself." Although this statement is misleading, the conclusion is drawn - "According to this Biblical usage, then atonement can refer to both Christ's death and His intercessory ministry in the heavenly sanctuary." (p. 110, col. 2) But you cannot have a "completed" atonement followed by a continuing atonement.

There is a point we need to consider, and that is the emphasis which the types gave to the two atonements - the daily and the yearly. There is no question but that there was an atonement resulting from the daily ministry in the earthly sanctuary service. See Lev. 4:20, 26, 31, 35. This prefigured the death of Christ on the cross. But the word is a verb describing an action and not a noun. It was a confessional sacrifice that was offered, and through the priest an atonement was obtained bringing to the confessor, forgiveness. In describing the yearly service a plural noun is used, atonements, with the definite article. (Ex. 30:10; Lev. 23:27-28, Heb) The result was "to cleanse." (Lev. 16:30) The emphasis in the types as far as "atonement" was concerned was on the final atonement. This our spiritual forefathers understood, and so placed their emphasis. This was and is the unique message of true Adventism.

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controversy which resulted from the publication of Questions on Doctrine. But in presenting Christ's human nature as being "created," the book also adopts the teaching of the "holy flesh" men of Indiana.

Confused? Yet this is the book which Steps to Life would have you accept as setting forth "historic" Adventism.

Why put a period to your study of God's Word, and state that you will not go beyond the teachings prior to 1957? Why make the basis of your concepts of what constitutes "historic" Adventism, the flawed book, Seventh-day Adventists Believe...? Isn't it time to walk in the ever flowing light from the throne of God rather than being deceived by taking steps to life which do not lead to life, but rather to spiritual stagnation and ultimate death?

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Erratum - The July issue of WWN with its lead article - "The Agenda of Deception" - was dated the same as the June issue - 6(93). It should have read - 7(93). This issue carries the correct dating - 8(93). As a friend in Australia would say, "Sorry about that." We will try to be more accurate; we are pained by errors.

Repentance must be something more than mere remorse for sins: it comprehends a change of nature befitting heaven.

Lew Wallace

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