"Watchman, what of the night?"

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

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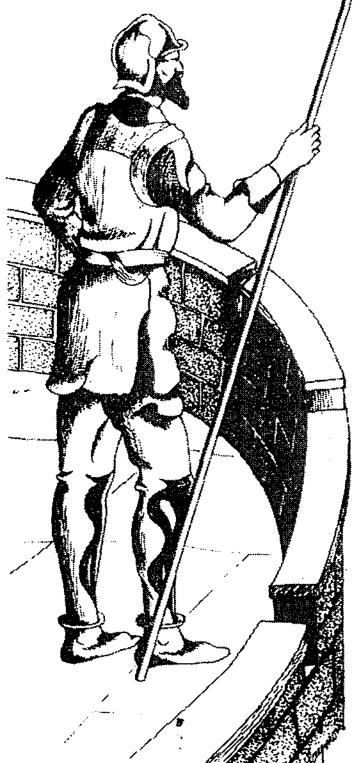
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Editor's Preface

With this issue we complete thirty four years of continuous publication. My mind goes back to the first issue sent out in December, 1967, as I - 1(68). It had been written for the most part at a desk in the Central Mississippi Chapter of the American Red Cross. When Madison College closed its doors, I was sent to Andrews University to complete my graduate work so as to return to the Madison Campus and teach Bible and History to the nursing students coming from Southern Missionary College for their practics at Madison Hospital. This did not materialize, and I was left free to accept any ministerial work offered. Instead, I asked for a leave of absence which was granted. I obtained a signed statement by the Southern Union Conference president that this leave was of my initiation, and as a minister in good and regular standing.

While at Andrews University, I could not erase from my mind the conviction that my future work would be in the field of writing. I didn't like to write; I resisted the thought. My first responsibility after taking leave was that of supervising counselor of an educational unit in a Federal project to help alleviate illiteracy for the underprivileged in the state of Mississippi. The hours in driving to and from the unit as well as the night testing programs gave no time for writing. But I could not erase from my mind the call to write. So one morning while driving to Yazoo City. I pulled off from the highway onto a side road, and there in prayer with tears flowing freely. I promised the Lord I would write if he found me a job where I could have time to do so. In a few weeks. the position at the Red Cross opened, caring for the department of Service to Military Families. I was told that I had to be at the desk eight hours a day (N-F) but if not busy. I could use the time as I wished. So during October and November of 1967, the first "Watchman, What of the Night?" was written. It was mimeographed, and sent out in December to a very small group of names that I could quickly put together. The organization of the Adventist Laymen's Foundation was to come later. as we found it necessary to respond to the requests coming from the growing group of readers of those early issues.



Doctrinal Idolatry

Paul in his letter to the Romans charged that the heathen "changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man." They also "changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator" (1:23, 25). In other words, the heathen imposed upon the Divine, the human. Instead of seeking to understand God as He revealed Himself to be, they created a God, according to their earthly perceptions of Him.

The commandment is specific, "Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath. ... Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them" (Ex. 20: 4-5). The God of Israel remained "invisible" (I Tim. 1:17), representing Himself by the Shekinah glory dwelling between the cherubim (Ps. 80:1). John wrote: "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten God (μ ovo γ ev η c Θ eoc) who being ('o ω v) in the bosom of the Father, hath declared Him" (John 1:18; Gr).

How did the Word who was equally God (John 1:1) in becoming flesh reveal Him? The Scripture is clear. As the second Adam, He came to restore the broken relationship resultant upon the first Adam's failure. "For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive" (I Cor. 15:22). Even as Adam was a son of God (Luke 3:38), so the Messiah became a Son so as to restore "many sons unto glory" (Heb. 2:10). This father-son relationship while revealing the objective of God for the salvation of man, dare not be turned, and read as the revelation of the nature of the Godhead. To do so is nothing less than "doctrinal idolatry," changing "the truth of God into a lie."

It is true that the incarnate Word is declared to be the Son of God. Many New Testament references can be cited. This is as the angel Gabriel said it would be: "That holy One which shall be born of thee shall be called ($\kappa\lambda\eta\theta\eta\sigma\epsilon\tau\alpha$) a Son of God" (Luke 1:35; Gr). Gabriel did not say either that "He was" or that "He is;" but that He "shall be called a Son of God" This "Sonship" is based on a different premise than a human father-son relationship. We dare not be guilty of the heathen application of the human upon the Divine.

The Messianic second Psalm begins with the rebellion against Jehovah and His Anointed One in a great controversy motif (2:1-6). The Hebrew word "Anointed"

in verse 2 is Meshiho (Messiah) - "the Anointed One of Him." This Anointed One is set as a "King" in Zion (ver. 6). The compact is between the Two Jehovahs of Isaiah 44:6 - "Thus saith the Lord (Yehowah), the King of Israel, and his redeemer, the Lord (Yehowah) of hosts; I am the first, and I am the last; and beside me there is no God (Elohim). The eternal God, the King of Israel, when He came unto His own, His own received Him not, but cried out, "We have no king but Caesar" (John 19:15). However, this counsel of peace which was "between the Two of Them" (Zech. 6:13; Heb.) involved more than a kingship. A decree was issued defining the messianic relationship, which stated:

I will declare the decree: the Lord hath said unto Me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee. (ver. 7).

The Godhead relationship is defined in Isaiah 44:6, the Messianic relationship is set forth in Psalm 2:7. To project back upon the pre-existent Elohim, the decreed relationship by which that Elohim designed to convey their objective in redemption, is doctrinal idolatry, and reveals the mind set of paganism. We might well ponder the following counsel:

When the mind is engrossed with the conceptions and theories of men to the exclusion of the wisdom of God, it is stamped with idolatry. (FCE, p. 186)

No outward shrines may be visible, there may be no image for the eye to rest upon, yet we may be practising idolatry. It is easy to make an idol of cherished ideas or objects as to fashion gods of wood or stone. Thousands have a false conception of God and His attributes. They are as verily serving a false god as were the servants of Baal. (5T:173-174)

The "Messianic" decree in its fulfilment became the core of the Gospel. To two different experiences in the life of "the Word made flesh" was the decreed "sonship" applied: 1) "When He bringeth the first begotten into the world" God did not say to the angels, "Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten Thee" but rather, "Let all the angels of God worship Him" (Heb. 1:5-6). He was "in flesh appearing" but nevertheless God, now to be "called the Son of God." 2) "We declare unto you glad tidings, how that the promise which was made unto the fathers, God has fulfilled the same to us their children, in that he hath raised up Jesus again; as it is written in the second psalm, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee" (Acts

13:32-33). In the Incarnation and in the Resurrection, the decree meets it objective and fulfilment. It is as the "Son of God" and "the Son of man" that the Messiah stands as the only Mediator between God and man. Paul states it this way - "For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Jesus the Messiah" (See I Tim. 2: 5) It is still the Two of Isaiah 44:6 and Zechariah 6:13. Status of position does not alter the nature of Being. The decreed Son is still God in a new dimension - the Godman.

Paul declares the "gospel of God" to be composed of two components: 1) "Concerning his Son Jesus Christ (Messiah) our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh;" and 2) "Declared the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead" (Rom. 1:3-4). This gospel, Paul affirmed, did not come from man, but "by the revelation of Jesus Christ (Messiah)" directly. By the Incarnation, the "Anointed One" was to be "called the Son of God" and by the Resurrection, He was declared the Son of God with power.

The picture in Revelation brings together the whole of the objective of the counsel of peace which was between the Two of Them. The Messiah is standing "in the midst of the throne as "a Lamb as it had been slain" (5:6), and thus in worshipping Him that sat on the Throne would be to worship the Lamb also. Indeed, He has sat down with the Father in His throne. (3:21). He could say to John who had fallen at His feet, "I am the first and the last" (1:17; Isa. 44:6): I am He that liveth, and was dead; and behold I am alive forevermore" (1:18). There was a "sundering of the Divine powers" in the redemption provided for men, but in the exaltation of the risen Lord, He is alive forevermore.

The last words of John in his first Epistle are apropos-"Little children, keep yourselves from idols" Yes, even doctrinal idolatry.

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Thus saith the LORD the King of Israel, and his redeemer the LORD of hosts; I am the first, and I am the last; and beside me there is no ELOHIM.

Isaiah 44:6

What Purpose? - The Tithe

With this issue, we complete 34 years of publication. During this time span, we have discussed or said little about the question of tithing. It is an individual matter and highly personal between an individual and his God. Whether one tithes very resrictively, or is liberal in his interpretation of what he should tithe is dependent on his appreciation of what God has done and is doing for him. The Biblical injunction is clear: "Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house" (Mai. 3:10).

In this one verse is the injunction - "Bring ye all the tithe." It is not a matter of allocating here and there the tithe as we may determine, but "all" is to come to one place - "the storehouse." But what is the storehouse? The regular Church would have you believe that the storehouse is the Conference. This may or may not be true. The Bible defines "the house of God." To Timothy, Paul wrote:

These things write I unto you, hoping to come unto thee shortly: but if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and the ground of truth. (I Tim. 3:15)

Here the "house of God" - the storehouse - is defined as "the church of the living God." So the position of the regular Church has merit, except for one fact. The "church of the living God" is "the pillar and the ground of the truth." Therefore, if a church is in apostasy from the truth, it ceases to be "the storehouse" of God. The first determinate factor in the placement of the tithe is truth. The tithe cannot be placed where error is a "pillar" of the faith.

How are we to understand the purpose of the tithe? The injunction in Malachi reads - "that there may be meat in My house" - literally "food." Does this mean then - "pay the preacher"? It does not say food for the preacher, but for the whole house of God - all who are of "the household of faith" (Gal. 6:10). This does involve the preacher but in the same way the church is involved. Jesus, during His eschatological sermon on the Mount of Olives, questioned:

Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his lord hath made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season? Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing. (Matt. 24:45-46)

"Food in My house" is focused by Christ on "food in due season;" and that "season" being the time of the second coming. It is incumbent upon those who receive tithe, to feed the household of God with "present truth" in regard to the prophecies which relate to earth's final hours; as well as the spiritual experience all must have who will endure to the end. This also serves as a criterion for where the tithe is to be placed. Awesome is the responsibility as well as the accountability of each one who truly desires to place the Lord's holy tithe where it ought to be placed. What an accounting will have to be given by "servants" who accept tithe, and do not provide "food in due season" but continue to preach error instead of truth. Further, how will the "blind guides" who continue to urge people to support apostasy with their tithe answer in the day of final accounts?

Yes, while tithing is a personal matter, it serves as a criterion as to how one relates to what is holy, and to what God claims as His own, for the tithe is both holy and the Lord's. (Lev. 27:30). The decision is individual, but the guidelines as to its purpose and use are clearly stated.

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Three Messengers

In 1888, the Church had three messengers, none of whom claimed infallibility. In 1903, the first "messenger" wrote:

From the year 1846 until the present time, I have received messages from the Lord, and have communicated them to the people. This is my work — to give to the people the light that God gives to me. I am commissioned to receive and communicate His messages. I am not to appear before the people as holding any other position than that of a messenger with a message. (St. Helena, California, Nov. 17, 1903; quoted in "The Final Word and A Confession," p. 10)

In 1888, God sent two other "messengers" to the Church with a specific message. Reviewing this commission, Ellen White wrote:

The Lord in His great mercy sent a most precious message to His people through Elders Waggoner and Jones. This message was to bring more prominently before the world the uplifted Saviour, the sacrifice for the sins of the world. It presented justification through faith in the Surety; it in-

vited the people to receive the righteousness of Christ, which is manifest in obedience to all of the commandments of God. (TM, pp. 91-92)

In the same testimony, it was noted: "It is the perpetual life of the church to love God supremely, and to love others as they love themselves." But in 1888, there was little of this love manifest in the Church, so "God gave to His messengers just what the people needed" (ibid., p. 95) Then the question was asked, "How long will you hate and despise the messengers of God's righteousness?" (p. 96).

There can be little doubt, that Ellen G. White who recognized her commission as a "messenger" also recognized Jones and Waggoner as commissioned "messengers" with a specific message for the Church. The question, though asked, has not been researched nor answered as to why God chose two other "messengers" to give the message of justification by faith instead of the first "messenger"? Further, while the two "messengers" of 1888 emphasized the "gospel" of the Three Angels' Messages of Revelation 14, during the same period, the first "messenger" was counselling the Church on an attitude and condition of mind which has been as much spurned as was the message of righteousness by faith itself, as given by Jones and Waggoner. Only the aspect of righteousness by faith has been brought to the forefront by the challenge of Wieland and Short in 1950.

In 1892, the admonition was given - "Let no one come to the conclusion that there is no more truth to be revealed" (Counsels on Sabbath School Work, p. 34). Two years prior, a brother had asked Ellen White, "Do you think we must understand the truth for ourselves? Why cant we take the truth that others have gathered together, and believe them?" To this she wrote - "It is dangerous to make flesh our arm. We should lean upon the arm of Infinite Power. God has been revealing this to us for years. We must have living faith in our hearts and reach out for larger knowledge and more advanced light" (R&H, March 25, 1890).

The messages of the three "messengers" are congruent. Each is a part of the whole. The righteousness of Christ was declared to be "pure, unadulterated truth" (TM, p. 65), and the truth was declared to be "an advancing truth" with the counsel, "we must walk in the increasing light" (op. cit, R&H). Lest, we would conclude that this counsel was being directed solely toward those opposing Jones and Waggoner, and that "the advancing light" was only in reference to the message of righteousness by faith - which it did in-

clude - Ellen White wrote:

There is no excuse for anyone in taking the position that there is no more truth to be revealed, and that all our expositions of Scripture are without error. The fact that certain doctrines have been held as truth for many years by our people, is not proof that our ideas are infallible. Age will not make error into truth, and truth can afford to be fair. No true doctrine will loose anything by close investigation. (R&H, Dec. 20, 1892).

And again:

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 an occasion to change an opinion, will be disappointed. As long as we hold to our own ideas and opinions with determined persistency, we cannot have the unity for which Christ prayed. (R&H, July 26, 1892).

Here is the crux of our problem - "the unity for which Christ prayed." It is so desperately needed among the fragmented segments of Adventism, yet it is among these segments that the "determined persistency" which opposes that unity is most visibly seen. We may proclaim the 1888 Message and form a committee for its promotion, yet if we are not willing to walk in the advancing light of truth which leads to a "pure, unadulterated truth," we in reality do not have the righteousness of Christ manifest in a living and working faith. The message of two messengers may be given, but failure to heed the message of the third leaves a void which nullifies "the unity for which Christ prayed."

Then there are those who profess to be upholding the "historic" faith, who, not only, know little of what righteousness by faith means, but also reject any advancing light of truth. They remain in the same Laodicean state out of which they profess to have come. Tragically, they have attached "works" as well as "hobby horses" to their confession of faith and are riding them "like the midnight ride of Paul Revere." But it is not leading to "the unity for which Christ prayed."

In the Review & Herald (July 26, 1892) in which is found the challenge - "We have many lessons to learn, and many, many to unlearn" - are also found the directives of how "the unity for which Christ prayed" may be realized.

The question is first asked - "How shall we search the Scriptures?" This is the first hurdle today, that evidently was not a stumbling block in 1892. Today, the question which dominates is "What do the Writings teach?" before we even open the Bible. The question, the first messenger noted as the beginning point to achieve the unity for which Christ prayed, is "How shall we search the Scriptures?" and she made it clear that she meant the Bible. She observed that "many who read and even teach the Bible, do not comprehend the precious truth they are teaching or studying."

After asking the first question, the first "messenger of the Lord" questioned:

Shall we drive our stakes of doctrine one after another, and then try to make all Scripture meet our established opinions, or shall we take our ideas and views to the Scriptures, and measure our theories on every side by the Scriptures of truth?

The answer is obvious. The Bible determines truth, not our own ideas and opinions. "Men entertain errors, when the truth is clearly marked out, and if they would bring their doctrines to the word of God, and not read the word of God in the light of their doctrines, to prove their ideas right, they would not walk in darkness or blindness, or cherish error. Many give the words of Scripture a meaning that suits their own opinions, and they mislead themselves and deceive others by their misinterpretation of God's word." (ibid.)

How then are we to study the Word so as to attain "the unity for which Christ prayed"?

As we take up the study of God's word, we should do so with humble hearts. All selfishness, all love of originality, should be laid aside. Long-cherished opinions must not be regarded as infallible. It was the unwillingness of the Jews to give up their long-established traditions that proved their ruin. They were determined not to see any flaw in their own opinions or in their interpretations of the Scriptures; but however long men may have entertained certain views, if they are not clearly sustained by the written word, they should be discarded. (ibid.)

This last step will be most difficult to take. To discard the many, many things that must be unlearned, which have been long cherished will be traumatic. At that point we will either do as the Jews did in a different form, or we will, with humble hearts, lay aside error.

The Jews crucified Jesus who was the truth, we can today crucify the truth as it is in Jesus.

With what attitude should we approach a challenge to our personal perceptions? The answer it given:

Those who sincerely desire truth will not be reluctant to lay open their positions for investigation and criticism, and will not be annoyed if their opinions and ideas are crossed" (ibid.)

Then the first messenger of the Lord recalled that "this was the spirit cherished among us forty years ago" which would take one back to the 1850s prior to the formation of the organized Seventh-day Adventist Church. What did that "Little Flock" as they were then called do?

We would come together burdened in soul, praying that we might be one in faith and doctrine; for we knew that Christ is not divided. One point at a time was made the subject of investigation. Solemnity characterized these councils of investigation. The Scriptures were opened with a solemn sense of awe. Often we fasted, that we might be better fitted to understand the truth. After earnest prayer, if any point was not understood, it was discussed, and each one expressed his opinion freely; then we would again bow in prayer, and earnest supplications went up to heaven that God would help us see eye to eye, that we might be one, as Christ and the Father are one. (ibid.)

If we would seek to emulate the experience that marked the beginning of the Advent Movement, it would become obvious that there were difficulties to solve. First, Bible Conferences such as have marked the years since then, such as the 1919 or 1952 conferences, cannot duplicate the setting necessary to achieve the true objective of "the unity for which Christ prayed." Study groups would have to be limited in size, small enough so that each one present could "freely" express himself. The time allotted would have to be of a duration so that solid conclusions based in the study of the Word could be achieved. The pace of life to which we are accustomed would have to be drastically altered. Progress would be slow due to the many and varied winds of doctrine that have been blowing unchecked in the corridors of Adventism during the past few decades.

Then there is a primary question that must be addressed. Who is willing among the many voices sounding in the corridors of Adventism to lay open their positions for investigation and criticism" and who

"will not be annoyed if their opinions and ideas are crossed"? Besides this, there is a more acute question: Who would be willing to admit that he was in error even if shown to be by the study of the Word?

We are prone to think that since the pioneer brethren came together and through fasting, prayer and study of the Bible, formulated a comprehensive doctrinal structure in the 1850s, it is infallibly sound. Yet it was some forty years later that the first messenger stated unequivocally that there were still things to learn, and many, many things to unlearn. This fact, we are reluctant to acknowledge and act upon in accordance with the directive - "learn" and doubly "unlearn." It has been made even more difficult to follow and accept, when it is obvious in the history of the church from 1950 and climaxing in 1980, most attempts to do so have resulted in apostasy from the truth rather than growth in the truth. This has been carefully documented in the first eight issues of WWN for this year as we critiqued Dr. George R. Knight's book, A Search for Identity.

Those promoting the current agitation over the 1888 Message, while placing in the forefront the message given by the second two messengers, have ignored, or we might say, have rejected, the directives by the first messenger in regard to the advancing light of truth. They deplore the rejection by the "brethren" of the 1888 message, yet at the same time reject the advancing light of truth commensurate to the hour to which we have come in human history. Their rejection since their challenge in 1950, and documented in A Warning and Its Reception, seems to have made no impression upon them.

There are questions that demand attention. There can be no question that we have reached the end of time. Jesus Himself gave a prophecy which would mark that end. We have not heeded it nor the message of the first messenger regarding final events. (See R&H, Dec. 13, 1892) From the very beginning of the Advent Movement, the first messenger encouraged the "Little Flock" to consider what could be designated as a "great controversy motif" in the understanding the salvation history. (See Spiritual Gifts, Vol. 1) This means simply that when the final judgment began in heaven, the first question to be resolved, of necessity, would involve the angelic host. From one of them is where sin began. The prophecy clearly indicates this fact (Daniel 7:10), but we have given it little consideration.

It is our objective, by the grace of God, to address

some of these questions forthrightly in the issues of WWN for 2002. If in 1892, there were lessons to learn, and many, many to unlearn, the intervening years have not nullified this counsel, but because it has not been done, it has made it even more necessary that such an attempt be made.

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Divine Intervention

While God created man a free moral agent with the power of choice, He did not abdicate His Sovereignty to intervene in the course of human affairs. The first act of sin caused God to intervene for the protection of the Tree of Life in the midst of the Garden. "He drove out the man" (Gen. 3:22-24). When the wickedness of man became so great that "every imagination of his heart was only evil continually," God altered the whole of the original creation by a flood of waters (Gen. 7:11). As the defiance of man again exhibited itself on the plain in the land of Shinar, "the Lord came down to see the city and the tower, which the children of men builded" (Gen. 11:5). He intervened. The very functioning of the human mind was altered which led to diversity of cultures and varied ethnic groupings.

With the call of Abraham, God intended through man to intervene in the affairs of man. Man was to reveal God to his fellow men. The exhibit which God developed in His relationship with Abraham was the element of faith - seeing the unseen by promise as if it were reality. The development of this faith in Abraham was so time consuming, that God had to intervene directly when only by that divine intervention could the promise be fulfilled. The whole reproductive system of Sarah had to be rejuvinated. In this experience, is set forth the single question which governs all else in the great controversy between good and evil -"Is any thing too hard for the Lord?" (Gen. 18:14). Paul, citing this experience, wrote of Abraham, that he "being fully persuaded that, what [God] had promised, He was able also to perform" (Rom. 4:21). This is the basis of grace, and the substance of faith.

The Gospel as promised required Divine Intervention (Rom. 1:1, 3-4). God entered flesh itself so as to condemn sin where it resided. (Rom. 8:3). But there was no intervention in His own behalf to purge the flesh before He entered it. He further limited Himself. In that flesh, of His own self, He could do nothing.

(John 5:30). But when the Messiah was made verily sin for us in all of its aspects - He died the "second death" - God intervened! To John, the risen Lord could proclaim; "I was dead; and, behold, I am alive forevermore" (Rev. 1:18).

There is to be another divine intervention. In the provision of the gospel for our present sinful lives, there is the promise that "if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous" (I John 2:1). However, in the contest with the flesh, we 'cannot do the things that (we) would" (Gal. 5:17). No amount of good works brings to us perfection. We fail often, though the "intent" is still there. We press on toward "the mark of the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." To "be thus minded" is to "be (presently) perfect" (Phil. 3:14-15). There is a time, however, when that intercession will cease. (Rev. What Divine Intervention does God have 15:8). planned for those whose "intent" is toward His high calling, when He takes unto Himself His great power and reigns? (Rev. 11:17). This is the supreme question of the present hour, and can be answered only in the context of the final atonement. There are only two factors from the human perspective: 1) Soul afflction, and 2) Cease from trust in our own works. (Lev. 23:29-30). All the rest, according to the type is the work of the High Priest. The promise has been given - "He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him" (Heb. 7:25). The question asked so long ago - "Is there anything too hard for the Lord" - is apropos. "Now unto Him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and forever" (Jude 24-25)

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