

THE REMEMBRANCER

A MONTHLY MAGAZINE

FOR

THE LORD'S PEOPLE.

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"Wherefore I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, though ye know them. Yea, . . . I think it meet, . . . to stir you up by putting you in remembrance."

2nd Peter i. 12, 13.

VOLUME IX.

HAMILTON, ONT., CANADA

BIBLE TRUTH AGENCY.

1900.



INDEX.

	PAGE
A Little Inquiry,	98
Alliances and Confederations,	7
"Concerning the Collection for the Saints . . . upon the First Day of the Week. (1 Cor. xvi. 1, 2.)	175
Fragments, 80, 140,	200
Frankincense, (Lev. ii. 2.)	95
From Blindness and Beggary to Worship. (John ix.)	41
German Rationalists and the Bible,	199
Growth through the Truth. (1 Pet. ii. 1-6.)	209
Humility,	220
Jesus, Thou alone art Worthy. (John iii. 25-36.)	92
Nothing but Christ,	135
Philippians iii.,	110
The Heart of Abram. (Gen. xi. 27; xii. 1-7.)	161
The Education of the Soul in the Truth. (Luke vii. 37, 38, 48-50; John xii. 1-3, xx. 1-17.)	101
The Hope of His Calling. (Eph. i. 15—ii. 10.)	222
The Inspiration of the Scriptures, Especially in Con- nection with the Human Element Therein,	181
The Kingdom of Heaven,	99
The Knowledge of God and Fellowship with Christ. (Sequel to "Alliances and Confederations.")	21
"The Light of the Body is the Eye." (Luke xi. 34-35.)	130
The Middle Wall Broken Down. (John iv.)	203
The Mind of Christ. (1 Cor. ii.)	97
The New Creation. (2 Cor. v. 13-21.)	121
The Offerings of God. (Heb. xiii. 15-16.)	54
The Path and Character of the Christian. (1 Pet. i. 1-7.)	225

iv.

INDEX.

	PAGE
The Purpose of God. (Eph. i. 9, 10.)	141
The Two Disciples going to Emmaus. (Luke xxiv.)	82
The Way of a Christian's Power. (2 Cor. xii.)	61
"To Me to Live is Christ,"	137
Unfaithfulness and Faithfulness,	90
Waiting for the Son from Heaven. (1 Thes. i. 10.)	2
Worship in Spirit and in Truth,	53

POETRY.

"And having Done All, to Stand,"	161
Communings by the Wayside (Luke xxiv. 15; Mal. iii. 16),	81
Jesus at the Well of Samaria (John iv.),	201
The Christian Mariner,	221
The Last Watch of the Night (Rev. xix. 7),	236
The Times of Refreshing (Rom. viii. 19-23),	1
Verses,	47, 208



The Remembrancer.

“THE TIMES OF REFRESHING.”*

ROM. VIII. 19-23.

“O scenes surpassing fable, and yet true,
Scenes of accomplished bliss!”—COWPER’S TASK.

O what a bright and blessed world
This groaning earth of ours will be,
When from its throne the tempter hurl’d,
Shall leave it all, O Lord, to Thee !

But brighter far that world above,
Where we, as we are known shall know ;
And, in the sweet embrace of love,
Reign o’er this ransom’d earth below.

O blessed Lord ; with weeping eyes,
That blissful hour we wait to see ;
While every worm or leaf that dies
Tells of the curse and calls for Thee.

Come, Saviour, then, o’er all below
Shine brightly from Thy throne above ;
Bid heaven and earth Thy glory know,
And all creation feel Thy love.

* “And he called his name NOAH (Rest) saying, This same shall comfort us concerning our work and toil of our hands, because of the ground which the Lord hath cursed.” —Gen. v. 29. These words of Lamech, the father of Noah, prophetically point to Him whom we now know as the true rest of His people, through whom alone, in the end, the curse will pass away from the earth, and the blessings set forth in the above lines will be given.

WAITING FOR THE SON FROM HEAVEN.

I THESS. i. 10.

In the calculations of men events unfold themselves as the effects of causes which are known to be operating. But, while this has its truth, to faith it is God who, in His supremacy, holds a seal in His hand to *stamp each day with its character or sign.*

This gives the soul a fresh interest in the passing moments. Some of them may be more impressively stamped than others; but all are in progress, and each hour is contributing to the unfolding of the coming era, like the seasons of the year, or the advances of day and night. Some moments in such progress may be more strongly marked than others. But all are in advance. Every stage of Israel's journey through the desert was bringing them nearer to Canaan, though some stages were tame and ordinary while others were full of incident. And so all the present age is accomplishing the advance of the promised kingdom, though some periods of it have greater importance than others.

These "signs of the times," or sealings of God's hand upon the passing hour, it is the duty of faith to discern, because they are always according to the premonitions of Scripture. Indeed, current events are only "signs," as they are according to, or in fulfilment of, such previous notices.

The words of the prophets made the doings of Jesus in the days of His flesh the signs of those days (Matt. xii. 22, 23). And have we not words in the New Testament which, in like manner make all around us at this moment, or in every century of the dispensation, significant? Have not words, which we find there, abundantly forecast the characters of such dispensation and given beforehand the forms of those corruptions that were to work in Christendom? They have told us what now our eyes have seen. They told us of the field of wheat and tares; of the mustard seed which became a lodging-place for the fowl of the air; of "the unmerciful servant;" of the Gentile not "continuing in God's goodness;" or of a "great house," with its vessels unto honour and dishonour; and of other like things. They told us of "the latter times," and of "the last days;" and they still tell the deadly character which the hour is to bear that is to usher forth "the man of sin," and ripen iniquity for the manifestation and power of the day of the Lord.

All this is so. And let me ask, if every hour be after this manner bearing its character, or wearing its sign, *what mark are we individually helping to put upon this our day?* Is the purpose and way of the Lord ripening into blessedness at all reflected in us? Or are we, in any measure, aiding to unfold that form of evil which is to bring down the judgment? If the times were to be known and described according to our way, what

character would they bear? What sign would distinguish them?

These are inquiries for the conscience of each of us. We cannot be neuter in this matter. We cannot be idle in this market-place. It may be but in comparative feebleness; but still each of us, within the range of the action of Christendom, is either helping to disclose God's way, or to ripen the vine of the earth for the wine-press of wrath.

The Lord tells us that the sign on which our *faith* must rest is that of a *humbled* Christ, such a sign as that of Jonah the prophet. Our faith deals with such a sign, because our need as sinners casts us on a Saviour or a humbled Christ. But hope may feed on a thousand signs. Our expectations are nourished by a sight of the operations of the divine hand displaying every hour the ripening of the counsels and promises, in spite of the world, and in the very face of increasing human energies.

These signs may be watched, but watched by the saint *already in the place and attitude assigned him by the Spirit*. They are not to determine what is his place, but they may exercise him in it. His place and attitude is beforehand and independently determined for him—*waiting for the Son of God from heaven*.

This posture the Thessalonian saints assumed on their believing the gospel (1 Thess. i. 9, 10). The Apostle seems afterwards to strengthen them in that posture, by telling them that from it they were

to be caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air (1 Thess. iv. 17). And again afterwards he seems to guard them against being disturbed in that attitude, against being tempted to give it up, by further telling them, that that place of *expectation* should be exchanged for the place of *meeting* ere the day of the Lord fell with its terrors on the world and the wicked (2 Thess. i., ii.). And, still further, this very posture of waiting for the Son from heaven had induced a certain evil. Some among the Thessalonian saints were neglecting present handiworks. The Apostle does not in any wise seek to change their posture, but admonishes them to hold it in company with diligence and watchfulness, that, while their eye was gazing, their hand might be working (2 Thess. iii.)

Other New Testament Scriptures seem also to assume the fact, that faith had given all the saints this same attitude of soul; or, that the things taught them were fitted to do so (see 1 Cor. i. 7; xv. 23, 51, 52; Phil. iii. 20; Tit. ii. 13; Heb. ix. 28).

Admonitions and encouragements of the like tendency (that is, to strengthen us in this place and posture of heart) the Lord Himself seems to me to give, just at the bright and blessed close of the volume.

“I come quickly” is announced by Him three times in Rev. xxii.—words directly suited to keep the heart, that listens to them believingly, in the attitude of which I am speaking. But different

words of warning and encouragement accompany this voice :

1. " Behold, I come quickly ; blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book " (ver. 7). This warns us that, while we are waiting for Him, we must do so with watchful, obedient, observant minds, heedful of His words.

2. " Behold, I come quickly ; and my reward is with me, to give everyone according as his work shall be " (ver. 12). This encourages to diligence, telling us, that by the occupation of our talents now during His absence, on the promised and expected return He will have honours to impart to us.

3. " Surely, I come quickly, " is again the word (ver. 20). This is a simple promise. It is neither a warning nor an encouragement. Nothing accompanies the announcement, as in the other cases. It is, as it were, simply a promise to bring *Himself* with Him on His coming again. But it is the *highest* and the *dearest* thing. The heart may be silent before a warning and before an encouragement ; such words may get their audience in secret from the conscience. But this promise of the simple personal return of Christ gets its answer from the saints (" Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh"), " Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus."

Thus the Lord, after this various and beautiful manner, does the business of the Spirit in the Apostles. His own voice, in these different and strik-

ing announcements, encourages the saints to maintain the attitude of waiting for Him.

Great things are a-doing. The Church, the Jew, and the Gentile are all in characteristic activity, each full of preparation and expectancy. *But faith waits for that which comes not with such things.* The rapture of the saints is part of the mystery, part of "the hidden wisdom." The coming of the Son of God from heaven is a fact, as I judge, apart altogether from the history or the condition of the world around.



ALLIANCÉS AND CONFEDERATIONS.*

"Associate yourselves, O ye peoples, and ye shall be broken in pieces. . . Take counsel together, and it shall come to naught, speak the word and it shall not stand. . . Say ye not, A confederacy, to all them to whom this people shall say, A confederacy; neither fear ye their fear, nor be afraid. Sanctify the Lord of Hosts Himself; and let Him be your fear. . . And He shall be for a sanctuary."—Is. viii. 9-14.

Few things can be more important, or distressing in a certain sense, than the widely accepted proposal of the world's reformation by means of the mental and moral cultivation of mankind, as opposed to God's redemption by the blood of His Son.

It is nothing short of this (as an object) which

* The moment seems opportune to reproduce the above paper, written a quarter of a century ago, in view of the failure of man's latest attempt (The Peace Congress) to bring about a millennium without Christ, so fresh in the minds of all. Ed: R.

is being attempted through existing institutions, whether established by voluntary efforts, as formerly; or, as now, by legislative enactments and governmental patronage, for they alike contemplate man as a member of this creation.

In addition to these establishments may be discovered, upon a higher level, the religious organizations and co-operative societies of the day, which embrace other objects, it is true, but still recognize man as a citizen of the world.

Even Christian associations, so-called, which rise upon this graduated scale and leave their own mark, stop entirely short of "a new creature in Christ," and "I, crucified to the world." By all such combinations of state-policy and social enterprise, it is hoped and confidently stated by the world's leaders, that the political and natural rights of men will soon be recognized; and that the suffrage may be universally extended, when its populations have been fitted by these educational schemes for its exercise, and all be then led forward, in one encouraging effort of getting good and doing good to the world, where they are.

As a fair consequence, the governments of Europe and the States, may, in their turn, as well expect by some gigantic effort to rise up out of their iron and clay formations and develop themselves in brass or silver, and, by thus working backward, endeavour to reach "the head of gold" (Dan. ii.).

The melancholy interest which one naturally feels about these movements and expectations is

deepened, because they are seen to be unscriptural and futile when judged in the light of the word of God. On this account it is that feelings of another kind lay hold on those who remember they were once upon this treadmill for themselves; and thus, the one great absorbing desire *now* is, the deliverance of such as are still hard at work in the Egyptian house of bondage.

Another fact weighs heavily upon the spirit of the emancipated ones, namely, that these combined efforts, in all their gigantic forces, are proof of alienation of mind from God, and to the way by which He invites and beseeches men to be reconciled to Himself, by the death of His Son. There is a fellowship which God has thus formed with believers in Christ, and into which in grace He calls; but this is not our present subject.

A confederacy of continental nations, in this our century, sought to reach a "Holy alliance" for themselves (many will remember it) as a ground of universal peace, and this was vauntingly declared to have been formed, but no sooner celebrated by the nations comprised in that alliance, than unholily violated. It has long since passed away from its expected longevity, into the pages of disappointed history. This failure gave place to a further and last attempt to reach a commonwealth of peace and prosperity by "the balance of power" amongst "the ten toes" of Daniel's prophetic image; but this was a rope of sand, and, following upon "The Holy alliance," only threw each of

the great powers into warlike attitude for aggression or self-defence. Nothing else could follow these last abortive efforts to form an international brotherhood but the existing armaments, with their iron-clads and turret-ships, in a proud defiance of one nation against another, in connection with all the innumerable rifles and *chassepots* of the ever-training armies which they embrace, in view of a coming and extended war.

But to proceed. It is not intended in this paper to say anything more upon true Christian fellowship, "which is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ," on the part of those who, in matchless grace, have been brought "out of darkness into His marvellous light," as it is not its subject. The fact has been already stated; we have now to examine its counterfeits.

Enough has been said of associations, unions, and mutual alliance societies, in their multiplications and varieties, to prove that fellowship in itself is the common want of the world.

An instructed Christian, judging by the light of God's word, must sooner or later admit that the need and call for these formations among men is but the avowal (unintentional it may be) of "the fall," by which mankind has shut itself up to its own inventions, and in wilfulness and wickedness broken loose from God. (cf. Is. I. 11). These are but their own sorry productions, alas, and the fruit of their poor resources, when left to themselves like Cain, who went out from the presence

of God, to take his place as a "fugitive and vagabond in the earth." He had reduced himself to himself, and to make terms of agreement with his neighbour, if haply he could, where the old dragon and Satan held his power and seat: I only refer so far back to show, that the primary and common drift, or, to speak morally, the *fact* of the fall and of original sin, was likewise a falling away from God; and threw man upon his fellow in guilt for sympathy, and in a common confession of departure, if not too far sunk, or else, in sinful confederation, to war against the righteous judgment of God which he could not escape.

But leaving this original ground, and its demands and supplies, we may look into other varieties of modern times, and the forms and fashions, religious or otherwise, with which we are unavoidably familiar.

Still God acted on behalf of men; He had not forsaken the world, and, by the introduction of Judaism as a grand system of legislation and of external worship, established with them on the earth, He founded a theocracy which was intended as the centre of outward peace and prosperity for Israel and the surrounding nations. This enabled the Jehovah of that favoured people to lead them into the land of Canaan, and dwell with them according to His promises. The patterns and forms which He gave out in grace (when the true knowledge of God was lost by mankind at large) and by which He opened a way between Himself and

Israel for conditional blessing, had been finished and set up in the tabernacle of Moses ; and again, with further developments and aids, in the temple and throne of Solomon.

It is very needful and precious to us to bear in mind the facts we are now tracing—that God would neither leave Himself without witness, as to communion and intercourse with His people on earth, nor suffer mankind unrebuked to perish in their alienation of mind and confederacy of will against Him by the formation of their own fellowships as they attempted at Babel. Nevertheless, it is sad to remember, that whatever God in love gave for the true knowledge of Himself in communion with patriarchs or the nation, must most surely turn against them governmentally if not used for His glory in their midst, and become a new measure for their correction in righteous judgment.

Nor is this all : for Satan, the enemy of God and man, catches up anything and everything which has once had the sanction of divine authority ; but has been forfeited and spoiled by transgression and abuse. Nothing will suit Satan so well as that which no longer suits God. Whatever is thus put aside as no longer suitable for "the sanctuary of God," becomes the choicest material for the devil's mint and coinage ; else, how could he get the whole world at last to worship the beast and his image, and to say, "Who is like unto the beast?" These corruptions of what once came from God, and their forfeiture on the part of those to

whose hands they were committed, added to the awful fact that Satan delights to turn them into capital and make these forfeits his new material of currency, bring us on to the consideration of the ecclesiastical and religious fellowships in our own day.

These take their character necessarily from Christianity, and likewise from Christ and the church, mingled it is true with the previous forms and ritualism of Judaistic observances. Let us bear in mind that the devil has lastly corrupted Christianity too, and added *this* to the ill-gotten stores, with which he is trading largely throughout Christendom and the world. As regards Christianity and the professing church likewise (this last, and which should have been the highest, witness of truth on the earth), the Son of man has said, when walking in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks, "I will spue thee out of my mouth;" and so the Apocalypse reveals "the woman as sitting upon a scarlet coloured beast." The thing which Christ rejects is, in Satan's hands, become the mother of harlots, and abominations of the earth. The heavens, so to speak, have thus emptied on the earth all they had to give in the way of recovering grace, if the hands were competent to retain, or appreciate and use, the means; but alas, all that was bestowed on the ground of man's responsibility to God has dropped out and been forfeited, only to put increasing power into the grasp of Satan. The huge confederacy he has

in this way formed against God and Christ, and the alliance he has thus made between mankind and himself, and their fellowships and agreements one with another, is "the mystery of iniquity" in the Revelation, by which the failure of all inward and public testimony closes in judgment upon the world.

Historically and prophetically we may thus look at the origin of these human fellowships and their final character and form, under the energetic and guiding enmity of Satan, "the god of this world," and "the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience" (2 Cor. iv. 4; Eph. ii. 2).

When this system of confederated greatness and pride has reached its height, then it is that God refuses and judges it, "for in one hour is she made desolate. Rejoice over her, thou heaven, and ye holy apostles and prophets; for God hath avenged you on her" (Rev. xviii).

Inside, however, and in a measure distinct from the world's fellowships, are those ecclesiastical and religious ones, which are accepted mainly by consciences exercised upon "the good and evil," but not knowing, or refusing, the Christ of God, and Him who has called His people "unto the fellowship of His Son" (1 Cor. i.).

It is obvious that all external and governmental systems, constituted by regal authority and conducted by parliamentary legislation, would not meet the uneasiness of such consciences upon

another and the far deeper question of sin and holiness in the presence of God, much less settle it. Nor was the best thing at Rome which Christendom presented, or its Eastern and Western churches more satisfactory on account of their contradictory creeds and dogmas. The dissatisfaction therefore which arose from a semi-political system, such as Popery on the one hand, with its indulgences and penances, and the uncertainty which national churches produced on the other, reduced the keeping of one's conscience (where there was any) to one's self, and what became individual, or else left an opening as to means and appliances for anything and everything which in time might appear more promising.

Two great systems, however, sprang out of this general dissatisfaction, and have become established—one is the Conventual, and the other the Sacramental, system—and both offer, in their respective ways, to restore man to this broken fellowship with God. Merely social and political unions and their nationalities were declined, on the weighty discovery that *God* was in question, rather than man and his neighbour.

The Conventual system embraced a religious life within walls to meet this emergency, and separated its votaries from the world by being enclosed out of its sight. The Sacramental system connected itself with a contemplative life, fastings and prayers, hours spent in church, on high days

and festivals, but not the confessional and oratory, as with the Conventual.

In either, the *body* must be all but ignored by fasting or penances, when required to bring it under, that the soul might be kept free from all worldly thought, or affection and desire. Under these restrictions and impositions upon the body, it is supposed the soul would rise into such a state of ecstasy, and perhaps beatitude, as to reach the full manifestation of Christian perfection.

Besides these Conventual and Sacramental systems of to-day, there is yet the Evangelistic movement, and the adoption of the Mosaic law, as "a rule of life," by which the body and its members are sought to be controlled and brought into subjection, in order to possess a fellowship of uncertain character, indeed not beyond the seventh of Romans as to experience, and forced to accept "O wretched man that I am!" as the proper state and condition of this so-called Christian. There are off-shoots of this Evangelistic system which claim from its advocates a self-surrender to God, and a putting the will on His side, accompanied by such a consecration of all the powers and faculties of nature, and the body, as would lead to a "higher Christian life," etc., instead of (a full redemption being known) *present* union with a risen glorified Christ, maintained by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

It is remarkable, that in all these ecclesiastical and evangelistic movements the human body seems

to be viewed and dealt with as the one thing in the way, and the main hindrance to the recovery of a lost fellowship with God; and on this account Conventualism, with its severer measures of penance and privation, or Sacramentalism, with its ritualistic observances, offers to carry the *soul* beyond the contaminations of the body.

The Monastic system, with its continental pilgrimages and new order of "the Sacred Heart," might have been added to these; but these so-called pilgrimages are properly speaking "excursions by railways" and connected with hotel accommodations and refreshments, under which the body escapes the impositions and privations formerly practised for its mortification. It is merely passed through the genuflexions and continuous adorations due to the Virgin, alternated by the counting of beads, and the daily lessons and hourly duties of "sisters of mercy," by which it is sought to bring the body back to its original virtues in "holy communion."

Still it is the human body, and a fallen nature, that occupies each and all of these systems, however they may vary in the choice of means for its subjugation, or its voluntary surrender to God, or its fuller consecration to His service.

One of the last of these pilgrimages was to Parai-le-Monial, and "the Sacred Heart," and this (as may be remembered) was arranged for from London, through France, with a well-known excursionist company by return tickets, under the

sanction of Rome, and the blessing of the Pope.

In the great outside confederations of the world, and the alliances between man and man, led on by the wiles of the devil, it is quite otherwise, for the body is at a high premium. As might be supposed, man and all his physical energies are taxed to the utmost, in order to their development and display, for Satan knows "that his time is short."

Fire and water, which in an earlier age were viewed chiefly as destructive elements, have now become allied, and by their generative power, are the necessary and hourly appliances for transit and gain. The millions who are thus whirled along in express trains over the globe, still needed a rapidity better suited for the transmission of their overtaxed thoughts and words, and these are flashed along the wires to the world's end, upon poles which support them in the air, or else by sub-marine cables across the channels and the seas. Man has become a cosmopolite, and is a wonder to himself by his inventions and appliances. Or else a fancied, but necessary, brotherhood in misfortune has sprung up, by which he becomes co-operative and international in his largest ideas and undertakings—but without God and without Christ!

And now, what is the result of all these and other fellowships in the church and in the world? Rationalistic, and infidel theories, in opposition to the word of God, abound, and are the palpable but plain answer, as given by philosophers and men of

science, who rule the day, and are themselves ruled by "the spirit of the age." Indifferentism and immorality would number up the rest of the outsiders—such as take things as they come, till their "soul is required" of them, or the impending judgment overtakes them, when "the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven in flaming fire taking vengeance, etc. (2 Thes. i.).

In conclusion, it is obvious that all these systems, religious or otherwise, have still got man in hand as a moral being, and are seeking how to educate him in his generation, so as to develop what is good; or else by confession and penance, or sacraments and prayers, to curb what is bad—for it is the devil's interest to keep up this deceit. It is only at the cross that such matters can be made plain for those who are simple enough to see the end of the first man in the death of Christ. As regards men and the world, the cross witnesses to the rupture of the last tie. "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself," but the rejection and crucifixion of the Son of His love was the open refusal either to accept His mediation or to suffer His presence in their midst on *such* a footing. What fellowship can there be with God in the face of that cross, which is the standing proof of the outburst of the world's enmity against Him and His love, when they nailed Jesus thereon? And they cried out all at once, saying, "Away with this man, and release unto us Barabbas." So Pilate "released unto them him

that for sedition and murder was cast into prison, whom they had desired ; but he delivered Jesus to *their will*" (Luke xxiii.).

The words of our Lord may fitly close this bird's-eye view of existing alliances and ripening confederations : " I am come in my Father's name, and ye receive me not ; if *another* shall come in his own name, him ye will receive " (John v.). Barabbas instead of Jesus ; the dragon instead of God ; the antichrist instead of Christ ; the false prophet instead of the true one ; the beast instead of the Lamb slain ; are become the authorities and names by which the devil is suffered to wind up this world's history, and by which he fatally plunges those who are " led captive by him at his will " into the last scenes of the apocalyptic judgments of God. The earth clears itself, by such means, of those who have corrupted it, whether by Satanic or human energies ; yet only that hell may open its mouth to receive them. The earth thus cleanses itself from its pollutions by destroying them that destroyed it, " and the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever " (Rev. xx.).

What an unspeakable comfort for our souls, and what a mercy, that we can turn away from the consideration of such fellowships as these, and their issues (and invite others to do so) to speak of another which God has formed for all who are Christ's, and into which He leads us by the Holy Ghost,