

Messenger and Visitor

Published in the interests of the Baptist denomination of the Maritime Provinces by

The Maritime Baptist Publishing Co., Ltd.

TERMS: \$1.50 per annum in advance.

S. MCC. BLACK

Editor.

85 Germain Street, St. John, N. B.

Address all communications and make all payments to the MESSENGER AND VISITOR.

For further information see page nine.

Printed by Paterson & Co., 107 Germain Street, St. John, N. B.

About Going in Debt.

Is it right to go in debt? In reference to this it may be said that there is a simple and short apostolic admonition which says—Owe no man anything, but to love one another. It will be objected that, under such conditions as obtain in the commercial and industrial world today, such an admonition calls for what is practically impossible, since the business of the world cannot be carried on on a strictly cash basis, and some system of credit is more or less necessary in all lines of human industry. In respect to the literal sense of the admonition, the validity of the objection may be freely admitted. Even in the simplest forms of society and the most primitive methods of doing business, it is hardly possible to make Paul's maxim, in its strictly literal sense, a rule of life. But if it is not possible for one to live up to the apostolic injunction in the sense of never being under a financial obligation to his fellow men, it is possible to live up to the spirit of it, and that is what is important. While "pay as you go" is an excellent motto, especially for those who are not "in business," and one which, if acted upon, would save an endless amount of vexation and trouble, dishonesty and disgrace, it need not be contended that a Christian man should never ask for or accept credit. But he should see to it that when he asks for or accepts credit it is on strictly honorable grounds, so that when he gives his word or his bond to fulfil an obligation, it embodies a reasonable assurance to the creditor that the obligation will be fulfilled. Christian men ought clearly to recognize the fact that, to run recklessly into debt, either in business enterprises or on account of the expenses of living, is no more honest than it would be for one to appropriate his neighbor's property without his consent. The man who habitually lives beyond his income, and wherever he can obtain credit, contracts debts which he has no reasonable prospect of paying, does not differ much in his moral complexion from a thief, and he who goes into business undertakings on credit, jeopardizing the money of other people in speculations that have in them a large element of risk, is no whit better. If search be made for the cause of the lamentable lack of spirituality in our Christian churches and communities at this present time, we apprehend that no small proportion of it would be found to have intimate connection with that haste to be rich and that desire to live expensively, which lead men and women of Christian profession to violate both the spirit and the letter of the Scripture teaching which enjoins upon us the duty of keeping out of debt.

What about churches running into debt? Surely the same principle applies with equal, if not stronger, force in the case of churches as in that of individuals, families and business corporations. We are glad to observe on the part of many of our churches a determination to have their houses of worship dedicated free of debt. This is altogether to be commended, and we hope that the purpose and the realization of it may prevail more and more. We do not mean to say, however, that a church debt incurred in the building of a place of worship is never justifiable. When a church is organized in a new and growing community, if the organization supplies a real need, it may, we think, be regarded as an act of reasonable faith to incur a measure of debt in providing a place of worship. Again, when under well-established conditions a house of worship is built of expensive materials, so as to last for generations or for centuries, it seems quite right and reasonable that the coming generation should bear

a part of the cost of building. What that proportion should be can be determined only by a careful consideration of the conditions of each particular case. In a general way, however, it may be said that there is far too much of a readiness on the part of churches, as on the part of individuals, to run into debt. The spirit of competition operates in the ecclesiastical world much the same as in the social world, and churches, like families, build beyond their means and live beyond their means, for the purpose of keeping pace with or outgiving their neighbors. This, in the one case as in the other, leads to debt and embarrassment, and, we fear, it must be added, to dishonesty. We do not mean so much that churches fall in their financial obligations to their creditors; although that sometimes occurs, as that they fall in what every church should consider its supreme obligation, its service to its divine Lord and Saviour. In the case of too many churches, the provision for the debt and their running expenses makes so heavy demands upon their members that they seem to have little left with which to promote the great work of Christ in giving the gospel to the world. For a church to be paying five times or perhaps ten times, as much for artistic music as it does to send the saving Word of Christ to the heathen world, is hardly an edifying commentary on the gospel which it professes and preaches. It might be a very wholesome thing for some churches to hold a meeting to consider what gratitude and honesty toward Christ demands in respect to these things. Would certain well-known words of the Prophet Malachi have any bearing here?

The Word That Cannot be Bound.

The opposition of forces and interests represented in the Jewish authorities on the one hand and the Apostles of Christ on the other, to which the Bible lesson for the current week calls our attention, is significant, not only in connection with the incident itself, but also as the beginning of a long conflict which has been perpetuated through all the centuries since and is still far from being terminated. There is a sense in which the Prince of Peace came not to bring peace but a sword. The blood of his cross was necessary to the setting up of His Kingdom in the world, and the way by which his people have marched toward final victory has often been marked with their blood.

The Jewish authorities, represented in the priests, the captain of the temple and the Sadducees, were "sore troubled" because of the words and deeds of the apostles. Those guardians of the people's interests are not to be blamed because they were concerned about the new teaching and its effects upon the popular mind. The fact that a doctrine is new or that it is popular or even that some remarkable phenomena accompanying it, constitutes no sufficient reason why it should be received without question. It is right to try the spirits and to prove all things and hold fast that which is good. But the spirit of interrogation and examination must be free from that unreasonable prejudice which rejects a thing simply because it is new and that bigotry which wilfully shuts its eyes to truth. This latter was evidently the attitude of the Priests and Sadducees toward the apostles and their teaching. This ministry in the name of Jesus was something diametrically opposed to their settled beliefs and to their supposed personal interests. They did not want to believe that these things were true, and so they did not set themselves, with any honest mind, to investigate the work and doctrine of the apostles in order to discover what foundation their teaching and the reported miracle might have in fact and in truth. If they had been willing to do God's will, the truth and the power of the gospel of Christ would have been revealed to them. But they blinded their eyes and stopped their ears. They thought that their authority was sufficient to deal with the matter apart from the demands of truth. So they ignored the miracle of healing which had been done, imprisoned the apostles, then cautioned, commanded and threatened them, and hoped that they were rid of their vexation.

When the most important factors in a problem are left out of the account, it is quite certain that the true solution will not be reached. The Priests and Pharisees in this case were accordingly doomed to disappointment. They took account of the apostles as bold but unlearned men, without rabbin-

ical training or authority, who, they judged, would not dare to act in defiance of the voice of the Sanhedrin, so they charged them "not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus," and then dismissed them. They "could not deny," but they ignored, the fact that a notable miracle had been done, they ignored the claim of these "unlearned and ignorant men" that this mighty work had been done in the name of the risen Jesus, the Anointed of God and the one fountain of salvation for men, and they ignored the fact that these men whom they sought to silence were filled with the Holy Spirit, and must speak though it should be in defiance of all human authority and power. The Priests and Sadducees at Jerusalem, and many others of like spirit, might threaten and command, they might imprison and put to death the apostles of the truth, but the truth itself they could never imprison or destroy. And those who in sincerity of heart declare the word today should rejoice in this, that the word of Christ cannot be bound. Today, as of old, it meets the needs of men. It raises them up from conditions of beggary and impotence, puts songs of gladness and gratitude into their hearts and sends them forth into joyful service for their Redeemer. That word shall not return to Him void. It shall accomplish that which He pleases and prosper in the thing whereunto He sends it. This is the Word and this is the Spirit by which the ambassadors of Christ are made strong to withstand Priests and Pharisees and Sadducees. This is the power and authority in which they are emboldened to stand before Sanhedrins and Herods and Caesars. This is the power in which they have preached to prince and to peasant, to the crowned head upon the throne and the criminal in the prison, the gospel of the grace of God which levels all in the dust of repentance and exalts all who believe into the liberty of the sons of God.

Editorial Notes.

—Next week's MESSENGER AND VISITOR will be a special number in the interest of the Twentieth Century Fund.

—A bill has been introduced in the New York State Legislature, providing for the incorporation of the Federation of American Zionists. The object of the corporation is said to be the purchase of Palestine from the Turkish Government and the settlement there of all Jews who may desire to locate in the ancient home of their people. It is said that many of the prominent Hebrews of the State are interested in the movement and that it is supported by unlimited capital.

—There can be no doubt that one of the strongest influences at work in our time for the promotion of temperance is to be found in the discount which in the industrial world is placed upon the man who drinks. Mr. Andrew Carnegie said in his recent address before the Y. M. C. A. Railway men in New York—"A drinking man should have no place in a railway system; indeed he should have no place anywhere." It would be gratifying if it could be said that the influence toward sobriety from high moral considerations has grown stronger in equal measure with that connected with business considerations.

—The idea that the ministry is a calling which does not call for men of the strongest character, and makes smaller demands upon the resources of those who enter it than are made upon men in other callings, is a wholly erroneous idea, unless the standard of efficiency in the ministry is lamentably degraded. The Watchman very truly says: "The most difficult task in the world is to minister spiritually to the needs of human souls. It is comparatively easy to provide for the bodily wants of others. There is no special difficulty in giving them information, or encouraging them to acquire intellectual discipline; but to arouse and inspire their spirits in the warfare of character and against temperament; to present Christ so that they may come into vital fellowship with Him,—that is a task that enlists all there is in a man."

—Dr. W. N. Clarke, of Hamilton Theological Seminary, has a short article in last week's Congregationalist on Going to Church in Oxford. In connection with the University sermon allusion is made to the "bidding prayer" peculiar to the place, which "is not so much a prayer as a call and direction to prayer in which we are bidden to pray for all good causes, and especially for Oxford and its institutions." Of the university sermons Dr. Clarke says: "Two of these three sermons were of unusual religious power in the quiet strain, while the third was by no means unreligious. All three had the high literary quality, the grace of expression, the suggestion of mastery that one would expect in Oxford. There was absolutely no word of ecclesiasticism in any of them; all was simple, manly, religious, tending to present good, unembarrassed by any extra churchliness, the preachers were speaking the word that was in them in the love of the spiritual life. If Oxford has its High Church aspects, as they say it has, they did not appear in these university sermons."