

Messenger and Visitor

The Maritime Baptist Publishing Company, Ltd

Publishers and Proprietors
 TERMS } \$2.00 PER ANNUM.
 \$1.50 IF PAID IN ADVANCE.

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

Printed by PATERSON & CO., 105 and 107 Germain St.

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The Winnipeg Convention.

As the readers of the MESSENGER AND VISITOR are aware, a Convention of the Baptists of Canada is appointed to be held in the city of Winnipeg, July 5-13 proximo, and since that date is scarcely three months away, those among us who are to attend the meetings, will need to begin at once, if they have not already done so, to lay their plans with reference thereto. The idea of this Winnipeg gathering has been in the air, so to speak, since the time of the Convention in Amherst, in 1898, when it was proposed by the Rev. A. J. Vining, who was there to represent the interests of the Northwest. The expectation was then that the Convention would be held during the summer of 1899, but as it was found that the time for preparation was too short, the date named above was finally fixed upon, and the Conference so arranged for received the endorsement of our Convention last year at Fredericton. The subject has been kept before our readers by occasional reference in these columns to the approaching Convention, and especially by communications from the secretary of the general committee of arrangements, the Rev. Charles A. Eaton, of Toronto. Now, as the time for the meeting in Winnipeg is drawing nearer, perhaps a few observations with more particular reference to the character and purpose of the Convention will not be out of place.

It is hardly necessary to say that the Winnipeg Convention will not—and in the nature of the case cannot—undertake anything in the way of legislation. It will have no authority whatever to change or interfere in any way with the existing institutions and organizations of the denomination. The Winnipeg meeting would perhaps more properly be called a conference than a convention, since our conventions are usually legislative bodies. It will be easily understood, however, that the purpose of the Winnipeg meeting is not for legislation, but rather for inspiration, through prayer and conference, for information, through the presentation of the various Baptists interests from all parts of the Dominion, for discussion of these interests, their relative importance and the best means of promoting them.

It is but reasonable to expect that much good will come of the Convention. But this will depend largely upon its being fairly representative of all parts of the country, and all the interests of the denomination. It will be good for the Baptists of the East to see the Northwest country, and to come into closer touch with their brethren who are doing the pioneer work in the great new west, doing that work amid difficulties and discouragements, but also with great expectations and indomitable confidence as to results. It will be well for Maritime and Ontario Baptists to have their minds more fully informed, and their hearts enlarged toward the work in the Northwest and in British Columbia, to the end that they may be moved to do what they can to promote this pioneer work, so important in respect to the future of the denomination and of the country. On the other hand it will be well for our brethren of the West, to give careful consideration to the position and the obligations of the Baptists in the East. It is but right that it should be known and recognized, that the numbers and resources of Eastern Baptists are not as illimitable as the Western prairies, and also that these Eastern Baptists long since became responsible for important undertakings, which they are still bound by every principle of honor and fidelity to support. It is well that, in the endeavor to

carry on our work as a whole, we should take a large and just view of our resources, and of the interests we desire to promote. It should be recognized as a controlling Christian principle in our denominational, as well as in our individual relations, that each one is not to look only upon his own things, but everyone also on the things of others.

There are reasons of a national as well as of a denominational character, for holding a meeting of the Canadian Baptists at Winnipeg, and for making the gathering as large and as representative as possible. The last quarter of this century has been a period of remarkable growth and development in the Northwest, and the first quarter of the next century will probably witness a much more rapid advance in the development of resources and increase of population. While a part of the immigration now coming into the Northwest contains excellent material for nation building, a larger part is of a character which profoundly needs the leavening of the gospel to make it a wholesome element in the body politic. In all probability this condition of things will continue in years to come, and it is only as these European peoples of the Galician and other types, are taken hold of by civilizing and Christianizing influences which they shall find in the country, that they will become valuable and patriotic members of the Commonwealth. When we think of the probable extent of this coming immigration, and how comparatively short a period will elapse before the centre of Canada's population will be west of Winnipeg, we can understand how important it is for the political as well as the religious future of Canada, that the Christian forces of the country should be employed to the utmost on behalf of the present and prospective immigrants. It cannot be doubted, we think, that the coming Convention in Winnipeg should have an important influence in that direction. We lack the ecclesiastical machinery of our Episcopalian, Presbyterian and Methodist brethren, by which their church interests, from ocean to ocean are combined under one organization, and represented in General Assemblies, Synods, and Conferences. But our congregational polity, if it loses something by the lack of a unifying governmental principle, gains in other respects. The democratic principle of Baptist churches finds favor with the people of a new country, who are apt to have a high appreciation of popular rights both in church and in state. Our brethren in the West bear unanimous testimony to the fact that a wide door is open there to Baptist effort, with great promise of rich results. We are certainly bound, then, by our allegiance to the Master whom we serve, by faithfulness to the principles for which we stand, and by duty to the country which we love, to do our utmost as a denomination to promote the cause of evangelization in the West.

We may hope then that, if the Winnipeg Convention is made what it should be, it will have important results. It will bring a considerable number of our Eastern people into closer touch with the West and its problems. It will promote information and a better understanding of our responsibilities, opportunities and duties as a denomination, it should promote a sense of denominational unity among us from sea to sea, and it should promote spiritual life in us, with a deeper apprehension of and a fuller consecration to the great work to which we are called.

Love and Power.

In our Bible lesson this week, two truths of the utmost importance respecting Jesus Christ are set in the strongest light.

1. There is first his divine sympathy for men. We have here but an instance of that which is demonstrated throughout his whole ministry, that the heart of Jesus was full of sympathy for suffering humanity. There is no reason to conclude, as some writers appear to do, that Jairus, the ruler of the synagogue was not a friend to Jesus. But we can have no doubt that his relations to Jesus, whatever they were, would not stand in the way of a gracious response on the part of the Master to the importunate appeal of the grief-stricken man. It is very possible indeed that Jairus, like many another man, had felt little attraction to Jesus, and had kept at a distance from him until a time of trouble, when the dark, cold shadow of a great sorrow was creeping over his soul. Many a man since Jairus has had reason to bless God for the affliction that has

brought him to his knees at the feet of Christ, for thus the sinner's extremity becomes Christ's opportunity. There is nothing to which the gospel narratives bear clearer testimony, than the uniform and tender sympathy with which Jesus regarded human suffering. There was no cynical contempt of sorrow, nor any stoical indifference to pain. Those who came to him with their sicknesses and griefs, were not sent away with philosophical precepts, empty and heartless. He did not say to men and women smitten with disease that pain was common to the race, that men suffered for their sins, and that it was the will of Heaven that they should suffer in the flesh. He did not despise the grief of parents for their dying-children. His ear was always open to the cry of pain and sorrow, and his heart was ever prompt and tender in its response. How much this sympathy of Jesus means for us and for all the world we can begin to understand, when with his apostles we come to see and to believe that Jesus Christ is God manifest in the flesh, that his feeling for men is God's feeling, that his mind and heart move in perfect harmony with the infinite heart of the universe, that he who has seen Jesus has seen the Father, and that his compassion and love for men is the compassion and love of God. When we get it surely implanted in our minds and heart that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, then we shall be able to believe in the divine goodness in spite of all that makes it hard to believe. In spite of the tempests and earthquakes, shipwrecks and conflagrations, fierce wild beasts and venomous reptiles, plague and famine, sorrow and pain and death, and all that makes the world seem so hostile to human happiness. When we see God in the face of Jesus Christ his Son, and know that the living sympathy and dying love of Jesus, are in truth the sympathy and the love of the infinite Father, then, though we cannot understand all God's ways, we can find a refuge in the Everlasting Arms—a refuge never to be found but through Jesus Christ, His Son.

2. In the second place we have here an instance of the divine power of Jesus. Going forth with Jairus to visit his house and heal the sick girl, our Lord is detained for a little by a poor woman who passes through the crowd, and by a furtive touch of faith, seeks the divine source of healing power; nor does she seek in vain. Now, while Jesus is still speaking comforting words to the woman whom he has healed, there come messengers from the house of Jairus to say—All is over; the maid is dead; trouble the Master no further. That was the message which it was natural to bring under the circumstances. And if it had been to anyone but Jesus it would have been the proper message to bring. But that which would have revealed the human weakness of any other man, reveals the divine power of Christ. Men go forth to execute their purposes. Some are weak and some are strong. One man falters at every difficulty, another is almost indomitable in his strength. But there is one foe—one foe—in the presence of which the weak and the strong are alike impotent. When death crosses the path of the mightiest, the most indomitable of men, he falters, and halts, and turns back; for what man is great enough to dispute with death? When death comes and claims something dear to him or to his friend, what can he do? He may join the band of mourners, he may bless or he may curse, he may rebel or he may submit, but what can he do against Death? The wise physician visits his patient, he brings his learned brethren, they consult, they employ all their wisdom all their skill, they leave nothing undone, they speak encouraging words—while there is life there is hope. But the patient dies,—and the great physicians turn away. They can do no more. It is all over. Death has come, and in that presence, all their wisdom, all their skill is weak and foolish as the prattling of a babe. When Death shuts the door in a man's face, then he knows that there is nothing for him but to turn back. The difference between Jesus and other men is, that Jesus never turned back—not even for Death. The messengers said—The maid is dead; all is over; nothing more can be done. But Jesus did not heed their words. He refused to turn back or to acknowledge the authority of Death. "Fear not," he said to Jairus, "only believe," and they went forward, he and they who were worthy to go with him—into the presence of the ancient enemy of mankind, and at his word Death yielded up his prey. The maid was given back to her parents. It is a great thing to be assured of

Christ's sympathy for the sinner's extremity becomes Christ's opportunity. There is nothing to which the gospel narratives bear clearer testimony, than the uniform and tender sympathy with which Jesus regarded human suffering. There was no cynical contempt of sorrow, nor any stoical indifference to pain. Those who came to him with their sicknesses and griefs, were not sent away with philosophical precepts, empty and heartless. He did not say to men and women smitten with disease that pain was common to the race, that men suffered for their sins, and that it was the will of Heaven that they should suffer in the flesh. He did not despise the grief of parents for their dying-children. His ear was always open to the cry of pain and sorrow, and his heart was ever prompt and tender in its response. How much this sympathy of Jesus means for us and for all the world we can begin to understand, when with his apostles we come to see and to believe that Jesus Christ is God manifest in the flesh, that his feeling for men is God's feeling, that his mind and heart move in perfect harmony with the infinite heart of the universe, that he who has seen Jesus has seen the Father, and that his compassion and love for men is the compassion and love of God. When we get it surely implanted in our minds and heart that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, then we shall be able to believe in the divine goodness in spite of all that makes it hard to believe. In spite of the tempests and earthquakes, shipwrecks and conflagrations, fierce wild beasts and venomous reptiles, plague and famine, sorrow and pain and death, and all that makes the world seem so hostile to human happiness. When we see God in the face of Jesus Christ his Son, and know that the living sympathy and dying love of Jesus, are in truth the sympathy and the love of the infinite Father, then, though we cannot understand all God's ways, we can find a refuge in the Everlasting Arms—a refuge never to be found but through Jesus Christ, His Son.

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