

## Correspondence.

### "AMENDED CONSTITUTION."

*To the Revs. Kenneth M. Fenwick, A. Lillie, D.D., Thomas M. Reikie, and F. H. Marling.*

In the "draft of an Amended Constitution and standing rules" for "the Congregational Union of Canada" is the following paragraph:—"That it shall consist of Congregational or Independent Churches, and of ministers of the same church order, who are either in the pastoral office, or (being members of Congregational Churches,) are engaged in evangelistic or educational service, approved and received at a general meeting." Permit me to ask you in what sense are any distinguished from ordinary Christians, as "ministers" without being engaged in either "pastoral or evangelistic" labours? Appearances indicate an allusion to the class that are commonly called the "clergy" or elect, in distinction from the "laity" or mere people. But I am reluctant to suppose that you could recognize such an "order," and I cherish the hope that some other conception suggested the terms of which I ask an explanation. You speak of "ministers" as engaged in "educational" work apart from pastoral or evangelistic. But what makes "educational" persons "ministers?" My question has no reference to their being admitted to your Union; for that they might be under the designation of teachers, tutors or professors. But I ask why you call them "*ministers*?" Is it that they once were "ordained," or appointed to pastoral or evangelistic work? Such an "ordination" or appointment must have been exhausted when the then given charge or duty was laid down: it related *only* to pastoral or evangelistic charges, and with those charges it came to an end. Ordination gives no right to preach where talents and opportunities concur, for that right belongs to all true believers. Besides the general fraternity then (some of whom are "speaking brethren,") and the pastors and evangelists, who are the "ministers" to whom you refer? I know of none. I find other people know of none;—and it will be very acceptable information if you will tell us who are intended.

I am the more desirous of this information because not only the Church to which I belong is specially regarded in the document which you have drawn up, but because I apprehend the popular idea of your meaning involves the very serious error of "holy orders,"—a professional class of "ministers," with or without charges. That "mark of the beast,"—the original and rudimental vice of the Great Apostacy, has no countenance from Apostolic ordinations, which all related to specific charges of a pastoral or evangelistic kind. It has been the source of priestly assumptions, sacramentarian superstition, private inaction, dependence, and servility, and a general corruption of Christendom. The professional "order" has been held very highly in dread for their office-sake, instead of "in love for their work's-sake." For the eradication of this heresy, great labours, talents and suffering have been employed; and a tendency towards its re-growth should be treated with the sternest resistance. "The mystery of iniquity," did "already work" in the first churches; and we, as having the same propensities, as well as institutions, as those then in operation, have need to "be watchful and strengthen