

MINISTERIAL CONCERT FOR PRAYER.

We need not say anything to our brethren in the ministry to recommend the suggestion of "A Fellow Labourer," who is also a brother beloved, contained in the following letter. But we shall be very happy to hear from himself on the same subject. In no place is the revival of the Church more likely to originate than in the closets and studies of ministers:

To the Editor of the Record.

DEAR SIR,—Most of your readers, I doubt not, are acquainted with the singularly interesting memoir of the late Mr. McCheyne, written by Mr. Bonar, of Collace. It is one of the most delightful books ever published. It is indeed impossible not to feel interested in it, and not to admire and love the character so beautifully drawn in its pages. Alas! it is to be feared that many will admire the beauty of the picture without seeking to imitate the holy character of him whom it represents. I remember that in reading this memoir, I was struck with the fact that Mr. McCheyne, and some of his brethren, several of whom were highly honoured in the Lord's work, were in the habit of observing a concert for prayer on Saturday evening. These seasons seem to have been very refreshing, and to have been occasionally preparatory and introductory to delightful and glorious Sabbaths.

The thought often suggested itself strongly to my mind, that it might be well if those amongst us who long to see the glory of the Lord exhibited in a revival of religion in the land, would agree to set apart a portion of time on Saturday evening for special supplication for a blessing on the means of grace, for an abundant outpouring of the Holy Spirit, and for increasing union among all who love the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. The hour from 8 to 9 p. m., might be thus employed. Might it not be a most beneficial preparation in the case of ministers for the labours of the approaching Sabbath? And might it not be the means of obtaining showers of heavenly grace to revive the parched ground? In vain we labour, without the influences of the Holy Spirit; and in vain may we look for these influences, if we do not earnestly seek them. "Ask, and it shall be given you," is the language which the Saviour hath addressed to us, pointing out both our duty and privilege.

I might have mentioned that the measure which I suggest might have the effect of leading our people to be more particular in remembering, in their prayers, those who preach among them the unspeakable riches of Christ. How often does Paul ask the prayers of the Christians to whom he wrote? And how much does he connect the success of the gospel with the agents employed by God in preaching it? "Brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course," &c.

It is unnecessary, however, to point out all the benefits which might arise from such an exercise as I am speaking of. I trust, Mr. Editor, that if you agree with me, you will take the matter up, and recommend it both to ministers and people.—It is a fit subject for the commencement of your new series.

Yours, affectionately,
A FELLOW LABOURER.

REGISTRATION OF BAPTISMS, &c.

We call the attention of our readers to the following letter. Like our excellent correspondent, we had been ignorant of the Act to which he refers until very lately; and we take no shame for our ignorance, for we had repeatedly inquired of a member of the Legislature, who is also, we believe, a member of our Church, and takes no mean part in parliamentary business, respecting the *New Registration Act*, and he assured us that no such Act had passed. He was right in regard to the

name of the Act, but in turning over the statutes, we found the obnoxious clauses in an Act for taking the census!

We have at present only room to say, that the Act is a sad specimen of blundering legislation, which may fill us with something like shame for those who could pass it—that to whomsoever its precepts and pains and penalties apply, in respect to the registration of baptisms and funerals, it is not to those ministers, who, like ourselves, have no more authority from law to baptize and perform funeral services than we have to preach or dispense the Lord's Supper. Our congregations should come promptly forward and petition against it.

To the Editor of the Record.

DEAR SIR,—Has your attention been directed to the new Registration Act? I have found that many of my brethren were not aware that such an Act was in existence. I regard the matter as one of great importance, to which the attention of all ministers should be called. The only copy of the Act which I have seen is in a newspaper. I have reason, however, to regard it as correct. The Act is entitled "An Act to provide for taking a periodical census of this Province, for obtaining certain statistical information connected with the same, and for other purposes therein stated." The first 15 sections of the Act have reference to the manner in which the census of the Province is to be taken every fifth year. On these I shall not make any remark. Sections 16 and 17 provide for certain duties being performed by ministers, and, in certain cases, by Township Clerks. The 16th section is as follows: "And be it enacted, that from and after the passing of this Act, it shall be the duty of every clergyman, teacher, minister, or other person authorized by law to baptize, marry, or perform the funeral services in Upper Canada, to keep a registry, showing the persons whom he shall have baptised or married, or who shall have died within his cure, and belonging to his congregation; the said registry to be forwarded by him to the Clerk of the District where he shall reside or officiate at the time, on or within five days after the first day of January, April, July, and October in each year."

The 17th section enacts that where no minister of any church shall be resident within a reasonable distance of any settlement, the Clerk of the Township shall make the returns connected with those families belonging to such church.

Section 21 declares that any one neglecting the requirements of the Act shall be guilty of a misdemeanour.

Now, Mr. Editor, I would wish, without encroaching much on your space, to make a few remarks on these last-mentioned sections.

1st. The language employed is most objectionable. The 16th section speaks of ministers being *authorized by law to baptize*. Is it the belief of the Legislature that ministers derive their authority to baptize from the law? We receive not our authority from the law, nor can the law prevent us from administering the sacraments instituted by Christ, without persecution. Our authority is from another king than Cæsar.

2. The terms are so vague, that it is impossible to make out what is really meant. Is it intended that the births should be registered as well as the baptisms? In any registration the date of the birth ought to be recorded, but here there is no mention of anything but the persons baptized. Again, what is meant by "a reasonable distance," in the 17th section? Is it 6 or 10, or 15 or 20 miles? Some of us have congregations at all these various distances.

3. This measure will not ensure anything like accurate statistical information. The children of a very considerable portion of the inhabitants are not baptized at all; and with very many there is no particular funeral service.

4. The Act will lay on ministers duties of a very troublesome and oppressive nature. They are degraded into a set of state officials, not only with-

out remuneration, but with the lash hanging over them. If they shall neglect in any case to comply with the requirements of the Act, they may be indicted and punished for a misdemeanour. Some years ago, ministers were deprived of some of their privileges as citizens, and now they are brought into a still lower state. Not to speak of keeping these registers, it would be very troublesome for ministers to have to send them four times a year to the Clerk of the District; it may be a distance of 40 or 50 miles.

I am really astonished that these sections were allowed to pass, and that they were not observed, ere it was too late to amend them. I have thought it my duty thus briefly to call the attention of my brethren to this Act; and my individual opinion is, that a general and strenuous effort should be made to have it repealed or amended in the next session of parliament.

Yours sincerely,

A MEMBER OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH.

OATHS OF PRESBYTERIANS.

The following extract from a Speech of Lord Brougham's, on the second reading of the Presbyterian Oaths (Ireland) Bill, we copy from the *Presbyterian Messenger* for September, and we give it a place in our columns, for the sake of the information which it contains, and in order to offer a counsel to our readers against conformity with the mode of taking an oath that is almost universally adopted in this Province. To appeal to the witnessing of God, and to our accountability to him in the great day of judgment for the truth of our declarations, is, when the occasion warrants it, an act of worship, and the raising of the hand to Heaven, is a simple token of our appeal to him, and one that accords with the usage of God's ancient people. But to kiss a book containing the Gospel savours strongly of superstition.

In Fisher's well known explanation of the Shorter Catechism, to the question—"What are we to think of that mode of swearing, by touching and kissing the Gospel?" the answer is—"It is evidently superstitious, if not idolatrous, borrowed by the Papists from the Heathens, who worshipped their idols in this manner; Job, xxxi. 27: *Howea, xiii. 2.*"

This is strong language, though there are still, we believe, many who would subscribe to it. Certainly the practice is most objectionable; and pre-valent as perjury is in this land, we believe that much of it is to be laid to the account of the irreverent way in which oaths are administered—as by mere subordinate functionaries in the courts of justice, and to the constructive and indirect way in which the oath itself is expressed.

Any one who has been present at the examination of witnesses in a court in Scotland, must have been struck with the solemnity of the scene as the judge himself arose from his seat, and, with uplifted hand, repeated to the witness the dread words of the oath. The contrast presented by our courts, where an officer of the court mumbles over the words, and thrusts a book into the hands of the witness, to be touched and kissed by him, presents a very painful contrast. We are fully persuaded, that if swearing were made to appear what it truly is, a solemn appeal to Jehovah, as witness and judge, that there would be less false swearing. We recollect of hearing from one of our ministers, who was called on to swear before a functionary of government; that the functionary