

To the Editor of the Record.

MY DEAR SIR,—Cordially participating as I do in the deep feeling of anxiety expressed by some of the brethren, whose opinions are entitled to much respect, concerning the issues of the deliberations of the approaching Synod—deeply impressed with a sense of the vital importance of the matters to come before our annual council, and that what may be done upon them may closely bear on the future interests of our church, and of the Redeemer's kingdom—and fully coinciding with the views presented in some late numbers of the Record on the paramount importance and great necessity of an internal revival of our Church—let me beg for some room in your columns, in order to follow up, by some hints, the objects of these late papers which I refer to, and for which I would earnestly claim not only the attentive perusal, but the prayerful consideration of all the brethren.*

Many have been the schemes devised at our various assemblies since the beginning of what may be called the new era of our church, and our starting on our new course in the year 1844.

But it must, with deep humiliation, be confessed that there is wanting that amount of internal spiritual life absolutely necessary to carry all these liberal plans into vigorous effective operation.—Much of the machinery is well constructed; but there is wanting the living power of that great spirit who presides over the Church of Christ, and whose divine energy is needed to set and keep all the wheels in right and effective motion; in living play and healthful operation. In simple words—an internal Revival of our Church is urgently needed.

We are in a weak because as yet only in a transition state. Many are the difficulties which we feel in carrying out our plans. For example:

The scheme of a common fund for the sustentation of our Ministers, or some substitute for it, requires immediate decision, and, perhaps, claims the precedence of all other matters; because it consists, with my knowledge, that many of our brethren have, for want of some uniform method of provision on this head, been reduced to the most distressing circumstances, and feel themselves paralysed both in their ministerial efforts, and in all their attempts to advance the general operations of the church. For while Ministers are kept in the most painful anxiety about the means of the support of themselves and families, and about meeting their absolutely necessary engagements, how can it be expected that either they or Presbyteries, who are bound first of all to care for a competent provision for their Ministers, can have any heart in devoting themselves to the other most important, but still more remote objects of the church.

To return to the subject of Revivals. Is there not much need for the appeal, "Oh, Lord, revive thy works"; Oh, Lord, by whom shall Jacob arise, for he is small? Let but God open the windows of Heaven, and pour out the influences of the spirit upon ministers, office-bearers, and members of our church, and then should we see many of our difficulties vanish, and many new and unexpected friends coming seasonably to our help.

I would now venture to throw out a few suggestions on the practical measures which the Synod might adopt.

1. It is true that Revivals are sometimes connected with the use of means of the humblest and simplest kind. A Revival of a congregation has been known to come in answer to the fervent prayers of one single humble individual. But God loves to be honoured by the solemn assemblies of his ministers and people; and it is a principle of God's government, that we transact with the most High according to our several relations and capacities. If we have sinned, or need blessings in our individual capacity, is it fit that we should confess and obtain pardon, and other blessings in the same capacity; and if we have incurred peculiar guilt, or need peculiar blessing as a church or nation,

* See article "Presbyterian Church of Canada," in Record of April, 1848. Also articles on the Revival of the Church, in the Records of December, 1846, and of February, 1847; and article on "Ministerial Concert for Prayer," December, 1847.

what more suitable than that we appear before God in the same attitude and character! Scripture history is full of precedents of glorious results connected with set days and solemn assemblies, fixed by the church, for fasting, humiliation and prayer. Witness the memorable transactions of this kind in the times of kings Hezekiah, Jehoshaphat, of Ezra, Nehemiah, &c. And, in recent times, let us remember the wonderful and blessed results connected with the spiritual exercises and humiliations of ecclesiastical assemblies. Witness the remarkable quickening of souls in the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, in 1596; and remarkable effects of a Revival Sermon, by John Davidson, Moderator; the wonderful Revival in the memorable Assembly of 1638; and the never to be forgotten Convocation of 1812! Is it not, then, worthy of the serious consideration of the brethren whether, before entering on the formal business of the ensuing Synod, it would not be well to set apart a whole day for humiliation, review, prayer, brotherly conference—combined with appropriate discourses and addresses—one of the discourses to be fuller than the rest—and to open up the subject of Revival?

2. I observe that our well-known and valued friend, the Rev. Mr. Arnott, of Glasgow, in his Lecture—forming one of the series of the Revival Lectures, delivered in Glasgow in 1840—brings very prominently and pointedly into view the great injury inflicted on the interests of christianity by the manner, tone and spirit in which Church Courts but too often conduct their business. Now, this is a sin for which our church must take its full share of self-application; and as it tends to turn our meetings—designed for our mutual instruction, refreshment of spirit, and increase of brotherly love and union—into seed-plots of secret if not open alienations of heart, it is scarcely possible to direct our efforts too much to its removal. The thing that has a great tendency to cure it, is to have a much larger portion of our time given to devotional exercises—and to have our business managed as much as possible by calm, affectionate, brotherly conference superseding, as far as the nature of subjects can admit, set debates; and, above all, the bringing subjects to formal votes and divisions. True, there have been more devotional and conference meetings of late years than formerly; but, according to the emphatic style of expression of Dr. Chalmers, "the secular" is still allowed "to overshadow the spiritual." The secular, or outward part of our business, ought always to be subordinate in our solemn assemblies to this three-fold end—the Revival of each other—the Revival of God's people—and the conversion of sinners in the places where our meetings are held. Then, what not a little increases want of christian calmness and brotherly kindness, is the great impatience of brethren to get home. True, their flocks and families deservedly claim a large share of their hearts; but the getting a day or even a Sabbath sooner home, is but a poor and sorry compensation indeed for the loss of the objects which ought ever to be the aim of the assemblies of the church, the receiving ourselves, and the imparting instrumentally to others more of the impress of God and Heaven, and the things of our eternal peace. Nor am I speaking of things fit only for Heaven and not for earth; for it is matter of fact that some of the assemblies of the Free Church have been felt and described to be of the nature not of mere cold and formal business, as formerly, but of the nature of "means of grace" and spiritual refreshment. On this subject I may just add, that from the nature of the questions to come before the next Synod, the more of brotherly conference and of devotional meetings, the better and happier results may be expected.

3. It might be well for the Synod to recommend to the earnest attention of Presbyteries to keep prominently before them the state of religion in the several congregations; to receive reports from the Ministers over them on this all important subject. These reports would furnish suitable materials for conferences among the brethren at the meetings of Presbytery. Without superseding more formal visitations of Presbyteries, where circumstances require them, much good might be done by Presby-

teries at their meetings going by rotation over all the congregations—having suitable discourses bearing on the revival and quickening to greater zeal in labours of love, and on the awakening of formal professors, and the conversion of sinners to God. Occasion should also be taken at these meetings not only for conferences among the brethren, but also with the office-bearers and members of the church. This plan has been proposed in the Presbytery of Kingston, and, to some extent, begun to be followed out; but very inadequately to the objects in view. In order to do any justice to these, it is obvious that brethren must come prepared to spend a few calm days upon them, and must bring their minds up to them, and throw in their hearts and affections to them, as worthy of their regard, and as involving substantial blessings to be in faith expected from them. The suggestions on concerts for prayer for the Revival of the church among the ministers—already referred to, and contained in the December number of the Record—are worthy of the Synod's attention.—Presbyteries should also give in their reports of the state of religion to the Synod Clerk sometime before the meeting of Synod each year; and an annual committee might be appointed to frame from these reports, a report of the state of religion, embodying their substance; or by some other method, materials might be furnished for the conferences at Synod on the state of religion throughout the church.

4. Should these hints meet the views and feelings of the brethren, it would be most desirable that some of the ministers and office-bearers of our church, near the place of meeting of the Synod fast coming on, should form themselves into a Committee to digest a plan of operations—assigning to particular persons definite subjects for discourse, addresses, or other exercises, so that we may have our minds prepared at the Synod for following out the conference meetings. The committee's doings would, of course, be subject to the approbation of the Synod, before being put in operation. It is manifest that it would vastly increase the interest and utility of all our spiritual work at the Synod, were there before each Synod some definite understanding on the apportionment of it. Indeed, it would be of great benefit were some special subjects every year assigned, and the Synod to sit a few days longer. In conclusion let me add, that none is more unworthy than myself to take any leading part in the Lord's spiritual work. Let the sense of the wretched leanness of my own soul account for my standing so prominently forward on the subject of Revival.

Yours sincerely,

G.

LATIN QUOTATIONS.

A respectable office-bearer in the Presbyterian Church called upon us the other day, and, after speaking of the Record and its prospects, and giving expression to his own favourable views of our of our humble labours, told us frankly, that he did not like these outlandish words in which some writers indulge, and some of which we had introduced into the Record; particularly, at the same time, "*ipsissima verba*," and "*perfericulum ingenium Scriptorum*," as some of them, that had cost him some trouble, without having arrived at their meaning. He said that he and his wife, after fruitless attempts to discover their signification, had come to the conclusion that if those quotations contained good sentiments, they should be opened up to the illiterate—if not good, they should not be there—and if printed for the learned, it would only be right and fair to give the translation for the benefit of the unlearned. We stand reproved, and shall be careful not again, in the like case, to offend; and hereby request all correspondents either to give their articles in plain English, or to accompany quotations in other languages with a faithful version. Our desire is to communicate the truth in the plainest and most intelligible manner.