

'And, therefore, whosoever slander us that we affirm or believe sacraments to be naked and bare signs do injury to us, and speak against the manifest truth.' This early Confession has never been cancelled or withdrawn, and when the Church of Scotland, more than 80 years later, adopted also the Westminster Confession, she did so expressly declaring that she understood the second Confession to be in no wise contradictory of the first. And, accordingly, anyone who reads the chapter on the Holy Communion will see that, however difficult it may be in 'matter-moulded forms of speech' to distinguish between a spiritual and a carnal presence, the language used expressly repudiates the idea of 'bare signs,' and it closes with the emphatic declaration that 'the body and blood of Christ is as really but spiritually present to the faith of believers as the elements themselves are to the outward senses.' I see no difference between the Eucharistic doctrine of our Confession and that of the corresponding English Article."

The Duke concludes his letter as follows: "It is with a dislike amounting to repugnance that I have found myself called away even for a moment from the broad and fruitful fields of Christian philosophy, and compelled to enter on the narrow and crooked lanes of sectarian theology. They are odious paths indeed. One feels one's feet clogged and one's breath stifled in the most miserable logomachies. And nowhere are they worse than where they twine and twist around the Eucharist. When from the carnal imaginings and the incoherent metaphysics which have tortured and perverted the most touching of all the Christian ordinances, we turn to the simple and majestic narrative of the synoptic Gospels, we could almost wish that systematic theology were laid to sleep for ever. In this case it has converted a celebration which might be, and was intended to be, a common bond of union between all Christians, into the sharpest and keenest of all the weapons which they brandish in each other's faces to keep up divisions and to render them indelible. The result is a reproach to Christendom."

So far the Archbishop has not replied in the press to any of his critics; it remains to be seen whether he will reply publicly to the Duke's letter.

Ministers' Rates.

We are requested to remind ministers that their rates to the Aged and Infirm Ministers' Fund for the year ending 31st March, 1899, are payable on or before the 15th January, after which date interest is chargeable.

Ministers' rates to the Widows' and Orphans' Fund are payable on the 1st of November. There are still some who have neglected payment of these for the current year. It is specially requested that they will remit without delay.

An Assembly Remit.

The next General Assembly will be asked to devise a better method of supplying vacant charges than the method now in force. An overture embodying a substitute for the present method was submitted to the last Assembly. It was received with little debate upon the merits of the proposed substitute, and still less debate upon the great question at issue. The whole problem of the supply of vacancies, together with the proposed substitute method was sent down to Presbyteries for consideration, "with instructions to report thereon at the next General Assembly." This Remit, not of the proposed substitute alone, be it noted, but of the whole question of the best method of supply, is now before the Presbyteries. Some have already passed upon it, but any deliverance we have seen has been most unsatisfactory. No Presbytery, so far as we are aware, has done more than "express approval of the principle contained in the Remit," that is, we presume, of the principle of the substitute method. But this is not the Remit. The substitute method of supplying vacancies is merely an appendage to the great question remitted by the Assembly.

The principle upon which this substitute method proceeds is, that to the Presbytery alone belongs the right of appointment to vacancies. Is it necessary to express approval of that principle? Does any one question it? Presbyteries are not asked to express approval or disapproval of this principle, but rather, taking it for granted, to suggest some practical method of applying it throughout the Church. We hope few Presbyteries will be satisfied with so superficial a deliverance as the approval of a principle which we all admit, but the practical application of which presents considerable difficulty.

In the proposed substitute scheme, for the supply of vacancies, which is attached to the question sent down, there is one defect, which, if not remedied, will render it unworkable. It is proposed to ask each General Assembly to appoint a committee of three to gather and distribute information respecting all vacant charges, and all ministers eligible for the supply of these vacant charges. A full list of these ministers is sent to each Presbytery, and all Presbyteries in which vacancies exist proceed to select from this list the men who shall supply their respective vacancies for the current term. Should several Presbyteries select the same man, which is very probable, who is to be arbiter?

We suppose it would be possible to issue the list early in the quarter, instruct Presbyteries to make their selections at once and report to the Secretary of the Assembly's committee, who could then notify Presbyteries in some recognized order that men whom they had chosen

had already been chosen, and ask them to make another selection, continuing this process till all were supplied. The Secretary of the proposed bureau of information would thus be able to give employment to several stenographers, and the rights of the Presbyteries would be conserved.

The Alumni Conferences.

The Post-Graduate Conferences in connection with our Theological Halls is a recent institution, but is showing remarkable vitality. We have been favored with advance copies of the programme of the Conference to be held at Knox College in the end of January, and the beginning of February. We notice considerable space allotted to the discussion of Social-Christianity. In the opening days there are such papers as "The State in Relation to the Unemployed," and "The Administration of Charities in our cities," both living questions at the present time. Then pressing closely upon the heels of the progressive thinkers, the members turn upon another day to the discussion of Dr. McGiffert's recent book; and during another sederunt to the consideration of the "Ritschlian Theology." The Conference closes with a study of comparative religions from a missionary standpoint, which will doubtless be one of the most interesting hours of the course. During the sessions the Alumni Association holds its annual meeting, and one evening is, most sensibly, we commoner mortals think, set apart for "Supper and a Social Evening."

The value of such conferences can scarcely be over-estimated. The frank interchange of thought and of opinion is a stimulus to intellectual culture. Thought suggestions are given and received that become the germs of further research, and a horizon that threatened to become narrow, widens immensely. Then, too, a bond is established between the busy pastor and his all-but forgotten College. The old love rekindles as he treads the well-remembered halls once more, and listens to voices he has not heard since the days of graduation. Life is brighter and broader after such associations.

Discussing the Ontario Curfew Law, which Mr. Kelso, superintendent of the Ontario Children's Aid Societies, declares to have been a failure in forty towns in the province, where it has been tried. The Montreal Gazette says: "It is not a good law. It was begotten of the spirit of meddlesomeness, that a lot of modern people take to be evidence of righteousness."

It is stated that a large company, with a capital of over \$500,000, has been organized in the United States and Canada to develop the oil wells and other minerals in Cape Breton.