

expected to contribute to the fund, and the ministers of congregations rising above the rated sums received a corresponding benefit. This plan has not been found to work well, and the subject of inquiry in the Assembly was, What plan ought now to be substituted? On the one side, it was argued that the plan of an equal dividend was the best that had yet been devised, and that the Assembly should resolve to adhere to it, instructing their present Committee to devise the best checks they could to meet the evils incident to it; on the other side, it was proposed that the subject be remitted to a Select Committee to take all plans into consideration and to report. The following resolutions were moved by Dr. Candlish, seconded by Anderson Kirkwood, Esq., Glasgow:—

"1. That the plan of an equal dividend is better fitted than any other yet proposed to secure the ends for which the Sustentation Fund was instituted and is maintained; and while it is desirable to adopt measures for preventing the decline of the equal dividend, through the failure of congregations to discharge their duty, these measures ought to be such as tend to preserve the general principle of the plan.

"2. That inasmuch as the existing regulations have respect to Church Extension and the Supplementary Fund, as well as to the distribution of the ordinary revenue, the Assembly, in suspending the said regulations, instruct the Committee to consider what arrangements may be made as to these other matters, with a view to next Assembly being in circumstances to place the distribution of the fund permanently on the footing of the equal dividend.

"3. That the Committee, as hitherto constituted, under its present Convener, possesses the full confidence of the Church at large, and whatever change or rotation of members it may be expedient to make from year to year, no change in the general character and functions of the Committee ought to be contemplated, and no separate Committee for considering the matters embraced in the overtures need to be appointed.

"4. That inasmuch as the prosperity of this fund must mainly depend, under God, not on any scheme of distribution, but on the liberality of the contributors, attention should be concentrated as far as possible on the great object of raising the revenue, and inasmuch as nothing but the revival of vital godliness through the outpouring of the Spirit can awaken and keep alive a right sense of the value of the Christian ministry and its claims to support, the Assembly earnestly urge the importance of this whole subject being always regarded and handled in a spiritual point of view, that it may have its due place in the prayers and sympathies of the people of God."

The following amendment was proposed by Mr. Dunlop, M. P., seconded by Rev. W. G. Blaikie, Edinburgh:—

"1. That the Assembly hail with great satisfaction the movement for increasing the income of the Sustentation fund, commenced after the rising of last Assembly, and recommend that it should be prosecuted with the utmost vigour.

"2. That the existing regulations for the distribution of the Sustentation Fund having proved unsatisfactory to the Church, and having failed in securing the object for which they were enacted, be now rescinded.

"3. That as the rescinding of these regulations will necessarily leave the fund to be administered by the Sustentation Committee, according to the method which was in force previous to their enactment, a special committee be appointed to take into consideration the whole subject of the Sustentation

Fund, the principles on which it is based, the method by which it is distributed, and the machinery by which it is administered, to inquire into the results of past experience, to invite and obtain information, to consider the plans of distribution which may be proposed by the friends of the church, and to report to next General Assembly, it being understood that the existing rights of all present incumbents shall be preserved by the principle of an equal dividend being applied to them, but that all new entrants to charges from and after the date of this Assembly shall be held to be subject to whatever regulations may be hereafter adopted by the Church in consequence of the report of the proposed committee."

The discussion which took place, besides embracing the points above noted, extended also to the following, Whether the regulations under the "rating-scheme" should be only suspended for a year, or wholly rescinded? Whether the appointment of such a select committee as was proposed, would not imply want of confidence in the existing committee? Whether the ordinary administration of this fund would not be best committed to the laymen of the Church? On the side of the motion of Dr. Candlish, the Assembly was addressed by Messrs. Serley of Selkirk, Bryce of Glasgow, (elder), Bannatyne of Old Cumnock, Campbell of Tillichewan (elder), Burnsides of Falkland, Water of Burghhead, Laughton of Greenock, Gibson of Glasgow, Burns of Dundee, White of Haddington, Nixon of Montrose, Wilson of Dundee, and Professor Miller (elder). In favour of the amendment, by Dr. Russel (elder), Mr. Cowan, M.P., (elder) Mr. R. Johnstone, W. S. (elder), Mr. Milroy of Edinburgh, Mr. Bethune of Blebo (elder), Mr. M. Lothian (elder), Mr. J. G. Wood, W.S. (elder), Mr. Mackenzie of Dunfermline, Dr. Hanna of Edinburgh, Mr. Thomas Chalmers (elder), Dr. Horatius Bonar of Kelso, Mr. W. Wood of Elie, and Mr. Sheriff Monteith (elder.) The motion of Dr. Candlish was carried by a majority of 257 to 101.

3. *Widows' Fund.*—The number of ministers connected with this scheme is 596, and the accumulated funds are £46,780. There were as yet only 16 widows and 18 orphans on the scheme. Considering that the sum paid by each minister (£7) was sufficient to procure an annuity of but £27 to each widow, and £10 to each child, it was strongly urged by the convener, Professor Macdougall, that legacies and donations should be sought to increase the amount of these inadequate allowances.

4. *Church and Manse Building.*—The report of the Church Building Committee was given in by Sir Henry Moncreiff. The sum at the disposal of the committee during the past year has been £3,800. The committee, by applying the small sum of £784 in the way of encouraging congregations to make efforts for the extinction of debt, have secured the extinction of debt to the amount of fully £2,362. The sum of £1,600 expended on new erections has drawn out local efforts to three times the amount. Thus, with a total sum of £2,500, the value of about £9,000 has either been gained or secured. The committee announce that they have now made arrangements for the lodgment of all the title-deeds of Free Church property in a fire-proof charter-room connected with the New College. Congregations are to have the privilege of depositing their title-deeds in this place of safety without any charge, and will, of course, have access to them at pleasure. Sir Henry tendered his resignation of the convener'ship of the Church Building Committee, as not compatible with the position he now holds as clerk; and on the part of the committee, suggested Mr. Alexander Kirkcaldy as his successor.