

submitted to the judgment of several friends what he called "A Scheme for the Economies of a Free Church," which embodied all the principles of the sustentation fund afterwards adopted. This scheme fully developed, was presented to the consideration of the Convocation of November, 1842, but instead of being received with favour, it was listened to, says Dr. Hanna, with incredulity, and the prospects held out by it were regarded as the visionary anticipations of a too sanguine imagination. Not ten out of the four hundred ministers to whom it originally was broached, had much if any faith in its success. Dr. Chalmers, referring to the reception of his scheme, said "My attempted demonstration fell at the time still-born on the ears, if not of unwilling at least of unimpressed and unconvinced, auditors." After the Convocation, Dr. Chalmers, far from being discouraged by the obstacles thrown in his way by the ignorance, indifference or obstinacy of his brethren, at once took steps to establish an association in his own district of Morningside, with the hope that the example thus given would be followed, and for six weeks, he says, his association stood alone to be gazed on with a sort of gaping wonder; but by and by as the crisis drew nearer, prejudices gave way, and associations for the collection of weekly or monthly contributions to the sustentation fund were established in 687 parishes throughout Scotland. During the year 1843, the first year of the existence of the fund, a sum sufficient to provide an equal dividend of £100 to 600 ministers was contributed, but Dr. Chalmers was far from being satisfied with that result, for in the Assembly of 1844, he showed that there was much in the experience of that first year to discourage them with regard to the future. First, he dwelt on the fact that three-fourths of the congregations were aid-receiving, and that many of these were raising quite a large revenue for their own purposes, while they were thus burdening the Church with the support of their minister. Second, he pointed out how, out of the one-fourth which were aid giving, 15 congregations contributed one fifth of the whole sum sent into the fund; and from these facts he reasoned that there was an amount of selfishness and apathy and niggardliness on the part of the people which augured badly for the future. He had a special complaint to make against the Highland congregations, which were nearly all aid-receiving, for the smallness of their contributions, and quoting the excise returns of the quantity of snuff consumed in the Highlands, he affirmed that if the Highlanders would give every tenth pinch to the fund, they would have all the money they required. But if the measure of success attained in 1843 had been the result of enthusiasm, there would have been a reaction as the excitement died away; but what were the facts? Dr. Chalmers' warning voice was heed-

ed, and his successors in the convenership of the fund were men of great financial ability as well as great energy, and the fund steadily grew as the years rolled on, until at last, 29 years after the disruption, the equal dividend of £150 was reached for every minister of the Free Church; and from that year, 1870, until the present time, the fund has kept on steadily increasing, and Dr. Wilson, the present convener, can estimate the amount which will be at his disposal from year to year, with as great accuracy as the Chancellor of Exchequer in England can estimate the amount of the income tax. But if any should still be unconvinced that the circumstances of the Free Church in 1843 were far from being favourable for the launching of the sustentation fund, let them consider for a moment the position in which that Church was placed by coming out from the Establishment, and they will admit that any gain she may have received from the enthusiasm of the people, was more than balanced by the magnitude of the task she was then compelled to face. She had 600 churches to build before her people could be organized into settled congregations. She had colleges to provide to supply her pulpits with well trained ministers. She had schools to build and equip in every parish, where her children could be educated under her supervision. She had manses to build for her ministers, who had left comfortable homes for conscience sake. She had the Colonies to think of and provide for; and she had to undertake the whole of the mission fields which had been supplied by the church before the disruption, as all the missionaries cast in their lot with her. Now surely it will be admitted that, instead of the position of our church in Canada being more unfavourable for the inauguration of a sustentation fund than that of the Free Church in 1843, we are now in infinitely superior circumstances for giving a sustentation fund a fair start. First of all, we have more congregations who would be aid-giving than aid-receiving, and in Scotland to this day it is the other way. There, the few support the many; here, the many would support the few. Second, our position is such in a new and growing country, that the burden on the fund would ever be decreasing, whereas in Scotland many of the districts of the country are becoming poorer instead of richer as the years go on. Third, we have the example of all the churches which have been before us in adopting this system, to guide us into the wisest plans for carrying out our purpose. Fourth, we have a people to deal with who are better taught in the privilege of christian giving, than those who were brought up in a state church, and a people who are giving more liberally year by year, even amidst the pressure of these hard times. But if there is no comfort for the opponents of a Sustentation Fund in the example of the Free Church of