

## LECTURE IV.

## TERRITORY.

FOR thorough and effective endowed territorial work, two requisites are indispensable. In the first place, the whole country must be divided into districts, each containing such an amount of population as shall be manageable by a minister and kirk-session; and provision must be made for easily rearranging these districts from time to time, so as to make them tally with the needs of a fluctuating and increasing population. In the second place, there must be an endowment fund applicable to each district, so as to render the minister so far independent of those among whom he labours, and more especially to make his services available for that portion of the population who care for none of these things, or who cannot pay for religious ordinances.

These two points I propose now to discuss. The

first of them has been already partially touched upon, and is obviously of primary and essential importance; for the extent and population of the several districts are elements of cardinal moment, in working out and securing the success of the territorial principle. If these be too small, the congregation which it is possible to gather can never be large enough to generate fire, and sustain life within itself; and the minister and all associated with him in his labours will ever lack a much-needed and most useful stimulus to earnest, diligent, and studious perseverance therein, as well as scope for organisation such as develops, by actual exercise, capacity for work and a spirit of liberality in the members of the Church. On the other hand, if the district be so extensive as to exceed the compass of the minister's personal visitation, and the population too numerous to admit of his easily acquiring and maintaining full and intimate acquaintance with every man, woman, and child composing it, the virtue of the territorial principle is equally destroyed and its proper and effective operation made utterly impossible. To give the principle fair play, there must be districts of such a size, and in each a population of such an amount and so situated, that the minister can com-

fortably overtake the regular visitation of every home and preach the Gospel from house to house at least once every year, as well as visit with sufficient frequency the abodes of sickness and distress of every kind, and attend to all the multifarious duties which, over and above preparation for the pulpit, form the faithful pastor's daily avocation. It is difficult to condescend on any precise superficial extent, or on any exact number of inhabitants, that would form the *beau idéal* of a parish. The various circumstances of town and country, of lowlands and highlands, and of different classes and employments of the population to be dealt with, will all affect most materially the aspect of the question, and make it impossible to lay down a rule, or fix a standard of universal applicability and authority. But, speaking generally, it seems to me that the policy of Knox might have fair scope, and the principle of endowed territorial work be carried out with thorough efficiency in Scotland at the present time, were the country so mapped out and parochially subdivided, that to each of 2500 parishes there should be assigned an average population of about 1200 to 1400. Of course, in so dividing the country respect would require to be had to the peculiar circumstances of extensive high-

land territories with very sparse populations, and allowance made for those declaring themselves decidedly and irreconcilably hostile to Protestantism and Presbyterianism. The crowded denizens of the poorer districts of large towns, the migratory operatives in mines and manufactories, and the staid inhabitants of remote rural districts, would all require to be differently disposed of and allocated in parishes of various sizes. But, making allowance for such variety in their character and extent, the number of parishes now mentioned appears to me sufficient to meet the present religious wants of Scotland, and to make, other conditions being conformable, the practical application of Knox's principles quite possible in the Church.

And here it may be of use to explain the origin of parishes in Scotland, and the means at present available for their subdivision and multiplication.

The word "parish" has different derivations attributed to it. Some derive it from the Latin word *parochus*, signifying the local officer, under the ancient Roman government, who provided salt, wood, and other necessaries for ambassadors and other functionaries travelling on the public account. Others derive it from the Greek word *παροιχια*, a dwelling, importing a neighbourhood or contiguity

of residence. The former derivation suggests more particularly the idea of personal connection between a pastor and his flock, and would represent the minister as supplying, through the Word and sacraments dispensed by him, spiritual nourishment to such people as were placed, or placed themselves, under this spiritual care. The latter derivation leads us to think more exclusively of the number of people under his care, as being determined by the circumstance of their dwelling within a certain territory, authoritatively designated as the sphere of his labours. The one term relates more directly to the people as actually congregated, the other to the district within which their residences are planted. Both ideas may properly be regarded as implied in the word parish. That word was originally employed to denote the district or tract of country from which a bishop or presbyter drew the converts who, being baptised by him, formed his congregation and constituted his spiritual charge. As believers were multiplied, and the bishop or presbyter of the original church, which was generally situated in a chief town, became unable to overtake the duty of the whole district connected with it, sub-districts were eliminated from it, and committed to the care of other pastors, whose appointment by, and conse-

quent obligation and subordination to the bishops or presbyters of the mother districts, gradually gave rise to the system of Episcopacy. These lesser districts were also called *parishes*, but, for the sake of distinction, the original districts came by-and-by to be named *dioceses*.

While, therefore, from the first, the territorial principle was recognised in the Church, the origin of parishes, as these are now understood, may be ascribed generally to the growth of Episcopacy. At all events they had for the most part a purely ecclesiastical origin. This, however, was, in the case of Scotland, so far modified by the special circumstances in which Christianity was introduced and long maintained in it. The form of its Church government was long monastic as opposed to episcopal; and when the circumstances of the times, and the conditions and wants of the people, called for and led to the erection of parishes, these were erected, not, as elsewhere, by the Church, but by the sovereign, as representing the civil power. In this way the entire territory of Scotland seems to have been divided into regular parishes long before the Reformation. The misappropriation of the revenues of the Church at that period, and the failure of many attempts subsequently made to provide all the min-

isters of the Reformed Church with competent stipends, created at last the necessity of altering in many cases the territories constituting parishes. As these territories embraced the whole country, any change upon them could be effected only by one or other of three processes—(1) by union of two or more; (2) by disjoining a portion from one or more and annexing it to another; or (3) by disjoining a portion from one or more, and erecting it into a separate and independent parish. Accordingly, by the Act 1617, c. 3, “Anent the Plantation of Kirks,” a Commission of Parliament was appointed to modify stipends to ministers out of the tithes of every parish in the kingdom, and to unite small parishes where a union could conveniently be made, and where the tithes were not sufficient for the maintenance of their respective ministers. To this Commission, the Act 1621, c. 5, gave the further power of dividing large parishes and of disuniting those previously committed to the care of one minister. By the Act 1633, c. 9, a second Commission was appointed, with authority to value and sell tithes, as well as to modify stipends, which was consequently styled, “The Commission for the Plantation of Kirks and Valuation of Teinds.” Several other commissions were afterwards granted (as, *e.g.*,

by the Acts 1661, c. 61 ; 1690, cc. 23 and 30 ; and 1693, c. 23), with still larger powers, and specially with authority to build new churches, to erect new parishes, to unite and disjoin parishes, to transport churches already built to more convenient localities, and to annex and dismember parishes, as they deemed best. By the Act of Queen Anne, 1707, c. 9, all these powers were transferred to the Lords of Council and Session *qua* Commissioners for the Plantation of Kirks and Valuation of Teinds, with this proviso, that it should not be lawful for them to transport churches, disjoin parishes, or build or erect new churches, without the consent of three-fourths at least of the heritors of the parish concerned, reckoning the votes not by the number of heritors, but by their valued rent within the parish.

Under these statutes, and more particularly under the Act last referred to, various changes seem to have been made on the boundaries of existing parishes ; but so far as appears, more in the way of union and of annexation than of subdivision. Steadily as the population of the country increased, these statutes did not operate, and were not taken advantage of, to increase the number of ministers, as was most desirable should be done in the circumstances. Not till well on in the present cen-

ture was any such increase regularly attempted, and then it was sought, not to meet the enormous population of large towns, where it was most urgently required, but to provide for the case of over - extensive parishes in the Highlands and Islands, where many, by reason of distance from their parish church, were excluded from the privileges alike of public worship and of ministerial visitation. By the Acts 4 Geo. IV., c. 79, and 5 Geo. IV., c. 90, power was given to certain commissioners to increase both the number of churches and the number of ministers in the Highlands and Islands; and with the aid of grants from the public purse, the exercise of this power issued in the erection of 42 Parliamentary chapels, as they were called. The commissioners acting under these statutes were required to designate particular districts in which the ministers of these chapels were to labour; but though they did so, they had no power to confer upon them any parochial standing. This defect was very soon found greatly to prejudice their influence and usefulness; and consequently, in 1833, the General Assembly passed a "Declaratory Enactment as to Parliamentary Chapels," by which they erected the districts assigned to them by the commissioners, into parishes *quoad*

*sacra*, and conferred on their ministers "the like powers, authority, and privileges now belonging by law to parochial ministers." This enactment was in 1834 followed by a similar one with respect to all chapels of ease, by which distinct and independent territories, and the full status of parish ministers, with kirk-sessions and seats in the Church courts, were assigned also to their ministers. In doing this, however, it was found, by a decision of the supreme civil courts in 1842, that the General Assembly had exceeded its powers; but so satisfied was the Assembly by this time of the benefits conferred by these new agencies, and of the urgent need of securing and further extending these benefits to meet the spiritual destitution of the country, that in 1843, when the Assembly repealed the *ultra vires* enactments of 1833 and 1834, they appointed a select and influential committee to present a loyal and dutiful address to the Queen on the subject. In consequence of this earnest representation, in the following year (1844) the statute now in force—7 and 8 Vict. c. 44—was passed; and by God's blessing on the efforts of the Church, it has led to most important results in the way of creating additional parishes.

Under this statute excess of population as well

as of territorial extent is constituted a ground for dividing parishes ; and it provides for (1) the disjunction and erection of parishes *quoad omnia*, with this alteration, that the consent of the heritors of the major part of the valuation of a parish shall be held sufficient, in place of the consent of three-fourths required by the Act of Queen Anne ; (2) the erection of parishes *quoad sacra tantum* ; (3) the erection of Gaelic churches and congregations in the lowlands into separate parishes without the designation of exclusive territorial boundaries ; and (4) the disjunction and erection into parishes *quoad sacra* or *quoad omnia* of the Parliamentary chapels erected under the Acts 4 and 5 Geo. IV.

Shortly after the passing of this Act, a Committee of the General Assembly, under the con- venership of Professor Robertson, proceeded to take advantage of its provisions, and thus to promote, on the part of the Church, an effort to overtake the spiritual destitution of the country. The existence of a lamentable amount of such destitution had been brought to light and demonstrated by the report of the Religious Instruction Commission in 1837. Dr Chalmers had laboured long and earnestly to arouse the Church and country to an adequate sense of their duty to provide an addi-

tional supply of the means of grace. By liberal subscriptions obtained from friends of the Church in Scotland he had succeeded in building about 160 additional places of worship. Encouraged by Sir Robert Peel and other leading statesmen of the time, he had appealed again and again to Government, in the sanguine expectation of obtaining from the public treasury a sufficient sum to endow these chapels, and knowing well that it was only by a permanent endowment he could make them thoroughly effective agencies in evangelising those outside the Church. His hopes in this direction were ultimately doomed to complete disappointment, in consequence of political changes, and the complication of the ten years' conflict which preceded 1843. The Church was weakened by his secession from it then without his object having been accomplished, and in the altered circumstances it seemed to many utopian to attempt its further prosecution. But Professor Robertson had faith in God, as well as indomitable energy of nature; and, in humble reliance on the aid he sought from the Head of the Church, he devoted his time and strength to achieve it through the contributions of its members and friends. The success attending his efforts, and which has con-

ferred such unspeakable benefits on thousands and tens of thousands, may be so far estimated from a few statistical facts. The 924 original parishes of the Church, as existing before 1843, had at that date been supplemented by the addition of 42 Parliamentary chapels. Now, as at 15th February 1875, 39 of these Parliamentary chapels had been erected into parishes, and, over and above these, 211 totally new parishes have been erected; so that, in the lifetime of a single generation, the number of regular parishes has been increased by more than one-fifth, or from 966 (924) to 1174, and this at a cost exceeding £770,000.

All the experience gathered from the history of these new parishes confirms those who have promoted their erection and watched their progress in the faith that the principle of endowed territorial work is a thoroughly sound one, and that the ecclesiastical system and mode of operation which it underlies is the best adapted alike to extend and maintain Christianity in a country. With wonderfully few exceptions, in which special circumstances, not at all affecting the principle, readily account for partial failure, these parishes have made large inroads on the dark domain of spiritual destitution. They have provided the means of grace for myriads

who, left to the tender mercies of Voluntaryism, must have perished for lack of knowledge. They have served to develop an amount of life and missionary ardour in the Church unsurpassed at any former period of her history ; and they have furnished conclusive demonstration of the fact, that if Scotland's wastes are to be thoroughly reclaimed, and the walls and bulwarks of her Zion repaired, so that no breach shall remain in the one nor any unseemly rent deform the other, it must be by working out the same principle of endowed territorial work, till the whole land, rearranged into parishes of manageable population and extent, each with its own minister, its kirk-session, its Sunday and week-day schools, and its thoroughly organised Christian congregation, labouring with hearty and devout zeal for the moral and spiritual regeneration of all the inhabitants, shall present to the world a spectacle of beauty such as shall evoke from men and nations the unanimous encomium, " Happy is that people, that is in such a case : yea, happy is that people, whose God is the Lord."

How this is to be practically achieved by the allocation of overtakeable territories to each and all of the ministers of the Church, and how these ministers are to be maintained in sufficient numbers

to meet the wants of the whole population, form the questions more immediately before us. They are questions that must be considered and disposed of by any one that would seek to remove the matter of thorough endowed territorial work out of the region of speculation, or, at all events, prove it to be of more than rare and partial applicability. At the same time, I am well aware how extremely difficult these questions are under our present conditions of government, society, and ecclesiastical separations. The difficulty involved in the suitable subdivision of territory is not the only one. To this there is added the difficulty of securing adequate endowments for a sufficient number of ministers, especially where these are most required,—viz., in the poorer, more degraded, and most densely populated districts. The difficulty connected with the subdivision of territory, though not solitary, is in itself sufficiently formidable. It is always offensive to some to meddle with arrangements of long standing; and any one who has had anything to do in the way of church extension, knows full well how ready and keen and obstinate the prejudice is in many quarters against any interference whatsoever with long-established parochial boundaries. Sentiment and feeling, custom and association, personal predilection, con-

venience, and pride, as well as actual proprietary interests, all combine to induce obstructiveness, even to plans of undeniable public benefit. This, which occurs in isolated instances, would operate all the more certainly and with cumulative force in resistance to any comprehensive scheme. Even in remote rural districts, it would not be easy to make the changes that are yet absolutely necessary, so as to adapt our parochial economy to the present circumstances of the population, and to promote in regard to religious ordinances the greatest convenience of the greatest number. But the main difficulty in the way of accomplishing the grand object of a complete parochial arrangement of the territory arises from the idea, which seemingly has silently taken possession of many, that the parochial economy or territorial system, while suitable to most rural districts, is not applicable to towns and cities and their dense teeming populations.

And I am not unaware of the difficulties of many different sorts that lie in the way of practically carrying out that system as thoroughly in towns and cities as in country districts. More particularly, no one can be blind to the fact that the virtual desuetude into which the system has been suffered to fall in most towns and cities increases

immensely the difficulty of applying it there. There a population, careless of its blessings, and averse to all its institutions, has in the mean time sprung up. There the wherewithal for its maintenance has to be provided from external resources. There it has to be revived and restored in the face of the dislike, and to the detriment and loss of the shopkeeping congregationalism, which, in the case of all the denominations, has supplanted it in all such localities. But yet nothing is to me clearer or more certain than this, that in itself the system is as suitable to town as to country, that the disuse of it in towns has been one of the chief causes of such a large proportion of their inhabitants declining from all church connection, and that nothing but its complete restoration in full and effective working order will ever lead to the thorough reform and Christianisation of what are called the lapsed masses. I do not intend, by this assertion, to depreciate the worth or disparage the usefulness, in their own way and in their own place, of other agencies and modes of operation. What are called revival meetings may be useful sometimes in breaking up the fallow ground of long neglect, and in disturbing the inveterate torpor of spiritual death. Missionaries and evangelists of every sort, clerical

and lay, male and female, who are earnestly set on saving souls, will find ample room for work in such fields. The total abstainer may alone be able, by the power and pledges of his organised fraternity, to impose on the maddened propensities of some long habituated to intemperance such restraints that they can calmly entertain the overtures of the Gospel. The schoolmaster may, in some cases, require to be the forerunner of the minister, that minds sealed imperviously in ignorance from their childhood may be opened to intelligent reception of the truth. But with all these and many such agencies, allowed full time and scope for operation, the radical evils of such localities as I am now referring to, will remain unremedied, and their population, as a whole, continue unrestored to the level of Christian decency and order, not to say far below the standard of true ecclesiastical life and activity. Such agencies are effectual only when they emanate from a living central congregation, and when they form the occasional adjuncts or permanent accessories of endowed territorial work. The effect they produce by themselves is, at the best, superficial and transitory, and often operates to prevent the more abiding and substantial results which the influence of the parochial economy, so

far as it acts on them, would produce. Every acute and candid observer of such matters must have seen again and again how ready the careless, churchless inhabitants of a district are to place their civil reception of visits from a city missionary, who represents no Christian congregation, in the room of their duty to attend upon public worship, which their consciences perhaps will not permit them altogether to deny, while yet, at the same time, such visits are never, by these individuals, regarded in the same light as the visits of a parish minister. The visits of the missionary they will receive regularly, week after week, and for many years, with passive courteousness, or even with profuse expressions of gratitude, while yet they approach not a step nearer any form of connection with the Church visible, and in point of fact, notwithstanding all the visits of the missionary, have no idea that the Church visible has made any advance or overtures to them. It is the well-consolidated and complete organisation of the territorial system, with all its many ramifications of sympathy and charity, and discipline and authoritative pastoral superintendence, that alone will make a lasting impression on such individuals, and tend to raise the class which they compose out of

their present degradation into full communion with the Church of Christ; and therefore, whatever difficulties may confessedly lie in the way of the thorough adaptation of this system to the increased population and altered circumstances of our large towns, these difficulties ought at once to be grappled with, and no effort spared or relaxed in combating them, aye and until they are all overcome, and the system of endowed territorial work established thoroughly and uniformly alike in town and in country.

In order to this most desirable consummation, various prejudices must first be dissipated. The idea just adverted to, that the territorial system is inapplicable to towns, must be escaped from by those who have entertained it, by considering carefully the undoubted facts that, wherever this system has been fairly tried and honestly and energetically carried out, it has invariably succeeded as signally in the town as in the country, and that no other system tried in towns has ever produced any good results of a really permanent and all-pervading character. In addition to this idea, another notion, equally prejudicial, and equally groundless, must be exposed, and, if possible, refuted. It seems to be a prevailing opinion that the destitute districts

of large towns present only inferior fields for spiritual cultivation, and that, if dealt with by the Churches at all, they may be so through the instrumentality of second-class agencies—that the laurels to be won there by successful work may be left to be gathered by lay amateurs, or student apprentices, or journeymen probationers—and that the high and more honourable places of the field are those where elegant suburban churches, with all their refinements of ornate architecture and artistic music, and eucharistic services, attract hosts of wealthy and fashionable worshippers, and yield ample salaries to their incumbents. This false and injurious notion must be counteracted and removed by dwelling on the consideration that, in spiritual as well as in physical enterprises, those presenting the greatest difficulties yield most honour to those prosecuting them with success. In a battle, the highest honour accrues, not to the soldier occupying merely—albeit at the bidding of his general—a position of eminence from which, in comparative safety, he may watch the movements of the armies in deadly encounter. The position assigned him may need to be occupied for the purposes of observation and signalling; and if he occupy it steadily, and do his duty there with fidelity, he undoubtedly

merits his meed of praise. But yet higher glory is justly awarded to him who, in spite of a thousand fears and dangers, leads his company into the thickest of the engagement, and, at the most critical moment, turns, by his prowess, the fortunes of the day; or who volunteers to head the forlorn-hope, and, at the imminent risk of his life, scales and seizes, to their utter discomfiture, the key of the enemy's strong position. In regard to agriculture, you would not award the same measure of praise to the man who should merely maintain with exactitude the common rotation of crops on a farm long under tillage, and highly favoured as to soil and climate, as you would to him who, in some upland region, should, by skilful appliance of ingenious modes of drainage and enrichment, overcome the untoward influences of soil and situation, and where the heather and the furze lately grew in unchecked profusion, should elicit an amount and quality of produce excelling or rivalling that of low-lying and long-cultivated acres. And even so, the minister of the Gospel who dispenses the ordinances of religion with whatsoever faithfulness and ability to eager and appreciating audiences, though he too merits commendation, has no such claim or title to applause as he who, from dark lanes and crowded

closes, draws forth and elevates to all the privileges and respectabilities of church membership those long immersed in ignorance, immorality, and ungodliness.

That this is so must be generally acknowledged and remembered as essential to the possibility of again applying to large towns the territorial system in all its integrity. It must be felt by the Church and country that the minister who, with pews nearly empty, with little to cheer and with very much to discourage him at first, mans his post as the pastor of a poor and degraded district with a firm determination to devote himself soul and body to his duties—who, confining his labours to its bounds, manifests a self-sacrificing zeal and enthusiasm for its interests that gradually rallies round him a band of like-minded lay coadjutors, and who thus succeeds in drawing from it to his church those who previously had no ecclesiastical connection whatever,—occupies a far higher position, and does far more important work, than the minister who, in some fashionable church and locality, attracts and sways by his eloquence and intellectual ability a congregation of the wealthy or genteel, drawn promiscuously from many parishes. This must be felt and realised to such an extent that the

right of the minister of such poor districts to stipends at least equal in amount to those usually paid in more favoured localities must be conceded, and by some means or other practically provided for, before the prejudices now current can be dissipated, and the evils now prevalent overcome, and the system of endowed territorial work established universally in town and country.

Another thing which seriously hinders this consummation, and operates injuriously in many ways is the enormous size of many churches. In the case of cathedrals, magnificently endowed, and with a large staff of functionaries capable, if properly organised, of overtaking the spiritual supervision of a large district, something may be said in defence of their adaptation to accommodate a numerous body of worshippers. In regard also to some of our more spacious churches, it must be borne in mind that they were intended to be occupied as collegiate charges. But neither the cathedral nor the collegiate system is well adapted for carrying on strictly territorial work. The forces of the one are apt to be scattered, till they lose alike the energy inherent in unity and concentration of action, and the strength developed by discreet combination. The forces of the other are found too often to

expend their activity in jealous collisions ; and the experience of all connected with collegiate charges goes to prove that in their case at least two are *not* better than one. The size, however, of most of our large churches is not owing to any connection either with the cathedral system or with collegiate charges. They have not even this plausible excuse for themselves. As the population of parishes increased, any necessity that arose for rebuilding their churches was embraced as an opportunity for enlarging them also. The better plan of dividing the parish into manageable districts, each with its own suitable church, was never thought of. The overgrown church imposed upon its minister a burden which it is impossible for any man to carry with comfort to himself and ultimate advantage to the community. It created, consequently, in its neighbourhood, the evil of a careless, church-neglecting population ; and, wherever it exists, it constitutes a very formidable hindrance to the full application of the territorial system, which alone is fitted to effect their reclamation.

It must be acknowledged by every one practically acquainted with the work involved in ministering to a congregation, not on Sunday only but all the week through, that a church which con-

tains more than about 800 worshippers, simply creates a physical impossibility in the way of that work being thoroughly done. Any church exceeding such capacity must either present so many empty pews as to seem uncomfortable, and to scare rather than attract worshippers, or it must be the resort of a larger congregation than any one minister can properly superintend and visit. No new church, therefore, ought to be built with accommodation in excess of that now specified, and ways and means should, if possible, be found for contracting the dimensions or lessening the pew-room of all existing churches of greater capacity.

A difficulty in the way of accomplishing this most desirable object, which consequently also forms an obstacle in the way of carrying out completely the plan of endowed territorial work, is the abuse which has gradually grown up in many quarters of asserting an absolute proprietary right in pews, and of leasing them to any who so desire, without reference to their connection with the soil of the parish. This is the fruitful source of many evils. The theory of a parish church is that it is a place for public worship and spiritual edification, intended for the use of all the parishioners, without exception. Lord Stowell, one of the most eminent

of English judges, declared it to be both the common and the ecclesiastical law of England, "that every parishioner, rich and poor, has an equal right to be seated," and that "in seating the congregation, the convenience of all is to be consulted—all, rich and poor, without money and without price." The law of Scotland is substantially identical. Originally, fixed or permanent pews were not in use. Worshippers either brought their seats with them, or dispensed with the enjoyment of such convenience. When pews were introduced at the common expense of those liable for maintaining the fabric, it became essential to the comfort of all, and indeed to public order, that they should be assigned to certain families or groups of families. In the absence of such appropriation there could not have failed in many cases to occur unseemly hurry and struggles for preoccupation of the best seats. To prevent this, and, moreover, to secure the seats for those really belonging to the parish, the plan was adopted of allocating them on the principle of assigning to each of the heritors a part of the area of the church proportioned to the valuation of his lands within the parish, which portion of the area was intended for the occupancy of that section of the parishioners constituting his

tenantry and other residents on his property. That this plan of allocation was adopted not to confer proprietorship on some to the detriment and exclusion of others, but in order to promote in the simplest way the convenience of all the parishioners, is clear from the law as laid down in 'Erskine's Institutes,' to the effect that "the owner of a right to a seat in his parish church cannot dispose of it as his absolute property;" and again, "as to that part of the area which was by the division appropriated to the several land-holders according to their valuations, it appears reasonable that the right of the seller's share thereof ought to be carried by his disposition to the purchaser, as a right essentially connected with the lands disposed. And, indeed, if a land-holder had it in his power to separate the two, either by expressly reserving the area to himself in his disposition, or by making over the lands and the area to different grantees, a church might soon be made the property of strangers, to the utter exclusion of the inhabitants of the parish."

And yet this, which the great Scotch jurist regards as utterly opposed to reason as well as to sound law, has been perpetrated in numerous instances. In many churches, both in town and

country, seats have been sold and disposed altogether irrespective of the property in the right of which the sellers or their authors first acquired them. Seat-rents have become customary, where no seat-rents are legally exigible. The pews are dealt with as private property. They are let to the first comer, or to the largest offerer, without the slightest reference to his residence being in or out of the parish to which the church belongs, and for the exclusive accommodation of whose inhabitants it was built originally. Those who are non-parishioners, in many instances, become, by purchase, proprietors of seats in parish churches, and let them on simply mercantile principles. In this way the shopkeeping system has managed to intrude itself where it has no right or business to be, and has, like a vampire, with noxious influence, sucked the strength out of the territorial plan. The interests of the poor have been sacrificed to lucre. The minister intended by the theory of the Church and the law of the land to be the pastor of a certain clearly defined district, is, in spite of all he can say or do, converted into a mere congregationalist. The many and great benefits of endowed territorial work are lost to a large area of the country. The Church suffers in a thousand ways from this griev-

ous abuse, and the cause of religion is greatly hindered.

The evil is so great and so inveterate that it is not easy to condescend on any proper or effectual remedy. The question of the legality of seat-rents in a parish church has never been carried to such an issue as to settle it conclusively in all its bearings. This much I hold to be perfectly clear, that it is not legal to exact them from those residing on that property in the parish to which the space in the church where they sit was originally allocated. Certainly the traffic in pews, which disjoins them entirely from property in the parish, and which would debar parishioners from their use, is illegal, and might be prevented by any parties interested in the parish. But so deep-seated has the evil become, and so multiform and powerful the interests created in favour of the abuse, that perhaps it can be effectually remedied only by an Act of Parliament, which would place the whole matter on a proper basis, and vindicate at once the integrity of the territorial principle and the rights of all classes of the parishioners. Whether this might not necessitate some change in the incidence of assessments for building and repairing the fabrics of churches, is a question that does not concern us

here. What I maintain is, that the evil pointed out is so enormous, and operates so injuriously against the fair trial and success of endowed territorial work, that whether, by the independent action of the Church herself, or by the intervention of Parliament on her behalf, some remedy or other for it must be found.

At whatever cost, and in the full view of all the obstacles now referred to, as well as in spite of other difficulties that may present themselves, a vigorous effort must be made to facilitate the subdivision of large parishes, and the rearrangement into manageable districts of the whole territory of Scotland, that the parochial economy may have everywhere a fair trial, and that no minister shall have assigned to him a sphere of labour which, either because of its extent or its populousness, imposes upon him the responsibility of duties such as no amount of earnestness, and zeal, and diligence on his part can ever enable him to overtake. In order to this, it seems absolutely necessary that the Act 7 and 8 Vict. c. 44, should be considerably modified; and that either the Church should by statute be acknowledged to have, as in 1833 and 1834 she claimed to have, the inherent power to erect parishes, and to confer on their

ministers a full parochial status ; or, in the event of this being considered unattainable or undesirable, that a new commission for the Plantation of Kirks should be constituted, with authority to deal with the whole matter in a thorough and comprehensive manner. This latter course, which is perhaps the more feasible, is suggested from no feeling of dissatisfaction with the court now vested with jurisdiction on such questions. So far as its prerogative and functions extend, the Court of Teinds forms an unexceptionable tribunal. It has brought not only the highest legal capacity, but the most unquestionable impartiality, to bear on every point of the subject presented to it for adjudication. Its decisions have justly commanded the confidence, and secured the ready acquiescence, of all interested in or affected by them ; and nowhere could men be found more competent than its different members to perform equitably and satisfactorily the duty of rearranging all the parishes. But for such a work men are required who can give their whole time as well as eminent talents to it. It is so vast and so diversified, by reason of local peculiarities, that its speedy accomplishment could be effected only by processes much more simple and less costly than those customary before a regular court

of law; and, in order to meet special cases frequently arising both in town and country, arrangements more elastic and flexible than any now in use would need to be authorised.

The most prolific seed-beds of irreligion and immorality are perhaps to be found in those degraded portions of towns from which eventually the population is likely to be extruded by a better social organisation or by the encroachments of mercantile appliances, and in those mining districts of the country whose busy and begrimed inhabitants will continue to occupy them only until, at a period which may be approximately estimated, their mineral fields shall be worked out. According to the hard and fast system by which parishes are at present constituted, there is little inducement to be at the trouble and expense of erecting and endowing such districts as parishes. The probability is that such costly machinery will be needed there for a limited number of years only. At their expiry the teeming multitudes that now throng them will have passed away to other fields. But meanwhile nowhere is the need of complete parochial agencies more urgently felt, or their supply more imperatively called for. The lack of them allows that disintegrating process of inattention to spiritual things, and neglect of re-

ligious ordinances, to go on till they issue in confirmed immorality and ungodliness. The taint received in such circumstances eats like a foul gangrene into the heart of the community, and spreads with fatal effect through the increasing masses of succeeding generations—

“ And, like a stone  
Cast on the troubled waters of a lake,  
'Twill form in circles, round succeeding round,  
Each wider than the first.”

And therefore, for behoof of present sufferers, and in order to check the probable growth of the evil in time to come, I conceive it to be not only expedient but indispensable, that power should be vested somewhere to provide temporarily for such districts the benefits of endowed territorial work, and to make the disjunction and annexation of parishes more susceptible of easy accommodation to the changing wants and circumstances both of urban and rural populations.

The great misfortune of old-established institutions is their lack of elasticity, and the difficulty of adapting their arrangements to the altering habits of society without shaking the foundations and endangering the stability of the institutions themselves. This misfortune should be obviated as far

as possible by the wise, timely, and courageous correction of such abuses as have crept in, and by the adoption of measures calculated to check the spread of evil in the future. The multiplication of manageable parishes to such an extent as is absolutely required, however difficult it may be asserted and must indeed be acknowledged to be, is at all events not impossible at present. How long it may continue so it would be bold in any man to say. While it is possible, it ought to be prosecuted with all zeal and energy on the part of every one interested in the welfare of the Church and country; for this alone can afford full scope for such endowd territorial work as will either develop true life in the one, or promote the highest prosperity of the other.

One grand obstruction in the way of carrying out such a scheme will no doubt be found to arise out of the civil interests and pecuniary obligations connected with the present parochial arrangements, and more particularly with the management of the poor by parochial boards. The question of pauperism will fall to be dealt with more fully afterwards. For the present it may be sufficient to say that, even supposing the principle of the existing poor-law to be preserved in its integrity, one can see a manifest improvement that might be effected

in its operation by extending the areas that determine the incidence of assessment, and by amalgamating the managing boards. At present, accidental differences in the sizes and situations of parishes, and in the employments and habits of their inhabitants, render the incidence of taxation for the poor most capricious and inequitable. Property in one part of the country is unequally burdened as compared with property in another. Town and country have not their fair share of it. Questions of liability for maintenance on the ground of birth or residence are the source of much expensive litigation. And therefore the fact that parochial boundaries as now defined are entangled with the working of the poor-law, instead of furnishing an argument against any interference with these boundaries, rather presents an additional reason for a thorough rearrangement of them, that taxation for the poor may fall fairly and equitably on all, as well as that endowed territorial work may have free scope and full opportunity for success everywhere throughout the country.

I am quite aware that the situation of some of the largest of our city churches in those central districts from which the better class of the population is rapidly receding towards the suburbs, and

leaving their neighbourhoods to be occupied chiefly either by enormous warehouses, or by crowded masses of the very poorest people, renders it exceedingly difficult to use them in strict accordance with the territorial principle. I have a strong opinion that such districts will never be made what they ought to be in reference to church attendance and religion till this difficulty is boldly faced and completely overcome, and till the districts are worked and superintended as regular parishes, with their own ministers and kirk-sessions, responsible to the Church at large, and particularly to the presbytery of their bounds, for their faithful management. In some instances, however, transitional expedients might for a time be resorted to with advantage. A church confessedly too large for one parish of manageable extent might, for example, be used as the church not only of the district specially designated as its proper parish, but also of several other districts annexed to it for the nonce. Each of these should have its own minister from the first, and eventually would have its own church; but till things were made ripe for this latter consummation, the ministers of all the districts would work together from a common centre and have different services in the same church. Possibly in this way, by com-

bined endeavours of a systematic kind, and by a variety of agencies and services, good might be done for all the districts in question, which could not be done for any one of them apart by itself. Nevertheless the expedient at best is of doubtful issue, and should only be tried in extreme cases ; and the thorough-going remedy of separate churches and of independent territorial work, wherever practicable, is to be preferred.

Perhaps the existence of so many dissenting Presbyterian congregations all over the territory of the Church may present a more formidable barrier than even the excessive size and population of many of its parishes as at present constituted, in way of their thorough rearrangement into districts of manageable extent. In many cases the excess and superfluity rather than the lack or defect of religious agencies tend to hinder the attainment of successful results by any of them, and more particularly makes it impossible to secure the effective operation and the full benefits of the parochial economy. This difficulty should be met also. Any commission for the Plantation of Kirks that may be appointed should possess power, within certain constitutional limits, to recognise and assign specific territories to all such Presbyterian communions and

congregations as, holding the doctrine of the Westminster standards in its integrity, shall be able to provide or willing to accept of a minimum sum as endowment, and become part and parcel of the national Church, sharing its privileges and its responsibilities. In this way, perhaps, the reintegration of the old national Church, by the reunion of such of its branches as still hold fast her cardinal principles, might most fairly and with most benefit to the country, be effected ; and in order to achieve such a result, which could easily be made to issue in the thorough application of the principle of territorialism to the whole country, old conflicts and petty differences might well afford to be forgotten. For such a consummation concessions and sacrifices might well be cheerfully made on all sides. While different sections of the Church have been wrangling and splitting hairs in angry disputation on points at most of theoretical interest and importance, the common enemies of them all have been eagerly seeking to gain ground. Popery has been stealthily and steadily at work. Infidelity has been advancing with giant strides. Everywhere, and especially in those localities where the different agencies of the different Churches have been most actively clashing with and overlapping each other,

the tide of immorality has been flowing higher, and the process of social deterioration going on; so that, in view of all this, and considering these and other lamentable results of our ecclesiastical divisions, one is often led to recall with sympathy the sentiments of Bishop Horne when he says: "When I view the innumerable unhappy differences among Christians (as members of different Churches), all of whom are equally oppressed with the cares and calamities of life, I often call to mind those beautiful and affecting words which Milton represents Adam as addressing to Eve after they had wearied themselves with mutual complaints and recriminations:—

"'But rise! let us no more contend, nor blame  
Each other, blamed enough elsewhere, but strive  
In offices of love, how we may lighten  
Each other's burden in our share of woe.'"

The matter is one of immense importance, and urgently demands the immediate and earnest attention of all true Christian patriots. The fact is, unless what are called our lapsed masses shall be speedily reclaimed to religious sentiments and to church-going habits—if they be suffered to continue their present downward career, and to fall away further and further from Christian belief, and to break more

completely loose from all ecclesiastical guidance and control, the consequences may be most serious. Our country has so long enjoyed the blessing of internal quiet that people are apt to overlook the smouldering ashes of unprincipled force upon which we are treading every day. Foreign examples fail to lead us to consider well our own estate. Our ears tingle at the tales of horrid cruelty done in an Indian mutiny or a Cawnpore massacre. We sicken with disgust in perusing the records of the first outburst of revolutionary violence in France, when frenzy seized society at large—when, rule and order being overthrown and all the bonds of friendship being broken, men went forth in rampant revelry, thirsty for blood and satisfied with nothing short of murder and destruction—when all that was fair and lovely and good in human custom and in civil institution being abolished, the sovereignty of God abjured and His very being denied, men walked abroad in utter lawlessness and made the beautiful capital of their country a very pandemonium. We lay the flattering unction to our souls that such excess having never yet disgraced shall never at any time disgrace our country's annals. But, vain delusion! if the same elements exist among us as existed in Paris,—and they do

exist in the shape of corrupt human nature—estranged classes—crushed, uneducated, and unchristianised masses,—these elements need but suitable occasion to burst forth in all the woful conflagration of lawless rapine, internecine war, unbridled lust and bloody murder, when every man's hand is against his brother's, and life and property are safe no more.

So recently as 1848, scenes in Glasgow made it apparent that the undermost strata of society there are composed of most dangerous materials, which at any period of excitement may explode with disastrous consequences. A very competent and accurate observer, who was an eyewitness of these scenes, afterwards described them to me in a way that convinced me of the truth of this, and left on my mind an impression that never can be effaced. Having been for some weeks previously resident in a remote part of the country, out of the reach of posts and newspapers, he was only very imperfectly informed of the nature and incidents of the fearful political earthquake that was then convulsing Europe, and with fear of change perplexing monarchs. Suddenly the railway brought him to Glasgow; and on his way to his abode there, he reached Argyle Street at the very moment when the mob,

in a tempest of blind fury and wildest anarchy, had broken into one of the shops at the corner of Queen Street or Buchanan Street, and was proceeding with horrid revolutionary cries to heave its contents out to the multitude. Familiar as he had been with the aspects of the city and the homes of its poor—for he had been acting as assistant and missionary in the parish of St Enoch's—he observed in the crowd a numerous class of both men and women whose appearance and bearing were quite strange to him. They were such as had shunned aforetime the light of day and the notice of their fellow-citizens, and resembled rather foreign *sans-culottes* than any description of British subjects. The delirium of foul and bloated intemperance, the recklessness that fears not God neither regards man, and the ragged barbarousness that is the result of long degradation in sin and infamy, stamped with a vile repulsive peculiarity the features of the surging masses. They seemed madly bent on plunder and on blood. The police and the pensioners that had been called out were powerless before them, and failed to stay the progress of the angry and raging tide. Wild cries of “*fire*” were heard proceeding from various quarters ;

and it was the decided belief of my informant, that but for the timely arrival, at the instance of Sheriff Alison who was wisely provident, of a troop of dragoons, which, coming up at full gallop from Eglinton barracks, charged the mob with unmistakable determination, the work of ruin which had been inaugurated would have forthwith swelled into general destruction, and such a scene of violence, pillage, and conflagration ensued as would have made most of Glasgow a waste.

Now the elements which produced this danger exist in Glasgow still. The number of those who are enemies of God, and who, hateful and hating one another, are sunk deep in vice and immorality, is not diminished. In these years of political calm and commercial prosperity, they do not intrude themselves on public observation; or, if they do, they are regarded commonly as objects not so much of alarm as of pity or disgust. But their radical condition is not improved; their real relations to society are not ameliorated. They are equally unrestrained as ever by the bonds of piety towards God, or of sympathy with their fellow-citizens. They have quite as little to lose by change of any kind. They are not less liable to

be moved by passion, and swayed to and fro by the claptrap of demagogues. In the great conflict that once more threatens to convulse Europe they will equally readily be set on fire by the heated atmosphere of strife and battle, and be not less susceptible than before of infection with the mad revolutionary fever that thirsts for blood, and riots in revenge and ruin.

Now, believing that the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ is the only sovereign cure for evils like these, and that it alone can elevate the class now referred to out of their miserable degradation, emancipate them from their barbarous vices, and raise them to some idea of the duties and privileges of citizens of a free State and heirs of an everlasting kingdom; and believing, moreover, that a Church constituted on the principle of endowed territorial work is by far the best fitted to deal effectually with such a class, or with the entire population of any country situated as ours is,—I hold that all the Presbyterian Communion ought, at whatever sacrifice to their pride, which more than anything else keeps them asunder, to find a way, and that speedily, to unite on the territorial principle, that so they may together

form a Church whose national scope and all-embracing ministrations may bear the Gospel with effectual power to every home and heart in Scotland. Thus only can the work be done. Thus, then, in the name of God our Saviour, let us all arise at once and do it.