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ART. I.—*The Limits of Religious Thought*, examined in eight Lectures, delivered before the University of Oxford, in the year 1858, on the Bampton Foundation. By HENRY LONGUEVILLE MANSEL, B. D., &c. Boston: Gould & Lincoln, 1859.

THIS book assumes that Christianity is related to philosophy. We therefore propose to consider Christianity from a speculative point of view; and, in the course of the discussion, to show the import of Mr. Mansel's argument, and to determine its value in Christian evidences.

Philosophy culminates in theology. God is the ultimate problem to which all the lines of philosophical investigation conduct. It is, therefore, proper for philosophy to inquire, whether, from a speculative point of view, Christianity is entitled to the high pretension which it assumes, of being a revelation from God of transcendental truths pertaining to the respective characters of God and man, and from these characters explaining the government of the one, and disclosing the duties of the other.

It is obvious that if philosophy must, from the principles and the laws of human reason, pronounce, there is no God; or if it

ART. V.—*Are there too many Ministers?*

UNTIL recently this question would have sounded strangely in the ears of Presbyterians. We have been accustomed to regard increase in the number of ministers as the evidence and index of the favour of God. To ask whether we had too many ministers, was regarded as equivalent to asking whether we had too many converts, too many revivals, too much of a missionary spirit, too much benevolence, too much zeal for Christ's glory, or too much devotion to his service. Were we and our fathers wrong in this view of the matter? Since when has the harvest ceased to be great, and the labourers few? When and how has our Lord recalled his command, "Pray ye the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth labourers into his harvest"? We hardly know how to enter on the discussion of this subject; and yet we are told that there is an urgent necessity for it. We are assured, that not only among men of the world, not only among those who are habitually disposed to take low views of everything, or who stand aloof from all benevolent efforts, but among many of the best men of the church and the best friends of our Boards, the impression is gaining ground, and often finds utterance, that we have too many ministers—that the supply is greater than the demand. It is very obvious that if this is true—if the supply of ministers is greater than we need—then it is the duty of the church to lessen the supply—to cease all efforts to increase the number of the preachers of the gospel. And it is no less obvious, that just in proportion as this conviction, whether well or ill-founded, spreads among the churches, will all effort to increase the number of ministers cease. It is very clear, therefore, that this is a vital subject, affecting the life of the church and her cherished institutions.

We have said that the assertion that we have too many ministers, once sounded as strangely as the declaration that we had too many Christians, or too much piety. Whether the state of mind which led to regarding these things as equivalent,

was right or scriptural, or whether the present impression which is said to be gaining prevalence in the church, that the number of our ministers is in fact too great, is reasonable and right, depends on the view taken of the nature and office of the church. If the church is a voluntary society in the sense in which the state is, or in which the army or navy within the state are, then the question whether its members or its officers are too many or too few, is a question of fact to be determined by prudential considerations. The citizens of a country may easily increase beyond the limits of comfortable support or profitable employment. The state would then be called upon to take measures to prevent such increase, and by emigration or otherwise, to remedy the evil. Still more frequently does it happen, that applicants for service in the army or navy are more numerous than the exigencies of the country demand. Then it becomes the duty of the authorities to stop all recruiting, and to refuse to make any new appointments. Now if men are disposed to regard the church in the light of a civil institution, it is to be dealt with on the same principles. If its converts become inconveniently numerous, we must stop preaching; or, if too many candidates for the ministry present themselves, we must refuse to receive them. This, however, is not the view which Presbyterians have been in the habit of taking of the church. And it is because the complaint that we have too many ministers, betrays the influence (secret it may be) of this low theory over the minds and feelings of our brethren, that it has given rise to so much painful surprise.

In the Scriptures, in our own standards, and in the inmost convictions of God's people, the church is the body of Christ, filled and animated by his Spirit. Every man by his regeneration becomes united to that body as a living member. Every member has its place and its office, determined not by its own will, not by human appointment, but by the Spirit of God. To one he gives one gift, to another another, dividing to each one severally as he wills. "We, being many," says the apostle, "are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another. Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophesy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith; or ministry, let us wait on our

ministering: or he that teacheth, on teaching; or he that exhorteth, on exhortation." If this be the true view of the matter, then the complaint that we have too many ministers, terminates, not on the church, but on the Holy Spirit. The church has nothing to do with it. It is not her office to call men into the ministry. She can only sit in judgment on the question, whether the candidate is really called of God. She puts him upon trial; she examines into his experience, into his qualifications or gifts. If satisfied, she pronounces her judgment to that effect, and thenceforth, until the contrary is made manifest, those whom the church approves as called by the Spirit, are to be so regarded and treated. Those who complain that we have too many ministers, know not what they do. They can escape the guilt of charging the Spirit with distributing his gifts unwisely or too profusely, only by denying that there is any divine call to the ministry. But this they cannot do without denying the plain doctrine of God's word, and the faith of our own, and of every other Christian church. The candidate is expressly asked in the ordination service of the Episcopal church, and impliedly in the inducting ceremonies and services of our own and of all other churches, "Do you believe that you are called of God to take upon you this office?" If the candidate believes that he is thus called, if the church is satisfied that he is neither a hypocrite nor a self-deceiver; if he gives every scriptural evidence of being the subject of this divine call, what shall we do? Shall we refuse to recognise it? Shall we say that we have ministers enough? Shall we decline to aid those thus called in preparing for the work to which God has called them, or in sustaining them in their labours? No one would dare consciously to take this ground. And yet this is the very ground taken by those who complain that we have too many ministers. To divest this complaint of its irreligious character, it must be directed not against the number, but against the character of our ministers. The only rational ground of complaint is, that the church introduces into the ministry men who are not called of God. This may well be; nay, it is impossible but that in some cases it must be; just as it is impossible but that offences must come. The church is not infallible in her judgment, and is not always

faithful in the exercise of her prerogative of judging. It is here, as in the admission of men to the full communion of the church. When a man is called of God into the kingdom of Christ, he has the right to come to the Lord's table, and it is the duty of the church to receive him. But it is not her duty to receive all who profess to be thus called, or who sincerely believe in their own vocation. It is the duty of the church to see that they have the qualifications for church-fellowship laid down in the word of God. In like manner, if any man is called by the Spirit to the work of the ministry, it is his right and duty to preach the gospel, and it is the duty of the church to aid him in preparing for his work, and to sustain him when he enters upon it. But it is not every one who professes or believes that he is called to be a minister, who is really called of God. And therefore it is the duty of the church carefully and faithfully to examine into the matter; to put him through a protracted trial, and be fully satisfied that he gives all the evidence of a divine vocation which she is authorized to demand. When she has done this, her responsibility ceases. Whether they be few or many whom God thus calls, she must joyfully receive, sustain, and encourage them, assured that if God calls men into his service he will find work for them to do.

The complaint, however, as we understand, is not that our presbyteries have become of late more remiss than formerly, in the discharge of their important and responsible duty in this matter, nor that the character of our ministers and candidates has deteriorated, giving evidence that the church is, so to speak, in advance of God's Spirit, receiving more candidates for the ministry than the Spirit calls to that work. Of any such charge we hear no intimation, and we believe that there is no ground for it. It must of course be admitted, that as unworthy members are received to the fellowship of the church, so unworthy men are sometimes admitted to the ministry. This is an evil against which no human foresight or fidelity can effectually guard. But we presume that no intelligent person will venture to assert, that the character of our church membership, or of our ministers and candidates, is lower now than it was twenty or thirty years ago. So far from this being the case, we believe that on an average the character of both of

our membership and ministry is higher now than it ever was. So far at least as we have the opportunity or ability to judge, we can confidently say, that the candidates for the ministry are now, and for some years past have been, of higher promise as to their spirit, piety, and general qualifications, than at any former period. We cannot see, therefore, that the complaint that we have too many ministers can be seriously entertained by any who believe that the Spirit of God, and not presbyterics, is the author of the call to the sacred office. It is our duty to hail the increase in the number of those whom the Spirit thus calls, with the same grateful joy with which we would hail any other manifestation of the Spirit's presence.

It may be said, however, that this is all theory, that there is no reasoning against facts, and the fact is that we have more good ministers and good candidates than we need, or than can find profitable employment. If this be so, it is something which never happened before since the world began. The clearest possible evidence should be demanded, to satisfy any Christian man that the Holy Spirit calls more men to the ministry than there is any necessity for. What is the evidence relied upon to sustain this extraordinary assertion? So far as we have heard, the evidence consists of two particulars; first, that many of our candidates after licensure are unable to find suitable fields of labour; and second, that when a vacancy occurs in any self-sustaining church, there is always a crowd of applicants for the situation. The former of these allegations is easily disposed of. The fact assumed is not true to any extent justifying the allegation. The graduates of our theological seminaries are generally settled in the ministry, or profitably employed in the service of the church, within a few months after leaving their respective institutions. It was publicly asserted months ago that every student who left the Western Seminary at Allegheny last spring, was already a settled pastor; and of the sixty recent graduates of Princeton, we are informed, that there are not ten who remain unemployed, excepting such as are still pursuing their studies or preparing for the foreign field. If, however, the graduates of our seminaries did remain unsettled to a much greater extent than is actually the case, this would not prove that the Spirit calls too

many men into the ministry. This is the very last hypothesis to which we ought to resort to explain the fact. It may arise from the peculiar and transient state of the country; from the want of proper guidance, or the deficiency of energy, or tact, or of popular talents on the part of the candidates. It is far from being true that the best and most useful men are the soonest settled. Showy, superficial gifts, often secure attention when those of higher value remain for a while unnoticed. But suppose it should be admitted that five or ten per cent. of our candidates for the ministry are failures; that that proportion of their number are either unworthy, or deceived as to their call; may not the same be said of our church members? Must we then close our churches? Must we refuse to send into the harvest ninety men, really called of God, because ten men join them who are not called? No enlightened Christian conscience could justify such a course. We must do the best we can to sift the tares from the wheat, but let us not throw away the wheat; let us not refuse to receive those whom God really calls, for fear we shall receive some whom he has not called. We are bound to receive the former, and to do what we can to avoid receiving the latter. The rest belongs to God.

The great argument, however, relied upon to prove that we have too many ministers, is that there are on our list some three hundred without charge, and that whenever any vacancy occurs in a self-supporting congregation there is a crowd of applicants for the post. Of these three hundred ministers without charge, we are not told how many are disqualified by age or infirmity for active duty; how many are voluntarily engaged in other pursuits; how many have mistaken their calling and have not the gift of preaching. If proper deductions were made from this class, the number would probably be greatly reduced. We do not believe there are one hundred Presbyterian ministers, qualified and willing to preach the gospel, who are unemployed. That there are numerous applicants for every desirable vacant church is indeed true. But this only proves that there are comparatively few congregations in this region able or willing to give a minister an adequate support. There might be only a dozen such congregations in the State of Pennsylvania, and yet a million of her population be destitute of the means of

grace. Would this prove that thirteen ministers were too many for Pennsylvania? Does the fact that there is not one self-supporting church in all Africa prove that its teeming thousands need no missionaries? According to the moral statistics from great cities, not one-half of the people are supplied with the stated ministrations of the gospel. Every unemployed minister in our church could find abundant employment in any one of these great centres of our population. If from one-fourth to one-half of the people of every state in this Union are not living without the stated ministration of the gospel, then our statistics are greatly at fault, and then is our country far better off in this respect than most other Christian nations. According to the most reliable information furnished to the public, there are some six millions of people in the United States who are under no pastoral care. We are commanded to preach the gospel to every one of those millions. Their blood will be required at our hands if we fail to do it. Yet we are told that we have too many ministers! Common sense and common honesty, it is said, forbid the increase of the number of preachers. The churches are exhorted to refuse to sustain any more candidates, to stop the supplies of our Board of Education, and to turn our theological seminaries into manufactories and arsenals. We have nothing to say to this. Giving is a matter of free will. The church has no right to constrain its members to contribute to any particular object. Each man must exercise his own judgment and his own choice. To his own Master he stands or falls. God does not beg any man to give. He only permits it. The Bible leaves every one perfectly sovereign in the disposition of his money. He may spend it wisely and liberally for the glory of God, or he may keep it all and carry it with him to the judgment, and say, Here, Lord, is thy talent. His fellow-men have no right to prescribe or to control in this matter. The churches, therefore, need have no fear of being pestered, much less disciplined, into giving to any cause which their reason and conscience do not approve. It is, however, a duty to disabuse the minds of the brethren, and not permit them to be deceived, or to deceive themselves as to what the true interests of the Saviour's kingdom demands.

Even if we confine our attention to our own denomination, the want of ministers is deplorably great. According to the Minutes of the Assembly of 1861, the number of our churches exceeds that of our ministers by nine hundred and seventeen. Deducting, on the one hand, from the number of congregations, those who are united under one minister, and on the other, from the whole number of ministers reported, those who are disabled, or engaged in other departments of labour at home or abroad, we have still such a deficiency, "that if every available minister in our church were settled in a pastoral charge, there would remain from eight hundred to one thousand churches for which there would not be a single minister." We make this statement, in full confidence of its correctness, from data furnished from the office of one of our Boards in Philadelphia. This, however, is not all: we learn from the same source, that although the last decade has been the most active and successful in the operations of the Board of Education, yet, so far from keeping up the supply of ministers, we have fewer preachers now, in proportion to our membership, than we had ten years ago! One-half of our ministers now in the service of the church have been aided by the Board of Education, whose operations it is proposed to suspend. What would have been our position as a church had the views now advanced been acted upon in 1851? Would we now exhibit the condition of one of the most efficient and honoured ecclesiastical bodies on the face of the earth, or one of the most inefficient and dishonoured? This question admits of but one answer; and it requires no spirit of prophecy to predict what will be our condition ten years hence, if these new views are to control our action. Should God withdraw from our young men his Spirit, so that few or none should be called to the ministry, or from the churches the gift of Christian liberality in their support, we have little reason to hope for other manifestations of his presence. Where the Spirit dwells, he dwells in the plenitude and harmony of his gifts. If he gives a man faith, he gives him repentance; if he gives a church zeal and spirituality, he will give to her children the grace to preach the unsearchable riches of Christ.

There is another consideration which cannot be overlooked.

The average number of deaths among our ministers can be hardly less than fifty annually. In 1855 it was forty-eight; in the years 1856 and '57 it was forty-six. To this must be added the number annually rendered unfit for active service by old age or sickness. These causes cannot deduct annually less than sixty ministers from the number of our working clergy. For the last ten years, the average number of graduates from our two largest and oldest seminaries, Princeton and Allegheny, has hardly amounted to that number; those seminaries, therefore, can barely supply the yearly loss of ministerial strength, leaving it to the other institutions to make provision for the demands of a population which nearly doubles itself every twenty years.

Hitherto we have not raised our eyes from the ground. We have been looking at our feet, and at what lies immediately around them. The commission of Christ to our church is not, Preach the gospel to the thirty millions of Americans, but to every creature under heaven. Preach the gospel to the thousand millions of your dying fellow-men, and, lo, I am with you always; with you, to endue your sons with the gifts of preaching, and you with the grace to aid and sustain them. To this we answer, Stay thy hand, O Lord, we have already more preachers than we know what to do with. What! more than enough for the thirty millions of your countrymen, and for the thousand millions of your fellow-sinners! Then, stand aside; I will give my gifts to those who are not so easily satisfied. May God in mercy preserve our church from such reprobation!

The brethren who complain that we have too many ministers, have their eye on a real and portentous evil of our system; but they fatally mistake as to its cause. It is not that we have too many ministers, but that inadequate means are provided for their support. This they acknowledge by contradicting themselves. They tell us, and tell us truly, that there are heathen enough in our cities to give full employment to every minister without charge in our church—and yet they say we have more than we need! That is, the cities would absorb our whole supply, and leave all the other abounding desolations of the land unsupplied. By their own showing, therefore, we

have not a tenth part of the number of ministers we need; what we lack is, adequate means of supporting them. The reason why so many applicants are found for the vacant pulpits of self-sustaining churches, is not that we have too many ministers, but that it is so hard for them to find means of supporting themselves and their families. This support they are entitled to by the laws of justice and by the express ordinance of Christ. Read the apostle's argument and revelations on this subject in 1 Cor. ix. "Who goeth to war on his own charges?" he asks; "who planteth a vineyard, and eateth not of the fruit thereof? or who feedeth a flock, and eateth not of the milk of the flock?" Is this merely a human usage?—does not the law recognise the same principle even in its application to brutes, when it says, "Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn"? What human and divine law thus recognise as right, has its foundation in simple justice; "for if we have sown unto you spiritual things, is it a great thing if we shall reap your carnal things?" Under the old dispensation, by divine command, they who ministered about holy things, lived of the things of the temple; "even so," he adds, "hath the Lord ordained that they who preach the gospel should live of the gospel." On this point there can be no dispute. If, therefore, there are well qualified ministers unemployed, it must be either because they are unwilling to labour, which is neither asserted nor believed, or because they have not the means of support. If the latter, whose fault is it? Can the church complain that we have too many ministers, when there are thousands and millions of our fellow-men perishing for lack of knowledge, if she fails in providing the means of sustaining them in the field? Here is the difficulty; and it is inherent in our system. We almost tremble while we write the sentence—but does not truth demand that it should be written?—The Presbyterian church is not a church for preaching the gospel to the poor. She has precluded herself from that high vocation by adopting the principle that the support of the minister must be derived from the people to whom he preaches. If, therefore, the people are too few, too sparse, too poor, to sustain a minister, or too ignorant or wicked to appreciate the gospel, they must go without it. We have attempted to ob-

viate this evil by aiding feeble congregations through the Board of Domestic Missions, and great good has been thus accomplished. But, 1st, this leaves the principle untouched. It is the object of the Board to aid, in the main, those churches which promise to become self-supporting. People living where congregations cannot be formed, or who fail to reach the self-sustaining standard, are either not reached, or are sooner or later dropped. 2d. The scale on which the limited resources of our Board force its officers to dispense their contributions, is far below the reasonable and righteous demands of the ministry. The families of our home missionaries are kept but little above the starvation point; therefore it is, that while the field is white for the harvest, ministers with families dependent upon them hesitate to enter into the harvest. If the church will not support them, how can they go? Do we refuse to send missionaries to the heathen until the heathen are willing and able to support them? If not, why should we refuse to sustain those whom we send to our own people?

Our system, which requires the minister to rely for his support on the people to whom he preaches, has had the following inevitable results:—1. In our cities we have no churches to which the poor can freely go, and feel themselves at home. No doubt, in many of our city congregations there are places in the galleries, in which the poor may find seats free of charge, but, as a general thing, the churches are private property. They belong to those who build them, or who purchase or rent the pews after they are built. They are intended and adapted for the cultivated and thriving classes of the community. There may be exceptions to this remark, but we are speaking of a general fact. The mass of the poor in our cities are excluded from our churches. The Presbyterian church is practically, in such places, the church for the upper classes (we do not mean the worldly and the fashionable) of society. 2. In large districts of the country—as in the pines of New Jersey, for example—where the people are poor and widely dispersed, we can have no churches. So far as we are concerned, such districts are left entirely deserted. 3. Hundreds of our best and most laborious ministers, settled over new or feeble congregations, are subjected to the greatest privations and trials;

often unable to provide for the support of their families, or the education of their children. 4. Many such ministers, unable to sustain themselves, are constrained to engage in secular pursuits, and to devote more or less of their time to making money; others give up in despair, resign their charges, and wait and look for some vacant church able to support them—hence the number of applications for every such vacancy. 5. Our present system interferes with the progress and efficiency of the church. It can go only where there are people who are rich and good enough to support the gospel for themselves. On this plan, it is almost impossible that we should adequately fulfil our duty to preach the gospel to every creature.

On the other hand, the system which secures an adequate support of the minister, independent of the people whom he immediately serves, has the precisely opposite effects. 1. The churches are common property. They do not belong to individuals who build or rent them. They belong to the people. The high and low, the rich and poor, have a common and equal right to them, as they have to the common highway. They resort to the one with the same freedom with which they walk on the other. The consequence is, that there are few or no class churches, none from which, by force of circumstances, the poor are excluded. Any one who has visited Europe must have been struck with this fact. Not only in Catholic, but also in Protestant countries, the places of worship are seen crowded with a promiscuous throng—the peasant, the student, the professor, the merchant, the noble, unite in one worshipping assembly. This is a right of which the poor avail themselves freely, and the gospel, or at least the benefits of public worship, are as open to them as to any class in the community. 2. Ministers can be sent and sustained among people unwilling or unable to support a religious teacher for themselves. 3. It is rare where this system prevails to see ministers engaged in any secular pursuits.

In countries where the church and state are united, the support of the clergy is provided for, in some cases, as in England and Scotland, by a system of tithes, in others, by endowments, in others by stipends from the government, and in others, as for-

merly in New England, by a tax on property for the support of public worship, just as the free-schools are now supported. Where the church is independent of the state, and acts on the voluntary principle, one plan is adopted by the Free Church of Scotland, another by the Methodists, both here and in Europe. The question now under consideration, is not how this should be done in our case, but rather the importance of, in some way, accomplishing the object. As long since as July 1847, this subject was discussed in the pages of this journal. The two principles insisted upon are, first, that every minister devoted exclusively to his work is entitled to a competent support; and, secondly, that the obligation to provide that support does not rest exclusively on the people to whom he ministers, but upon the church at large. As to the way in which duty can be best discharged, opinions may differ. The main point, however, is to secure the general and cordial recognition of the duty itself. In some of our cities it may be expedient to erect churches and provide an endowment for the pastor, or secure his support by outside contributions. In others, it may be wise to have district missionaries sustained as are ministers in our seamen's chapels. But, as it seems to us, the most feasible plan is simply to enlarge the resources of the Board of Domestic Missions, so as to enable them to give an adequate support to those aided by its funds. To accomplish this, the plan adopted by the Free Church of Scotland might be found as available here as it has proved there.

The proposition to provide an adequate support for the clergy, independent of their congregations, righteous and scriptural as it appears to us, met with strenuous opposition, not only on the ground of the expense which it would involve, but on the assumption, that if ministers are secure of a support independent of their people, they will neglect their work. To this we answer, 1. That it supposes that ministers have no higher motive of action than the desire to get money out of their people. If the love of money governs the ministry of our church, they are a very silly set of men. There is not one in ten of them who could not secure that object in some other way more effectually than by preaching the gospel. 2. It is not found that the teachers of our free academies and schools,

whose salaries are not dependent on the favour of the parents of their pupils, neglect their work. These teachers are not constrained by higher motives than ministers, nor are they held to a stricter responsibility. 3. Our foreign missionaries have a support independent of the people among whom they labour. And yet, as a body, they are as faithful, diligent, and successful, to say the least, as any other equal number of our clergy. 4. This is no new plan, it has been acted on for centuries. Whatever may be said of the orthodoxy or spirituality of the stipendiary clergy of Prussia, for example, they are as hard-working a class of men as any to be found in this country. They not only conduct public worship on Sundays and festivals, but they must attend to the sick, and to the burial of the dead, and devote certain hours every week to the religious instruction of the young in the public schools. Every child in Prussia, male or female, passes through a course of religious training by the clergy, and you cannot find a barefooted boy in the streets of Berlin, who cannot read and write, and give an intelligible account of the historical facts of the Bible, and, if approaching the age of fourteen, who cannot repeat the creed, the Lord's prayer, and Luther's catechism. These results imply an amount of faithful and systematic labour, which the plan of making the clergy dependent on their own people has never yet secured.

We are not concerned about the way, if only the end be secured. Let the church remember that her field is the world, that she is bound gratefully to receive, and, if need be, to educate, every young man whom the Holy Spirit mercifully calls to preach the gospel, and then to sustain him in that great work. Let those who feel for unemployed ministers not raise the standard of rebellion against God, nor reject the proffered gifts of the Spirit, nor strive to impede the progress of the church, but devote their energy to enable her to carry into effect the ordinance of Christ, that they who preach the gospel shall live by the gospel. Then, should we have too many ministers, the proper remedy will be the deposition of those who refuse to work, and not arresting the increase of faithful labourers.