

THE CHURCH AND THE RURAL COMMUNITY

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The country church is responsive to every stimulus which affects the country community. It is a sensitive register of the economic experience and of the social welfare of the country population. Three phases of economic experience in America have recorded themselves in the country churches.¹ Each of them has created a social type. The pioneer has been followed by the exploiter of the land. The exploiter is giving way to the husbandman, or agricultural economist. Each of these has had his church, following one another in the order of the development of American farming; and the faithfulness of the church to the American economy would require that in no other order should the church in the rural community develop. Her changes are those of the population which she serves.

The pioneer type was a lonely man. In the woods his ax alone sounded. From his cabin no other was reached with the eye, or by even a far cry of the voice. He lived and thought and battled alone. His theology was therefore a doctrine of personal salvation. It was the dogma of freedom and responsibility. He was moreover a man of impulse, emotional; for he practiced all the trades, from shoemaking to cutting grass. Adam Smith made clear the dependence of the worker at varied trades upon impulse. The pioneer used rum as a stimulant for his great feats. His religion was the experience of emotion. Yearly or periodic revivals were his only or his primary method of church work. Finney and Nettleton made a fine art of the pioneer religion; but neither of them could so revive rural people today, because the pioneer economy is gone forever.

The second type of economic life was that of the exploiter. He was a man who saw the value of wealth for man's use. He

¹ Professor J. B. Ross in the *Political Science Quarterly* for December, 1910, traces the successive changes for the Middle West.

went to California in 1849, not to settle but to scoop up a fortune and come back. In all the states he turned from farming to mining and oil prospecting. Coal or iron, mica or even a clay bed gave him promise of a fortune. His church is the church whose chief doctrine is giving, building, endowing. His has been a great and valid stage of American church life.

The third period which is just now beginning is that of husbandry or cultivation of the soil. The Bible speaks of "marrying the land." I never knew its meaning till I saw it in the mountains of Tennessee and the prairies of Illinois. There side by side is the outraged land and the land cherished, cultivated, economized. The systematic farmer loves the land and studies it; he trains it, he fertilizes it, he educates it. Economist and husbandman are the same in meaning, though diverse in derivation. The husbandman is to be the greatest economist in our history.

The church of the husbandman has come in some places. It is institutional, social, using qualities more than quantities; it determines every policy upon a comprehension of the entire problem. It serves the whole population. It builds for the future, for the permanence of all values, as well as for immediate results. The same population who are scientific and systematic on the farm may be trained to be systematic and progressive in the church.

The history of American rural churches contains, in addition to the progress of typical churches referred to above, certain peculiar narratives of country life. In those communities the influences are economic-religious. These communities, while varying somewhat in their type, are represented by the Pennsylvania "Dutch" and Quaker communities. Omitting, therefore, extended reference to Shaker or Mormon communities and other such extravagant variations of the religious community, let us observe the history of the Mennonite and Quaker communities in Pennsylvania. The so-called "Pennsylvania Dutch" are better described for our understanding them here under the general term Mennonite.² For the Mennonites and the

² See Kuhns, *German and Swiss Settlements of Pennsylvania*; Sachse, *The German Pietists of Pennsylvania and The German Sectarrians of Pennsylvania*.

Quakers have much in common. Quakerism was descended by a line of direct social causation from the Mennonite sects. And when William Penn started his "Holy Experiment" for the peopling of the territory in the new world which came to him by grant from Charles II, he enlisted the Mennonites on the continent of Europe and the Quakers in England, finding them responsive in common to his advertisements and other appeals for settlers. William Penn used German and Dutch in addition to English. He journeyed on the Continent in the Dutch and German territories and started the stream of immigration to Pennsylvania at a time when persecution on the Continent and unrest in England supplied the expulsive forces which selected the Mennonites and the Quakers for settlement in America. With the Mennonites came other sects, whose social character is illustrated in the Mennonites.

These people were selected by common economic, social, and religious experiences. They settled in the wilderness which came to be called Pennsylvania, under conditions of poverty, intense social sympathy and religious idealism. These they shared with one another in such degree as to consolidate them into settlements and communities. In order to survive they were obliged to intensify in America a social unity which in the old world had protected them against persecution and enabled them to get a living in a hostile social environment. In America they perfected their economic methods and their forms of social organization, and in harmony with these their religious societies, into such community life as still to survive.

The complete history of these Mennonite and Quaker sects has yet to be written from a sociological point of view. They have produced few historians, but their communities have been highly successful in accomplishing certain results.³ The weakness of their community life need not engage us at present. They suppressed individual genius and uniformed their population by discouraging individual talent. They repressed the artistic, inventive variations which appeared in individuals. This may be forgiven them when one remembers the bitter economic

³ Warren H. Wilson, *Quaker Hill, a Sociological Study*.

struggle in which they fought their way to survival as communities. We are more interested here in the elements of positive social strength which these Mennonite and Quaker communities exhibit.

The first of these is their economic success. In every territory where the Pennsylvania Mennonites are found they stand out in contrast to other farming populations by their success as farmers. Other Americans in the representative northern and eastern states have not been successful as farmers. The success of American farming in typical instances has tended to the elimination of the farmer as a farmer. Not so among the Pennsylvania sects. Their communities are permanently agricultural. They maintain the fertility of the soil; they increase the total products which they have for sale as years pass, and they make farming profitable.

Second, these Mennonite communities have eliminated pauperism. Among them there is none poor. "They take care of their own people," as their neighbors say. Actually this is accomplished by a form of social control in which their communities promptly act for the sustaining of the marginal members of the community who suffer any incidental loss or are weakened in the competition of life. This seems to me to be the greatest triumph of these Mennonite communities. They have exhibited in America the possibility of sustaining a population, originally very poor, so that no section of its members, through two centuries, has lapsed into pauperism.

I believe that this process also extends to the prevention of degeneracy, though of this I cannot speak so confidently. In recent years I dare say they are found wanting in adherence to sanitary ways of living. But so far as I have been able to study them there are among them very few insane, idiotic, or degenerate members.

In the third place, the "Pennsylvania Dutch"—to use their common name—maintain their social organization. Their communities do not so rapidly disintegrate under the influence of economic success. They do, indeed, suffer losses, but the process of rural degeneration which shows elsewhere throughout the

country is much retarded among them. The intensity of their community organization is efficient here, as in other respects, for the building up of a permanent population. One meets them not merely in Pennsylvania, but in Ohio, Michigan, Illinois, Iowa, Minnesota, and Colorado, and everywhere they are called "Pennsylvania Dutch."

The Quakers have not been so tenacious in rural communities as the Mennonites have been. On the other hand, they have survived longer in the cities, to which Mennonites seem less suited. The same characteristics, however, of community life are exhibited by them. The Quakers have eliminated poverty and reduced degeneracy of their population to the lowest terms.

It is interesting to observe, and of this I am sure in the case of the Quakers, that their community organization permeates other than Quaker populations who are united to them. I have seen a community in which the Quaker families had diminished, their places being taken by Irish Catholics, practice the economic and social customs of the Quakers by which poverty and degeneracy are resisted, just as if the whole community was still attending the Quaker meeting. That is, the social methods of organization which were initiated by the Quakers have been made permanent and have extended farther in the population than the Quakers' creed or forms of worship. This is illustrated in the city of Philadelphia, a social area leavened with Quaker habits of thought and feeling.

Now in these Mennonite and Quaker communities the country churches have survived as long as the economic and social organization has prospered. The "Pennsylvania Dutch" wherever they have their communities have also their meeting-houses. They follow the good old American custom of sectarian division with impunity; and seem to be unembarrassed by those scruples which make sectarianism fatal to the typical New England, Pennsylvania, or New York farming community. Of course the same processes work among them, but much more slowly. Their churches are more closely accommodated to their economic life and the relation of the church to the community seems much more intimate than among the individualistic types of American

communities in which the economic struggle is personal rather than collective.

There is another kind of American community, dependent not on conscious cultivation of community life, but upon clannishness. The Scotch-Irish and Germans, having settled certain territories and built their communities, possess an instinctive social unity rather than a conscious unity. They are related closely; they come of one stock. They do not, as the Mennonites and Quakers do, use religious discipline to perpetuate the conditions of old-world peasantry, but being instinctively prejudiced against others and instinctively fond of their own, their populations have lasted longer and their communities have enjoyed a longer life than those whose instinctive preferences were for individual success alone. These unconscious and instinctive social organizations have maintained their churches; and I know of none which are more successful, as country churches, than some maintained by these Scotch-Irish or German settlements, for they do not discourage individual genius nor repress personal talents. Unlike the Quakers or the Mennonites, who have an aversion to artistic or literary success, they have been much more in sympathy with the average American economic ambitions, while at the same time maintaining the permanency of their settlements, through the working of instinctive sympathy and unconscious social unity.

In speaking of these Mennonite, Quaker, Scotch-Irish, and German rural communities, I do not mean to exhaust the annals of such exceptional community experience. I am only indicating that aside from the typical rural economy which has prevailed throughout the most of the country there are these exceptional communities in which the rural exodus has been retarded and the rural community has possessed greater tenacity. My purpose is to say that the country church in these communities is an excellent register of the social and economic prosperity of these farmers. In all these instances the economic and social life expressed itself and measured itself in the religious institutions.

We are engaged at this time in revaluing the country churches. The question nowadays is as to the social efficiency of these institutions. Formerly they were regarded only as vehicles of eternal

salvation. For reasons the rural population is demanding of the church a present social value. The great cause of this revaluation is the economic pressure under which the farmer is suffering at the present time. This economic pressure is felt throughout the older states. Under pioneer conditions different hardships prevailed. Men had not had time to take an inventory of social values. In the newer settlements the population is fluctuating and the centers of social organization have not been clearly and finally recognized. In the older states, however, in which one may now include those as far west as the Missouri River, the following conditions prevail.

The influence of the free lands of the West upon the farmers of the East has been a very heavy burden. Rural communities have been depleted by the constant westward movement of the more ambitious farmers. The opportunities, both agricultural and speculative, have tempted the farmer of the East to give up a meager income for a possible speculative gain, and for an assured greater estate in the West.

But worse than that, the western free lands have put their products on the market at a price so low that the eastern farmer could not compete in the use of lands which required the use of fertilizers to maintain their productiveness. A New York expert has said, "Considering the food values in a bushel of corn, the New York farmer has been obliged to pay as much for the fertilizer necessary to raise the corn as the Illinois and Missouri farmer got for a bushel of corn." Under these circumstances the eastern farmer could not compete with the western settler.

Another influence of the western free land which has disturbed the farming population has been more recent. As the free land in the West has diminished in amount it has ceased to tempt the eastern farmer to abandon his land, but it tempts him to sell it. For with the exhaustion of the western free lands a higher price is offered for eastern lands. This influence is evident in Illinois and Indiana, for example, where high prices are offered for land, irrespective of increased income from that land. In the past ten years throughout the Middle West land values

have increased from 50 to 100 per cent. In those same ten years the net income of the farmer throughout the Middle States, considering the high prices he must pay for what he has to buy, has not increased more than 5 per cent. The result is that the farmer's interest on his invested capital has steadily gone down, and when he is confronted finally with the fact that he is making, for all his labor, only 2 or 3 per cent on his money the average farmer is constrained to sell.

Now under these circumstances the farming population is in a continual state of unrest. The farmer for all his apparent prosperity, following a long period of poverty, is much perplexed as a class and feels the need of leadership. The dominating institution in country communities is the church; and the country church has had no economic doctrine. In the past two decades, therefore, the farmer has been dissatisfied with the country church, because it has generally offered no ethical or spiritual help in the conditions of economic pressure to which I have referred.

Another factor in this revaluing of the church has been the change from the ancient tools, which our grandfathers have used in agriculture for thousands of years, to modern machinery. This change has had its correlatives in the emotional and intellectual conditions of the whole population. But considering it only in its outward effects, it has reorganized the whole of the rural economy. Fewer laborers are necessary for the production of greater quantities of farm products. As one goes westward this influence shows itself in the greater horse-power used in the tillage of land. "In New England it is a one-horse farm, in the South a one-mule farm, in Ohio two horses are seen at the plow, in Illinois three horses, in Iowa four horses, and in Idaho one man rides the plow and drives eight horses." With the development, therefore, of the American rural economy larger estates are possible, greater capital can be invested, and the class of tenants and laborers is differentiated in the country as sharply as in the factory town. The country church is called upon to minister to the landless class of men who do not own the tools with which they get their living. The country minister has

had no training by which he can understand these social processes. Too often he has simply complained of the weakening of his church by the coming of tenant farmers into the community. Over against this the residents and laborers in the country have a diminished respect for the church because of its lack of service to the people in the community.

In connection with this influence of machinery it must not be forgotten that the change has been so sudden in America that we suffer in the rural population from immature economic forms. For instance, the usual lease by which the land is let to a tenant throughout the United States is for one year. In older countries land is leased for a period of years so long as to give permanence to the rural tenant population. But "the American system of farm tenantry," says Professor Curtiss, "is the worst system of which I know in any country." It would be very hard for the church as a social institution to render service in the conditions so hastily and superficially forced upon the community. But in any case, the churches have been discredited in the country by the constant changes and temporary economic forms in which the tenant and the laborer work, as members of the community. The church has been discredited by its lack of flexibility, but the situation demanded of the ministry more than the colleges and seminaries had given it.

Among these temporary forms are those used in the great farming estates; in some of which, as for instance the estate of David Rankin in Missouri, great numbers of laborers are employed at the planting and the harvesting season alone, and then discharged. A limited number of laborers are employed on this estate throughout the year, many of them being housed in boarding-houses. Of course over this whole estate family life, churches, and schools have fallen into decay. I suppose that this is a temporary condition. In any case it has tended to discredit the country church as an institution unable to survive under the influence of swift and arbitrary transformation.

The organization of hostile economic groups in conflict with the farmer has weakened him and undermined the stability of farming populations. The influence of transportation has been

such as to destroy the old local economy and to force the farmer, all unprepared for it, into the world-economy. In this world-economy he has no hold upon his own industry. Other industries are organized; his is not. He has not sufficient organs for the expression of his own needs and no adequate agencies for agitation of his own interests. Of course the effect of this has been the weakening of the farming class; and this weakening of the farmer as a farmer is shown in the characteristic church which ministers to the farmer.

The growth of the cities has been in part at the expense of the country.⁴ The leaders of political life and of intellectual life, and especially the commercial leaders of recent generations, have assembled in the cities as much as possible of the good things in this world. They have not only been uninterested in the farm and in the country community, but they have so organized life that the country community has suffered and has been impoverished through the operation of their genius upon our civilization.

Through these forces the country community has been unified: its population has come to be of one type.⁵ The city and the railroad have drawn away all other industrial types, as the smith, the merchant, the shoemaker, and attracted also the more brilliant, the more enterprising, the bolder and the more eccentric spirits. To a great degree the degenerate stock in the country has been drawn off into the cities. The influence of this upon the country has been to reduce the farming population to a flat, level equality, in which there is no leader and for which progress is an impossibility.

All this is to say that the community life in the country has generally been destroyed. Allowing for some exceptions, not too numerous, it may be said that throughout the prosperous and productive farming regions of the United States, which have been settled for fifty years, community life has disappeared. This is to say, the community does not satisfy locally the normal instincts and desires of the normal man or woman born in the

⁴ Sir Horace Plunkett, *The Rural Life Problem in the United States*.

⁵ Wilbert L. Anderson, *The Country Town*.

country. There is no play for the children, there is no recreation for young people; there are no adequate opportunities for acquaintance and marriage for young men and women; there is not a sufficient educational system for the needs of country people, and there is not for the average man or woman born in the country an economic opportunity within reach of his birthplace such as will satisfy even modest desires. There is not in a weak community that satisfaction of social instinct which makes it "a good place to live in." This is what I mean by saying that there is no community there. Time was in New England and New York and Pennsylvania when there was a community to which every farmer belonged with some pleasure and pride. The absence of community life throughout these country regions expresses today what one man has called "the intolerable condition of country life."

The question may be asked, "What is a community?" The average man would answer, "The community is the place we live in." And this popular answer contains the elements of the definition. The community has three elements: locality, personal values, and vital processes. The community may then be defined as the larger whole in which the members of a *we-group* find their vital need satisfied. The needs of such a group are economic, that is, a local income; social, local possibilities of recreation, enjoyment, and social union, as marriage; educational, that is, a schooling for modern life; and spiritual, that is, having a local experience of modern religious life and hopes.

The Department of Church and Country Life is making on behalf of the Presbyterian church a sociological survey of a large number of country communities in which our churches are placed. We are using the methods of community survey of Professor Giddings, of Columbia University, and of Professor Henderson, of the University of Chicago; sending a trained man to each community for a thorough study. Within a year we expect to have a body of knowledge carefully ascertained by scientific methods which will throw light upon all the causes of religious conditions in those communities. We have surveyed in Pennsylvania, Illinois, and Indiana about two hundred com-

munities. There is not yet time completely to digest this information, but it shows some conditions with startling clearness.

First of all, we have found in Pennsylvania many communities composed of farmer types alone. The farming population when it is unmixed with any other, as for instance the mining population, has certain definite characteristics. It boasts itself upon its temperance convictions, and rightly enough, because the temperance reform has done much to unite the farming population and bring them to a sense of their collective power. But the farming population is as unprogressive as possible when it is mixed with no other element. In every instance we find that the presence of miners or of storekeepers in a farming population is co-ordinated with progressiveness in the church, and in other institutions.

No community is more inert than that in which all the men in it are alike in economic type and nearly uniform in possessions. If certain social idealists are willing to be convinced of the fallacy of some of their hopes, let them go to Pennsylvania and see a population, all owning land, every man equal to his neighbor, and as a whole, dead-locked against progress. In such communities there is no outstanding individual. The farming population in and of itself has no leader of universal influence. No man would take among these farmers the position of the old-fashioned country squire, and no man would grant such a position to his neighbor: so that leadership is impossible. Among eighty communities, fifty being agricultural, we found only two with such a leader.

Moreover, these country populations have no common experience. Throughout the whole year there is no meeting which all attend; there is no church or society in which all may be seen; there is no store where regularly all assemble. Men may live within a mile of one another and be unknown to one another. The city has its Dewey Celebration or Hudson-Fulton Anniversary or its World's Fair which brings every man to the curbstone. The small town may have a fireman's parade; to the smaller cities comes once a year the circus. But in the rural community there is no common celebration which brings the

population together, neither Christmas, in which all believe; nor Easter, nor Memorial Day, whose emotions are common to all; not even the Fourth of July nor Thanksgiving brings the community to a common celebration of a common belief or emotion. This is what it means to have "intolerable country life." This condition is not merely negative: it is a positive condition of isolation; a kind of aggressive loneliness in which each man repels his fellow and every man lives in a kind of suspicion of every other.

The understanding of these facts and conditions throws some light upon the church in the country. It also helps in directing the policies of the country church, to understand that the impotence of institutional life is due not to the irreligious character of the population nor to the weakness of the church or other institution in itself, but to the profound individualism and the habit of social repulsion which is general among country people of the average type.

Country ministers, themselves, and officers of country churches generally, recognize, at least among those denominations which educate their ministers, that the country church is in most instances socially inefficient. In the language of a professor of agriculture, "The country church does not meet the community's needs as the community sees those needs."

The two causes which are working toward the decadence of the country church are: first, the wastefulness of the American rural economy. The methods of farming in America are sinfully—at least ecclesiastically!—wasteful. The country church shows the effect of this waste as no other institution does. One may say that the country church is a thermometer of the prosperity—the real prosperity—of the American farmer. There is a superficial prosperity expressed in high prices of land and in many sales of land, which is the opposite of real prosperity. But we are discovering that churches in rural communities in the larger number of cases have fallen into decay where the land has been exhausted of its fertility and the timber has been removed from the hills without reforestation. In other words, the wastefulness of American

farming and lumbering has registered its effects in the decadence of country churches.

The second cause of the decay of the country church is the wasteful ecclesiastical economy of the past. The country church has been a mere means for distributing the hope of personal salvation. For this purpose it did not need to be, in the judgment of former generations, a socially effective organization. Any small group of believers has been at liberty to build a meeting-house and maintain an organization. National denominations have been all too willing to support these competing congregations in the country community. We have, therefore, in almost all the older states too many country churches. This fact is so well known that I will not extensively illustrate it, except to say that we recently discovered in Pennsylvania a farming region in which within a radius of four miles from a given point there are twenty-four country churches; within a three-mile radius from a point half a mile farther on there are sixteen of these country churches. Of course this is an impossible social situation. Whatever be its doctrinal value, it is a form of social inefficiency.

Worship is the highest expression of communal unity, and in a congregation assembled to pay the tribute of the spirit to the Almighty is found, I believe, the symbol of ultimate unity of man with man. If such congregations are separate, they can express only social disunion; if they are united in worship they express the oneness of the community. I would not be understood as saying merely that communities have been disunited by the dogmatic differences of the churches. I believe that these dogmatic differences are the outward expression of deeper social differences. The isolation, suspicion, and mutual repulsion of country people has in many communities necessitated some expression and the churches have given it expression by their divided congregations. These dogmatic differences have tended, I think, to perpetuate in turn the social differences of the community. Of course the duty of church organizations to bring these people together is clearly intimated by this situation.

In making a revaluation then of the country churches we are acting upon certain accepted social principles. First, the value of

the elements entering into the country community is determined by the law of diminishing returns. The policies of the country church seem to be deficient through their lack of service to the marginal people in the country. The new policies of the country church are being reshaped as a direct approach to the marginal man in the community. Indeed, one may say that all missionary work is a ministry to marginal people. The old-established Home Mission policies were determined by the purpose of supplying religious institutions to frontiersmen, settlers, mountaineers, and freedmen. Their frontier was geographical. The new Home Mission policies, which are expressed in the new type of the country church, are based upon the discovery of a frontier no longer geographical, but sociological.

The process of thought, therefore, of the modern church is a sociological process. The churches are adapting their work to the needs of workingmen, immigrants, and farmers. We have come to recognize that the moral and spiritual standards of every social population are determined by the marginal people in those populations. For instance, in such a city as Troy, N.Y., where large numbers of young women are employed in the collar factories upon a low wage barely sufficient for physical existence, there is a general recognition that the moral standards of the town rise no higher in their averages, even within the churches and among the well-to-do classes, than the moral life possible among these young women. In Pittsburgh it is clearly recognized by the leaders of religious and humane enterprises that the marginal people of Pittsburgh, the steel workers and tobacco workers, for instance, determine the moral tone and the spiritual attainment which prevail throughout the average Pittsburgh people. When this is recognized, the business of the church is very clearly seen—it is to raise the moral tone and improve the spiritual possibilities of the marginal people.

In the country community the marginal man is the working farmer, and farm hand. That is to say, the farmer who himself must toil in the fields, whether he is an owner, or a tenant, or a hired man, is the economic type by whom the policies of the church in the country must be determined. He may be a tenant

farmer or farm hand who sits at the table of the small owner and enjoys social equality with him, or he may be an owner of land whose circumstances are so meager that he must do the work of a farm hand himself. It is with him that the country church succeeds or fails.

The second general sociological principle by which the older type of country church is condemned and on which the newer type is to be built is that of adaptation to environment. In the country this means the interpretation of the economic life of the farmer in terms of scientific agriculture. It means also the revision of the farmer's business methods that he may succeed in the world-economy. Very few country ministers at the present time are engaged in this adaptation of the farmer to his land, to his community, and to the world-economy, but the attention of country ministers generally is turned in that direction. One such minister said to me, "Since I left the seminary I have read more in agriculture than I have read in theology." Sir Horace Plunkett insists in his book, *The Rural Life Problem in the United States*, that economic betterment of country life must be first, urging that religious, social, educational, or ethical improvements which ignore the economic will necessarily be superficial. The means for this desired adaptation of the farmer is little more today than a body of knowledge in the possession of universities and agricultural colleges. Without the use of this body of knowledge country people are indolent and fatalistic in their methods, governed by a *laissez-faire* method of farming, the leading citizens in the country community following the exploitation of the values of land and translating country life into mere speculation in land, cattle, and corn. It is the business of the churches, and some of them are performing it, to adapt the farmer to his environment, to translate the indifferent fatalistic methods of the older days and the enterprising spirit of exploitation into husbandry. It is my belief that without the support of the churches in the country this transformation can never be effected. The special function of the church, I believe, is to condense and distil the economic experience of any generation into a new ethical im-

perative by which they are adapted to their surroundings and enabled to survive.

The third sociological principle which is reinterpreting the duty and function of the church is the recognition that religion is the result not of personal experience but of social experience. This has not yet been clearly stated by any authoritative writer among American churchmen, but the recognition of it, without clear definitions, is very general. I have seen this principle stated somewhere in a sentence of Simmel to the effect that religion is the resultant of the reactions of the individuals in a group with the other members of the group and of the interaction of the group and the individual upon one another. One cannot understand the new social spirit among the churches without recognizing that this principle underlies it. It has not yet entered into the philosophical utterances of the church, but it is an essential part of the experience of the church. The men who are sure of themselves in the field of social service are of necessity convinced of this principle.

The laws of social action which have compelled a new valuing of the churches in the country have suggested also the reconstruction of country churches. I turn now to a few instances of modern country churches formed in obedience, more or less conscious, to these principles. I acknowledge that they are few in number, but the attention of Protestant churches has been turned to them and they represent in their success those things which many others are attempting in experiment.

As an instance of economic success, at Bellona, N.Y., two country churches, both Protestant, have united through their ministers and church officers to form a Farmers' Club. This club has undertaken the careful study of the soil, market, and the future of the neighborhood from an economic point of view. They have brought in the lecturers of Cornell University and given them opportunity to speak to the whole community. These lectures have been followed by close, intelligent discussion and the result of the lectures under the promoting influence of the Farmers' Club has been a great improvement in the farming

methods throughout the community and measurable gain in prosperity.

I might cite other instances, for they have been not uncommon. At Colora, Md., the minister has a farm as part of his living. With this nucleus he identified himself with the farmers and has become a leader in the transformation of this community from peach raising to the raising of potatoes and other farm products under modern intensive cultivation.

These two churches, one in New York and one in Maryland, have identified themselves with the community and have led in the adaptation of farmers to their environment. Both of them are in the older states where the land has been exhausted by earlier and wasteful methods of farming. In both instances the churches have prospered as the farmers have prospered.

At Plainfield, Ill., is a very notable country church, in which, under the leadership of a man of independent genius, the church has become the social center of the whole community. In this instance the farmers have felt no need of economic leadership. They are still tilling a fertile soil and before its fertility is exhausted the newer agriculture will doubtless enable them to maintain their place. But the church in the community has undertaken the social cultivation of the people. It has assembled the young people for musical, theatrical, and athletic enjoyment and training. The church edifice has been rebuilt; and instead of one room for worship only, the building now contains a gymnasium, dining-room, cloakrooms for men and women, and a restroom for mothers with babies in their arms, young peoples' social parlor, study, and numerous classrooms for use in religious training of various groups. The success of this church has been in satisfying the social needs of the community. It has had to compete with granges and social clubs and has survived where they have failed. This church itself has grown in membership, and in moral and spiritual power, with the social culture which it has imparted to the community.

At Quaker Hill, N.Y., a country church was organized which united in itself the whole religious ministry to a population of great variety. So different were the religious preferences

of the community that no denomination could serve them, so that an independent church, sanctioned at its organization by the neighboring congregations which represented five denominations, was formed. Into its membership this independent church received the adherents of eleven different denominations. The presence of so many sectarian groups in the community indicates a situation not altogether unique, but this church united in itself the whole community, and has for fifteen years, without denominational support, maintained that leadership and served religiously as the center of worship and religious ministry for a territory eight miles long and two miles wide. This church is cited here as an illustration of the religious unity which is absolutely essential in the country community.

At Rock Creek, Ill., and at McNabb in the same state are country churches of different denominations, whose leading members have influenced the rural schools toward centralization and consolidation. In both places the one-room country schools have been abolished, their districts merged into one large district, the children of a wide region being brought together daily to a modern building situated in the country. Professional teachers have been secured for both these schools. Industrial training in the form of scientific agricultural study, manual training, and domestic science are being taught in the McNabb school. Of course, in these instances the church did not act directly, but the church was the organizing center of the influences which individuals exerted for the improvement of the public schools. The whole of the community in each of these cases has benefited by the improvement, and again the church in the community has inevitably grown in accordance with the success and growth of the community.

These instances are merely illustrative. In every case others could be cited representing the same lines of progress. I do not claim that these successful country churches are so many in number as to influence the majority of churches in the country. But they are perfect examples of what many churches in the country are striving to attain, and those who have led in this community service rendered by these churches have been men

of pioneer spirit. So far as I can see they have been in as many cases laymen as clergymen. The minister has nowadays no education or training for such community service. The theological seminary so far prepares him only to be a sky pilot. It gives him no sufficient training for social or economic understanding or leadership.

Meantime we know enough about American rural churches and communities to believe that the church will survive when the farmer as a farmer survives. The prosperity of the church proceeds on lines parallel to the actual prosperity of the farming community which built the church. This does not mean that in America the farming population is becoming irreligious, and the process is not one, so far as I can see, toward atheism or non-religion. Except in a few territories the churches which perish are succeeded by those of another denomination. The tenant farmer usually brings with him his own type of church if the other church does not successfully minister to him. In Delaware, for instance, the earlier farmers were Presbyterian. They still own the land in some territories and have themselves retired to the towns. The tenants who work the land are Methodists and they have built in the country their little chapels and maintain a feeble but extended religious force. This system of substitution of one church for another is very wasteful. It is a heavy tax upon the farming industry so that the churches as a whole have no resources for social service or community leadership. They can only persist as interpreters to a dying population of the life to come.

In Pennsylvania, where the land values have been diminished by wasteful agriculture, retirement of the farmers and a succession of inefficient tenants, the present valuation of land in one town through which the Pennsylvania Railroad runs has gone as low as \$7 per acre. In this neighborhood the old Protestant churches of the earlier farmers have been succeeded by a Mormon church. It is my belief, based on observation, therefore, that the country population is inevitably religious. In some form or other new sects will arise if the older religious establishments fail to render service to the newer population. I am aware that there

are exceptions to this. In some parts of New England in particular, throughout whole towns, church attendance has almost ceased, especially among the men. But I believe the tendency to form new sects and weaker congregations, with a ministry uneducated, or with no specialized ministry whatever, is the more representative condition.

For more than a year it has been my duty to assemble the ministers and officers of country churches at central points throughout all of the older states of the Union—excepting certain southern states—and to discuss with them the conditions prevailing among the churches. Generally, almost universally, these ministers and officers agree in stating that the country church is losing its hold. They speak for the Protestant denominations which have a trained and specialized ministry. I think it possible that another story would be told if we could get the testimony of those Protestant sects which exist without a clerical class. These men, however, with whom I have discussed the matter have agreed upon certain definite proposals for the remedying of the present condition. These proposals are not at all doctrinal. There seems to be, so far as I can find, no general belief among the ministers and officers of Protestant churches that doctrinal training will remedy the situation. But everywhere in these conferences the following propositions have resulted from the discussion of the country church and community.

1. That the country church is such an institution, and the experience of religion in the country community is such, that the divided religious ministry to the community is fatal to the interests of religion. In other words, church unity in some form, or at least church federation, is forced upon the churches as a means of arresting the decay of religious institutions and the dilapidation of the country community. These observers of rural conditions agree with Sir Horace Plunkett and President Kenyon N. Butterfield, that there is needed a “reconstruction of rural civilization.” The need of church federation or church union in the country community is not purely religious; it is the need of the social life of the community as much as of its

religious societies. Indeed it appears in this discussion that the country community is simple. Its social processes are clear and apparent to the intelligent observer. The rural community is like a lens through which if one knows how to look, he can see with limpid clearness the original native process of social organization. Country people are disunited, isolated, and their feelings are organized in mutually repellent habits. Religion, in order to be of service, must unite them. The country minister believes that there should be one church in the country community. Those who do not assent to the proposal of one church for each community agree that the churches and institutions of the country community must at least be closely federated.

2. The next demand of these rural observers is that the economic welfare of the farmer and of the rural community must be promoted by every institution in the country. From this rural economic promotion no institution can be excused. The church cannot plead its spiritual ministry, because it is clearly apparent that the prosperity of the farmer is so subtly united with his religious prosperity, that without the promotion of the one the welfare of the other is impossible. I have been amazed to see the clearness with which group after group of ministers and officers of country churches from New York, Pennsylvania, Delaware, Ohio, Illinois, Iowa, and other states bordering on these have agreed that the church has a duty to promote the newer agricultural knowledge. This proposition is much criticized by religious people, but the discussion of it among country ministers leaves no doubt as to their common opinion that it is practical; and in every group there is at the end of the discussion no dissent. In other words, for the average American community the process is the same as that which confronts Booker Washington in his leadership of freedmen in the South. Without securing their economic welfare—not merely financial, but broadly economic welfare—he finds no other welfare to be possible for them. The same unity of economic and religious welfare which shows itself in the Mennonite and Quaker communities is equally apparent in the average American community. A leading merchant in the Board of Home Missions

at the time I began my service for country churches briefly stated it as follows: "I do not believe in evangelism alone for country churches. It will do no good. But if we are to undertake to serve our country churches we must work for the whole prosperity of the farmer and undertake the upbuilding of the rural community."

In these two propositions these rural observers are agreed. With little dissent they go on to demand that the moral life of the country people should be dealt with, not by mere prohibitions, but by constructive service through playgrounds, indoor recreation, dramatic and rhetorical exercises, and other play activities. They believe also that the consolidation of rural schools is a reform on which all country life waits. Therefore, they urge that the churches promote the intelligent improvement of rural schools. And in all these measures the impact of them is to be upon the marginal man, the tenant farmer, the laborer, and the children of the community. The policies for all the community are to be measured by immediate fitness to the needs of the poor of the community.

Now the significance of work on behalf of the country community is in the fact, of course, that the farmer needs, for the sake of the agricultural industry, that his life should be interpreted in its own terms. But the farm lands have a national value as well. There is need of the country-life movement for country life itself. It is necessary also that the farm lands in America should feed the American people. We are raising fifteen bushels per acre of those products which are raised in Denmark and Germany at sixty-five bushels per acre. We have been an exporting nation, but with the growth of our consuming class and the retarded development of agriculture we are soon to become an importing nation. We may well look forward with apprehension to the day, said to be near at hand, when this change will take place. It is the duty of the country church and the country school to make the farmer successful as a farmer, in order that as a farmer he may serve in the American economy. It matters not that this duty is undertaken by the church for the purpose

of survival, so long as the church clearly recognizes that in order to survive it must help the farmer to survive and to succeed.

The building up of country communities will effect certain other great gains for the American people, of which much may be said. The country population is conservative, morally and religiously; it is the mother stock from which are drawn the various types of economic efficiency. It is profoundly important that the sources of our population be purified, in order that the whole people may be strengthened.

But there are certain gains which are possible in a rural community that seem for the present unattainable elsewhere. In a country community poverty can be dignified and pauperism can be abolished. Agriculture filled with a religious spirit has proven itself capable of sustaining a whole people in dignity and comfort, without loss. The experience of the Mennonite and Quaker, to mention no others, has shown that a rural community trained in a religious spirit can care for its marginal people, its weaker members, in such a way as that none shall be in permanent need. These forms of social response and social service of the stronger to the weaker and of the whole community to its poorest member are simple and contagious. Once they are taught to the population, the lesson need not often be repeated, for it is constantly exhibited every year of the community's history. It seems to me that the cultivation of communal experiences through church life, the elaboration of communal ideals, gives great promise for the future of the American population and makes possible the establishment of strongholds in every section from which poverty, the greatest enemy of mankind, can be practically excluded. The influence of such rural communities upon the whole country would be very great.

The value of a successfully organized country community will be felt in the development of our social experience in America. The country community is a clear and intelligible measure of social processes and causation; it is a glass through which you may look into the very heart of human association. Sociology studied in the city is confusing. The aggregates are too great, the causes too extensive and entangled; the order of

phenomena is a Gordian knot of maze and intricacy. It is a question whether any of our leading cities is a natural rather than an abnormal aggregate. The country community, on the contrary, is limpid and clear: you can see to the bottom of it. This brings forth the remark, which should not be withheld in any consideration of the country church, that behind the country churches stand the theological seminaries; professional schools, founded and established for the training of ministers; originally country ministers. At the present time these schools, with almost no exception, are rendering an entirely inadequate service. More than inadequate: it is misplaced and it has the effect of misdirection. For three years the student for the ministry is detained away from the study which he should pursue and for a good part of that time he is diligently trained in studies that he ought never to follow. The country community, therefore, is a field, in the case of most ministers, for original investigation—untrained, amateur, and unsystematic investigation—in which he has no help from those appointed to be his helpers and his leaders. For the reconstruction of the theological seminary the sociological analysis of the country community is of the greatest value. It should be a special topic to which for a long time to come almost unlimited hours should be devoted in the seminaries, because rural sociology is of initial concern to him who would understand the American population and minister to the need of the whole American people.

My thesis then is a plea for economic and social training of rural leaders; especially for country ministers. If this work is not done by the seminaries it should be undertaken by the universities. The president of this society has a weekly class, attended by more theological students, so far as I am informed, than meets in any seminary of theology. There is no permanent reason why the state universities may not provide courses for the training of ministers which will render unnecessary much of the seminary curriculum.

Speaking for a great religious agency, I earnestly hope that this training will be provided in order that the abounding and perennial religious life of country people may have educated

leadership. And if the scribes and Pharisees of the chosen people will not furnish it, I say with an early preacher of Christianity, "Lo, we turn unto the Gentiles!"

DISCUSSION

EDWARD CARY HAYES, UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS

There is no denying that economic causes are still tending to increase the relative proportion of our population in the city and to diminish the relative proportion in the country. Yet some things can be done to induce more people to remain in the country than otherwise would do so, and what is more important, to make the life of those who live there better than it otherwise would be.

Our rural conditions are new and unfinished, even more so than are our urban conditions. Our cities are more like old world cities than our country is like the old world country, as our paved and lighted city streets are more like theirs than our country roads are like theirs. We hope that when matured our country life will surpass that of any land in the old world, because it will be the product of democratic freemen, not of peasant and squire, *Grossgutbesitzer* and *Bauer*. But as yet in our rich central region where the land is worth two hundred dollars an acre, even as an investment to one who does not intend to farm, the houses are mostly poor little makeshifts that were built by men who were paying for their land, straining every nerve to get established and thinking little of the house they lived in or the life of which it is the symbol. There is no reason now why these cottages should not be replaced with farmhouses having every "modern convenience" and surrounded with beauty. Even in the older regions, like New England, the final adjustment of rural occupations has not been reached. They have given up growing wheat and corn for market but have only imperfectly worked out the agricultural specialties that will make it profitable to till those glorious hillsides and valleys. In art galleries we see canvases no bigger than a window pane that have cost fifty thousand dollars; by the same standard there is many and many a porch, or kitchen window, in New England the view from which is worth a million.

For the development of rural life we must rely mainly upon three things:

I. *Transportation and communication*.—Difficulty of intercourse is the drawback of the country. With the rural mail route and the telephone the problem is partly solved; it is the cheap and rapid transportation of persons and goods that remains to be achieved. When we find the really essential things to be done we can pour out millions upon them. But the farmer, alas, doesn't want to have his taxes increased a little to make good roads. He must learn that scarcely any other expenditure of his money will yield him such high returns in comfort, convenience, and worth of life. I should

not wonder if in those rich rural sections where the country roads, for months of the year, are now level stretches of mud, the road would some time be double tracks—the farmer's automobile and autotruck built with wheels to fit the rails, trouble and cost of rubber tires abolished, the cost and power of engines reduced to a mere fraction of what is now required, high rates of speed rendered safe, and crops and persons transported with little cost of money, time, or comfort.

The introduction of manufacture into the country is largely a matter of transportation. It is not necessary and may not be feasible; yet "garden villages," as the English call them, where every man sits under his own vine and fig tree, or at least in his own hired patch of ground, may be the proper and profitable location for certain seasonal industries whose period of idleness can be made to coincide with the season of harvest, so that the laborers in those garden villages, instead of loafing through the dull season of the factory in the demoralization of city slums, would become available harvest hands. Such an arrangement might not bring sufficient advantage to any single interest to secure its adoption through private initiative, but might bring such great advantages diffused among several interests as to justify governmental aid, even to the extent of such control of transportation as to afford artificial inducement to one of the parties essential to the plan. Investigation would disclose whether this suggestion of introducing seasonal manufacture into the country is practical or only visionary.

2. *Public education.*—The second agency in the development of rural life is public education, through the transformation of the rural school, one aspect of which has been wisely suggested by Professor Gillette, and also through the state university. The agricultural college must maintain a department of landscape gardening as well as a department of soil fertility, for in some of our rich agricultural states Nature has been very niggard of everything except black dirt, and we must learn to work with her in order to make country life beautiful and interesting. The agricultural college must in yet other ways be a cultural agency; it must teach people to live on the farm, as well as to make a living off the farm.

3. *The country church.*—There is almost as much need of a Protestant reformation now as there was in Luther's time, not because the church is debased but because of the practical opportunity to which it needs to become adapted as it is not under its present denominational form of organization—then there would not be four churches on the four corners of streets that cross in the best residential section of a city and scores of miles of streets in the neediest section of the same city without a church in sight, while churches retire and disappear from city neighborhoods in proportion as the need of churches in those neighborhoods increases, nor would there anywhere be sixteen weak and competing country churches within a radius of three miles.

Probably the ideal form of social organization is the parish organization

in which the parish is a geographic unit, each parish having a single church. The country parish church should be, not merely a gateway to the life to come, but it should be the center of all the recreational, cultural, and ethical activities of the community, except those that center in the school and the home. Its organization should furnish the effective leadership pervading the actual life of the whole people for which Professor Blackmar pleads, and the lack of which, he says, has caused our projects of reform to remain, for the most part, unrealized programs.

THOMAS J. RILEY, WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY

Professor Gillette has concluded that about one-tenth of the excess gain of the population of the cities of the country over the rural districts is due to the removal of persons from the country. While it seems extremely difficult to me to find out just how many "John Smiths" removed from the country village to the city, it is doubtless true that a goodly number of young men and women have made such removals. There is another aspect of this movement which might be called the interaction of the country districts and the cities in the circum-urban zones to which Professor Gillette did not call special attention. This interaction is a significant fact for the growth of the city population in numbers, but it is a much more significant fact as a social problem. Great cities grow by accretion, by the mere extension of their boundaries, without people making any removals. This has been notably true in the case of Greater New York. It is very well known that clustered around the larger municipal incorporations are many smaller towns and villages that present unusual problems of government, of the control of liquor, vice, and marriages, etc. These zones are neither urban nor rural, they are not hot or cold, they are lukewarm. Churches do not thrive, schools are generally inferior to those of the adjoining cities. Public improvements languish. There is an expectancy toward the city which is more than a state of mind of the suburbanite, for it shows itself in his institutions and his public improvements. It would be difficult to measure the width of these zones, but it is generally recognized that the influence of the city affects the social life and local activities as far out from the great cities as transportation facilities make access to the city short and easy. In the case of Chicago it extends across Lake Michigan, and we have the Gretna Green at St. Joseph. At Clayton, just outside of the city of St. Louis, is the place where marriages are readily solemnized by a justice of the peace, for parties contracting this relation at times of doubtful responsibility for their actions. These are but suggestions of the problems that are involved in these interactions between the cities and the surrounding contiguous territory. It is not that I am able to give any information concerning these problems, but that I might suggest them as a fruitful field for study, that I have taken this time for their discussion.

JOHN LEWIS GILLIN, STATE UNIVERSITY OF IOWA

There is little doubt that there is a more or less close correlation between the country church and the economic stage of development. However, it is open to grave question whether that correlation is as close as the reader of the paper would have us believe. Is it not rather that the correlation is secondary or tertiary rather than primary? That is, does not the economic condition affect the church chiefly through other conditions which are in their turn affected by the economic factor?

Doubtless the shifting of population caused by the attractions of new lands and of the rapidly growing cities was the primary disturbing cause of the old and happy conditions in the country churches. There was no problem of the country church until that happened. In one place it was the call of new and better and cheaper lands; in another it was the call of the city near at hand draining the countryside of its young people. In both cases it induced social and psychological changes which were momentous for the country church.

It was inevitable that every village with people from different parts of our older settled communities or from the other countries of the world should have as many denominations as there were different kinds of people there unassimilated to a single kind of faith and social life. Each faith was the only and true faith. It had demonstrated that by the way in which it had enabled its devotees to conquer the wilderness and subdue its enemies. Each sect, therefore, fought the others and by that struggle enlisted the interest of some and the enmity of others. Every man and woman in the village or in the country district had pronounced convictions on the church or churches of the place. There was only a very narrow ground of indifference, on which were stranded the few really broadminded men in the community and those strange beings of every community who find their interests aroused by struggles that have the minimum of contact with current religious affairs. The love of struggle being strong in all, it found its outlet chiefly, in contrast with the situation today, in ecclesiastical controversy.

So long as this antagonism remained strong, there was no problem apparent such as we are discussing today. It was a grand *mêlée* in which everyone had joy. It ended often in the strong driving out the weaker, but that was a part of the game and was discounted in advance. It supplied the opportunities of church life. If some did not care to avail themselves of its advantages, the worse for them. Its members were loyal. Its minister took what he could get and was glad it was no less. Did it meet the religious needs of the community? That was a question which had not yet been framed. It furnished a God-given means of grace. If some did not take advantage of this, they were cheerfully dismissed by being consigned to the category of "total depravity," or the "non-elect." The trouble must be with the people; it could not be with the church.

But now the whole situation has changed, or is rapidly changing. The lingo about the "only church" has perished from our language. Instead, the shibboleth for at least the past ten years has become in ecclesiastical what it was earlier in political circles: "In essentials, unity; in non-essentials, liberty; in all things, charity." This changed note in the thinking of the churches has altered their activities. Formerly there was great activity in discussing the church. Every man was the defender of his own church; now there is no necessity, for no one attacks. Then everyone did his utmost to get adherents to his church; now it is of no consequence to the ordinary layman. Thus gradually in every part of the church's activities, instead of the intense interest characteristic of the former days there has grown up an apathy. The struggle note—the call to battle—so strong and clear in all man's former life, both in ecclesiastical and secular affairs, has been silenced. Hitherto the devil had been incarnate in the opposing sect or in the equally corporal and lively "infidel." But now the only devil which remains is a disembodied spirit of the legends, who finally vanishes into thin air, for the other sects are discovered to be "brethren" and even the "infidel" has been found on close examination to be a fairly good man, moral, kind to his family, honest, a respectable citizen, and only a little "queer." There is nothing to fight except the devil in oneself, and that is exciting only to those rare souls like Paul and Luther who are born only once or twice in a millennium. The message of the pulpit became abstract, directed at nothing in particular which people could comprehend, or directed to moral platitudes about which most people are only indifferently concerned.

Together with this softening of the ecclesiastical attitude toward other religious bodies there went the great social changes which the attractions of the towns were making in the country congregation. Here one and there another family moved to town. They came back to the country to visit their former neighbors oftener on Sunday than any other day because they could best get away that day. Perhaps they went to church at first, but after a time they got out too late to get to the service, and the family stayed at home to have the dinner ready for them when they came. Thus began a tendency to find one's social interests satisfied outside the church. Then some of the young people began to drift off to the town. When they came back their stories made restless the other young people. Soon the drift to the town was on. That broke the social solidarity of the young people of the community and put the church down from its predominating social leadership in the community. The church had ceased to be the only social center of the community. Communication between town and country was increased when some of the older people retired from the farm and moved to the neighboring town. In all these ways the church ceased to be the social center it had once been. It lost its hold upon the people.

At about the same time as these changes there began a demand for increased salaries on the part of the country ministers. They were becoming

more highly specialized and found need of a greater income. The country people, conservative by nature, refused to accede to these demands as quickly as the people in the towns, and their preachers soon began to find work in places which would pay more salary. That left only the younger and more inexperienced and weaker ministers to care for the country congregations. That again helped on the downfall of the influence of the country congregation. But note that the failure to pay higher salaries was not due to their inability, but to the fact that they had not been used to doing so and did not yet appreciate the new era which they were entering. In the Middle West, at least, this deterioration was not correlated with economic failure of the farmer, but with his prosperity rather.

The change was not alone due to the reason assigned in the paper, viz., the draining off of the progressive spirits to other places. That had its influence. That helped to break the social solidarity which had come about in the course of years, and thus to injure the church as the chief social center. So far as movement of population affected the case it was chiefly through the fact that it lessened the population, inducing thereby a decrease in the social struggle and making possible an approach to each other by the formerly contesting parties, and by creating a social unrest which impaired the sense of social completeness formerly found in the rural community. The ties that bound them were widened. They knew people in other communities, they exchanged visits with them, they learned of their way of life, their interests, and their ambitions. In doing this their own interests became diffused, their old satisfaction with conditions in the country became weak, and in its place often came a dissatisfaction. The church suffered with the rest.

More important, however, were the great social and economic changes which have come about through the adoption of the telephone, the introduction of the rural mail route, the trolley, the bettered roads, and the automobile, and through the increased number of towns and villages which have sprung up in hitherto isolated communities and which have offered their attractions to the country people. The telephone and the rural mail have broken up the isolation which made the church the chief social meeting-place as well as a place of prayer. The bettered roads, the trolley, and the automobile have made access to the neighboring town easier. The rise of new towns along railroads piercing the formerly untraveled areas of country districts has lessened the distance once necessary to be traversed in order to reach town. The prosperity of many of the towns and the concurrent prosperity of the surrounding country districts, making the town attractive on the one hand and making possible the retirement thereto on the other by the prosperous farmer, have combined to break sadly into that social solidarity which was one of the charms of country life years ago. Now, remembering that with all these great changes in the physical situation there also have gone on great changes in the social and mental worlds of the farmer,

we can understand why the church is face to face with a problem it has never met before. While these great changes in the economic order of things were going on, the country school and the country church were standing still. The farmer sent his children to the city or village school as soon as they were prepared for it. The old spelling school and the debating society died. In their stead came farmers' institutes, granges, or farmers' alliances. The village or city church began to compete with the country church. It was not far to drive in to town to church; besides, the parents were often there and the children found it convenient to go there to church and stop with the "old folks" for dinner, or with a neighbor or friend. The services in town were more edifying than in the country. The church was more up-to-date. Hence, in many cases the country church did not fail because of poverty and the competition of new lands, but because of prosperity and material progress which had made the town and its institutions more attractive. New interests had taken the place of the old. New ideals had come to dominate in everything else but the country church and the country school. No one had made it his business to keep the country church up with the times. Its appeal was lost, its message meaningless, its members interested in other things than ecclesiastical success, and its call to arms, if it issued any, fell upon the ears of those already enlisted in other causes. I doubt very much whether the trouble is "wasteful economic strain" on the farmer. In my judgment it is social strain, brought about by social changes which only in part are economic. If the farmer is not irreligious in the sense in which he was religious earlier, he is at least non-religious. He has vastly other interests and ambitions. Other interests have overtopped, if not crowded out, his interest in the church. Nothing has been done to adapt the church to the changed conditions. Some of the things suggested in the paper will help to do that.

As to remedies, while the federation of the various churches of the country may be a step in the right direction, I doubt if that alone will solve the problem. I know a place where federation has had to give way to denominationalism with the result of a healthier and more vigorous church life. That place is Sunnyside, Wash., in the midst of that splendid irrigated valley of the Yakima. The thing that is needed is to make the church the center of the social life of the community. That is easier where there is but one church than where there are several, but federation is not essential. Thought must be taken by the leaders to make the church central in every interest of life. I know of a community where that has been done. It is the community located south of Waterloo, Ia., in Orange Township. It is composed of an up-to-date community of Pennsylvania Dutch Dunkers. From the very first they have made the church central. When these great changes of which I have spoken began to occur, the leaders of that community began to take measures to checkmate the attractions of the towns for their young people. For example, Fourth of July was made a day of celebration at the church.

When the people of other country communities were flocking to town by hundreds, the youth of that community were gathering, in response to plans well thought out beforehand, to the church grounds where patriotic songs were sung, games were played, a picnic dinner was served, and a general good time was provided for the young. They have also arranged that their young people have a place to come to on Sunday nights where they can meet their friends. The elders look to it that provisions are made for the gathering of the young people on Sunday so that they shall "have a good time," with due arrangements for the boys and girls to get together under proper conditions for their love-making. Even their church "love feasts," held twice a year, are also neighborhood gatherings for the young people. The church is the center of everything. Is a farmers' institute to be held in the community, or a teachers' institute? The church until very recently was open to it. Is a farm to rent or for sale? At once the leaders get busy with the mail and soon a family from the East is on their way to take it. This country church has not remained strong and dominant in the community just by accident or even by federation. It has survived because it had wise leaders who have met the changes with new devices to attract the interest of the community and make the church serve the community in all its affairs, but especially on the social side. Such thought takes account of the "marginal man" too. The hired man and the hired girl, the foreigner and the tramp are welcome there. No difference is made. There is pure democracy. With the growth of the class spirit I do not know how that can survive. These hirelings are not talked down to; they are considered one with the rest. They will some day get enough to buy a farm and become leaders in the community, perhaps. The church is theirs as much as anyone's else. It looks after their interests, not only for the hereafter, but here and now. Under its fostering care they form their life attachments, it provides for their social pleasures, it is the center to which they come to discuss their farming affairs or whatever interests them. And in spite of the fact that the preaching has little contact with life and its interests, so strong is the social spirit that the preaching can be left out of account. What could be accomplished were the preaching as consciously directed to forwarding the social interests of the community one can only speculate.

T. N. CARVER

The tone of Dr. Wilson's paper is admirable, and the general argument seems to me to be entirely sound. I have therefore nothing but commendation to offer. One or two suggestions, however, I should like to make, not in the spirit of criticism, but merely to correct possible misapprehensions or to turn attention to some important phases of the general question.

In the first place, I think it is a mistake to assume in the free and easy manner of some of our long-distance farmers—or Christian Science farmers

as they may be called, that is, those who are trying to solve the rural problem by absent treatment—that our American agriculture is wasteful, or that it is inefficient. That depends altogether upon our point of view. If we regard land as of more importance than men, then our American agriculture is wasteful, because it takes a good many acres in this country to produce a given amount of product. But if we regard men as of more importance than land, then American agriculture is the most economical and efficient in the world. Nowhere in the world will you find such an efficient economy of labor, or so large a product per man, as on the American farms. There are two ways, for example, of growing 100 bushels of corn. One is by putting a great deal of labor into it and growing it on one acre. That is economical of land but it is wasteful of labor. Another method is to put less labor on two acres. This is economical of labor, since it takes absolutely less labor to grow 100 bushels on two acres than on one; but is relatively wasteful of land. In a country where land is dear and men are cheap, the former method, however, would be regarded as more economical. But in a country where land is cheap and men are dear, the latter method is the more economical. Let us not cease to give thanks that conditions in this country are still such that men are dear, even though land be cheap; and let us hope that a merciful providence will save us from the state where men are cheap and land becomes dear.

Again, the suggestion is made that the commonplaceness and monotony of rural life is a problem which the country church must try to solve. That suggestion is undoubtedly a good one; but again let us hope that it will not be solved by trying to introduce the variety and excitement of city life into the country. Let us rather try to solve it by trying to create in the minds of rural people an appreciation of this same monotony and commonplaceness. Rather let me correct myself by saying, let us teach them that country life is not commonplace and monotonous if one only has the power to see the interest and the variety which the country affords. If one is blind to the interesting things that exist in a city, nothing could be more monotonous than city life, but those who are awake to the multiplicity of things to be found there find anything but monotony and commonplaceness. Similarly, if one is really awake to the interesting things of country life, one will see there anything but monotony and commonplaceness. As a matter of fact, a great deal of the interest of city life is of the dime-museum and the two-headed-calf variety; that is, it is of the queer, bizarre type, which is of course of great interest to certain minds. No one who reads Gilbert White's *Natural History of Selborne* or Miss Mitford's *Our Village* gets the impression from these classics that country life is uninteresting or monotonous, or even commonplace. But even the word commonplace itself ought not to have any terrors for normal minds. Suppose a thing is commonplace; is not that an indication of its merit rather than of its demerit? All the large facts, all the large values of life are commonplace. It is

only because we are looking for something queer or abnormal or unusual that we fail to appreciate the larger and more commonplace facts of life.

It has seemed to me also that the country church needs to emphasize, more than most of our sociological students have seen, the value of the neighborhood idea as a basis of social reconstruction. This is a thing that has to be re-created in the city, but in the country the neighborhood as a fact is usually taken for granted. It was a city man, a lawyer, I believe, who once asked a countryman the question, "Who is my neighbor?" Such a question would never occur to a countryman. To him the term neighbor always means the man who lives near by, who is within reach, who can be helped and who can give help because of physical or geographical nearness. The whole tendency of city life is to destroy the neighborhood idea and to build up the class idea, to make one ask, not is he a man who is near by, but is he a man who is a member of my class, or occupation or profession? The neighborhood idea may have fallen into decay in the country, but I think there are few rural neighborhoods where the class idea, which is positively demoralizing or immoral, has taken its place. The most constructive workers in our cities are beginning to see that they must restore the neighborhood idea and get rid of the class idea. The constructive social workers in the country, therefore, it seems to me, have a distinct advantage: they do not have to get rid of the class idea.