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The rural church as a social center

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THE RURAL CHURCH AS A SOCIAL CENTER.

by

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The Rural Church as a Social Center.

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SIX BEST BOOKS FOR A RURAL PASTOR.

Rural Life Problem, Plunkett.

This book sets forth the problem of the country and suggests a way whereby it may be remedied.

Constructive Rural Sociology, Gillette.

A scientific study of the rural conditions which he treats in a very good way. He touches most every problem that the country faces. A very good book.

Rural Life and Education, Cubberly.

This deals with the educational problem, setting forth the modern needs of the country and the relation of the school to other rural institutions.

Educational and Religious Resources of Village and Rural Communities, Hart.

This is a very good book which suggests ways and means which may be used in building up the church and how the church can serve the community.

The Evolution of the Country Community, Wilson.

This shows why the country communities are a problem, their needs and the place of the church in restoring the country.

The Story of John Frederick Oberlin, Beard.

This is a very inspirational book for it shows what can be done by a pastor in the rural field who stays by it and has a program.

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THE RURAL CHURCH AS A SOCIAL CENTER.

I. The Need of a Rural Social Centre.

One of the fascinating things about history is the fact that it reveals to us that every age has its problems. Not only nations have theirs, but certain groups which compose the whole have their difficulties. One of the groups today which comprises one half of the population of the United States, the Rural group, face a real problem. In this comparatively young nation with its vast resources and great stretches of territory we are facing some problems in regard to our country life which are not imaginary, but which stare us in the face as cold facts and which demand our best thought and most careful attention. The aim of this paper is to set forth the place of the rural church, as we see it, in its relation to rural life and rural conditions. By rural we mean that part of the population which is grouped in villages and towns not to exceed twenty five hundred in number, where the people live more or less scattered in the open country and have to travel some little distance to reach, store, school and church.

1. The farmer by a very normal process of events and

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conditions has lived more or less of an individualistic life. He went out on the land in an early day and with but very little assistance cleared his land, built his home, tilled the soil and the result is that some of them have massed fortunes, others have made a medium success and still others have made only a bare living. The farmer raised nearly all the things which were necessary for food and clothing and so from the very earliest his environment and conditions have not on the whole been conducive to the spirit of cooperation and association. The result is that today by means of environment, ancestry and training the farmer is considered the most individualistic of all the great groups of people. He has not come to this state, quickly, consciously nor with his mind set toward that end, but it has been the result of years of growth and development. There was a time when that spirit and condition did not mean so much, but today for the farmer to be individualistic is absolutely detrimental to his best interests, for we no longer live out on the frontier, for that line has reached the Pacific and now we are becoming a thickly populated nation, at least the tendency is in that direction. So today the great

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rural group can no longer live and work on the individual basis and the farmer no longer can have a little realm of his of own and do just as he pleases, but he must learn what other groups have done and what many of the progressive farmers have already learned, that he is a member of society and that his own interests and the interests of the groups are best conserved and developed if they develop the spirit of cooperation and association so that it becomes a reality in actual life touching all of his needs and legitimate desires.

2. If there is any group of people that need and deserve a good healthy social life it is the rural folk. This includes the farmer, his family and all his hired help. God put within all of us the desire to associate with our fellow men and also the instinct of play and these are factors with which we must reckon. Why is it that so many of our young people desire to go to the town and city in the evenings, Saturdays, afternoons and later in life flock to the city to find a place of labor? Not only the young people, but why do entire families as soon as they feel they can afford it? Investigation has shown that one of the chief causes has been to satisfy that God-given instinct of as-

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sociation and play which manifests itself in so many different ways. With this fundamental longing in people it becomes necessary for the country to provide means whereby this need may be met in a wholesome and legitimate manner and thus keep the people in the rural sections where they are needed so much. It takes more than two boys to play baseball and more than a half dozen people to furnish an adequate audience for a good entertainment or social gathering. This at once puts before us the necessity of finding some institution or group in which the social life may center for it must have some head. One good strong center is a necessity where the activities of the community can center and thus secure direction and development.

3. Now social life is demanded by both old and young. It will not take the same form for both and thus we must meet that need today in order to hold the people so that we may be able to build up a strong institution in the country the same as we have in the city. This cannot be done with an ever-shifting population and a large tenant group. We must meet a need that at present the town and city seem to satisfy.

a. There is still a tendency among some rural folk

to think that if the young people attend to the work around the home and the field they will get all the exercise they need to develop a well-rounded life. This is an erroneous theory to start with and which has been exploded long since but a host of people have not awakened to the fact as yet and thus many are wandering why the young folk have such a strong desire to go to the city. The farmer's boy wants to play ball just as much as his brother in the city and that need ought to be gratified. And it is so with other instincts and desires. The country girl desires the fellowship and companionship of her neighbor friends. She does not desire to wash milk pails, make butter, cook, wash dishes, and so forth, one day after another, week in and week out without a chance to develop the social instinct she has. If these faculties are not given a chance to develop in a normal way the boy and the girl may grow up to be a person who may be quite efficient in making money but that is not all of life. What need more and more are people who are good citizens in every sense of the word. They must be efficient members of society and not mere tools for turning out money. The mere ability to make money does not

appeal to the young people of today. That does not hold the young man and woman on the farm. Our young people are going to the city to satisfy their social natures. Why not provide in the rural section those things which will meet their needs? The older people need the social life also to break the monotony of constant toil. This is especially true of the women. What do the statistics of our insane asylums show us in regard to country life? Enough has not been done to relieve the monotony. A far too large a percent in these institutions come from the country and its root lies back in the constant toil and the unchanged vocation. Often it is six days of hard work and then perhaps once or twice to church on Sunday with a very meager opportunity here of satisfying the social instinct.

b. From the educational standpoint also we would need to have a community center for much of our education is derived from our association with other people. Community gatherings make this possible in many ways. This is secured through lectures, demonstrations, discussions of various kinds, entertainments and socials. All of these are made attractive and possible by the

group spirit and cooperation.

c. Then from a moral standpoint the social life is demanded. The social and educational capacities which have a longing to be satisfied, which are natural and necessary for the normal person, must be met if that person is to be morally what he ought to be. Play and recreation, if rightly supervised and directed is found to be of the greatest moral value to the young people. It gives the right outlet for their energy and teaches them the principles of cooperation, unselfishness and the like which is so much needed today. Education and the social life if rightly conducted are of the greatest moral value to the rural class. We are morally bound to satisfy the legitimate longings of the people and to see that these necessities are supplied under the most wholesome directions and influences.

II. The Place of the Church as a Center to meet these Needs.

1. What the early Christian church stood for and attempted to do.

We quote here at some length from Rauschenbusch,

"Christianity and the Social Crisis", which gives us the idea that the early church was more than merely a place for worship but it carried on much social work. "Christianity was not in the least academic. Its distinctive quality was the passionate moral energy with which it pressed for action. Jesus had put a new spirit into his followers. That spirit spread with a noble contagion and sought expression in a new society. The old social life was stubbornly hostile to it at some points and irresponsible at others. Therefore a new social life had to be created to be the fit environment for the new spirit. Hence, wherever Christianity came, we see a new society nucleating. To create a new type of social organization is always a feat of strength. The higher the ideas and aspirations are which the organization embodies, the greater is the force needed to create and maintain the organization. Christianity tore down the existing barriers with irresistible force and brought men together by a new principle of satisfaction. Jews were wrench loose from their firm hold on their race and religion; Greeks from their culture and pleasure, and both joined in a footing of equality. Spiritual

affinity triumphed over the strongest bonds that held men together.

The Churches of the first generation were not churches in our sense of the word. They were not communities for the performance of common worship, so much, as communities with a common life. They were social communities with a religious basis. A common religious experience and hope brought them together, but the community life extended to far more than that. They prayed together but they also ate together. They had no church buildings but in the homes of their friends. That in itself was an influence against ecclesiasticism and for social intimacy. They were democratic organizations of plain people. Because they were separated from all society they had to find nearly all of their social relations, pleasures and interests within the Christian community. How far did this sharing life go?"

The best illustration is of those at Jerusalem. "All who became Christians were together and held all they had for the common use. They sold their property and goods and shared the proceeds according to their individual needs. They met for worship in the temple

at Jerusalem, and for their meals in their homes. The outflow of this fellowship was a simple-hearted gladness so they could praise God and win the good will of men. The primitive churches were fraternal communities. The disciples in Jerusalem had met in their homes and had eaten in common. The one act which might be called distinctly Christian ritual at the beginning, the reminder of the Lord's last meal, was performed in connection with these common meals and this insured the simplicity of the rite. These common meals were so essential a part of the earliest church life that the custom was established wherever Christianity came. This in itself is a strong proof that the churches were more than organizations for worship. We know that from Paul's letter to I Cor. 11: 17-34 that the Christians met in the evening, the time of the chief meal of the day and dined together. It was a downright meal to which the people came hungry so Paul advised them to get a bite at home to take the edge off their appetites if they were to hungry to wait for one another.

It is the outcome of the close investigation which has been given to this subject in recent years that the

framework of the organization in the primitive churches was devised, not for the conduct of worship, nor for preaching and teaching, but for the administration of common life.

The first step in organization was the appointment of the Seven at Jerusalem, and they were appointed to administer the fraternal help of the church with great fairness. It is usually been assumed that these Seven were the first 'deacons'. It now seems more probable that the deacons were a later contrivance for the purpose of lending subsidiary assistance to the bishops, and that the Seven were the first Elders. In that case the original purpose of the Presbyterate was not teaching, but organized helpfulness. The bishops of the early centuries were first of all great executive officers. They became teachers and theologians when doctrine and theology became an essential part of church life."

Rauschenbusch concludes: "If these results of modern historical investigation are to any extent correct, they furnish a powerful proof of the fact in early Christian communities, the administration of mutual helpfulness was a very important part of their existence and that the common life must have extended far beyond

their common religious worship. It is now generally recognized that this element of mutual help was quite as strong a factor in the growth of the Christian movement as the attractiveness of the truth it presented.. Harnack justly makes, 'The Gospel of Love and Charity' one of the chief chapters in his account of the missionary expansion during the first three centuries. Christianity was not purely religious but also a democratic and social movement. Or to state it far more truly: it was so strongly and truly religious that it was of necessity democratic and social also."

These few extracts from this eminent authority show us that when we plead for a church that is a social center we do not advocate anything new but that we only go back to earliest Christianity and revive for the rural people a long forgotten practice.

2. The church today must be the servant of the entire community. Its organized efforts must be such that they minister to the particular needs of the community in which it exists. It is our firm conviction that the church of today must do more than merely administer to what is commonly held as the purely reli-

gious needs. These religious needs must always hold a preeminent place in our churches but there is more to life than just our religious nature. The church must be interested in every phase of man's life. Miss Carney, speaking along this line in her book "Country Life and the Country School" says, "Perhaps one of the first needs in the redirection of the church is a new definition of religion, certainly a broader and more comprehensive interpretation of the term would at least prove helpful." Cubberly in his recent book "Rural Life and Education" says, "If the church is to be strong and wield much influence, it must labor to build up the community rather than itself; it must look to the future as well as to the past and must make of itself an efficient earthly institution if it is to render a real spiritual service. The church as an institution needs to study carefully the rural life problem and to plan a program of usefulness along educational and sociological lines. Unless this is done the church will bear little relation to a living community and its influence on the young will be small and its mission of moral and religious leadership will soon be forgotten." Wilson who perhaps has written

as much as anyone along this line and who has studied it carefully makes the following statement in the "Evolution of the Country Community", "The needed teaching of our time is that of the organized community. Christian people and all others must be interested in community betterment. They must be taught to recognize clearly the bounds of their community. They must come to realize how fully their own lives and the lives of their children, friends and kindred are spent in that little environment. They must make of it a republic to be ruled in sanitary respects, in all matters of beauty and in the recreative life, in the interests of developing personality and the unfolding of social life. In the service of this little republic the influence of the church will be the dominating element. If Christian churches are not the community centers then new churches will arise. This great task will be done." "The Country Life Commission Report" speaking of the place of the church, "The time has arrived when the church must take a larger leadership both as an institution and through its pastor in the social organization of rural life. The rural church must be more completely than now a Christ-

tian social center. The poet has said,

New occasions teach new duties
Time makes ancient good uncouth."

Gill and Pinchot in the "Country Church" say, "The church does not exist for itself, it is an agency for the service of social needs and must not be considered as if it stood alone." Bricker points out in "Solving the Church Problem" "The Church must do more than hold Sunday School and have preaching service once every two weeks. The church must be made a real social centre in the rural community. It should take the lead in work and recreation and should ever strive for the practical betterment of the people in the community. The church to win men must be social and take an interest in them. There are poor people in nearly every community who ought to be reached by the church. The question ought not to be 'How much can they pay toward the expense fund, but of how much of help and inspiration can the church bring to them?'"

3. It is very evident today that the church must minister to the whole man and not ~~just~~ to one phase of the life the Creator has given him. Our churches, to a very large extent in the past have been built with only the idea of worship and the idea of service is not

at all manifest in the design of the building. Often the rural church is an oblong one-room affair without the sign of anything which helps towards the service of the community. People will attend and support an institution in proportion that it is of service to them their family and friends. So we must see to it that we have an adequate building where all the needs of the people can be met. Our churches must have a beautiful place of worship but there must be a place also where men can meet and discuss the problems which confront them and their community. Where the husband and wife and their children can come and enjoy the best kind of entertainment, where they can hear the problems of the day discussed, where the boy and the girl can play and where the young can meet in wholesome social relations. Bricker says in regard to this, "The average country church and its building are fifty years behind the time and are wholly inadequate to serve the community. We do not use the cradle to harvest our grain why use old church equipment to take care of the greatest community assets, the people."

4. Our rural churches must awake more to realize their responsibility in regard to the young people.

The country today is suffering because often the best, strongest and most efficient young people leave the country. This deprives the country of what it is in most need of today, efficient leadership. Gillette in "Constructive Rural Sociology" on this points says, "The most serious effect of the shift^{of} population from country to city is involved in the loss of leadership sustained by rural communities." He says further, "The drift to the city constitutes a fact in evidence of country social hunger. While we must remember that the fundamental forces or conditions which transfer population from country to city are of an economic nature, yet there is a large conscious element in the shape of desires and cravings after the pleasures and satisfactions which are supposed to arise from the social solidarity and associational opportunities offered in urban aggregations. A meeting in the corn-belt was called to discuss the conditions of the country life of this region. Being asked why they desired to move to town, the answer was 'to secure good school facilities, to escape bad roads and isolation, to secure church privileges and to be able to enjoy social advantages.' In other words the country life

was successful only on its business side, and a satisfying rural society has not developed. The town was a center of interest. The country was not sufficient unto itself as a permanent place of abode. From replies to questionnaires sent to college students in the East and West is found corroborative evidence of the statement that country life is considered barren by those who are turning from it to fit themselves for another sphere." Facts like these reveal the imperative demand for a more adequate socialized life of the country. Clubs for boys and girls are as necessary in the country as in the city. Beside clubs covering particular interests as corn-clubs, camera-clubs, nature study, Bible study, organizations like the Boys Scouts, Camp Fire Girls, Knights of King Arthur, and Pioneer Girls can be and should be fostered and supervised by adults. By the employment of such socializing agencies country life will become more attractive and the siren song of the city will not sound half so sweet to our rural youth. Bricker in solving "The Country Church Problem" notes an obstacle that is often met in the rural section. "Oft times there are in rural communities good Christian people who love the church su-

premely and who love God devoutly who cannot see the importance of relating the social life of the young people to the life of the church. Some argue that the church was made for worship and that alone. They vigorously oppose every move made in the direction of social improvement on the ground that the church will become worldly; and every year many young people drift away and are forever lost to the church because of the failure of the church to realize its social mission. If the church cheerfully recognizes that play is a part of life, takes the lead in reorganizing this and takes the lead in providing this, the chances are that it will be quite as good as it otherwise would and also that the church will get a stronger hold on the younger people of the community. Neighborhood recreation of some sort is the imperative demand and the local church may well enlarge its ministry by furnishing it. The rural church should do this without apology and with assurance that it is working inside of its own appointed mission."

5. We must not only look after the welfare of the children and the young people but there is another group that needs the attention of the church and that

is the group which takes in the wives and the mothers. Their lives in general have not been varied enough. It has too often been one of monotonous toil. The rural delivery and the telephone have been of some help, but often the telephone is now used where visits once took their place and the country woman has lost by not meeting her neighbors face to face and thus not receiving the benefit which comes from the personal touch. Carney in the "Country Life and Country School" contends "Social, educational and cultural conditions have improved greatly in farm homes in the last decade, but are even yet far from what might be enjoyed. There are still too many homes where the local newspaper represents the chief literary contact with the world; where neighborhood gossip, petty if not malicious is the chief topic of conversation; and where the questionable party or dance and the Saturday trip to town represents the rural social divergence. In too many farm homes even in this day of rich varied opportunity, money is the god of life and drudgery its constant companion. The necessity of reducing drudgery in the farm home can not be too strongly emphasized. No other single issue has more bearing upon rural de-

pletion and the general farm problem. The difficulty, here is not so much of decreasing the quantity of labor, since this cannot be done beyond a certain limit, as of securing increased returns from the amount of energy expended." The church can be a might factor in bringing about better and more modern equipment in the home. The women need to come together to hear lectures on home improvement, labor-saving devices, the value of more time to develop the cultural side of their nature^{and} where they can exchange ideas and thoughts. The men have this opportunity afforded them by the nature of their position but the community must make this a possibility for the women in order that they may be an efficient factor in all of the community affairs. We need to strive with all of our power to give the women of the rural sections more leisure to develop their social and educational faculties in order that the monotony and isolation may be removed and that the home may become happier and more enjoyable for all of the occupants. The church can furnish the place for the social clubs, exhibits, demonstrations and furnish specialists in all fields to tell how the home life may be improved and how the women can assist in the uplift and

betterment of the community.

6. The vestry of a church might well be the place where the people of the entire community might meet for various purposes. Is there any reason why our rural churches should not have their doors open seven days a week? Why have a building and only use it for two or three services a week when we might be using it daily for the uplift of the community? "The Country Life Commission" points out most clearly that the rural people need to know much more in regard to, "better farming, better living, better business" in order to come into their proper inheritance. Is not the church a fit center where these things can be discussed and made plain to the people who are anxious for this knowledge? Gillette, speaking of particular demands of the country says, "farm management, crop and animal production, farm machinery, construction and arrangement of buildings, appreciation of the conveniences and utilities on the farm and in the home, and an understanding of the conditions of cleanliness and health, and an inculcation of ideals of taste and beauty are some of the prominent subjects which demand attention. Good farming, good homes and good neighborhoods are

dependent on their comprehension. The problem is to get these things understood by the masses. All agencies now at work---Agricultural Colleges, United States Department of Agriculture, Agricultural high schools, experiment stations, extensional work, and farmers' institutes---are hardly touching the masses. Only an occasional farmer and farmer's son gets the light."

Rev. McNutt, who for twelve years has been making the church a center for all the activities of all the people and who has made a striking success has this to offer as his experience. "The commingling of country people at the church center may be made a real stimulus to many kinds of practical service which will help to make ruraldom a new earth. Lessons will not be assigned and recited, perhaps, and studies completed as in school but many beginnings will be made through these church activities that will be completed in the home, the school, or college, in years to come, beginnings in scientific study, music, home making, better farming, more intellectual and constructive citizenship, aesthetic tastes, home and rural sanitation, better business, better living, better schools, world-wide evangelization, and what not. Everything indeed that pertains

to the needs and welfare of a rural community, may find substantial encouragement in a live social center country church."

He goes on further to express his experience as to whether it will make the church irreligious or not. "It is nonsense to say that these social activities centering in the country church will detract from religion and lead to worldliness. They produce the opposite results as has been demonstrated in many social service churches. Social service tends to give life and reality to religion. The fact that so many community boys break away from the church in the teen age shows that there is something seriously wrong with the methods employed in our country churches. This accounts for the scarcity of men in many churches---the boys are not held.

People are saved to serve. They are not only saved from something but to something. The church is full of people that gloat over their personal salvation, who at the same time have not the least interest in saving anybody else. Church life and business is bound to become insipid and drag when the gospel of social service is not preached along with the gospel of salva-

tion and where Christian people are not trained to cooperate and lend themselves to the good of all the community. All power of any kind is useless unless it is harnessed to some worthy object or task. A saved man is of little use in the kingdom until he becomes active in saving others and in transforming the community where he lives."

7. The quotation shows at once the benefit of coming together to discuss the problems of the community and branching out to wider fields. Cooperation is the one great need of the farmer today as is pointed out by Plunkett in "The Rural Problem of the United States", "The Country Life Commission" and practically all who have looked into the problem. Gillette remarks, "by means of association cooperative activities are promoted. A coming together for purposes of planning, discussion, an organization is found to be quite necessary. The greatest industrial and commercial organizations of our time are promoted by meeting together of ^{the} interested for advice and formulation. Lesser associations and organizations best exist and prosper when people meet from time to time to talk things over. They generate the initiative and personal interest as well

as the understanding which promotes them."

"By means of associational intercourse the cultural process is expanded and intensified. Contact between people has always been found necessary to accumulation. Provincialism is broken down by migration and social mixture. Prejudices are dissipated. Ideas are multiplied and made to do service as against the few. Suggestions take root and grow. Better ways of thinking and acting come to light. The brighter minds lead and educate the more backward. Something of the elevation of the larger views become the heritage of all. Were a district ceases to be a mere collection of householders and rises to the dignity of the community, it becomes alive; and the monotony of the country life becomes largely a thing of the past. One achievement fosters another and unexpected potentialities are awakened. We need the stimulation of our kind for our own betterment."

The Survey of Indiana issued by the Board of Home Missions of the Presbyterian Church has this to say for cooperation, "We recommend that this cooperating spirit be organized as discipline of the whole people in order that its fruits may be reaped in the churches."

The Master will not have a church that belies a spiritual condition of the people. Therefore, the cooperative system must be organized in the business affairs of Indiana. Especially among farmers is cooperation needed. Among them and their economic associates a cooperative system of doing business should be organized. It is recommended here as a discipline suited to the spiritual needs of a divided people who are at war with one another in business, competing in banking, disagreeing in social life, while great commercial combinations exploit them. When farming becomes cooperative the farmer will prosper, his institution will be supported and the leaders will be themselves farmers. The cooperative system of industry applies to the business of the farmer, to the buying of machinery of feed or of fertilizer, to the selling of farm produce, fruit or milk products. It has two essential features and one necessary ally. First, the cooperative system is a combination in which each man has a vote, however large or small his share in the business. Secondly, the cooperative system distributes profits after interest is paid on borrowed money, according to the contribution of each man in produce or labor, to

the business or the amount of goods purchased. And thirdly, a business among farmers on such democratic control, sharing its profits according to the business done, will succeed only as it is supported by a cooperative spirit. This is the place of the church, whose function is spiritual. The ally of the cooperative grain elevator should be the federated church, for the cooperative association will train men in working, and the church once united will hold men loyal to their neighborhood and community."

In a similar report from Ohio it has this to offer "Cooperation among farmers will be the way, and there is no other way by which they shall maintain themselves in the country. The present independent economic and social life, by which each man works for himself, will be the death of the American stock as a farming population. We can only hope and pray and teach that the farmers work together. As the wants of country people with growing intelligence they will come in contact with an ever higher wall of necessity, and two alternatives alone are left. Either to sell and leave the country, or remain in the country and cooperate. It is fundamental to maintaining of an

American stock on the land. The country church needs a full development of the Protestant organization. It needs not so much an eccentric or peculiar treatment as a normal development of the church. Country people need a good organization. No matter where they have it, the result is the same. Something to hold them together, create a sound social life, to teach the principles of cooperation, mental obedience and the subordination of one to another and to keep a live the idea of self-sacrifice in the interests of a large whole and a great purpose---this is the need of the country." In summing up the whole matter they offer this which seems the right thing, "We recommed, therefore, to ministers and church officers that the church of whatever denomination, must be made the center of all the interests of the community. In the language of Henry Wallace 'Unless the country church resolves that it will be a community church rather than a denominational church it will not make very much progress. In doing community service the country church is getting back to the teaching of the Master. In building barricages from material not quarred out of the Rock of Zion to defend itself against other churches, it is

getting away from the teachings of the Master and does not deserve to prosper'."

Cooperation will never succeed until it is based on the idea of brotherhood and this is what the church stands for and with a sufficient and well trained leadership the church as the center can and ought to lead forth in this beneficial and necessary movement. Anderson in "County Town" has this to say for the church "The community needs nothing so much as a church to interpret life, to plead for the common interests, to inculcate unselfishness, neighborliness, cooperation; to uphold ideals and to stand for supremacy of the Spirit. In the readjustment of the times, the country church has suffered; but if in its sacrifice it has learned to serve the community, it lives and will live."

8. Perhaps some may think that we have emphasized what may seem to them the things which are not really religious and have laid too much stress on the social and economic side of life. While this may seem to be the case yet that is the thought furthestest from our mind. We have stressed these things in order that they may become religious in reality. In the sight of Jesus there is nothing secular but all things

are sacred. It has been our aim to point out the place of the church in making the whole of life Christian. We hold that to do this the church must be the place of vision and inspiration. In order to accomplish this to the desired end it must have an interest in every phase of life. The country church, with the pastor as its leader should be the inspirer and promoter of the deepest and profoundest Christian life. For religion lies at the basis of all well-being physical, mental and spritual. If the moral and religious teaching of the church is lacking, corruption, disintegration and decay take place in rapid succession. We maintain that the church is the one institution above all others which has it within its power to inspire life to rise to higher levels. The church must point out the religious values of recreation, of sanitation, of better roads, of fellowship and a socialized community. The church must point out that humanity is the community's greatest asset and that it is opposed to everything which does not lift people so that they can live a happier and more useful life. Whether that evil be in the form of selfishness and individualism, unsanitary conditions, neglected childhood, isola-

tion and loneliness, overworked women and mothers, too long hours of labor, neglected education, bad roads, poor farming, neglected resources, poor homes or sin in a man's heart. . The church must show that religion is more than a profession but that religion is to be lived in life. The church must always set forth the ideals of life as Jesus would have the individual live it. It must show that the materials things of life are only a means to an end, and not an end in themselves, that they are transient and fleeting, but that we are to make the most profitable use of them so that they may be an assistance to building up the spiritual in man which is the eternal and abiding. As the country church spire points high above all the surrounding buildings in country and village, so must the church's teachings and precepts show people the higher and better way of life which eventually leads to life everlasting.

III. The Relation of the Church to other possible Social Centers.

In looking over the problem of the church in relation to other possible social centers we find there are

two other possibilities. These are the school and the parish house or community center building. The latter is the more preferable term, to our mind, if the center is a building apart from the church or school.

1. In our reading and investigation we find a community house or social center is of quite recent development and is yet in the stage of experiment. This kind of a center necessitates a board of control or directors which have complete control of the affair and thus at once we can see that it can be used for good or evil. Herein to our mind lies a serious objection. A center that is a purely public affair is very liable to be rather easy going on what the nature of the affairs carried on in the line of clubs, societies, recreation and general amusements shall be.

This kind of a center has the advantage of being more public than the church and may reach a larger number of the people in the community. Its usefulness and helpfulness will depend largely on its secretary. One of these parish houses "Built under the direction of and owned by the Congregational Church of Wibeau, Montana, is to be at the disposal of the public, irrespective of church affiliation or lack of affiliation.

It is designed to be a community center for social life, open to all residents of the town and surrounding country as well as the transient population." The minister is secretary of the institution and it is controlled by a board of directors. In examining the proposed work as outlined we think the pastor has too much to do and there is not enough time left for the real work of the pastorate.

Another center, which is purely a community center, is what is known as the "Tamalpais Center, Kentfield, California, which is on a large scale. It has twenty-one trustees, eight of whom are directors. They have a fine building and a large plot of land for a ball park and a race track. The article in "Rural Manhood" of September 1911 says this in regard to the people they are trying to reach "The people we are after are not the poor for there are few such in the community, but the tolerably well to do." Judging from the quite lengthy article the religious side is of secondary importance. The nearest church or Sunday School lies in the town or villages adjacent "So that Kentfield is peculiarly deficient in this respect". The article indicates that sociability and recreation are the

prominent features about it. Here is a danger with a public community house, that it is not tied up with any church thus old and young are separated from the church instead of being drawn to it. It has a tendency to set the church off as something apart from the everyday affairs of life and is not the common meeting place but rather the exceptional place.

2. The school in many places, is serving as the community center. It has come to this position largely because the church has not seen her opportunity and also because of the lack of church leaders. So few of our rural churches have resident pastors and without them there can be no efficient church. The school has the advantage of being a democratic center, for it is a building built by the people and for the people, and has served admirably, where the building has been constructed for that purpose with adequate equipment. The contention is that the school is generally the best and most available agency in the local community for introducing and instituting immediate progress. By reason of its peculiar effective position the school can react upon the home life, point out the necessity of good farming, care of soil, good housing, teach the neo-

essity and benefit of better roads, further church progress and point out the need and benefit of cooperation and see that it becomes a reality in the community. It may make the general assembly room the headquarters for lectures, discussions, entertainments, and all phases profitable to rural life.

No matter which place may be the center, the church and the school must supplement one another. Pastor and teacher should seek to cooperate in every way possible. It is very probably that often the school will have some equipment that the church can use and vice versa. The people must be made to realize that both school and church are not for any special group but that both are for the use of the people in the community. Denominational lines must vanish more and more in our rural sections and we must all unite hands for humanity's sake and for the kingdom of Christ and not for the glory of any one denomination.

3. The church as a social center has been a success where it has had adequate leadership. Leadership, leadership, this is the crying need of the hour. Leadership ability is obtained by preparation and experience. Preparation costs money and if there is to be

efficient leadership the country people must realize that they have a part to play in obtaining it. They must not expect to have the pastor make all of the sacrifices. I am confident there are men in our colleges and seminaries who are willing to give their life to this field and all they ask is that they have the cooperation of the people and an adequate income commensurate with their needs, so that they can work at their tasks instead of working at a side issue in order that they might live.

We coming more and more to the conclusion as to whether church, school, or community house is to be the center, is not a general problem and always comes down to a local and specific case. Your local conditions and material on the ground will largely determine which it shall be. If there is no center at all we see no reason why the church should not be the center and have the equipment and facilities for that purpose under one roof. The stock illustration of this is the Presbyterian church at Plainfield, Illinois where the entire social life of the people has found the church the ideal center for everyone in the community, both Protestant and Catholic..

The Presbyterian Board of Home Missions have made extensive surveys in various parts of the United States in regard to the rural conditions. These surveys which we have read recommend the church to be the best center. While the admission has not always be open in so many words, yet the tendency is in that direction if we read them rightly. The reasons are these to our mind.

a. It is under the supervision of one man or group of men who are anxious to connect all of life in every phase, activity and interest with the spiritual side of the people

b. If our center is in the church we get old and young to come there for their recreation, social life and educational life. You tie them up to the church so they desire to come to the more distinctly religious service. This to our mind is of the greatest importance and to us the strongest argument for the center in the church. Here the pastor can meet them in their business problems, their play life and in fact in all of their interests and thus a bond of fellowship grows up that gives him a point of contact which is of the greatest value. With the church as the center

it is not an isolated affair it comes to fit in as a necessary factor of their life. It seems to be a step in the right direction to do away with the erroneous idea of the distinction between the secular and the religious. In the sight of God it is evident that he desires the entire life and that all of its activities be righteous and godly. Cubberly makes this point, "When the church awakens to the realization of her opportunities as has been done in a few places it stands almost first among the institutions of society for the upbuilding of the community and the improving of the moral tone. Once the church held such a place by natural right; today it can hold it only by a successful competition." Gill and Pinchot in "The Country Church" have this to say for the church, "With the present depleted country population and the disinclination of the farmer to combine even for his own good the organizing and strengthening of life on the farm will be difficult. Without the help of the church that difficulty will be multiplied many times for in the country life there is no other agency which can fill its place. Under church leadership, successful cooperation in production and marketing of crops,

in buying supplies and in milling and banking, has been brought about in certain localities outside the town counties, when without the religious motive it would apparently have been impossible. The Scotch-Irish Presbyterians and Pennsylvania Germans are said to be the only Protestant churches not effected by the decline of country life and this is due because of thorough cooperation to create and maintain effective economic organizations in the open country." Ashenhurst in "The Day of the Country Church" remarks, "In a special way the church is responsible for the social life of the parish. It rests upon the rock element in human society. It has a vital relation to the pleasures and enjoyments of the people, both old and young. The church must not become so highly socialized that it cannot maintain its peculiar office as a spiritual center of the community; it may not become a real social club, yet it should regard the social life of the community as an important sphere of its service." "The Country Life Commission" says this of the church "The forces and institutions which make for the morality and spiritual ideals among the rural people must be energized. We miss the heart of the whole problem if

we neglect to foster personal character and neighborhood righteousness. The best way to observe ideals for public and private conduct is to build up the institution of religion. The church has great power of leadership. The whole people should understand this. It is vitally important to stand behind the rural church and help it to become a great power in developing concrete country life ideals. It is especially important that the country church recognize that it has a social responsibility to the entire community as well as a religious responsibility to its own group of people."

There is no other institution which the country needs to be more interested in and which should receive more thoughtful considerations than our churches. If we let our bulwark of morality, vision and inspiration lag and decay we have taken out the fundamental stone of society. Thus we need to broaden its scope so that it will meet the needs of our day and thus do the work our Master expects of it.

IV. The Country and the City Churches Contrasted.

1. The churches in the city have long since seen the need of the church as a social center and have at-

tempted to make it so. Some have succeeded very well indeed. In the city the church as a center has the advantage of the compact population and distance is largely eliminated by the paved street and the street car service. While in the rural sections the population is somewhat scattered and the problem of distance and poor roads are obstacles which the city does not face.

2. From the viewpoint of financing the proposition our investigation has led us to believe that there is not much difference, taking things on the whole. In general it is admitted that it is more difficult to get the farmer to let go of his money for he does not in general deal with vast sums and much of his wealth has come by hard labor, while in the city there are a number who are capitalists but you have a great group who live near the poverty line and cannot contribute much. In both places the task is to get the people educated up to the point where they all realize that it is an imperative need and a good investment. In many sections of our country, and specially in the Middle west, the country has to face the problem of the tenant farmer with the city landlord. The tenant is

transient, for on the average putting it conservatively, he moves once every two years and the estimate is that we have in the United States from 33 to 37% of tenant population, which at once makes a serious situation. The tenant does not have enough local interest to tie himself up to the problems and help solve them. Also often his economic condition is such that he cannot contribute very extensively. Then there is the landlord who has moved to city to educate his children^{and} to enjoy himself. This group is hard to interest and cooperate with in public improvements. In general they are not very enthusiastic along the lines of improvement for they have been content on the farms with just the mere necessities and do not favor public improvement on what seems to them a lavish scale. In the city as in the country it is a matter of education but the city is educated up to the needs a little more than the rural section.

3. On the question of leadership it would appear that the city has the lead. Many of those who receive High School and college training find their way to the city and make it their place of abode. While they evidently are there yet the city church has the task of

finding them and keeping them on the job. Down town churches especially are troubled with the transient population which is a difficult problem for them.

While the city church has people who are more or less efficient in intellectual matters, it has a task of training them for the particular church work. While in the country it is admitted that it is sadly lacking in leadership, yet there are those who can be trained in course of a few years. There are not so many things to attract the rural people and if they once see the need of their services and their value it will go a long ways in preparing and obtaining leadership.

Also with the present emphasis on the consolidated school and the course of study that will educate them for the rural life instead of away from it, the country church seems to have a new day before it.

4. We have pointed out above at some length the need of a rural center and it is evident that there is certainly a place for it as much so as in the city if not more. In the cities there are various other kinds of community centers while in the country there are few.

The city must hold what she has and be more aggressive.

The country must press forward and built adequate centers

to take care of the needs of the rural peoples. In this day of modern improvement a suitable building, with all the needed fixtures can be built in the country and here again the city has no monopoly on the matter. There is an old saying "where there is a will there is a way", and what ruraldom needs is to get the will and this will go a long distance in bringing about the necessary material to make the idealized centers, realities.

5. Our conclusion is that as we compare and contrast the rural and the city churches, both have their assets and liabilities. The city is farther advanced in the construction of their buildings to meet the needs of a center. The city has learned the art of cooperation which the rural people in general have not developed to a very great degree of efficiency, but which is receiving thoughtful consideration by an ever increasing number. While in the matter of finances and leadership both have their difficulties, but as the task unfolds itself as something worthwhile and people come to realize it as a place where they can invest their talents in such a manner that they will bring adequate returns in the uplifting of the community and

that it is a part of the Master's kingdom, both will be forth coming. Each have their own particular problem, but the country needs the church center as much as the city if not more and we must have a faith that will give us a courage to surmount the present difficulties in the rural sections so that we will build adequate buildings and train up an efficient leadership to meet the needs.

V. General Conclusions.

1. Our general conclusion is that there is a crying need for some adequate social centers in the rural sections.

2. The church today under adequate leadership can fill the need of a community center for what is needed today is a place where the people can get a vision and an inspiration and this the church must give if she is to maintain her position. The question of sufficient leadership is the one which demands our attention in order that ruraldom may reach its rightful inheritance.

3. While there are several possibilities for a rural center, it appears that the church in the present

stage of rural development can best meet the needs, if she has resident leadership. The ideal to our mind would be the Community House for this throws the whole responsibility back on the people where it rightly belongs and is the most democratic. The people of the entire community must see that each one has a responsibility in regard to the religious and social life of the group. But we must remember that we cannot reach the ideal at one bound. Hence let us use every legitimate means to reach our ideal by what seems most beneficial and useful for the community in its present stage of development.

4. In contrasting city and country both have advantages and difficulties but the need of^a community center is so urgent and necessary in nearly every rural section that we must meet it even though there are some difficulties in the way in the form of economics and inadequate leadership. If we begin to work these difficulties will vanish, as they have in the places where the people have the vision. So let us take courage and heed the words of one who never let obstacles dim his vision nor opposition hinder his purpose. Then "Let us not be weary in well doing for in due season we shall reap if we faint not."