

THE CHURCH  
IN A  
RURAL COMMUNITY

THESIS--MA. IN SOCIOLOGY

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## THE CHURCH IN A RURAL COMMUNITY

There is agreement amongst sociological writers that it is the inflow of the pure, virile, life from the rural districts that prevents the degeneration in morals, intellect, and physique of the city population. John A. Hobson in "The Evolution of Modern Capitalism," a book written from the standpoint of pure economics, has a chapter entitled "Machinery and the Modern Town." In this chapter he accepts almost as axiomatic the above principle. He quotes Dr. Ogle as follows:- "The combined effect of this constantly higher mortality of the towns, and of the constant immigration into it of the pick of the rural population, must clearly be a gradual deterioration of the whole, in as much as the more energetic and vigorous members of the community are consumed more rapidly than the rest of the population. The system is one which leads to the survival of the unfittest." This is quoted in whole because of its tremendous importance and because reference will be made to it again. On page 356 Mr. Hobson says "This progressive deterioration of physique accounts for the unceasing flow of fresh country blood into the towns." On page 339 he says, after speaking of the weakening of mental fibre by town life, "Most of the best and strongest intellectual work done in the towns is done by immigrants, not by town bred folk." On the same page he says "A lack of grit, pertinacity of purpose, endurance, character, marks the townsman of the second generation as compared with the countryman." A survey of the roster of professional men of any urban centre has almost invariably shown an undue proportion, judging by population, of those born and reared in the rural districts. It has been generally accepted that over seventy-five percent of the men in the ministry are from rural districts which only fifty percent of the population in the rural centers of Ontario. Above all, it would be difficult to find a Gifford Pinchot.

When he says, ("The Church and Country Life" page 7) "From the country comes the strong, new blood which renews the vigor of the towns. The tenacious spiritual ideals of the open country constitute a most resisting barrier against the growing laxity and luxury of our social organization. It is the Country Church rather than the City Church which is in fact our best defence against the advance of the evils of our time." Thus it will be seen that whatever concerns the rural church and country life is of far vaster importance than if the welfare of the population of the rural districts was alone at stake.

There is a growing conviction on the part of those most directly connected with country life that all is not well. Country physicians report an alarming increase in venereal diseases, especially in the districts which are within reach of the larger cities. The census returns indicate a constantly decreasing rural population. The shortage of farm labor was so acute, even before the war, that many farms formerly productive were either idle or used merely for pasturage. The country store is following in the footsteps of the rural post office and the rural blacksmith shop. But much more serious, there are indications that the country church is following in their train. As chairman of the State of Religion Committee for the Baptist Convention of Ontario and Quebec, I made investigation, by means of a questionnaire, of the condition of our churches. The reports manifested numerical and financial progress in the urban churches, but, speaking generally, the rural churches showed decline in numbers and spiritual power through the financial strength, counting dollar for dollar, is much the same. But if one measures by the purchasing power of a dollar there is also a marked decline. A comparison of the Convention Annual report for 1917 with that of 1907 will show that 46 rural Baptist Churches have ceased to exist, that 247 others have lost membership, that these 293 churches have 5696 fewer members than in 1907 and that there are many <sup>more</sup> of our rural churches which will follow the way of the good and die young, unless most aggressive and wise action is taken

shortly. I had occasion recently to visit a church in the open country on an anniversary occasion. I took advantage of the opportunity to inquire as to the conditions of the three churches forming that "field." There had been no regular pastor for over a year and little prospect of getting one. One of the churches had not had regular pastoral oversight for over two years. The third church was so nearly dead a year ago that the congregation seldom numbered more than twelve. No Sunday School or prayer meeting was held. As a result of an Associational Campaign of Evangelism this church has taken on new life and under proper leadership would probably weather the times. I was well acquainted with the centre church as a boy and remembered the full church that greeted the minister Sunday after Sunday. A mere handful gathers now. I inquired regarding the homes on the front road and discovered that very few were regular church attendants, even though members of the church. The back road I found was even in a worse state, so that not more than one family out of five were regularly represented at a church service. Families which had been regular attendants at the church and in membership with it had ceased attendance entirely. I made inquiry as to the ways in which the church was striving to serve the community and found that absolutely the only medium of approach was the weekly church service, preceded by the Sunday School. In the investigation for the state of religion described above, I sought to discover what were the available resources in sight for the ministry and was amazed, not merely at the small number, but at the small proportion from the rural churches. Of the <sup>300</sup> churches reporting 71 reported one or more as having the ministry or missionary service in view, and of these 29 were in rural churches and 133 were in urban churches 18 and 82 percent respectively. The purpose of this long preamble is to make emphatic first, that the country life problem is of national concern, second, that the church and country life are of vital importance each to the other, and third, that the subject proposed is a most pressing one. For if the economists are right, who maintain that the deterioration of the urban centre is prevented only by the influx of

pure blood from the country, and if it is also true that potentially the church is the greatest force in the community, and it is further true that both rural life and church life are deteriorating, then it requires no prophet to see what the end will be unless there is an awakening. The procedure in this study will be first to discover what are the actual conditions in Townsend Township, and village of Waterford, then to bring into view the problems of this particular rural community and to endeavor to lay down some principles and methods of procedure which if followed would enable the church to make a greater contribution to the welfare of the community church-  
~~to discuss what is needed before the church can make its full contribution.~~  
The survey of conditions follows the suggestive chart of George Frederick Wells called "A Social Survey for Rural Communities." The investigation has not been made with the thoroughness that he advises, nor in the way he advises, but the information is derived from trustworthy sources. The Assessor's Rolls furnish reliable information as to population, families, tenants etc. Conversation with life-long residents of the community is the basis of the conclusions respecting soil, resources, etc. while a personal acquaintance of six and a half years that has covered almost the whole township and all the village has been of great value. The Home Visitation Campaign, (described in the Appendix), is the source of most of the information relative to the Churches and Sunday Schools.

## A SURVEY

OF

## THE COMMUNITY AND ITS POPULATION

The Community surveyed is Townsend Township, Norfolk County, Ontario, with the village of Waterford included. The area is 64000 acres. The township is the extreme north-east of the county and is bounded on the north by Brant Co., on the East by Haldimand Co., on the south by Woodhouse Township, and on the west by Windham Township. In shape it is practically a rectangle, nine miles east and west, and twelve miles north and south. The village is at about the centre of the west half of the township. The total population {of township} is 4295. Of this 1027 live in the village of Waterford, about 50 in each of the hamlets of Boston and Villa Nova with about 20 each in centres of Wilsonville, Hartford, Bealton, Naber, Rockford, Round Plains, Foomsburg, Renton, Tyrrell and Townsend Centre are usually regarded as centres, but there are only a couple of families in each not directly related to farms. The population of the farming community is therefore about 5000. There are 1206 families in the community with an average of 3.55 persons. In 1891 there were 1268 families with an average of 4.3 persons. Of the present population 788 are from 5--16, and 288 from 16--21. Seventy-five live in houses alone. There are a few scattered Indian families and three Austrian-Hungarian families, but practically all the people are English speaking, descendants from the early settlers, Scotch, Irish, English, and immigrants from U.S. The only industry outside of the village is farming if we except the centre blacksmith shop, schools and stores and those connected with the railroad. In the village there is a Knitting factory with capacity for 200 hands and employing about 60. A Canning factory runs for about eight months in the year, employing from ten to sixty, mostly women, according to season. There is also a roller mill which is under the same management as the feed store and coal yard, and employs about twelve. A

saw and planing mill runs intermittently and employs two to five. There are two garages, three blacksmith shops, one wood shop, sixteen stores or shops, a printing plant with weekly newspaper, a post office, two banks, and two hotels. About one hundred and fifty are connected with the railroad. The rest of the population not related to these industries etc, are either professional, three medical doctors, one veterinary surgeon, five teachers, and six ministers (three retired), or retired farmers.

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## ECONOMIC AND INDUSTRIAL CONDITIONS

The soil of Townsend Township is, on the whole, as good as can be found in Ontario. A sandy loam, mostly of fine quality, though in need of tilling in the north-east corner, extends about a third of the way across the township from the west. This gradually merges into a clay of most excellent quality, though very heavy on the east side. The north east section is a poorer quality of clay. Practically the whole of the township is either tilled, used for farm pasturage or is in timber. Assessment shows 757 farms of which possibly fifty are unoccupied. Of the farm land, 395 acres is marsh land, 1940 slashing, 5407 woodland, leaving 57500 acres of good tillable soil. The timber areas are not plentiful, nor are they large, but many of the farms have wood lots that furnish sufficient supplies of rough lumber for local needs, fuel for the farm, and some commercial lumber. There are no minerals but it is claimed that an outcropping of rock near Villa Nova is of first rate quality for road-building purposes. There is water power sufficient to run the flour mill most of the time. The soil is very favorable in a small section near the centre for the cultivation of ginseng. This has developed through local initiative until the annual dig is worth six to ten thousand dollars. There is a little trapping but the value is small. It is probable that the farmers of today do not work nearly so hard as those of a generation ago. The

farmers are, however, wide awake and eager to take advantage of every opportunity for more efficient farming, though lacking in leadership. It is claimed that the fibre of character is deteriorating but this could scarcely be traced to failing resources.

#### PUBLIC SERVICE

##### FACILITIES

The road system is fair; gravel roads in the west half, but in the East the clay roads are almost impassable at times. A County good roads system has been decided upon and this will give the township a splendid road system. The west half has excellent railway facilities, an electric road traversing north to south and a steam road north to south from Waterford. A steam road traverses east and west at near the centre and another near the south boundary. Most of the territory is covered by rural mail routes. A rural telephone system is within reach of practically every home and is well partitioned. The village has Hydro-Electric and one line supplies a small section of the farms. The control of both telephone and lighting systems seems fairly satisfactory.

##### INTERCOMMUNITY RELATIONS

The northern section lies within easy reach of Brantford, especially in summer, but not so near that many ill effects are manifested. This may be due in some measure also, to the comparatively high tone of Brantford. The south-west section lies in direct proximity to Simcoe and in license days the effect was marked but the injury now is comparatively slight. The Hagersville and Brantford markets are a direct source of revenue to the producers of the township. The community interest of the people is not greatly lessened by counters, though this together with the big departmental stores is having an adverse effect upon local trade. The proximity of Pt. Dover, a summer re-



sort, made so easily accessible by railroad and auto is tending quite noticeably to a slackening of interest in church work and worship in the summer months. A few families have been attracted to Brantford in the last few years by the prospects of higher wages but there is no marked movement in that direction.

#### FACTORY AND LABOR CONDITIONS

The factories and mills with number employed have already been mentioned but it should be said that conditions of labor are fairly satisfactory. The ten hour day is in vogue with Saturday afternoon off in the Knitting factory. The stores close each night at six except Saturday night, and during the summer, close Thursday afternoon, but are open Wednesday evening. There are no children under fifteen employed during school hours.

#### WEALTH & POVERTY.

The village may be called a village of homes as there are so few renters. One hundred and ninety-two are classed as tenant farmers, about one-quarter of the total. There are about sixty farms untenanted and possibly double that number of unused houses owing to the doubling up of many farm properties. The wealthiest in the township are not rated much above thirty thousand, though a few individuals may reach fifty thousand. There are practically no families of dependant poor at the present time, but some are so near the border line that a period of industrial depression would put them in that class.

#### COMMERCIAL AGENTS

A detailed inventory of these seems scarcely necessary. Little exception can be taken to the number, character, or control of these, except the pool room. A market place in the village would seem to be to the benefit of the Township commercially. The two regular hotels are unlicensed and have sufficient capacity but one has had a fitful experience, though at present is in the hands of people of good character. There are no summer boarders except those who assist in the fruit harvest and the patronage of the travelling public seems insufficient for the maintenance of a first class

Hotel. There is considerable loafing about the barber shops and the livery stable, and it is feared that the influence of these places is far from helpful. Gambling in a mild degree may be connected with a men's club, but such is doubtful. The pool room is not under the best auspices but there is little to complain of at present.

#### CIVIC LIFE AND COMMUNITY ORGANIZATION

The character of the civic life is on the whole high. Men of good repute fill the positions of Municipal trust. The church has used its influence by pulpit appeal, and indirectly to get men of high stamp to take interest in public questions. The political leaders have been of similarly high character.

The village has a Board of Trade that is not particularly active. The farmers have a Fruit Grower's Association that is at present in difficulty. There is a Farmer's Club at Boston that does cooperative buying and selling. The Women's Institute movement is fairly strong and is a helpful agency. There is a private club that may not be all it should be. The various lodges and secret fraternal orders are represented and under fair leadership. The village has a library that needs replenishing badly, but the war is made the excuse for inaction. Most of the Sunday Schools have a fair library of the Sunday School type which could easily be made the nucleus of a fine serviceable community library. The only institution for the care of dependents, etc., is the County Home, situated outside the township, but there seems little need for it so far as Townsend Township is concerned.

The moral life of the community is an important consideration. There has not been a saloon in the township for a generation, nor in the village for eleven years, so that drinking is not of serious proportions, and the law is pretty well observed. But there are a number of improper <sup>little</sup> homes cohabiting illegally. In one case one woman claims she was married to the man before second ceremony was performed. In other cases the woman "keeps house" for the man and sometimes raises a family. The bar to marriage is usually a husband

or wife living elsewhere. There is little danger of contamination by defectives and no considerable amount of prostitution.

#### THE COMMUNITY'S RECREATION

The problem of the recreation of children under twelve in the village is not very serious owing to the fact that there are very few children (the total between 5 and 16 being only 161) and that the character of the home's with children is of fair average. Many of the girls take music lessons while the small boys play in groups near their homes. No effort in village or country is being made to give moral direction to their play. The only play gang of the boys (13 to 16) in the village is organized into a club connected with an organized class in the Baptist S.S., with the pastor as mentor. They follow the standard of efficiency tests, meeting once a week and taking Saturday afternoon "hikes" when possible. Practically all of the girls of this age are either in attendance at school or at work. The tendency for the boys and girls of fifteen and sixteen to seek each others' company is in evidence. As there are only thirty in the village 16 to 20, and most of these are working during the day and many attending business college, three nights a week there is not much difficulty in the various church organization & S.S. classes meeting their needs for recreation. The co-social life of the sexes so centres about the church that little difficulty is experienced in properly overseeing the recreation of young men and women. This is true of the country as well as the village. Serious moral delinquency has resulted in the past from street-strolling by boys and girls and characters have been ruined, but there seems at present very little of this.

The lodges, institutes, churches, and Sunday School A.B.C. classes with their regular semi-social meetings seem to meet the need for the adult population for social recreation. Social dinners are popular in the winter time but there is comparatively little of this since the war.

The village has its tennis court, bowling green, and play ground, but there are no facilities for organized recreation in the country. There

has been a so-called family picnic that has attracted large numbers but internal dissension seems likely to disrupt it. The S. Schools have union picnics by localities. The twelfth of July celebration attracts fair crowds, but generally speaking, legal holidays are spent according to small group fancy. Confederation day was taken advantage of at the fiftieth anniversary for a public gathering. Objection might be made occasionally to some of the plays "put on" by the travelling parties and some of the others may not be particularly uplifting, but a serious breach of what is fitting would not be tolerated. There is a moving picture outfit but it is not used regularly. The churches and lodges usually furnish, directly or indirectly, the public entertainment. Tennis and bowling are the favorite sports. The leadership is satisfactory from the moral standpoint. There is very little card playing and for the last few years only one or two public dances. There is practically no public provision for recreation outside of the play grounds connected with the schools.

There are sixteen public schools in the Township, and one in the village with four teachers. Practically all the children of public school age attend. The consolidated rural school might be an advantage but the schools, on the whole, are doing good work. There is a high school in the village that fairly well meets the needs of the community. A business college, under private auspices, has a total attendance in day and evening classes of sixty. Probably seventy-five percent of those of high school age attend either business college or high school, and of these more than sixty percent are church members. The proportion of church members amongst the 25 percent not attending high school would not be more than forty percent. The above figures would indicate that most boys and girls go from public to high school. The others quit school at about fourteen. Whether the Public Schools fit the boys and girls for the duties of later years may be a disputed question, but it would seem evident that the courses as planned are not as practical as they might be. There are not more than half a dozen in attendance at University at present, and the numbers sent in the past have not been proportionate to

the township's size and ability. I only know of three who have taken courses at the Agricultural College. Their influence is splendid.

### RELIGION AND CHURCH LIFE

There are scarcely one hundred Roman Catholics in the Township, about seventy-five Latter Day Saints. The remainder are practically all Protestants. There may be fifty families who do not line up with any particular church. A religious census was made in January 1917. There are five Baptist churches and one mission, in the community, and two on the border. There are eight Methodist churches, and one on the border, while the Anglicans have one church. All of these are well established, and with two exceptions, have at least one mid-week service as well as at least one Sunday service, and Sunday School. The average attendance is much lower than it ought to be, even when all the extenuating circumstances are considered, and seems to be on the decrease. This seeming decrease may be due to decreasing population. The membership, however, holds pretty steady. The decrease is not due to any considerable extent, to exodus to the towns. The best men of the community are almost without exception in the church. Little effort is made to get the young people to church and the decline of the family pew bodes ill for the future unless the church awakes. The life of the churches seems on the whole fairly healthy. Class divisions and petty quarrels are largely unknown. The churches, with two exceptions, are manned with regular pastors of average, all round gifts. The two exceptions are served by one man, as supply pastor, who is of rather exceptional preaching ability, but who is unable to do pastoral work by reason of physical disability. Non-attendance is due in the main to the spirit of the age, pleasure seeking, money grabbing, and religious indifference with a lower level than ought to be of spiritual life amongst the members of the church. Summer Sunday outings by automobile are reacting unfavorably.

### THE PASTOR

There are eleven pastors connected with the churches of the

community, and those on the border, but five other churches are served by them, making twenty-two for the eleven pastors. This does not include the Latter Day Saint Church which is small and served by its laity with occasional visits of ordained men. Four of the men have three churches each, three have two each, and the rest have a single charge. The four with three churches have from twenty to twenty-four miles to drive on a Sunday, those with two have ten to twelve miles. One of those with three has roads that at times are almost impassible. The others with more than one church have mostly sand and gravel roads though bad enough at times. All the pastors have either been reared in a rural community or so near by as to be fairly familiar with rural life and conditions. One church has had the same pastor over five years, seven--to~~ten~~ years, ten--one year, four newly settled. Two pastors are University graduates in Arts and Theology, two in Arts, six have had a fair ministerial scholastic training and one, the best preacher, has had no University training. One has attended the special summer sessions at Guelph for ministers. Most are fairly faithful to pastoral work but the extended fields of some make almost impossible thorough pastoral oversight, and leadership. As the fields are at present constituted, while it might be said they furnish an adequate field of service the men are unable to realize the possibilities. The salaries in some cases might be considered, under normal conditions, as sufficient, but in most cases a more adequate salary is indispensable to thorough and efficient work. None of the churches receive assistance from without. There are parsonages connected with eight of the eleven fields but two are not occupied. The rental value of the parsonage is considered as in lieu of the equivalent amount of salary.

#### INTER--CHURCH RELATIONS

All the churches may be said to stand for evangelical fervor as opposed to intellectual liberalism. While there is no apparent need, from the standpoint of the community, for at least two churches, it could scarcely be said that any church serves of set purpose the denomination rather than the

community. On the other hand it could scarcely be said that any church consciously sacrifices itself to serve the community. Inter--church co-operation is of a high order in Sunday School work, evangelistic effort and the extension of devotional life or civic betterment. No attempt at inter-church federation for community betterment has been made, but something along that line has been discussed. Such, if unselfishly entered into, would probably result in the elimination of at least two churches, but the gains by permitting more concentration on local problems and the abolishing of denominational competition would be splendid compensation to the community. Outside of the two indicated above, it is doubtful if there are too many churches. The others are two and a half to five miles apart. The south east corner is possibly suffering from lack of a church, the nearest being three to five miles over bad roads.

#### EVANGELISM

Efforts along this line have been confined largely to special campaigns of direct evangelism. In the last, led by an evangelist, nearly one hundred united with the churches. It was practically a union movement with the village as centre. Many of these were the result of personal effort. Others conducted by pastors have resulted in many uniting with the churches. The Home Visitation Campaign described in the appendix, had as its ultimate goal the winning of the people to Christ. While anticipations have not been fully realized, the effect has been good. Although special evangelistic effort is made use of, the churches do not depend on it solely but by means of decision day in Sunday School, and personal effort, make rather persistent efforts to bring all the members of the community into personal relationship to Christ. About half of the total population are church members, or about two thirds over the age of ten. These efforts have resulted in changing many lives and giving right direction to many others, but the results have not gone as deep as desirable. This is due largely to the fact that the community, as a whole, is morally on a high level and the church members do not experience

a great emotional change in conversion, and their spiritual life, while steady, is not of a very high order. While many adults have accepted Christ, the big majority are those young in life. Few of the hardened are won.

Sunday School work is considered to be at a high level, Townsend being a Front Lind Township and alive to all that is tried and proven. The total enrollment of the Sunday Schools is ~~2530~~ of those within the Township, and about ~~150~~ more from the Township attend Sunday Schools on the border, so that <sup>63%</sup> of the total population is related to the Sunday School. From its ranks, as already intimated, come the big majority of the church members. The Young Peoples Societies are training schools rather than evangelistic centres. The same is true of the other organizations of the church. Practically no effort, except the Boys' club, mentioned above, is being made by the churches per se to develop the life of the boys and girls along the four fold lines. Religious Education is confined to the S. S. hour.

#### INSTITUTIONAL CHURCH WORK

Outside of the Boys' Club and the work of organized Sunday School Classes which, from the institutional side is small, practically no institutional work is done. Two of the Young Peoples Societies have put on the agent "The Call of the Country." Cooperative agencies of this character are few, the W. C. T. U., Institutes and Farmers' Clubs being the sum. Whether it would be an advantage to the church of the community to have these in vital relation to the churches is an open question. Church leaders are the leaders in these. Most of the churches have a kitchen and ten have basements or separate room for Sunday School and Social purposes. Some assistance is received from outside through expert workers. This has been helpful, but has not been of sufficient extent. Local talent might be used more than it has. A Rural Union has been organized in one community with the Pastor as leading spirit. This Pastor has the vision and the church he serves is responsive to work along the lines of community betterment.



# FEDERATION OF RURAL SOCIAL FORCES

Of strictly township institutions a Sunday School Picnic will probably attract the largest number with a Sunday School Convention next. A Political Meeting in a hot campaign would come next, followed by a school fair. A farmers' meeting might be placed fifth, the township fair sixth. This would seem to indicate that the interests of the people are in this order, social, religious, political, economic, though in all there is a strong social interest as the attractive force. The leading social centres of a federated character, in the order of their religious and moral value, are: The Township Sunday School Association, The W. C. T. U., The Womens' Institutes, The Farmers' Club, The School and Township Fairs. In social value No. 2 would come last, from the standpoint of social attractiveness. But not social good. The homes co-operate splendidly on the whole with the churches. The schools have a measure of co-operation, as is evidenced in a special effort for funds, or a school fair, but this co-operation has not been largely developed. There is a spirit of co-operation between the churches and the schools, but it finds no organized expression. The same might be said of all town and civic organizations, even the lodges as the leaders are the same in both. There is no competition between organizations that leads to contention, unless it be the political. These sometimes develop harmful friction. The great unmet social need is a recreational centre. The churches seem best fitted to lead along these lines of co-operative effort for social purposes. A new movement of a sectional character would have difficulty in gaining a place, but a Federation, embracing all, would, under enthusiastic, wise leadership, probably find a ready reception.

Community Problems and the Contribution the Church might make toward their solution.

It might seem from the foregoing that religious, moral, social, economic and civic conditions, that is social conditions in the broad sense, are fairly satisfactory. Even though this were true there would be room for improvement, but a close examination will reveal that satisfaction is based largely on negative rather than on positive grounds. The purpose of this section is to consider the problems and needs that have come to light in the foregoing discussion, and to seek to discover lines along which the church may help to solve the problems and meet the needs.

#### 1. Declining Population.

The cause of this seems to be two-fold, first, the cityward movement, second the westward movement, third the declining birth-rate. The cityward movement is due to a variety of causes among which may be mentioned better opportunity for making money better educational opportunities, aesthetic advantages, (musical, drama, etc.) social and recreational privileges, higher standard of living, in short dissatisfaction with the opportunities and conditions of farm and village life. It may seem at first that the church can do little to better the economic opportunities of the rural community. It can emphasize that all is not gold that glitters and that rural life at its best is far better than city life. There are university and aesthetic advantages the country cannot furnish but, otherwise, real advantages possessed by the city life is within reach of the rural communities. It may not be possible to make a fortune farming or in a village industrial life, but a most comfortable income can be obtained. The city home has conveniences but all of these are available to the country home. I know a home in the Township five miles from electric current, that has toilet, furnace, hot and cold water on tap and electric light. Roads that are impassible at certain ~~times~~ are a hardship but the Good Roads Movement is sweeping the country, and Townsend Township will have its main roads in first-class condition in a few years. The country school is sometimes disparaged. I am not sure that such is just but in any case the consolidated school removes the disadvantages. ~~Some~~ aesthetic advantages may not be in immediate reach of many in the country but the nearby cities are easy of access and much can be done by use of local talent and visiting artists. The isolation of the country is largely removed by the telephone, rural delivery, and good roads and, with a little leadership, social life can be made sufficiently full and yet centre around that which is helpful and uplifting. Recreation will be treated later but each church can make its grounds a community centre for recreation in the summer and its buildings in the winter. The task of the church seems obvious. It is to so ~~gentle~~ <sup>gentle</sup> into the life of its community that it leads to community betterment by the introduction of conditions that are wholesome and will make the country seem desirable to the young people. The long hours of labor, compared to the eight to ten hour day of the city, drives some from the country. The increasing use of machinery and broadened intelligence are effecting a change in this respect. Discussions in public upon this subject might well be conducted by young peoples societies. The Church, Farmer's Club etc. and would help all to see both sides of the question. The practise of employing

help only in the summer is also a serious hindrance to retaining not only the hired man but the farmers' sons themselves. The depletion of timber has taken away winter employment, but greater attention to dairying and stock-raising would compensate and the church can lead the people to see the advantage of such.

The Westward movement has never <sup>at</sup> affected Townsend to any appreciable extent. Its power is due to the cheap and more productive lands of the West. It would seem to have largely spent itself as Western land has increased in value, and farming become more remunerative in the East. A good farmer in the Township of Townsend on a fair average farm, is fairly sure of an income of \$1500 and some make \$4000. Those who do not, have either poor farms, farms that need draining, or are poor farmers. I know a farmer who twenty-five years ago, was a renter with no capital but who to-day has one of the best farms in the Township and money to spare. This is connected with the problem of decreasing productivity and will be treated more in detail there. But so far as it is related to the young people leaving the farm this ought to be recognized. Many ~~happy~~ farmers treat the young people as hired help, so far as work is concerned, and as children so far as pay is concerned. A few addresses along the line of "The Farm a Joint Stock Company" would open the eyes of the parents to the need of partnership in the farm industry. The giving of a definite percentage is done in some cases that I know and seems to be fairly satisfactory.

The declining birth-rate is perhaps the most serious cause, so far as Townsend is concerned, of the declining population. A typical illustration may make this clear. "I asked a farmer." "How many were in your family?" "Ten" was the reply. "How many in your wife's family?" "Twelve" was the reply. He had two children and a good farm and comfortable income. The twenty-two children on both sides had an average of between one and two. The roots of this so far as I can discern, are first economic, that is people are more selfish, do not wish to be burdened by a large family. It costs more to live and children are regarded as an incumbrance, interfering with the social life in other ways. By inculcating unselfishness, simplicity of life and promoting saner ideas of home life the church may help to remove this root. The connection may not be very apparent but a conversation has given me food for thought along this line. We were speaking of the age of a certain person when one remarked "He is --years. I remember because he was a Ridder(not the name) baby". I asked for an explanation and was told that an Evangelist by the above name had held revival meetings in a certain church when the people had been mightily stirred. Within a year afterwards nearly every home was exhibiting a new baby. It may have been merely a coincidence but I have a conviction that a real revival of religion would take away many of our "modern" ideas and have some such result.

The second root is closely allied and may be called character. To be frank we must acknowledge that women in these days are not as willing as in the days gone by, to suffer the pains of maternity. This is closely allied with the character

deterioration in the people that is claimed by many, and will be considered in connection with that subject.

The third root is physical. It seems beyond question that the women of to-day are not as physically capable of raising a large family as were our grandmothers. Saner views of life with opportunities for recreation will react, and result in greater physical fitness. Such teaching and doing ought to be a part of the rural church's programme as will appear later.

The second problem, viz shortage of help, from our survey, is largely an outgrowth of the former, accentuated at the present of course by the war. Emergency measures such as the S.O.S. movement and village and city movement to aid the farmers with adult help in the harvest season ought to receive not only the co-operation of the church, but might well be led by them. The era of industrial depression which is likely in some measure at least to follow the war, will help solve this problem, but the root of the trouble can be remedied only by increasing the population by birth rate, by holding those in the country on the farms, through better living conditions, and by attracting to the country those who are in city occupations. The first two have perhaps been sufficiently discussed. the last is more difficult and requires co-operation as well as patience. As farming conditions improve, becoming more remunerative and life more livable, many will prefer the country. But a cooperation between country church and city church would help. The country church would lead the farming community to see the advantage of each farm needing help having a house, comfortable and with at least ordinary conveniences where a city family might live. The city church could cooperate by recommending families of suitable character who would adopt themselves to country life and desire the change. Farms that are too large might be divided and a settler partly financed until established.

The shortage of help in the village is also a serious drawback. The factory cannot obtain half the help it needs. Cooperation as above would help here also. It would seem largely a matter for the local Board of Trade, but the local ministers could counsel with them and aid them in their considerations.

Decreasing productivity is a third problem, and it is intimately related to the two just discussed. While some claim that as good crops as ever can be raised, it is admitted by all that to do so it requires more careful cultivation. It is probable that there is real soil depletion which can be remedied only by stock-raising. But the great cause is generally set down as changing seasons. The extremes are greater than they once were, and the periods of drought and wet weather are more protracted. The spring is later and the atmosphere far less humid. The result is that the seeding is later and the growth less rapid and luxuriant. Spring wheat is a thing althoether of the past and fall wheat<sup>is</sup> fast becoming of little value for bread flour. The ultimate cause of these changing seasons seem to be

the depletion of the timber areas, and the greater attention to drainage. The former acts in a two-fold way, first by removing the reservoirs of moisture, and second by throwing the country open to the influences of the climate conditions of more remote districts, such as the West. Drainage of most of the land is doubtless of greatest value, but there is drainage that effects swamps and marsh areas, and results in not only less moisture for steady evaporation in the summer but retards the growth of the timber that requires much moisture. Black Ash is almost extinct while the growth of all lowland timber is not half as rapid as fifty years ago. It is surely within the realm of the church that would serve its community to assist in an understanding of the best methods of meeting this problem, either through its own initiative or through the farmer's club.

A fourth problem closely related to all of these is the comparatively unremunerative character of farming. Some farms do well but the average earning is only three percent on investment. The middleman and distributors are able to make fortunes by gauging the farmer on the right hand and the consumer on the left. Farmers are notoriously weak in cooperation. The reasons need scarcely be discussed, and there is room for discussion as to the highest ethical attitude in the matter. But the only practical way of meeting the problem at present seems to be along the line of cooperative buying and selling, eliminating as far as possible, the middlemen. State control of the distributor, the speculator and the manufacturer by eliminating unnecessary and harmful competition, and preventing a price fixing that gives more than fair profit will probably be more and more depended upon. The rural church ought to enter sympathetically with the farmer in his effort to obtain a fairer share of the results of his hard labor. At the same time it needs to stimulate the altruistic spirit so that the farmer does not grow into the sins of the selfish capitalist. There is room for improvement in labor conditions in the village though the comparatively high rate the railroad men are able to compel sets a standard in days of labor shortage at least for other classes of labor. The wage scale seems too low and the hours of labor too long. And there are other injustices that a church, sympathetic, to the laboring classes, could help to remove.

There are many minor problems of an economical nature in rural life, such as the disease that is killing the birch trees, which a sympathetic church directly or indirectly help to solve.

The problems of a moral and civic nature do not seem to be, at first thought, particularly serious. The claim is made however that the fibre of character is deteriorating, that each succeeding generation possesses less force and integrity and capacity for strong constructive work. This may be a looking back to the "Golden Days", on the part of the older men of the present generation. But there seems to be some real ground on which to rest the claim. If so it is the result probably of a three-fold cause. The drainage to the city and the West takes the bolder and more forceful spirits first, for modern conditions of life with its less intense struggle for an existence does not tend to develop strong character. The pioneers labored hard

and to succeed were compelled to husband every effort and every cent. Their children entered into the fruit of their labor and spend what thier fathers earned. Character like other things seem to deteriorate with the passage of time. Stock runs out, Luxury and ease enervate. But the leadership is not of the high herioc type of our fathers. In the ministry were men of deep convictions sturdy character, and of a sacrificial spirit. To check this deterioration is a tremendous, but most important task. The rural church, be it said with all kindness, has been served by third rate men in the main. This side of it will be discussed when the question of pastoral leadership is under consideration. But it is evident ~~evident~~ that character is partly heritary and partly the effect of environment. The former is largely out of our immediate control, but the envionment can be changed. The unwholesome conditions, such as the saloon, have been largely removed, but there is need of constructive work. A minister said in response to my testimony as to the moral character of the community-"Yes but they are really pagans. They have no breadth of vision, no conception of the higher and loftier things bound up in life." There is unquestionably considerable truth in this assertion, but strong leadership by a pastor of high character and attainments and constructive work of a Spiritual and social nature will, with patience accomplish much.

The value of books is recogonized by all. Why should not the Sunday School Library, as well as the village library be made a strong cultural character-building force, and at the same time a source of information of economic value. The village library is of little value. There is needed in the village a building that will not only house the books, and a reading room but will provide some indoor recreational features. But there is equally needed a high-class librarian, one who has the spirit and the vision to realize that mission. Th S.S. libraries in the country centres could be coordinated with this or made supplementary to it. This is a sphere of service of utmost value to the community and one in which the ministers and churches are particularly adapted for leadership.

Closely allied to this is the question of physical and social recreation. There is here a field of service amongst all ages. The boys and girls under twelve years of age could be so directed in their play that the character building value of group games, properly directed, would be conserved. The same is true of the boys and girls of thirteen to sixteen years. The school teacher would seem to be largely the key to the situation for these ages. What is needed in most cases is someone to open their eyes to the possibilities. the lady teacher in a country school is of course at a disadvantage, and in this the consolidated school would have an advantage. There are at present no young men or women in the village whose time is not fully occupied during the winter but when normal conditions are restored there should be, both in the village and the country centres, a community playground. There should be connected with this a community social centre, where under proper chaperonage and leadership, young men and women could meet, and find that recreation, together or seperate, that youth requires. Along with this, however, the home as a social centre should be emphasized.

There well might be combined such economic educational features as would be particularly valuable to rural youth, as book-keeping value of soils etc.

This brings us to the more strictly religious problems. Of these the most vital is the spiritual life of the churches. The power of regeneration and close fellowship with God to shape character, and to develop altruism can scarcely be over-estimated. The Spiritual is after all the source of the highest and holiest endeavor. While church attendance in Townsend may not be greatly decreased in proportion to population, and much of the old evangelical fervor remains, it is to be feared that Spiritual life is not as deep and as far reaching in its manifestation as it ought to be. The trend of the times seem to be away from the spiritual. Sunday motoring to a near-by holiday resort or to the city, Sunday dinner parties, and the general laxity of Sabbath observance along with the materialism of the day seem to be the great foes of deep spiritual life. The ministers are themselves not as spiritual as they should be. They are handicapped in many ways, some have such an extended field of labor that little more can be done than hold the ground. Imagine a man trying to impress the spiritual life of a community scattered over an area of one hundred and fifty square miles. The salaries are in most cases altogether inadequate to enable the men to do efficient work. There is however, a disposition on the part of the people to recognize the necessity of allowing a minister more than a bare existence. An automobile could be used to splendid advantage by all the men, but not one is able to afford it. For those with one church a horse and rig may suffice, but to drive thirty miles on a Sunday and attempt to do real pastoral visitation, along with community service in two or three churches covering an area of one hundred to one hundred and fifty square miles would keep a man on the road or doing chores all the time. The personal touch, that is so essential for the spiritual results is either largely impossible or the minister's own spiritual life is dwarfed by lack of time for bible study and meditation.

There is a great need for a more intelligent application of the principles of religious education. Townsend is a front-line Township, and perhaps deserves to be classed among the best. Teacher-training is participated in by about half the schools and all the schools are fairly well graded. The graded lessons are in use, to some extent, in three of the schools, but there is no thorough going appreciation of the principles of religious education and practically no effort to correlate the educational work of the various church organizations. Since the Church service follows the S. S. service in all but ~~time in~~ three of the ~~service~~ churches, the attendance of boys and girls in the country at the church service is good. This could scarcely be said of the village churches. The united service scheme might be a help in spite of its obvious disadvantages. The introduction of a special feature of



interest to the boys and girls, seems to prolong the period unduly. The family pew is fast falling into neglect and some method of restoring it or substituting for it is urgently needed.

Townsend is fortunate in having ministers who are village or country reared but this advantage is offset in several ways. I have already mentioned two extended fields and inadequate salaries. The short term is a distinct loss one field, a Methodist, is holding the present pastor only one year. His predecessor remained a year and a half, his predecessor two years, and only one pastor has served for more than five years. In the country two years is the longest term of the present pastor. The academic training has been long enough probably in every case but it has had practically no special reference to the work of the rural minister. In only two instances does overlapping prevent the pastor performing the fullest community service in the country churches. In one other instance the situation would be improved by the removal of the church to a different location. The village is theoretically overchurched. Three churches with seating accommodation for twelve hundred for a constituency of little more, seems about two, too many. Whether one church would actually meet the needs of the community better would depend on many factors. The prospect is alluring but many subtle dangers lie in the path.

The spirit of co-operation is, as already intimated, very encouraging. But it is largely a spirit awaiting leadership to move it to definite action. The churches work together in splendid harmony. The home visitation campaign was conducted in a beautiful spirit. A village patriotic society and the W.C.T.U. embrace all and church adherence causes no distinction. But these are movements outside the church's sphere though led by the leaders in the church work. An interchurch federation that would enable the churches to present a solid front to anything detrimental to the community's interest and to take united action to compass such ends as are desirable for the community, would have a large sphere of activity. There are many things a single church can scarcely do but which a group of churches can easily accomplish.

The churches and the homes are rather closely linked together by the cradle and home department in the Sunday School as well as, by the representation from almost every home in the Sunday school proper and in one of the various church organizations. Yet it is true that the church shows very little interest in the home, as a home outside of its being a source of material for filling up the ranks of the Sunday school and church. It is doubtful, if for example, a book on Home Beautifying or the Home Garden could be found in a Sunday school library in the Township.



The Church and the Public or High Schools have not direct connection. The matter of religious teaching in the school is a somewhat thorny and debated subject, but the churches could well take advantage of the privileges allowed by the school law and regularly conduct classes that would give instruction on the non-controversial points of the main Protestant denominations. But cooperation should go further and encourage, if not lead in a movement for better buildings and equipment, better paid and better qualified teachers, teachers who have the vision of the possibilities of the rural school as well as the training to translate the vision into reality.

There is room for closer cooperation between the churches and civic organizations. The opening of a political meeting by scripture reading and prayer may be greeted by cries of "Hypocrisy". But this is a stigma on political parties that needs removing. If the U.S. Senate is moved by the earnest prayer of its Chaplain, as on a recent occasion, why should not the village or Township Council have its deliberations opened with prayer? Why should not our rural churches actively cooperate with the Farmer's Clubs, the Public Library, The Musical Organizations and other organizations, that make for community betterment?

The great problem that underlies all these questions is that of Leadership. Our rural districts have within them ~~possibilities~~ wonderful possibilities. They are responsive to the call of high and holy endeavor, but are largely as sheep without a shepherd. Their call is "Give us leaders." Leaders may be found in the ranks of the enterprising farmers, the store-keepers, the professional men, as doctors, teachers, the editor, the librarian, or amongst the ministers. The last is from our view-point the key to the others. But fortunate is the community that has laymen or women of high intelligence and training who have the community vision and spirit, and are willing to spend and be spent for the community's good.

The rural minister is in the most advantageous place of all for leadership. He should be a man reared in the country, or one with such predilections for country life that he readily adapts himself to and familiarizes himself with the conditions of rural life. The country sends its best to the ~~villages~~ <sup>cities</sup> and the universities, but few return. The spirit created is averse to rural life. This of course is not done with malice aforethought. But surely it is time that our colleges set themselves to create the spirit of rural service. They could do much to direct attention to the need of the country and to create the vision of its wonderful opportunities for life investment. And this applies not merely to students for the ministry, but for all ranks.

The rural minister needs to be well trained and specially trained. No people are more appreciative of good preaching and

teaching than the rural folk. The rural preacher who would do good work must be thoroughly trained in all the essentials for his successful pastorate anywhere. The country has been blessed with many able and Godly men but speaking generally the country church has been at most a stepping stone for the bright capable man to reach a city church and too often it has been the dumping place for those who could not succeed elsewhere for lack of training or talent. The country church has not thought itself able to pay the price and many men think the opportunity is not equal to that of a city church. But once our young men get the vision of community service, they will see that for intensive and real lasting work and work that constantly repeats itself, there is no opportunity like that of a church unhampered in a small rural centre surrounded by a fair average farming constituency. But the rural minister needs not only to be well trained and to possess the vision but he needs special training in the technique of community service. The urban minister with good preaching ability and fair executive capacity is fairly sure of success. But the rural minister who would serve his community along social as well as spiritual lines must be familiar with the latest research along agricultural lines. He should be able to conduct a class in manual training, direct the recreation of girls and boys, teach the elements of good business and <sup>know</sup> the many details that are peculiar to well ordered rural life, not that he will do all these things himself but he must largely blaze his own trail and be the instructor of those who lead in the various activities. There is urgent need of some radical changes in ~~and~~ the training of our ministers along pastoral lines, at least. Some advance has been made of recent years but there remains much more to be done. W.K. Tate in an address on Church and Country Life, page 167, claims that the training of the country ministers should include the following "The sciences underlying farm life, especially the biological sciences; enough agriculture to allow the free use of this subject as a source of illustration; constructive rural sociology; rural recreation; a study of the rural changing ideals of rural education; rural economics, especially as it relates to rural organization". He has certainly not understated the requirements.

The conditions which make impossible efficient and effective leadership must be removed. No man can minister to more than two churches unless he has a staff of assistants. The larger Benzonia parish described in the Church and Country life, page 97, is the most interesting example of what can be done by that method which has the advantages of greater centralization. We might mention overlapping in this connection. The day may never come when there will be ~~when there will be~~ but one denomination but an interchange of stations ought to be possible that will banish duplication of building, equipment, service, etc., and the antagonism so often felt by churches so situated, that there is scarcely room for one.

The community would be the gainer, if for example the Baptists withdrew from Round Plains and the Methodists from Villa Nova. If, however, the church cannot be the community centre, it can be a community centre, provided the pastor was not stretched so thin that he had no weight on any particular point.

Inadequate salaries mean loss in efficiency. Townsend is fairly fortunate in this respect as compared to others. But a salary sufficient to enable the pastor to possess an automobile would be a distinct gain. He needs to purchase books and magazines that are of special value to the rural minister. He ought to be able to attend the Guelph Summer session, as well as Farmers Institute and other conferences where the problems of rural life, receive special study. His home ought to be not only a model country home but a rural social centre. An acre of land attached to the parsonage ground would provide a sort of experimental agricultural station but these all mean outlay to the minister, for which the immediate returns might not seem large. The partial help of a stenographer would in time become a necessity. The short pastorate must cease to be. The organization of a rural community centres far more in one man than that of the city. It directs not merely its inspiration but its direction and cohesion, in most cases from a single individual. That man is usually the pastor. If he stays two years he has only time to get acquainted with his field and get a start at organization. The third year may find it fairly complete. The fourth year it begins to really accomplish things but a decade is scarcely long enough to establish. The short pastorate is due almost altogether to the foregoing conditions. Some can not stand the physical strains of the long drives and others will not spend their lives attempting to stretch themselves over a territory so extended that they cannot hope to more than scratch its surface. We are losing this spring, one who has been settled only a year. He is one of the best that has come into the Township but he will not spend himself to no purpose. The salary is so inadequate in most rural churches that a man can scarcely live out of debt and who is there to blame a man if he listens to the Sirens voice and goes up higher to the large town or city that at least gives him a respectable livelihood. The lack of social contact may be mentioned as another reason but this and many others are due to the fact that the rural community is so largely unorganized. The people perish for lack of vision expressed in terms of leadership.

The question of finance blooms large at first. Community service work involves expenditure but so far as Townsend is concerned, there is plenty of money within its own constituency to carry out any desirable scheme and the people will respond to any reasonable appeals.

A few words of explanation may be permitted in conclusion. The title of this paper, "The Church in a Rural Community," may seem too broad. It is true that a definite rural community, viz. Townsend Township has been in mind and care has been taken not to lay down general principles. At the same time there is conviction that all rural communities are much alike, and that the problems of Townsend township are essentially the problems of all rural constituencies. There will be variations caused by varying local conditions that can be determined only by a local survey. Because of the limited scope no attempt has been made to lay down rules for survey work. In any case these are so well established by experts that ~~the same treatment~~ treatment here is not required. It might be objected that the programme has not been sufficiently definitely outlined. This is due largely to the fact that what has been attempted is not a treatise, but a study, and not a study of one centre but of a group of centres. Each one of which would need to work out its own local programme. A general programme, that could be easily adapted to local needs will be found in the "Church and Country Life" (Pg. 113). Books and pamphlets now abound in such numbers that anyone can easily acquaint themselves with the general principles. Some might object that the programme suggested is too large. If, what has been said, be interpreted that the Church and its Pastor is carrying out the program, the objection may be valid. But the policy of the Church should be to inspire and co-operate where ever possible, rather than instigate.

Space will not permit one to dilate on the possibilities or to picture the visions that arise. But to the writer it appears that for a man who has the physical strength and elemental qualifications, no nobler sphere for a life investment could be found. The situation is critical and growing more and more so but with wise aggressive action it may be saved and our rural churches take their old time place as the nurseries for the national leaders in all spheres of activities and our rural communities become delightful places in which to live and work. God speed the day.