

*General
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THE BIBLICAL REVIEW

QUARTERLY

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WILBERT W. WHITE, *President*

ROBERT M. KURTZ, *Editor*

Associate Editors:

WILBERT W. WHITE LOUIS MATTHEWS SWEET ALBERT CLARKE WYCKOFF

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*The general diffusion of the Bible is the most effectual way
to civilize and humanize mankind.*—CHANCELLOR KENT.

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EDITORIAL

NEARLY TWO YEARS AGO DR. FAULKNER GAVE US A COMPREHENSIVE paper on English Bible translations, which he prefaced with some observations on the general history of Scripture translations, and then told the impressive story of the great English versions in their order. In the present issue that account is finely supplemented by Dr. Luccock's review of *The New Translations*, covering the independent efforts of modern scholars, with reference especially to the New Testament. The ones dealt with are, the Twentieth Century New Testament and the translations of Professors Weymouth, Moffatt, and Goodspeed and Mrs. Montgomery.

As stated at the outset, the writer's aim is not critical discussion, but an endeavor to consider these works from the standpoint of a pastor who discovers in them valuable aids in his own study of the Scriptures, and realizes that, rightly used, they may help every reader of the Bible. After devoting some attention to the reasons for these independent and, to some, seemingly presumptuous efforts to make the New Testament better understood, Dr. Luccock proceeds to show the difficulties encountered and to comment on the attempts by

THE COUNTRY CHURCH

By REV. HENRY W. McLAUGHLIN, D.D.

ON the eighth of June as I was passing through Charlottesville, the university town of Virginia, I met my friend, the county agent. He introduced me to the teacher of the men's Bible class of the leading Baptist Church, who said: "Yesterday I had an interesting experience. I had seventy-four men present and took a census to find out from whence they had come. Sixty-nine of the seventy-four had been born in the country."

This gave rise to two questions: 1. Where were the men that Sunday morning, living in Charlottesville, who had been born and reared in the city? 2. Who was that Sunday morning carrying on the Sunday School work in country communities from which those sixty-nine Baptists had hailed?

Rapid changes are going on in the habitat of our population. In 1910 about 60 per cent. of our people lived in the country and 40 per cent. lived in the city. Ten years later the figures were reversed, and during the last five years the country folks have been moving to the city at the rate of almost one hundred thousand per month, which means a shifting in that time of almost six millions from rural to urban life. A large proportion of these six millions is composed of the choicest young men and women. Many of them are high school graduates, and not a few hold college degrees. They are the country's best. These are the men and women who are destined to be leaders in the cities.

Who are to be the leaders in the country? The

reader may find it interesting to picture to himself just what would be the condition of our cities if, during the last fifteen years, they had not been recruited by the red-blooded, virile, moral Christian American youth from the country. The causes which have led them thither are largely social and economical. It is human nature to choose for personal promotion and profit. Agriculture has been unremunerative as compared with other pursuits. The city affords greater creature comforts and conveniences than the country. It may also be of interest for the reader to picture to himself just what will be the status of rural America if it continues to be robbed of the finest and fittest of its youth.

Life in the country has always had its hardships. Edna Ferber, in *So Big*, has not overdrawn the picture, and it is not everyone who has eyes to see that "cabbages is beautiful." Roelf Pool and Dirk DeJong were not merely the products of the school of adversity. A gambler's daughter in a private school caught a vision. She helped the country lads to see it. It is the mission of the church to give a vision not merely for success but for service. This might have been done by Rev. Mr. Dekker and the church in which he preached, had they been different.

The social and economic forces are both seen to be working against the country church. The mind of the hour is against her. She is in dire plight, and, like the little boy of the cartoons, she "needs a friend." Reports come that thousands of churches are being deserted, and one writer says: "Others are being abandoned so fast that it is impossible to keep trace of them." While the country people constitute the most hopeful part of our population, they are the most neglected.

Where is it most difficult to secure nurses and doc-

tors? In the country. Where, women having come to motherhood, are they most ignorantly attended and die in the greatest proportion? In the country. Where are school teachers the most inexperienced and poorly paid? In the country. Where is educational equipment most meager? In the country. Where is the school term the shortest? In the country. Where do children have to travel long distances over almost impassable roads to reach school? In the country.

The farmers of the United States have many compensations, but they toil longer and get less for their labor than any other portion of our population. The life of those who actually till the soil has always been hard. The farmer is the chief heir of the curse, "Cursed is the ground for thy sake; in toil shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field; in the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground." Since the day the Lord God sent the man forth from the garden to till the ground, these words have pressed hardest upon the farmer. Health, education, and the pursuits of the country people constitute problems which are closely allied to those of the religious life of rural America.

The average country church building, with its plain four walls, is poorly equipped to put on a progressive program of religious work. Frequently the community is too poor to provide adequate equipment, but more often does not have leaders with vision to see that equipment is necessary. The sprightliest and most promising preachers usually go as foreign missionaries, become city pastors or enter other fields of activity. Those who do not have a call to go elsewhere go to the country, and these with the idea that the rural work is to be endured

until something better offers. Such a minister has no heart for the work and can never accomplish the task. It is looked upon as a "stickit minister's" job. A sort of stigma is attached to one who labors in country places.

Yet the situation is not so hopeless as it seems. What has been said above is much like most of the articles appearing on the country church. What I have said is true, but not the whole truth. It would be easy enough to hunt up and count the abandoned church buildings in the city and to search out data to prove that Christianity in general is failing. Many church buildings have been abandoned in both country and city because changing conditions have made their locations unsuited to the needs, and new and better buildings have been erected in more advantageous places. Sometimes the old residence section becomes a location for business, and the church follows the people to their new homes on the boulevard.

Sometimes, in the country, the center of population shifts. Improved roads make it desirable to have the community center in the village instead of the site of the old church in the open. The congregation may be just as rural as before and much larger and more efficient than in the good old days, but the investigator finds the old, inadequate, neglected building in the field and counts it among the abandoned country churches.

I have a pretty wide personal knowledge of country churches, but know not of a single abandoned church that has not been supplanted by another church that has sprung up within the bounds of the old congregation. Some country churches have been greatly weakened by removals to the city, but the members given up have gone to bless other congregations.

Thirty-four years ago my father moved to what is

now known as Maxwelton, West Virginia. We as a family attended church at Lewisburg, five and a half miles distant, riding in a carriage every Sunday morning the year round over dirt roads. Those neighbors who had no carriages did not often go to church. There was a little one-room schoolhouse in the neighborhood where a public school was taught for about four months in the winter, and where an afternoon Sunday School was conducted from April to October. There was also occasional preaching. There is now at Maxwelton, in the open country, a church with about three hundred members. They have a commodious building with Sunday School quarters. In addition to the main Sunday School and Christian Endeavor, both of which are flourishing, three outpost Sunday Schools are conducted in the surrounding country. The congregation owns a comfortable manse, and for three years has enjoyed the full time of a pastor. Instead of the one-room school, there is now a good junior high school with four teachers, to which the children of the surrounding country are being conveyed on improved roads.

Three years ago I had occasion to study the rural conditions of the Valley of Virginia. I found that within forty miles of Staunton, the birthplace of Woodrow Wilson, there were seventeen churches in the open country, with a membership ranging from 250 to 640. This was of one denomination. There were churches of other denominations within the same radius. Each of these seventeen churches had a minister's home on a plot of ground ranging from one to fifty acres. Each had a resident pastor for all of his time, a graduate of some reputable college and of a theological seminary requiring three years of resident work. They were red-blooded

men who took a deep interest in community welfare and community organizations.

All of these churches had been having their normal loss by death, had been constantly sending a stream of life into the city congregations, and had received but few members by certificate. Notwithstanding all this, the seventeen churches had made a net average increase during ten years, from April, 1911, to April, 1921, of eighty-five members for each church. Their real growth and development were not shown by the increase in membership, but by their increase in efficiency, in service to the world at large. The amount contributed for all causes other than local expenses for the year ending March 31, 1921, was 533 per cent. more than the amount contributed for the same period of time a decade before. In the last three years, under more adverse agricultural conditions, with an unprecedented movement to the towns and cities, these churches have on an average more than held their own, some of them making a good advance.

The New Providence Church of which I have been pastor sixteen years, a congregation composed entirely of farmers, has a membership of 659, the largest in its history. During the month of May we had an average attendance at the main Sunday School of 311 (the entire Sunday School remaining to hear the sermon). In addition there are three outpost Sunday Schools with an attendance of 150 to 200. We are just completing a modern up-to-date building suited to the needs of the congregation for religious education and other activities. During the year ending March 31, 1925, the church collected and dispersed over \$30,000.00.

A country preacher may suffer some deprivations, but he has many compensations. Not long ago I told

a city visitor that, in the 179 years of the history of our congregation, there had been only eight pastors. She answered: "The people cannot be very fastidious." I said that they were not. Country people love their ministers. The country preacher may not figure in the headlines, but he does not have so many heartaches as his city brother. I have been both a city and a country pastor, and my advice to young ministers who want to invest their lives where they will yield the largest dividends for the glory of God is to give themselves as definitely to country work as some do to the foreign field. The discouraging things said in the early part of this article should constitute a challenge and a call to service. Real ministers of Christ, because they love Him, want to seek and save the lost, though it be but one stray lamb on the mountainside or in a secluded valley.

There are well-defined reasons why Christian workers should at this time direct their attention and give their lives in service to the country people. First, these people are often poor. The crowning evidence that Christ gave of His divine commission was, that the poor had the Gospel preached to them. Christlike men and women are anxious to follow in His steps. Many country folks are neglected. In some sections the coming of the automobile and good roads has tempted the well-to-do to the nearby towns to worship, and left those in spiritual destitution who cannot afford to have cars and wear fashionable clothes.

The city churches are well organized and manned with competent leaders, not only to perform the congregational tasks, but to do city mission work. The scattered people of many country districts are as sheep without a shepherd, which have the compassion of the Christ and should appeal to His followers.

Because of the movement to the city, the denominations have been taking what they call the strategic places. Home mission money spent in the cities has in a short time produced self-supporting churches. But the denomination which can do this kind of work most successfully is one that has previously cared for the country places whence these new city dwellers came. The real place of strategy for the builders of a great church is in the country. Richmond is a strongly Baptist city because the Baptist Church has long occupied the rural sections from which have come the people of the Virginia capital.

The Southern Presbyterian General Assembly at its recent meeting in Lexington, Kentucky, passed the following resolution:

“That the Assembly express the conviction that it is the task of the Church to minister to all people of the community. Recognizing that those who till the soil will ultimately own it, it emphasizes the fact that it is the part of wisdom as well as the Christian duty of the whole Church to look after the religious welfare of the farm tenants and their families. The denomination which cares for the children of the tenants in the country today is the church of tomorrow, both in country and city.”

The opportunities in the country for a man of real ability are very great, because of the large number of people who will gladly hear him and because of the fact that his message will have a very profound and lasting effect.

The other day in the city of Chicago there died Rev. Dr. W. S. P. Bryan. His grandfather, Rev. W. S. Plummer, said to him when a young minister: “Go to the country for ten years, and then you may go any-

where you please." As a small boy I knew Dr. Bryan as a country preacher where great crowds of country folks waited on his ministry. For nearly forty years he has had a distinguished career as a city pastor, but we believe he never had a congregation who loved him as those country folks did, or a people whose lives were so powerfully influenced by his ministry as when he was the shepherd of those dwellers among the hills. We naturally ask ourselves the question, Would his life have meant more to the Kingdom if his entire ministry had been given to the country church?

The country folks are Gospel-hungry and do not care for claptrap and sensation. They appreciate real sermons, meaty with Bible truths. The most constructive leaders of modern times were reared in the country, in the old-fashioned way, their souls nurtured on the Gospel, preached by men who believed their message. A famous theological professor used to tell his students: "When you go to the city wear your best suit of clothes, when you go to the country take your best sermon." A country preacher should understand farm conditions and co-operate with the agencies for rural betterment, but never lose sight of the fact that his business is not to feed men's stomachs, but their souls. He is constantly to remember that Christ wants the Gospel preached to the poor, and that it is the Gospel which is the power of God unto salvation. It is not his first business to solve social, industrial, economic, and political problems, but to preach the Gospel of grace and the truths of an inspired Bible, which will produce the right kind of men and women, and the right kind of men and women will, as enlightened citizens, solve the problems of life.

RAPHINE, VIRGINIA.