

THE RURAL PASTOR

Intelligent and Consecrated Leadership the Need of the Hour.

By Peter Radford.
Lecturer National Farmers' Union.

The rural pastor has greater possibilities than any other factor in our national life. The rural civilization of the Twentieth Century has opened up a new world of activities for him. There lie before him unexplored continents of usefulness, unemloyed forces of civilization and tremendous responsibilities such as have never before confronted the pastorate.

The need of the rural communities today is intelligent and consecrated leadership. There must be a marshaling of forces that build life, strengthen character and broaden vision. The pastor should deal with living problems. In addition to the service he now renders he should help us lift the market basket, hold out a helping hand to the farmer and develop the potential energies of the community he seeks to serve.

A More Useful Ministry.

The farmer needs the personal touch of the pastor. He seldom comes in direct contact with his halving influence, except when he is baptised, married and buried. We need to further extend Christian influence in the homes, as well as to spread the gospel in China; to instruct our children in the art of living, as well as to convert the barbarian and the Hottentot, and we should devote our energy and talent to the solution of problems of our own locality, rather than consume our energies in fighting vice and ignorance beyond our borders. It is as important that we discuss from the pulpit, the building of macadam highways from the church to our homes, as that we preach of the golden streets of the New Jerusalem. It is as much a part of the duty of the pastor to exert us to own a home while on earth as to inspire us to build a mansion in the skies and th t we should construct Christian character in our own community, rather than that we fight foreign sins in other lands. We want a religion we can farm by-as well as die by.

Christian Influence Needed.

There is an emptiness in the life of rural communities and we want preachers who can weave into the social fiber, educational pastimes, profitable pleasures and instructive amusements. Too often we find the eyes of our young people a search for a suggestion in immorality and a stepping-stone to sin. The pastor should supervise the growing lives of young people, approve their amusements, cross expressions of joy and leisure that makes for Christian character and bless their lives with Christian modesty.

The farm is the nursery of civilization, and the paragon of all religious denominations. Too long has the farm furnished the cities with their great preachers, until today the rural church is the gangway to city pulpits. The current should be reversed. The power of the pulpit is most needed in the country where the fundamental forces of human life originate. The farm is the powerhouse of all progress and the birthplace of all that is noble. The Garden of Eden was in the country and the man who would get close to God must first get close to nature. Many communities are church-ridden. We frequently have three or four churches in a community with a circuit rider once a month preaching to small congregations and all fail to perform the religious functions of the community. In many instances, more harmonious effort might result in a more efficient service. The division of religious stress and breaking into fragments of moral effort are oftentimes little less than a calamity and defeat the purposes they seek to promote.

A pastor in a neighborhood, studying the economic, social, moral and educational problems of the community, presenting fresh visions of potential possibilities and native power with beauty and new meaning, interpreting the thought-life of the community and administering to their daily needs, will contribute more toward the advancement of a locality than a dozen preachers who occupy the pulpits at irregular intervals, preaching on subjects foreign to the life of the community.

Church prejudice is a vice that saps much of the spiritual life of a community, and wasteful sectarianism is a religious crime against society. Denominational reciprocity should take its place. Non-support of church institutions and religious charges can often be traced to causes inherent with the church. There should be co-operation between churches and co-ordination of moral effort along economic lines, and there must be if the rural churches of this age are going to render a service which this age demands.

New Tasks for the Rural Church.

The rural church has been slow to adjust itself to the new order of things. The churches are discovering new opportunities for service, broader community usefulness and a greater social mission. The church must find itself for new tasks and under a new virile type of leadership undertake real community building with the modern church as the center of activity and source of inspiration and guidance. The triumph over isolation and the gradual emancipation from drudgery, the development of good roads, telephones, rural mail service and the wonderful evolution of

farm machinery make for religious advancement. The increase in intelligence, new social consciousness, growing spirit of co-operation, added efficiency of rural institutions, character, home building and better rural morals afford opportunities for a community-serving church to demonstrate its power. The rural church to fulfill its mission must swing around it the influence for progress.

THE CALL OF THE COUNTRY

Rural life offers to young men days of toil and nights of study. It offers frugal fare and plain clothes. It offers lean bodies, hard muscles, horny hands and furrowed brows. It offers wholesome recreation to the extent necessary to maintain the highest efficiency. It offers the burden of bringing up large families and training them in the productive life. It offers the obligations of using all wealth as tools and not as means of self-gratification. It does not offer the insult of a life of ease, or aesthetic enjoyment, or graceful consumption or emotional ecstacy. It offers, instead, the joy of productive achievement, of participating in the building up of a higher rural civilization.

To young women also it offers toil, study, frugal fare and plain clothes such as befit those who are honored with a great and difficult task. It offers also the pains, the burdens and responsibilities of sacred motherhood. It offers the obligation and perpetuation in succeeding generations the principles of the productive life made manifest in themselves. It does not offer the insult of a life of pride and vanity. It offers the joys of achievement, of self-expression not alone in dead marble and canvas, but also in the plastic lives of children to be shaped and moulded into those ideal forms of mind and heart which their dreams have pictured.

Co-operative thinking is the biggest problem that confronts the farmer today.

AGRICULTURAL LEGISLATION NEEDED

The Farm the Place to Study All Legislative Problems.

By Peter Radford.
Lecturer National Farmers' Union.

The principal function performed by government today is to collect taxes, keep records and prevent and punish crime; but that is not sufficient. Government should tip its hat to the Goddess of Opportunity as courageously as it draws a six-shooter on a train robber. We ought to encourage thrift as well as restrain greed. We have been basing legislation upon the extremes of human life—the classes high and low, the depraved and the talented—let us now reach the masses and the extremes will more nearly disappear. Our statutes are filled to overflowing with pity and revenge; let us add opportunity.

The slogan of the Farmers' Union is co-operation. Not only among individual farmers, but between all legitimate and useful occupations. We want to sit around the hearthstone of industry and talk over problems of mutual interest with our neighbors.

We want to invite those who are earnestly searching for information on public questions to get back to the soil with their investigations where, in the stillness of nature, they can climb the mountain-top of wisdom, explore the deep canyons of knowledge and stroll through the quiet valleys of understanding.

There is no problem in civilization that cannot be found in its native state on the farm. The labor, educational, financial, transportation, home building and all other problems are there. We will discuss a few of them.

The Labor Problem.

We bow to the dignity of labor. No one would be willing to do more to lighten the burdens, increase the safety, comforts and profits of those who labor in commerce and industry than their fellow toilers in agriculture. But how about the farmer who bows his back to feed and clothe the world, and who works from sun until sun? Is he not also entitled to an increase in pay and a shortening of hours? Much has been said about the women in the factory and behind the counter, but how about the woman in the field, drenched in perspiration, gathering the harvest, the little children, their lips wet with mother's milk, tolling by her side? Are they not also entitled to consideration? Is not the man who digs in the ground entitled to the same consideration as he who toils at the forge, weaves at the loom and works behind the counter?

The farmer has been bearing his burdens as patiently as the beast he plows, but is patience a bar from justice? The labor problem of Virginia today is on the farm, and the first attention should be given those who labor in the field.

THE POLITICAL PREACHER

THE PULPIT WARNED AGAINST THE YELLOW PERIL OF POLITICS.

A Consecrated Ministry Needed for the Rural Churches.

By Peter Radford.
Lecturer National Farmers' Union.

The farmers of this nation have on their payroll 95,000 preachers and this number applying themselves diligently and exclusively to the religious work at hand is sadly inadequate to properly serve their respective communities.

Those who put on ecclesiastical robes are in a measure free to unlock every door to the human heart and enter the secret chambers of reason and every person should submit their conduct to review and seek the counsel of those divinely appointed messengers of life, but the moment the minister closes the Bible and opens the law book, he becomes a menace to society.

The difficulty of keeping the preacher in the pulpit is as old as religion. Christ encountered it in the temple when he drove the priests from the bargain counter back to the pulpit. Our pilgrim fathers met it when, through the influence of the clergy, a witch court was established at Salem, Mass., in 1692, that precipitated a legal holocaust threatening to reduce the population to ashes and which was extinguished by the laymen uniting and forcing the preachers back to the pulpit.

The greatest peril to the church today is politics. The temptation of the ministry to throw down the cross of Christ and pick up the club of the policeman; to substitute the penalties of the law for the power of the altar and to legislate religion into human hearts, never was greater.

The world never needed a religious ministry more nor political preachers less than it does today. We need ministers to teach us how to live; we know how to vote.

The religious preacher is the most capable servant and the political preacher the sorriest master the world has ever known. Wherever power is placed in the hands of the latter they invariably become intolerant, bigoted and vicious and resort to the whip and the fagot to enforce their opinion.

Civilization has many times been compelled to drive incorrigible preachers back to the pulpit at the point of the bayonet. Many of the pages of history are wet with blood shed at the hands of political preachers who wrote laws on the statute books that committed arson upon mankind, maimed human beings with the hatchet and sent helpless women to the torture rack, all because they disagreed with their views. When in control of government, the pulpit politicians invariably undertake to perform legislative miracles such as casting out witches with the flame of a torch, suborning conscience with shackles and enforcing opinions with the guillotine.

Mixing Politics and Religion.

Politics and religion will not blend. No free government can long exist or the church perform its mission to society when preachers and politicians temporarily exchange callings, and a civilization that will countenance such conduct will soon decay. Such a traffic in occupations is as unsound in principle as the white slave trade is immoral in practice.

The hand that passes the sacrament should not collect slush funds for political purposes. The gentle voice that comforts us in sorrow and pronounces the last sad rites upon our departed loved ones should not rave and rant on the hustings. I do not believe a preacher can manipulate political machinery and be righteous any more than he could become a burglar and be honest. I think it as immoral for a preacher to seek to lobby while he prays as it would be for him to gamble while he preaches.

A preacher can no more preach a political sermon without converting his pulpit into a political rostrum than he could sell intoxicating liquor from the altar without converting the church into a bar-room. He can no more purify politics by playing the game than he can sanctify gambling by running a lottery.

I join in the oft-repeated suggestion that a preacher has as much right in political brawls as a saloon keeper and we also admit that he has as much right to get drunk as anyone else, but we would rather he would not do so for the "greater the saint the greater the sin." I think a political bishop can turkey trot in the name of Christianity as consistently as he can enter into a mud-slinging political contest to the disgrace of his church.

It is my opinion that when this world is saved it will be through religious sermons and not through political speeches. Salvation must come to us from the Bible and not from the statute book; it will come through holy counsels of consecrated ministers and not from caucuses of political preachers.

The Problem of the Laymen.

There never was a time when preachers and politicians formed an unholy alliance that civilization did not shriek out and Christianity cry aloud. Since the beginning of government, politicians have sought to decoy the ministry into the meshes of politics and make them carry banners

in political processions. They have taken the ministry to the mountain-top of power and offered to make them monarch if all they surveyed, and while most of them have said, "get thee behind me Satan," a few have fallen with a crash that has shaken every pulpit in Christendom.

The ministry, unsophisticated and confiding, is no match for the politician versed in artful persuasion and skilled in deceit, and it is the duty of the laymen to protect the ministry against the onslaught of these wolves in sheep's clothing and drive the politicians from the pulpit with the lash of public scorn. It is the laymen's problem to keep the ministry free from unholy alliances, for it is said on divine authority that we are our brother's keeper.

Political Prayer Meetings.

It is a sad day for Christianity when the church bells call the communicants together for a political prayer meeting. Such gatherings mark the high tide of religious political fanaticism, put bitterness into the lives of men; fan the flame of class hatred and destroy Christian influence in the community. The spirit actuating such meetings is anarchic, un-Christlike and dangerous to both church and state.

It must be said to the credit of the church that the political preacher is fast disappearing and may his influence ever wane and his shadow ever grow less is the prayer of the farmers of this nation.

ISOLATION AND DRUDGERY THE TWIN ENEMIES OF AGRICULTURE.

The Rural Church the Guiding Star of Progress.

THE NEW RURAL CIVILIZATION

By Peter Radford.
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We are confronting a new rural civilization. It is so radically different from the life of the past that it may well be called new, not merely because of its characteristics, but because of its triumph in rural co-operation and leadership. The utilization of modern agencies, and the use of farm machinery have greatly increased the efficiency of the farmers, broadened their vision and made life more satisfying.

The most serious enemies to country life are isolation and drudgery, and perhaps the worse of the two is isolation. It is the curse of the country. The hunger of young people for companionship has been disregarded and in various ways the social instincts have had their revenge. The fruits of modern inventive skill and enterprise have enriched country life and afforded the facilities of banishing forever the extreme isolation which used to vex the farm household of the past. The telephone is a great social asset in the rural home; the rural free delivery brings the world's daily message to the door; the parcel post delivers ten million packages per annum at a half million homes, and the automobile annihilates distance, making isolation a myth. The building of public highways has brought communities and farm homes closer together.

The Slave of Drudgery.

It is a dramatic moment on the farm when machinery emancipates the slave of drudgery. The evolution of farm machinery is a continued story of human ingenuity. One man now, by the aid of modern mechanical devices, can do as much as five or ten men used to perform and the work is less burdensome and more fascinating. The miracle of conquest will lift the curse of drudgery that has crushed the courage out of farm boys and caused them to retreat to the cities. There are many labor-saving devices for the homes that can relieve the wife of back-breaking tasks. Labor-saving machinery has wrought educational problems that have engaged the attention of the boys, relieved the housewife and added new economies and values to farming and has taken away self pity and given them a genuine pride in their calling. We need to take full advantage of these facilities.

Co-operation the Key-Note.

One test of modern civilization is the capacity for co-operation. The selfish days of the independent farmer are rapidly passing and we are beginning to catch the vision and share the profits of organized efforts. There are many farm machines adapted to serving a community, but organization of farmers is required to purchase and operate them on a co-operative basis, and new laws are needed to permit these transactions.

Soil is not a dead, inert substance, as many suppose. It is an active, virile force, full of energy and power and the farmer should know his soil if he would maintain its productivity.

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