

Our Young People

Seven Reasons for Joining the Christian Endeavor Society.

BY THE REV. F. B. MEYER.

Christian young men and women cannot, in my judgment, do better than join the Christian Endeavor movement, of which the spread throughout the world has been so phenomenal—a proof, as it seems to me, of its adaptation to the young life of our churches. Of course, where an Epworth League or some similar organization is already in existence in a church, it would be a folly and a crime to introduce a Christian Endeavor Society. But where there is nothing of that kind in occupation of the ground, and there is no objection raised by the minister and officers of the church, it is hardly possible to desire anything better for the young Christians on the one hand, or for the church on the other, than a healthy and vigorous Christian Endeavor Society. And where one already exists, one would greatly urge young Christian men and women to join it for these reasons, which have been suggested by my observation of the effect of the Society of Christian Endeavor in training and molding character, during my recent presidency of the society in Great Britain and Ireland.

1. Join it because its pledge suggests a noble ideal. One of the most beautiful prayers in the Psalter is that of Psalm 143: 10, where the Psalmist cries, "Teach me to do thy will; for thou art my God; thy Spirit is good; lead me in the land of uprightness." But the version given in the English Prayer-Book is even more beautiful. "Teach me to do the thing that pleaseth thee, for thou art my God: let thy loving Spirit lead me forth into the land of righteousness [or uprightness]."

This is a prayer for our life so simple that a child may utter it; so sublime that a seraph, who fulfils God's commandments, hearkening unto the voice of his word, may make it his own; so comprehensive that it may be used on the week's working days as well as on the Lord's Day,—so that, before putting a coin in an automatic machine or investing a fortune, before smoking the first cigar or learning to dance, before going to a place of amusement or a religious meeting, we may look up into God's face, and say, "Teach me to do the thing that pleaseth thee, for thou art my God."

This prayer is also a sufficient test for our life. It does not deal only with what is right or wrong in the abstract; its thought fits closer than that,—"Will this be well-pleasing to God?" No man has a right to judge for another, or add two or three new commands to the Decalogue for others to keep. One man observes the day to the Lord, and another does not, but each must be fully persuaded in his own mind. To his own master each servant stands or falls; and for each the supreme test is, "Teach me to do the thing that pleaseth thee."

This is the true ideal for Christian living,—the ideal of Christ, who said of himself, "I do always the things that please my Father," and of whom the Father said, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." And this is the ideal proposed in our Christian Endeavor pledge, wherein we say, "I will strive to do whatever he would like to have me do."

In addition, we promise to read the Bible and pray to God each day, and to bring Christian principle to bear on all the details and commonplaces of our life, deeming that there is nothing in which we ought to engage which may not be included within the golden circle of the will and good pleasure of God in whom all that is lovely and noble, glad and strong, blend in perfect beauty.

2. Join it because, in joining it, you enter into a covenant with God. What is known as the pledge is really a covenant, in which the soul proposes to itself certain things, relying and reckoning on God that he will fulfil his part in the common enterprise of a wholesome and righteous life. Notice the words, "relying on the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation, and trusting in God for strength, I promise"—

It is a holy compact with God into which the soul enters. It begins with God. God is always first, the Alpha, the Creator. Our fresh springs are in him. In infinite love he draws near to save us, and offer us his strength. He opens to our view all that he is prepared to do on our behalf. Proof after proof is given to warrant our trust in his fidelity to the soul that dares to step out in simple reliance on his promises, and finally we cry, "Seeing that thou hast engaged to save me, I rely on thee for salvation; and since thou art willing to supply strength in every moment of need, I reckon on thee absolutely, and so step forth into the untried and unknown path to which thy spirit calls."

When we realize that we have been called into partnership with Jesus Christ, it is easy to leave boats and nets, because he makes himself responsible for all needed supplies. He makes all grace abound toward us, so that we, having all sufficiency in all things, may abound unto every good work.

3. Join it because it will introduce you to Christian companionship of the right sort. We need companions on our way to the Golden City. I question if some of the pilgrims who went with Christ would ever have reached their destination if they had not been part of a company. The difficulty with many who come into our great cities is to know how and where to find congenial companions. But all these questions are answered by the Christian Endeavor Society. Young men and women meet there on terms of comradeship and friendliness. The new comers are received with the utmost cordiality. Those who have belonged to the society in other places find themselves surrounded by the same general conditions that they have left behind them, and know exactly how to proceed. There is therefore a golden thread which links together all places all societies, and all Endeavorers.

Wherever an Endeavorer sees the little badge glancing on the breast of another he knows that he will be greeted by a kind of spiritual affinity which is superior to all other differences, and immediately there will be a common set of experiences to discuss. There is no lack in the smaller or larger topics of conversation when two Endeavorers meet. And in all my experience of church life I have never met with a gladder, brighter, and more earnest number of young people than in our Christian Endeavor societies. The cream of our churches seems to have been gathered into them, and the pastors' universal

confession has been that they cannot be thankful enough for the type of character which this great movement has given them.

4. Join it because it will educate you for Christian service. Each society is like a sun with its attendant planets, for there are always from five to a dozen committees, on one of which each member is expected to serve. It may be that you will choose the Good Literature or the Sunshine, the Look-out or the Prayer-meeting Committee, but, whatever it is, you will find yourself one of a number of young men and maidens who are bent on achieving a common purpose with as much success as possible, doing their work tastefully, energetically, for the glory of God, and for the help and blessing of those around them.

It is a capital training to see how others do their work, to learn how a meeting should be conducted, to acquire the habit of working with others, looking at things from their standpoint, and having patience with their failures. Out of all this comes the temper and patience of a truly Christian soul, who realizes that a great machine must have various parts, each of which is different from all the rest, and that the success of the whole depends on the perfection of each several portion. These lessons will be of value to you as long as you live.

5. Join it because it will teach you to express yourself. It is a great loss to the Church when her members are unable to take an audible part in her meetings for mutual edification, prayer, and counsel taking. A man may be full of devout feeling or wise suggestion, but if he lack the power of expression he is indeed "like a fountain sealed." To himself also this lack of expression is a constant source of trial; he is nervous to be called on for an expression of his thought and desire. But you will never be conscious of this if you become an active member of a Christian Endeavor Society. Almost without knowing it you will become familiar with the sound of your own voice, and be able to express yourself easily to God and man.

It is an excellent part of our covenant with God and one another that, in his strength, we will take some part, aside from singing, in every meeting, unless hindered by some reason which we can consciously give to our Lord and Saviour. It will at first cost us a little time and thought in selecting the text or verse which will be appropriate to the subject chosen for the meeting.

6. Join it because it is a useful method of promoting the well-being of the church of your choice. All young Christians should be members of some Christian community, to which should be given the best thought and energy of their lives.

7. Join the Christian Endeavor Society because it constitutes a bond between all churches. What little pools are in ebb-tide are to the ocean, what the folds are to the one flock, that the churches are to the church, and one of the most blessed gains of Christian Endeavor has been to bring together young people from every branch of the church of Christ in great conventions and district meetings, teaching them to respect the conscientious convictions of others, and laying deep in their hearts the foundations of catholicity of spirit and comprehensiveness of view which are among the most precious equipments for a strong and useful after life.—S. S. Times.

Christ has much people in even the worst city; this should encourage the worker when all seems hopeless.