

Is the Epworth League Fulfilling Its Mission?

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IT must not be supposed that the Epworth League Movement is the initial effort of Methodism to promote the social, intellectual, and spiritual culture of her young people. During all the years of her eventful history, individual churches have sustained societies for the special benefit of their younger members. In recent years these organizations have multiplied until in the larger churches they have become quite common.

Frequent enquiries being made about the origin and development of the Epworth League in Canada, Rev. Dr. Crews has devoted a whole chapter in "Practical Plans" to a "Historical Sketch of the Movement." Thus from the minds of many of our young people false ideas as to the early history of the League have been eradicated.

The scope of the Epworth League, as we all know, is large. Here is opportunity for the development of the latent powers of youth—the cultivation of the devotional, by stated seasons of prayer, the broadening of the intellect by study of the Word of God, and other valuable books. Through the Missionary Department, not only have the Leaguers the privilege of obtaining a wide knowledge of the needs of the nations afar, but may also practically demonstrate the "real missionary spirit" in effective work at home.

League has realized, this it aims to accomplish, and in part has fulfilled.

Splendid equipment is provided its members. Attention to reading choice books has been a prominent plank in its platform as well as the systematic and regular study of the Bible.

In the Mission Study Classes, the persistent, thoughtful and continuous study of facts has resulted in a wider and more intelligent knowledge, a deeper interest, and a more flourishing missionary cause, through this truly educational policy of the League. Nor has it educated our young people as to the need alone, but it has done much to teach how that need may be met. It has pressed home the truth that not only must we pray and study, but give also of our substance, if the great work of evangelization is to be accomplished. True, we cannot with money alone purchase salvation, but it is a mighty factor in the world's forward missionary movement. There is no language that money cannot speak, no geographical bounds by which its power is circumscribed, and the most obscure, as well as the most prominent, may lend his influence here.

Above all, the aim has been to develop efficient workers by the habits of personal work, and here is where we need to place the emphasis to-day. We cannot by mathematical deduction determine progress in the Christian Endeavor Department. Personal work and consecration are vital parts upon which depend the real success of the Epworth League. Without these strong corner-stones we are sure to fall. It



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Then athletics, employing the attention of youth, may also be engaged in with pure motives, and the physical, too, be consecrated.

So we find the Epworth League has indeed an extended mission. Has it fulfilled its mission? Some might answer in the negative.

We hear it sometimes said that the church would be better without the League, that there would be more spirituality, more devotion, and a better type of Christian if the League did not exist, that the class-meeting would be more largely attended, and that, generally, the League has displaced the weekly prayer-meeting.

But is the Epworth League to blame? We do not wish to say that the League has in every respect fulfilled its mission, nor yet met the entire expectation of its promoters, but it cannot be denied that a great and useful work has been accomplished. The greater part of the world's work in the mechanical sphere and in the realm of commerce is done by the younger men, and we are only just beginning to realize the value of youth in the work of the entire church.

If our young men were all fully consecrated to God's work, the unevangelized forces of the world would be won for Christ in this generation. In the United States and Canada there are said to be six to eight millions of members in the Young People's Societies, and if all at work, what a tremendous power they would be! The trouble is we have been spending much of our time in the conversion of hardened sinners, while the same amount of energy used among the young would have brought ten-fold the results. This the Epworth

is well to cultivate the social. It is a religious duty we owe to our fellows, as well as to God, to give liberally to spread His cause. It is indispensable that we learn God's will by the study of His Word, but our spiritual power and efficiency come only from close and intimate touch with Jesus Christ day by day.

We must ever remember that the energy, volume and quality of the spiritual life of the Epworth League will depend upon the purity and fervor of the spiritual life of each individual member, and if the League is to be a spiritual force it will be because its members are living Spirit-filled lives. There can never be any great outflow of spiritual power upon our leagues till there has been a mighty influx into our individual hearts from the great reservoir above, nor will there be any great permanent ingathering into our League till we realize the need and practice the habit of personal work.

Weekly meetings are good, they help to enthuse, but there is no work so effective as the individual and personal work for Christ.

We should therefore so cultivate the spirit and develop the habit of personal activity for Christ that it will no longer seem to be a duty, but a delightful service. With these qualities fully developed it will no longer be necessary to ask, "Is the League fulfilling its Mission?" for its success will be so marked that even the prejudiced will see and acknowledge it.

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