

## YOUNG PEOPLE IN THE CHURCH

THE Topic for the first meeting in August, under the direction of the First Vice-president, deals with the important subject restated above. In addition to what Dr. Forbush has said in the text-book "Young People's Problems" and the article dealing with the topic in its regular place, by Mr. Bamforth, we will do well to bear in mind the two great outstanding truths growing out of the teachings of Jesus in reference to the Church and the young.

1st. It is very evident that He intended that little children should be in themselves a valuable contribution to the Kingdom which He established upon the earth.

2nd. It is equally clear that He intended that young disciples should make for themselves a valuable contribution to the Kingdom.

Study these two propositions. The first relates the children to the Church according to such passages as are recorded of the Master's teachings, e.g., "Suffer the little children to come unto me and forbid them not for of such is the Kingdom of Heaven"; "Wherefore it is not the will of your Father which is in Heaven that one of these little ones should perish"; "Except ye be converted and become as little children ye cannot enter the Kingdom of Heaven." By such words of His we are able to get His viewpoint of the present worth of the little child. Jesus did not rate the child as of supreme value simply because of what that child might grow to be in future years, but He esteemed him of priceless worth because of what he really was at the actual time of speaking.

If parents had this thought of their children they would realize that their first obligation was that of *dedication*. The presenting of the child to the Lord through the ordinance of Baptism is more, much more, than giving the baby a name. Rightly understood and interpreted, it means that the parents admit the Divine ownership of the child, the Divine redemption of the child, the Divine rights in the child, and by their presentation of the child they publicly make acknowledgment of their purpose to honor God's Fatherhood, to surrender to Him the first rights of control of their little one, and to pledge themselves to hold their child for Him as a token of His love for them and of their fidelity to Him. Such thoughts on the part of parents would add greatly to the sacredness of the baptismal ordinance, and would mean a whole lot more for the child as it grows than too often is the case under ordinary prevailing ideas of the baptismal rite.

Again, if the Church had the thought of Jesus regarding the children uppermost in its heart, it would take greater care of the little ones and seek to fulfil the positive command of the Good Shepherd when He said, "Feed my lambs." The first duty of the parent regarding the religious life of the child is to dedicate him to the great Father from whom he came. The first duty of the Church is to shepherd the little ones within its sheltering fold, until such time as the growing child is capable of receiving some measure of religious instruction. Dedication precedes education in the religious culture of the child, and in this both the home and the Church must agree and co-operate for the lasting good of the little one. The principle announced lies at the very foundation of all the Church's provisions for the retention and care of its children. It is the only good reason why the Cradle Roll exists in the Sunday school. It is the one justification for a Baptismal Roll and later for Catechumen classes in the Church, both in charge of the minister. It gives abundant room for the Junior Epworth League. Acknowledge the rights of the child in the Church because of the child's rightful place in the Kingdom as set forth by our Lord, and there will be no hesitancy on the part of either parent, teacher, or minister in "counting in" the children and of treating them as being in themselves, here and now, what we have called a *valuable contribution* to the Kingdom of Heaven.

But our second proposition develops as we thus proceed. Children are not children for ever, nor for long. The time soon comes when to each one there opens up the sense of individual responsibility growing out of conscious powers of reasoning, choosing, acting for himself. The child is no longer a passive member but an active one. His parents cannot make his decisions for him, the Church cannot hold him against his will. Up to this point both parents and Church may have done all within their power for him; but now he has powers of his own, and is not slow to claim the right to exercise them. Such is the normal result of the child's growth, and the Church should rejoice in it as she seeks to wisely and lovingly guide the youth to the best choices for the highest life-values possible to him during the formative years of early manhood with their expanding powers of practical utility. In making such provision for the growing youth the Church has proven the value of all its preaching, teaching, training, and industrial agencies. It is not our intention to institute comparisons between these essentials. In the development of a deepening sense of responsibility for the full equipment of the growing youth so that he might make something like an adequate contribution to the sum total of the spiritual worth of the Kingdom, the Church has, from time to time, changed and modified existing agencies and introduced new ones. Nor has the ultimate been yet reached. The Sunday school has done a glorious work in the past, but the Church is only beginning to realize its possibilities as a real school of practical training for positive Christian service on the part of the young. The Epworth League was inaugurated to supplement the inadequate machinery of the Sunday school, and has had a splendid record in Methodism. As yet both school and League are necessary in our Church and neither can say to the other "I have no need of you." If in the Sunday school the child learns to appropriate Truth for his own sake, in the Epworth League he must learn to apply and employ Truth for the sake of somebody else. This is fundamental to our entire Missionary propaganda; it is vital to our Citizenship work; it is indispensable to all effective Service in the name of the Master. The Church must make it easy for the young man or woman to offer a real living practical contribution of both character and service to the Kingdom. If she does not the youth will suffer much and the Kingdom will lose more. The Church must hold her youth, not only for the good she can do them, but for the good she can help them do others. The youth must regard the Church not only as a good place to go to for the getting of good, but a good place to go from for the giving of good. All Church machinery, existing ostensibly for the religious education of the young, may be counted as of value just in proportion as it affords opportunity for the exercise of youthful gifts and graces in actual service to others in emulation of Him who "came not to be ministered unto but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many." The Church and the Young must learn this and work together for the largest possible reciprocal benefits.

### Planning for the Future

This is one of the chief duties of the principal executive officer of any organization. Just here we desire to remind our Epworth League Presidents of the value of taking a long look ahead, and thereby having clearly in mind what is to be undertaken as the months progress. The President of the Conference or District League that has no vision of the future can have no prospect for his league. The same is true in a more limited sense of the local league. The President is the man on the bridge, the field marshal, the general manager, according to the figure used. It is his business to study the whole situation and to devise the best ways and means of accom-