

But the real weakness is at a deeper level than statistics can plumb. It lies in the large numbers of conventional Christians who grow up within the Church's fellowship, and who are eventually received as communicants. But their growth in the Christian life has never become to them a matter of supreme importance, and their obligations to Christ and the Church are looked upon languidly and leisurely, and without any sense at all of the life-and-death urgency of the business they are in.

This is the most serious failure of our Christian education programme — that in so many lives it has failed to make Christ and His gospel of such commanding importance that He thereafter assumes mastery of life's values and purposes.

The reason for these grave weaknesses is partly that our teachers and leaders are not themselves deeply enough committed Christians, and they fail in their task because the communication of faith is from person to person, and one cannot communicate, in the Christian sense, what one only knows as hearsay. Another reason for our failure lies in the fact that the Sunday School is only part of the answer to the need for Christian education. It cannot possibly do the job alone, and the effort to make it do so — usurping the vital roles of home and congregation — must be reckoned one of the far-reaching errors of Protestantism, from which we need to turn with new insight and determination.

### WHERE WE FAIL

Once again, we are face to face with the issue of ourselves and our responsibility. For the whole congregation teaches, not simply the Sunday School. The work of Christian education lags far behind what it might be because of the profound inertia of largely uncommitted adult members. It is from deeply committed adults, first as parents in our homes, where the indispensable groundwork of the Christian faith is laid, and then in the general life of the congregation, where that faith is nourished and brought to fruition in surrender to Christ, that true growth in the Christian life comes.

For too long we have tried to compartmentalise our educational work within the Church. It is perhaps more comfortable to "leave it to the Sunday School", as such large numbers of our congregations are content to do, but the results are poor

indeed. This is not the rich fellowship of the Church of which the New Testament speaks.

This is a poor substitute, by which too many Christians seek to dodge the solemn responsibilities of the Church's teaching ministry. Until at the very core of every congregation there appears a new depth of concern about the Church's real task and ministry, a new commitment of heart and life to Christ's purposes,

there will be no growth into living faith at all commensurate with the immeasurable power of that gospel we so glibly take upon our lips.

The key to the future is in the total Christian community, for the whole congregation teaches, and teaches continually, through its life and fellowship. We must see that that teaching becomes the instrument of Christ and His gospel and not the cause of indifference and hostility.

## BOYS OF THE YOUNG BRIGADE

By T. S. MARTIN

**T**HE Presbyterian Church in Victoria has so far failed to realise the value of its work among boys of the international organisation — the Boys' Brigade. Today, scattered through 21 countries, there are 200,000 boys enrolled in this organisation, which has as its object:

"The Advancement of Christ's Kingdom among Boys, and the promotion of habits of obedience, reverence, discipline, self-respect and all that tends towards a true Christian Manliness."

In Victoria there are 170 lads from 12 to 17 comprising eight companies enrolled in the B.B. These young Victorians have the same vision as their brothers in other countries — white, brown and black boys who, as members of the Boys' Brigade, are "sure and steadfast" in their purpose.

No greater purpose can be envisaged. The members of this inter-denominational youth organisation, when on parade, wear a simple uniform, consisting of a cap, belt and haversack. By virtue of its constitution, each company of the B.B. is attached to a church, whose authorities have the right to decide the type and method of religious instruction to be given, as well as having complete control over its internal affairs.

### BIG REPUTATION

The Boys' Brigade was founded in 1883, by William (later, Sir William) Smith, a Presbyterian who formed the 1st Glasgow Company. Its object and simple uniform remain unchanged. In Britain the movement is widespread, and everywhere it is highly regarded as a loyal Church organisation. The Queen is patron, and honorary office-bearers include the leading dignitaries of the Presbyterian, Anglican, Baptist, Con-

gregational and Methodist Churches. President of the B.B. this session is Lord Maclay, of Kilmacolm.

The fundamental characteristic of the B.B. is the combination of religion with drill and discipline. While company activities include first aid, physical training, swimming and camping, the Bible class is the real dynamic. The Boys' Brigade has a junior organisation for lads from nine to 12, a condition of membership being attendance at Sunday School. Jointly, these organisations represent "a nine years' plan for boyhood." An interest in missionary work is fostered in both these organisations, and last session approximately £20,000 was contributed by Bible Class and other collections towards Church and medical missions.

### OUR CHANCE

At present there are 73 B.B. companies in Australia. Of the eight in Victoria, however, only one belongs to the Presbyterian Church. What a challenge this presents to us — particularly in Melbourne, where as yet there is no Presbyterian company!

Full particulars are obtainable from the Overseas Secretary of the Boys' Brigade, Abbey House, Westminster, London, S.W.1., who will welcome your enquiries. Or the Federal Secretary, Mr. R. McEwan, P.O. Box 4, Haberfield, Sydney, will be pleased to tell you how you can have a Boy's Brigade company in your Church.