

Boy Scouts, the Gymnasium, the Educational Classes and the Religious exercises all make for discipline’.

Before the advent of Scouting, however, the Boys’ Brigade had shown a quite remarkable growth throughout the world. By 1902 there were 35,000 members outside Britain and 50,000 in the British Isles. Outside the United Kingdom there was evidence of strong work in the U.S., Canada, the West Indies, South Africa, Australia, New Zealand, India, Ceylon and New Guinea. As one leader pointed out at the Annual Council in Newcastle, England, in September 1902 ‘the BB had become more than national; it had become Imperial’.²⁷ Some writers went even further in seeing ‘the Boys’ Brigade as a factor in Imperial Unity’ that ‘so powerful an organization is a boon and a blessing to the Empire’.

The Boys’ Brigade is not confined to those of British blood, for in its ranks are many black and coloured members, and the day is not far distant when the youth of the yellow races also will be recruiting under its banner. To one who is at present unable to take an active part in Brigade work it is an inspiration to read that 87,000 Boys are standing shoulder to shoulder in the one great cause and pressing forward to the one ideal.²⁸

The previous January one writer in the *Boys’ Brigade Gazette* had achieved immense, if somewhat silly and almost blasphemous allegorical heights, as he surveyed the ‘Symbol of the Union Jack’: ‘But there dawns on me an allegory. I seem to see Christ approaching the threshold of the British Empire . . . “let all who own my Father rally round this Union Jack”’.²⁹

Fortunately for the movement not all of W. A. Smith’s colonial emissaries or article writers were as naive and disastrous as this one. Smith himself subscribed little or nothing to Imperial and Anglo-Saxon jingoism: he was more interested in the spiritual, moral and material welfare of boys. He made only two visits overseas to review the progress of the work he had founded and these trips were both to North America in 1895 and 1907. His attitude was made clear after a visit to Boston in 1895:

. . . we felt that The Boys’ Brigade represented a kingdom grander and wider than either the United States or the British Empire and that, without losing anything of the feeling of patriotism which has made both our countries what they are today, we could sink all national differences in the spirit of brotherhood which is born of such teaching as that of The Boys’ Brigade. . . .³⁰

Smith’s tenets were uncomplicated and they were simply and effectively expounded by some very powerful brigade ‘missionaries’ to the Empire. Among these were Professor Henry Drummond (1851–1897), a prolific and influential writer on religious and scientific themes and Professor of Natural Science at the Free Church College in Glasgow from 1877, and John Campbell