

BOYS BRIGADE: UNSURE and UNSTEADFAST? APPENDIX added 22nd October 2022

Several items concerning the **BOYS BRIGADE** have caught my attention in recent times. The most recent was the article located on this link –

https://www.historyscotland.com/history/the-boys-brigade-was-founded-on-this-day-in-scottish-history/?fbclid=IwAR0nUnrBrTk-R-NCNjMsiYI40K3zdjRSL0HaQ9kp2xLaAEO9kL0_1th-hF8#

The article opened with these words –

The **Boys Brigade** was founded on 4 October 1883 in Glasgow by Sir William Alexander Smith. Smith was an army officer and Sunday school teacher, born in Thurso, who created the Boys' Brigade with the aim of promoting '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.'

The Boys' Brigade motto 'sure and steadfast' comes from a phrase from the King James Bible '**Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast.**' (Hebrews 6:19).

Hebrews 6:19 continues with these important words – “**AND which entereth into that within the veil**”. The following comments from **F B Hole** in his commentary on Hebrews (p 27) are helpful –

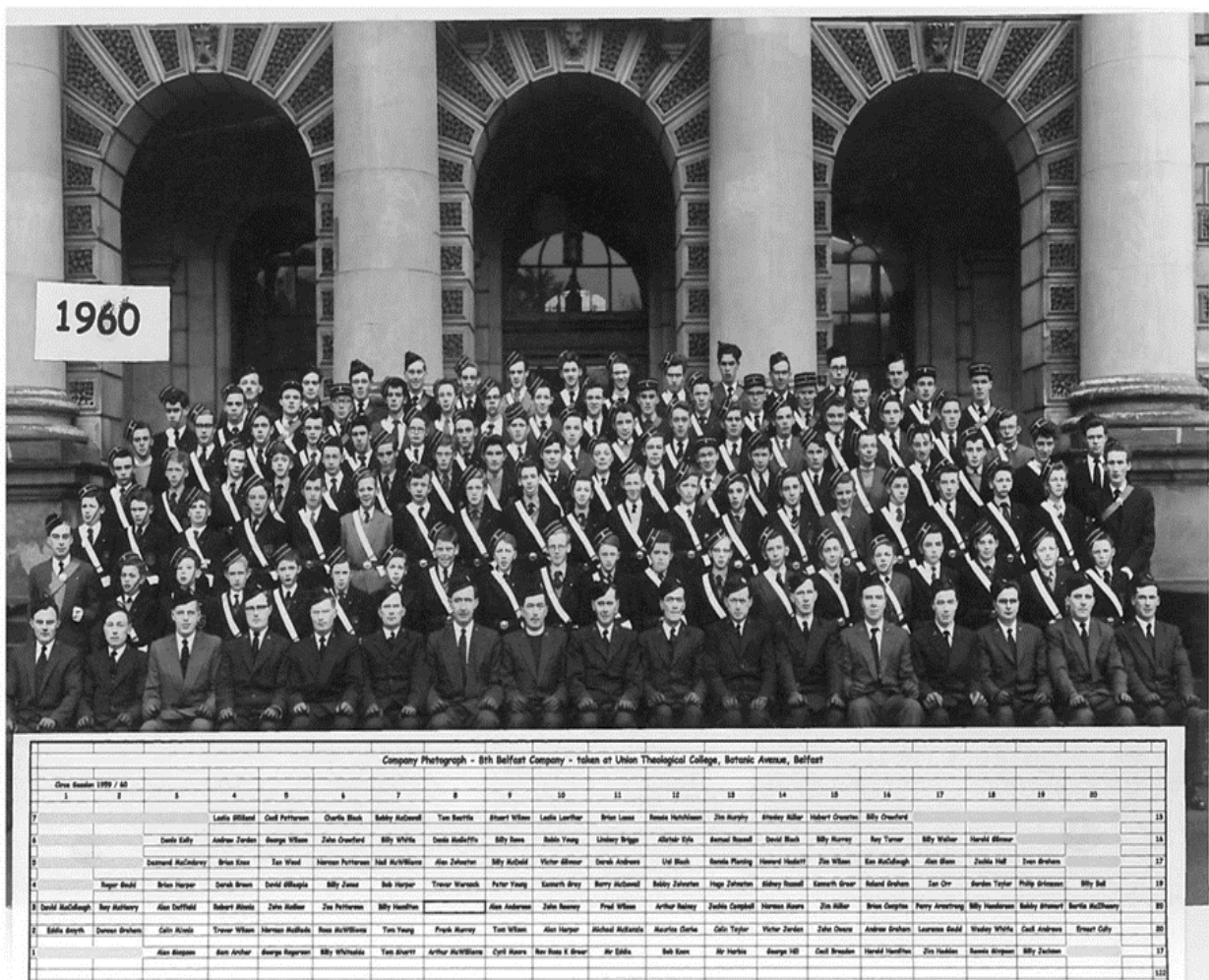
'The Christian's hope is heavenly; therefore, it is said to enter into "that within the veil". "Within the veil" was the holiest of all, typical of the third heaven: that is, the immediate presence of God. "That" within the veil was the ark of the covenant, typical of Christ. Now Christ is entered into the immediate presence of God, and that on our behalf. He is entered as Forerunner and as High Priest. **Our hope being centred on Him acts as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast** ... We are already anchored to the Person and the place to whom and to which we are going'

Let me just state at this point, for it is relevant to this whole article, **Roman Catholicism DENIES** such “**sure and steadfast**” assurance to its adherents – indeed, if they claim to have such “**sure and steadfast**” assurance of entering immediately into heaven when they die then they are anathematised by their own 'church'. The **Council of Trent** stated –

Sixth Session: Canon 16. 'If anyone says that he will FOR CERTAIN, with an ABSOLUTE and infallible certainty, have that great gift of perseverance even to the end, unless he shall have learned this by a special revelation, let him be ANATHEMA'.

Roman Catholics are dogmatically denied the right to believe that they have "an anchor of *their* soul, both sure and steadfast".

Perhaps you are wondering why the **Boys Brigade** is of such interest to me – well, the truth is that I was a member of that organisation and the following photo, dating back to 1960 is 'exhibit one' –



This was the company and officers of the 8th BB attached to Cooke Centenary Presbyterian Church in Belfast. The photo was taken at the front of Union Theological College in Belfast. Yours truly is in the row immediately behind those seated at the front and I am one in from the right.

On the following link you can obtain information about the **Boys Brigade** and an important section to note is entitled – **‘Our Object’** – this is the link

<https://boys-brigade.org.uk/who-we-are/>

Under **‘Our Object’** we read –

The Object of The Boys’ Brigade is:

“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.”

Christ’s kingdom can only **‘advance’** as people are converted to saving faith in the Lord Jesus Christ – that was why the company I belonged to held a BB Bible Class each Sunday morning before Sunday morning service. Yes, **‘habits of Obedience, Reverence, Discipline, Self-respect and all that tends towards a true Christian manliness’** were promoted but so also was the need for conversion to Christ and that only happens when the TRUE Gospel is proclaimed.

Because of dwindling numbers, we learn via this article that membership has been opened up to those of non-Christian faiths, no faith and to girls

<https://www.heraldscotland.com/news/15541825.boys-brigade-opens-faiths-combat-dwindling-numbers/>

Here are a few extracts from that article –

‘Founded in Glasgow in 1883 to promote "reverence, discipline, obedience and all that tends towards a true Christian manliness", the youth group's numbers have shrunk from 100,000 members in its heyday to just 17,000 north of the border today’ (Cecil – please note that the article did not include “The advancement of Christ’s kingdom among boys’) ... John Sharp, the new director for Scotland, has said he wants to move away from the perception that the organisation was an exclusively Protestant one. He said: "We are not affiliated with any Christian denomination and so we are open to young people of all different faiths. In an increasingly secular world, we are also open to people with no faith. Most of our groups would be attached to the Church of Scotland but we are not a part of the Kirk as an organisation and I think that is an important to stress." (Cecil – why does Mr Sharp want to distance himself from the Protestant faith which was the faith of the founder, William Alexander Smith, and which he no doubt recognised to be the basis of the ‘evangelistic tool’ to ADVANCE Christ’s kingdom among boys. I have no problem with those of non-Christian faith or no faith joining BUT it should be made clear to them and their guardians that the aim is to ADVANCE Christ’s kingdom through the message of the Protestant faith of its founder.)

The Boys Brigade began admitting female members a number of years ago, and **Mr Sharp** said that this policy had proven a success with one group in Dunoon now split evenly between both sexes. However, **he feels that the organisation should be more vocal about its success in moving on from its traditional image as a male-only preserve**, saying: "As an organisation we definitely need to improve how we get the message out there." **(Cecil – this completely baffles me why someone who works for the BOYS Brigade wants to ‘move’ on’ from its image of being ‘a male-only preserve’ when there is an organisation called The GIRLS Brigade – helpful information on https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Girls%27_Brigade)**

I have referred to the **‘Protestant faith... of the founder, William Alexander Smith’**. There is helpful information in the article on this link

<https://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/research/learning/hall-of-fame/hall-of-fame-a-z/smith-william-alexander>

and it should be noted that he was associated with the **FREE Church of Scotland** which then would have been regarded as even more ‘evangelical’ than the ‘national’ Church of Scotland. These links give helpful information on the history of the ‘Free Church’ –

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Free_Church_of_Scotland_\(1843%E2%80%931900\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Free_Church_of_Scotland_(1843%E2%80%931900))

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Free_Church_of_Scotland_\(since_1900\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Free_Church_of_Scotland_(since_1900))

Where is William Alexander Smith remembered and buried? Well, he is remembered on a plaque in **St Giles’s Cathedral in Edinburgh**. And who was a former minister of **St Giles’s** – no less a person than the great Reformer, **John Knox**, as you can read on –

<https://www.stgilescathedral.org.uk/john-knox>



As for where he is buried, Mr Smith is buried in the Western Necropolis Cemetery, Glasgow, Scotland. This is his headstone –



It seems obvious that Mr Sharp is ignoring the Word of God that says **“And be not conformed to this world” (Romans 12:2)** or perhaps the term **‘woke-world’** might be more appropriate in this particular instance.

The other article concerning the **BOYS BRIGADE** that caught my attention related a photograph that was circulated in August 2022 –



This photo is from an article on the web site of the **Boys Brigade**

<https://boys-brigade.org.uk/meeting-pope-francis/> [#BoysBrigade](#) [#LifeToTheFull](#)
[#FaithInYoungPeople](#)

Monday 15th August 2022

Our Brigade President, Rev Dez Johnston recently met with Pope Francis. Dez was joining 300 young people **at Alpha's Youth Camp in Central Italy** when he had the opportunity to meet with the Pope in the Vatican City. Pope Francis told those gathered: *"May Jesus become your great Friend, your Companion along the way. May the living Jesus become your life! Every day and forever."* **Dez shared: "To meet Pope Francis was a huge honour and a very special moment. He is someone who truly believes in the power of young people and encouraged us to dream of a future which they have a unique part of."** "As BB groups across the United Kingdom and Republic of Ireland prepare to open their doors once again, it's important to remember the incredibly important role we can play in children and young peoples' journeys in faith and living life to the full."

I have to confess that when I first saw the photo and read the accompanying write-up, I was very tempted to immediately write **Dez Johnston** off as an ecumenical reprobate. However, I decided to probe a little deeper and went to the BB website and watched a 10-minute video of **Dez** outlining his hopes and aspirations for the BB. You can view the video on this link –

<https://boys-brigade.org.uk/introducing-our-new-brigade-president/>

I was struck by two things about **Dez**, his humility and his sincerity. He expressed a desire for boys to come to faith in Jesus Christ – however, the problem is this – he obviously views the ‘Jesus Christ’ of the **ALPHA** course and the **ROMAN CATHOLIC** religion as being the true Jesus Christ – they are not.

My belief is that **Dez** may very well be a ‘converted man’ but that sadly he is currently a ‘misguided man’. I have in consequence made contact with **Dez** and have sent him links to various items on the subjects of **ALPHA** and **ROMAN CATHOLICISM**. He has confirmed to me that he followed up all the links I sent to him.

We have agreed that if he comes at some stage to Northern Ireland that we will meet to chat or alternatively we will hopefully meet up when, God willing, I am scheduled to be in Scotland for several weeks in August 2023.

Please join with me in praying that God will show clearly to **Dez** the dangerous deficiencies enshrined in **ALPHA** courses and the soul-damning heresies promoted by **ROMAN CATHOLICISM**.

The first verse of what has come to be known as ‘**The BB Hymn**’ reads

**Will your anchor hold in the storms of life.
When the clouds unfold their wings of strife
When the strong tides lift and the cables strain
Will your anchor drift or firm remain**

Sadly the ‘**storms**’ and ‘**strains**’ of ecumenical, multi-cultural/multi-faith compromise appear currently to be causing the ‘**anchor**’ of the **Boys Brigade** to ‘**drift**’ rather than remaining ‘**firm**’ and so, in consequence, the motto could currently, I believe, be justifiably written as ‘**Unsure and Unsteadfast**’.

APPENDIX:

Boys Brigade (Northern Ireland) to 'go it alone'?

Shortly after this article was posted to the ministry web site and I had given details of it on Facebook, a number of folks alerted me to the fact that less than a month ago the **'Boys Brigade' (Northern Ireland)** had decided to start negotiations about separating from the rest of the United Kingdom and also from the Republic of Ireland. The article on the link that follows gives helpful information concerning the decision and quotes a statement by **BB NI** as saying –

“The Northern Ireland District of The Boys’ Brigade has decided to establish a different relationship with BBUK & ROI,” it said. “The AGM voted by clear majority (88.5% to 11.5%) to enter negotiations with the stated aim of becoming a separate autonomous body by mutual agreement.”

I am personally very pleased at this news – the link to the article is –

<https://www.newsletter.co.uk/education/boys-brigade-in-northern-ireland-decides-to-split-from-gb-and-republic-of-ireland-3857771>

