

A Study of Scouting

Through the words of the Scouts, of the
Scriptures, and of the Synods

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It's an institution which seems uniquely American. The Boy Scouts of America stress rugged individualism combined with service to our country and service to our God. This institution focuses young boys away from leisure activities and models dependable, reliable young citizens. It seems like a win-win for everyone. America gets a more educated and better behaved citizenship. Parents get well disciplined and directed children. Boys get life skills that will benefit them for their rest of their lives.

Yet, with all these benefits, the Wisconsin Synod seems out of touch. "You don't support the Boy Scouts? Can you be serious?" This was the question posed to the author of this paper by a first time church visitor during the author's first month of his vicar year. The visitor couldn't believe that what he had read on the Internet was true. The visitor painted the situation in black and white – the WELS are holdovers from a previous generation and somehow fail to support a American program of youth training like the Boy Scouts. The WELS also has similar stick-in-the-mud beliefs like limiting women's suffrage and closed communion.

The first time visitor had a good point. Can we in the WELS still seriously reject the Boy Scout Movement? We'd better have some good reasons for rejecting such an popular American institution and not just our own opinion. We have such good reasons and we owe a debt of gratitude to our forefathers in the WELS. They had the keen scriptural insight to understand that the heart and core of the Boy Scouts is diametrically opposed to the work of the Church which is the spreading of the Gospel. They also had the intestinal fortitude to defend their beliefs against our brothers in the Synodical Conference. Thanks be to God for raising up faithful leaders in this time of controversy.

My research so far has seen the Boy Scout Movement covered from three different angles: People research Scripture about the Boy Scouts, they research Boy Scout literature about the Boy Scouts, and

people research the conventions of the late 1940s and early 1950s for proceedings about the Boy Scouts. This paper will present all three angles together in a codified way to understand the “big picture” why the Wisconsin Synod does not support the Boy Scouts. We’ll begin by understanding that the history of the Boy Scouts of America ^{shows that} is not an uniquely American institution, as some would suppose, but rather an institution which had been Americanized and spiritualized for “success” by its founders in America. Then we’ll look at the Boy Scouts by reading their own produced materials and comparing their teachings with Scripture. Finally, this paper will look at the practical literature of the Boy Scout Movement. We will want to see if the doctrinal differences expressed by the WELS and LC-MS over the Boy Scouts are shown in the training materials of the Boy Scouts.

It is surprising to most people that the Boy Scouts did not start in America. Its underpinnings hail from the military scene in Africa. Lieut. General Sir Robert S. S. Baden-Powell was a scout for the British Army in South Africa. As he received new recruits from England, he found them unprepared for military life in the bush of South Africa. Sure, they knew how to care for a rifle, but they didn’t know how to care for themselves. Baden-Powell found them lacking dependability, initiative, and resourcefulness. He trained these new recruits under *Stunts in Scouting* to develop these skills and abilities. He produced his schemes under another title *Aids to Scouting*¹ which was published and sold quickly in England. Interest grew in this book and when Baden-Powell returned to England in 1903 boys’ schools were eager for more materials. He drew on a number of sources² to begin the Boy Scout Movement which formally began at YMCA building in Birkenhead, England on January 24th 1908. The purpose of this Movement

¹ We should note that Baden-Powell produced into book form his previous studies of *Stunts in Scouting* and called it *Aids to Scouting*. More information is available on page 8 in *Fundamentals of the Boy Scout Movement*. His Boy Scout materials, both in study and book form, were both widely distributed.

² The *History of Boy Scouts in America* quotes Baden-Powell on page 5 attributing the Boy Scout Movement as an “evolution of ideas gathered from all sources, of which the following are a few: Doctor Hahn, Cuhulain and his Boy Knights, Codes of the Zulus, Red Indians, Pacific Islanders, etc. and their customers, Kenelm Digby’s “Broadstone of Honour”, Code of King Arthur, Sir W.A. Smith and the Boys’ Brigade Organization, Dan Beard’s Pioneer Work, Seton’s Camp Games”

started off ^{so simply} simple. "To help in making the rising generation, of whatever class or creed, into good citizens at home or for the colonies."³

As the Movement grew in size and shape, distinctive features that separated the Boy Scouts from other boys' groups emerged. The Oath, the Scout Law, the Motto, the Good Turn, the Badge, and the Patrol became the standards by which the Boy Scouts were identified from other groups. This Movement matriculated from Britain to America in 1909 through the work of William D. Boyce. Boyce, a Chicago publisher, while visiting London was so impressed by the courtesy and service rendered to him by an unknown Boy Scout that he brought this Movement to America.

While the Boy Scout Movement in Britain was largely removed from the religious sphere, the Boy Scouts became completely immersed in religion in America. The first troops under the direction of Boyce and Colin H. Livingstone were founded in their local YMCA. YMCA religious leaders saw the Boy Scout Movement as an honor system of character development⁴ which would successfully train youth. The program took off rapidly, so rapidly in fact that the Boy Scouts quickly became in debt due to the volume of printing and publishing they were producing. They need^{ed} a steady hand at the wheel to guide this organization to financial stability. Dr. James E. West, a former orphan who had previously managed orphanages, was chosen as Chief Scout Executive along with other notable men as assistants.⁵

Dr. West, along with other members of his council, set to "Americanize" the principles of this British organization. Unfortunately, they did more than just update Baden-Powell's writings into American

³ William D. Murray, *The History of the Boy Scouts of America* (New York: Boy Scouts of America, 1937), pg. 6.

⁴ *Ibid* pg. 22.

⁵ Pres. Taft and Pres. Roosevelt served as Honorary Presidents. Daniel Beard, who's Sons of Daniel Boone had amalgamated with the Boy Scouts, along with Gen. Verbeck and Col. Bomus served as National Scout Commissioners.

English.⁶ With the addition of the 12th Law⁷, they fortified this organization as a religious one. “A Scout is Reverent. He is reverent toward God. He is faithful in all of his religious duties and respects the convictions of others in matters of custom and religion.”⁸ While one could argue that Baden-Powell in his first law⁹ had set up this Movement in the religious sphere, West’s work brought religious involvement as an emphasis, not as a sidelight, for the Boy Scouts. Note the opening sentence of President Coolidge in his opening address on these new laws. “What a formula for developing moral and spiritual character.”¹⁰ Baden-Powell wanted this organization to develop only moral character, yet West and others desired a spiritual reformation as well.

This Movement progressed through the towns and villages of the United States through not only the work of local Boy Scout Troops and the YMCA but also through the foundation of their magazine *Boys’ Life*. The artistic renderings of a young Norman Rockwell appealed to the frontierism and enthusiasm of young boys across the United States. With West as editor and Rockwell as artist this magazine strove to instruct young boys nationwide to become good citizens. However, there was only one way they could become good citizens.. “The Boy Scouts of America maintains that no boy can grow in the best kind of citizenship without recognizing his obligation to God.”¹¹ The founders of the Boy Scouts in America did not shy away from staking religion as the high purpose and goal for the Boy Scouts. “On this subject Ernest Thompson Seton¹² wrote as follows: “Dan Beard feels as I do – the Twelfth Law is absolutely a sine-qua-non.”¹³ West also wrote in 1935 a message concerning Easter and Passover which closes in

⁶ Most notable changes were vowel letters from “honour” to “honor” or words from “whistle” to “smile”.

⁷ It should be recognized that many of these thoughts were not unique to West. Baden-Powell, in the genesis of the program, had sought instruction from Jew, Catholic, Anglican, and Protestant ministers to create an organization that would train youth in an acceptable way for all religious aims and purposes.

⁸ Ibid pg. 63.

⁹ To do my duty to God and to the King

¹⁰ Ibid pg. 64.

¹¹ Ibid pg. 499.

¹² Founder of the Woodcraft Indians and became one of the founding pioneers of the Boy Scouts of America

¹³ Ibid pg. 503.

these words “The faith of mankind suffers when a whole nation violates its religious principles and desecrates its altars of religion... Times may change, but there can be no shifting standards in the basic honor and integrity of our people, so as long as we build securely upon the foundation stones, quarried by the Pilgrim Fathers from the mountains of eternal truth.”¹⁴ West and the early leaders felt that by following the 12th Law Scouts would not only become better citizens but also hold on to their individual faiths. “It will at once be seen that the twelfth Scout Law is more than an idealistic pronouncement. It is a statement of principle, which has served as the basis for adoption of the Boy Scout Program by all religious bodies, because it guaranteed complete respect for all faiths, while urging the necessity of an adequate religious experience for each individual Scout.”¹⁵

The teachings of the Boy Scouts were praised and consequently adopted by churches nationwide. Baptist Sunday school teachers based their lessons off of the Scout Oath.¹⁶ Mormons incorporated Scout teachings into their Young Men’s Improvement Association.¹⁷ The Catholic church, after approval was given from the Vatican in 1919, incorporated the Boy Scout methods as their official method of instruction for boys aged 12-15.¹⁸ Jewish churches across the New York area adopted Scouting principles for their youth.¹⁹ Even Lutherans participated in scouting. By 1936 a total of 691 troops were active in Lutheran churches.²⁰ Boys from a variety of churches joined together in worship and prayer at their camps and churches, singing songs and praying prayers like these.

Our Father in Heaven above, we ask thee
 For guidance in our daily task
 May virtue and manhood stand strongly amongst us;
 To Thee we give all our thanks.

¹⁴ Ibid. pg. 503.

¹⁵ Ibid pg. 504.

¹⁶ Ibid pg. 519.

¹⁷ Ibid pg. 520.

¹⁸ Ibid pg. 522.

¹⁹ Ibid pg. 527.

²⁰ Ibid pg. 529.

The Scout Oath, the Scout Law,
 Their lessons unfolding
 To our youth in numbers untold.
 Our Motto, our "Good Turn";
 May we live and teach it,
 Great Spirit of Scouting, we pray!²¹

"Dear God of all persons, who created us to depend on finding our delight in fellowship, we worship thee. We are grateful for the pleasure that comes in knowing others and being known by them. May our seeking of friendship glorify thee and build relationships with others on a foundation of Christian love. We rejoice in the church which declares thy love and provides the nurturing warmth of fellowship to us all. Amen."²²

These statements of Boy Scout leaders and prayers of their youth are based solely upon the principles of the organization. The Boy Scout Movement can be summed up with four of their distinctive features:

Oath, Law, Motto, and Slogan. The Boy Scout Oath calls for a boy to do his best according to his honor.

"On my honor I will do my best: to do my duty to God and my country, and to obey the Scout Law; to help other people at all times; to keep myself physically strong, mentally awake, and morally straight."²³

The Scout Law lists the 12 principles that a Boy Scout must follow to keep the Scout Oath.²⁴ "1. A Scout is Trustworthy. 2. A Scout is Loyal. 3. A Scout is Helpful. 4. A Scout is Friendly. 5. A Scout is Courteous. 6.

A Scout is Kind. 7. A Scout is Obedient. 8. A Scout is Cheerful. 9. A Scout is Thrifty. 10. A Scout is Brave.

11. A Scout is Clean. 12. A Scout is Reverent."²⁵ Their Motto is "Be Prepared"²⁶ and Slogan is "Do a Good Turn Daily."²⁷

These principles are ingrained into each of the Boy Scouts as they progress in the Movement. The

youngest Scouts known as Tenderfoots are required to know from memory the Oath, Law, Motto, and

²¹ Ibid pg. 530, sung to the tune of "Marcheta"

²² Church Commission on Scouting (National), *When Scouts Worship* (St. Louis: Bethany Press, 1968), 23.

²³ Boy Scouts of America, *Boy Scout Handbook* (New York: Boy Scouts of America, 1948), 19.

²⁴ Please note that there are explanations to each of the Laws in every Boy Scout Handbook. We will be investigating the explanations to certain laws which have religious significance later.

²⁵ Ibid pg. 26.

²⁶ Ibid pg. 40.

²⁷ Ibid pg. 42.

Slogan.²⁸ As these Tenderfoots become Second Class Scouts, they must now “live up to” the Oath, Law, Motto, and Slogan.²⁹ As this Scout progresses from Second Class to First Class and finally to Eagle, they are required to “put into practice in his daily life the ideals and principles of the Scout Oath and Law, the motto, “Be Prepared,” and the “Daily Good Turn.”³⁰

As these Boy Scouts advance in this program of moral training, they are instructed to recognize all Scouts as fellow-brothers. “World-wide... in Scouting they are all friends and brothers.”³¹ This brotherhood requires them to see all men are “equal before God”³² as they share the same trefoil badge³³ regardless of their religious differences.³⁴ This brotherhood emphasizes their own religious responsibility summarized as their “duty to God.”³⁵ This duty to God requires regular worship in which the Scout should “remember in doing your duty to God, to be grateful to Him.”³⁶ This duty is not only worship but also service. “By...helping other people at all times, you are doing what god wants you to and practicing reverence. By living up to the Scout Oath and Scout Law, by doing good to your fellow man, you are doing your duty to God.”³⁷

How can one do this duty to God? By searching inside him for inner strength and living according to your honor. “On your honor you promise to try to keep the Scout Oath and Law. You may find it hard sometimes to live up to all you have promised. But you can always keep trying. You can always do your

²⁸ Ibid pg. 14.

²⁹ Ibid pg. 104.

³⁰ Ibid pg. 425.

³¹ Ibid pg. 6.

³² Ibid pg. 39.

³³ Ibid pg. 47.

³⁴ Ibid pg. 51.

³⁵ Ibid pg. 19.

³⁶ Ibid pg. 20.

³⁷ Ibid pg. 39.

best.”³⁸ This is the new life of a Scout. “When you promise to follow these rules, you start a new life.”³⁹

This new life isn’t about thought but action on this earth to merit heaven. “Some men... doing good before they went to heaven. Try to make your hole in the blanket (star in the night sky) by good work while you are on earth. It is something to be good, but it is far better to do good.”⁴⁰

Such heavy emphasis on their daily actions drove a Scout to do “what is in you” to follow these requirements. “You promise on your honor to keep yourself morally straight. It is a test of your honor and your strength. ‘I will be what I want to be - a matter of right thinking.’”⁴¹ Following these laws are obligations that Scouts must keep. “the obligation to do a Good Turn to someone every day is much of the meaning and spirit of the Scout Oath and Law.”⁴² This obligation grows into a daily habit which rewards the Scout with satisfaction. “keep the Good Turn in mind every day. Gradually it becomes a habit that will give you a lot of satisfaction. The ideals of Scouting... promises that you make to yourself, and live up to in your daily life... make up your code of honor.”⁴³ The foundation of the Scout Laws is derived from various religious sources. “Your Scout code includes the ideals of ... the splendid codes that have gone before you (Law of Moses, Christ’s⁴⁴, the Incas’, the Knights’, the American Indians’, the Pilgrim Fathers’.) To help the individual grow into a better man and a better citizen... is the purpose of the Scout code.”⁴⁵

³⁸ Ibid pg. 20.

³⁹ Ibid pg. 17.

⁴⁰ Ibid pg. 23.

⁴¹ Ibid pg. 25.

⁴² Ibid pg. 42.

⁴³ Ibid pg. 43.

⁴⁴ Note that when they speak about the Law of Moses and Christ, they are specifically mentioning the 10th Commandments and the Beatitudes. These laws, not the Gospel promises and encouragements, are what a Scout must glean from the Bible to develop himself into a better citizen and moral person.

⁴⁵ Ibid pg. 118-119.

Scoutmasters should also find satisfaction in leading their Scouts to live the Scout Law. "The wise Scoutmaster, the Scoutmaster of imagination and vision, is able to instill into each individual boy a desire... to keep himself 'physically strong, mentally awake, and morally straight.' The entire Scout Law and Oath loom large in affecting the boy's whole attitude toward life and influencing his daily conduct. It is by aiding him to keep the Oath and to live that Law that we shall surely reach our goal of fashioning his character".⁴⁶ The Scout Oath and Law truly do loom large in influencing each Boy Scout's attitude on life. The goal of any Scoutmaster is to fashion their boy's character through encouraging them to live the Law and keep their Oath, for this is a "practical Christianity" that believes in "salvation by character."⁴⁷

Each boy must live this practical Christianity to keep himself clean according to the eleventh Law. "But there's another kind of dirt that won't come off by washing. It is the kind that enters your mind. An important part of your battle against that kind of dirt is selecting the right friends. Keep away from fellows who seem to get a kick out of swearing and telling dirty stories. Get in with a clean crowd where you will hear clean speech, find clean sportsmanship, and get a clean outlook on life."⁴⁸ He lives this Christianity by following his conscience. "It is your conscience that makes it possible for you to distinguish between right and wrong, that helps you follow the right trail through life."⁴⁹ By following his conscience he pleases God and merits his favor. "God cannot do your life task for you. You must do it yourself, in the faith that 'God helps them that help themselves.'"⁵⁰ While evolution is not fundamental to an understanding of the Scout Oath and Law, it is nevertheless taught as accepted truth to Boy Scouts. "Coal... some geologists estimate that it took 300 million years to form. Flowers and seeds have developed since the cola age. That may have taken another 100 million years... the same biological

⁴⁶ Boy Scouts of America, *Handbook for Scoutmasters* (New York: Boys Scouts of America, 1944), 35-38.

⁴⁷ Barry Chalmers, *The Boy Scout and His Law*. (New York: Boy Scout of America, 1928), 172-173.

⁴⁸ *Boy Scout Handbook* (North Brunswick: Boy Scouts of America, 1973), 40-41.

⁴⁹ Ibid pg 525.

⁵⁰ Ibid pg.525.

orderliness that has occurred down thru sons of time can be seen occurring in the bog or marsh."⁵¹

Evolution is the accepted truth for all Boy Scouts. "Eons and eons ago, when the earth was young, all life, both animals and plant lived in the water. Just rock and water, that is all there was; there were no soil, no grass, no trees; no animals as we know them today." Yet, the Boy Scout Movement talks out of both sides of their mouth. They also hail nature as God's creation to bring Scouts in reverence to him. This reverence, in keeping the Scout Law, will bring good actions and striving for ideals to make you the man you wish to be.

Reverent to your Maker⁵² When you step into a church or synagogue, when you stand on a quiet night under a starlit sky, when you walk thru the woods on an early spring day as the trees are turning green, haven't you sometimes stopped and wondered? Haven't you felt a reverence to the God who made it all? As a Scout, living in close contact with nature, you can't help knowing more deeply God's handicraft. As you see the wonders about you, your faith in Him is strengthened. A Scout is Reverent.⁵³ It is important that you show your reverence in your deeds. As a matter of fact, keeping the Twelfth Scout Law, is simply keeping the other eleven. By following the Scout Law, you follow the Law of God also. DOING GOOD instead of just BEING GOOD you do your duty to your God and your country and help to bring about His kingdom on earth. It is striving for your ideals, keeping faith with them that will make you the MAN you want to be.⁵⁴

Boy Scouts will never name or define God as anything more than their Maker "the infinite Creator of the universe"⁵⁵ and their "source of life"⁵⁶ in their literature. In fact, they purposely are vague in describing God as "the Great Master of all Scouts"⁵⁷ in order to appeal to a wide range of audiences. They allow boys of various creeds, whether Catholic, Protestant, or Jew, to worship and recognize the very same God⁵⁸ so that they might become better citizens.⁵⁹ They firmly hold to this description and this teaching of God as a basis for their religious instruction and training of the youth. "The Boy Scouts of America

⁵¹ Boy Scouts of America, *Boy Scout Handbook* (New York: Boy Scouts of America, 1948), 180.

⁵² Heading for the following paragraph.

⁵³ Heading for the following paragraph.

⁵⁴ Boy Scouts of America, *Scout Field Book* (New York: Boy Scouts of America, 1946), 492.

⁵⁵ Boy Scouts of America, *Standard Local Council Constitution and By-Laws* (New York: Boy Scouts of America, 1942), 3.

⁵⁶ Boy Scouts of America, *Handbook for Boys* (New York: Boy Scouts of America, 1943), 108.

⁵⁷ Boy Scouts of America, *Handbook for Scoutmasters* (New York: Boy Scouts of America, 1943), 71.

⁵⁸ Boy Scouts of America, *Constitution and By-laws of the Boy Scouts of America as Amended to May 16, 1946*. (New York: Boy Scouts of America, 1946), 3.

⁵⁹ *Ibid* pg. 3.

maintains that no boy can grow in the best kind of citizenship without recognizing his obligation to God... The recognition of God as the ruling and leading power in the universe and the grateful acknowledgment of His favors and blessings are necessary to the best type of citizenship and are wholesome things in the education of the growing boy."⁶⁰

How then is a Protestant boy to interact with a Jewish one if they all worship and serve the same God? Each boy owes the other respect and reverence for their religious beliefs. Each boy's beliefs are sacred and no matter what one believes they are brothers in Scouting and in the Church. The Boy Scout Movement firmly insists that every man (and every boy), to come into his largest self and largest usefulness, must have an active part in things religious and spiritual. Belief in God? Of course. Obedience to His basic Ten Commandments and His larger command to brotherhood? Of course – but more than these, the real man keeps himself in conscious harmony with God, God's other creatures and his fellowmen through in active participation with the Church. In doing this, Scouts extend to every one of the other faiths the same courtesy and consideration and respect for the other man's sacred things that the Scout expects for his own. That is the spirit of Scouting in religiously free America.⁶¹

Boy Scouts are expected not only ^{to} give respect for other religions but to also treat them that they are worshipping the true God. "There are many kinds of religion in the world. One important point, however, about them is that they all involve worship of the same God. There is but one Leader, although many ways of following Him. If a Scout meets one of another religion, he should remember that he, too, is striving for the best."⁶²

⁶⁰ Ibid pg. 3.

⁶¹ Boy Scouts of America, *Handbook for Boys* (New York: Boy Scouts of America, 1943), 108.

⁶² Boy Scouts of America, *The Official Handbook for Boys*. (Garden City: Doubleday, Page and Company, 1914), 13.

Truly, Dr. West was correct when he said “there is nothing more essential in the education of the youth in America then to give them religious instruction and I advocated that this be included in the Twelfth Scout Law: A Scout is Reverent!”⁶³ Yet, there are some that claim that Scouting is purely a secular organization that can be molded by the Church for her purposes. Is that true? Our forefathers in the Wisconsin Synod who dealt with this issue head on found, on the basis of Scripture, that we cannot and should not incorporate Scouting into our Church in any function.

Our forefathers have recognized that there are particular activities in Scouting which are purely of a secular and physical nature. They list “hikes, camping, archery, study of plant and animal life”⁶⁴ as examples of these secular activities. However, the Church recognizes that she is concerned primarily with the Word of God and godliness⁶⁵ and not with the innocent hobbies of her members. The Church approaches Scouting under the Lord’s command to test the spirits.⁶⁶ Scouting is not purely secular but it also brings in a religious element. As shown earlier in this paper, Scouting demands that each Scout recognize and honor their God whomever or whatever that might be. Scripture teaches us that there is only one⁶⁷ Triune⁶⁸ God who created us.⁶⁹ Whenever someone denies this doctrine of the Trinity they are no longer worshipping God but an idol.⁷⁰ Their denial of the Trinity also denies Christ, and by denying Christ they are against Christ.⁷¹ Our Wisconsin Synod forefathers noticed this as well. “Inasmuch as the religious pronouncements of Scoutism on the subject of “God”, even at their best, refer only to the first person of the Trinity, the Father, with no reference to His only-begotten Son, the Movement

⁶³ Boy Scouts of America, *Fundamentals of the Boy Scout Movement; Introductory Training for All Leaders, Committeemen, Parents and Others Interested in Cubbing, Scouting and Senior Scouting*. (New York, 1945), 3.

⁶⁴ Erhard C. Pankow, *Scouting in the Light of Holy Scripture* (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1946), 3.

⁶⁵ 1 Timothy 4:8-9

⁶⁶ 1 John 4:1, Matthew 12:37

⁶⁷ Deuteronomy 6:4

⁶⁸ Matthew 28:19, 1 Corinthians 8:5-6

⁶⁹ Isaiah 43:1-11

⁷⁰ John 5:23

⁷¹ 1 John 4:2,3,14

also very definitely, and by no means deservedly, fails under the condemnation of John 5:23."⁷² Boy Scouts trivialize God when they refer to him as the "great scoutmaster".⁷³

Scouting also perverts Scripture's teaching on one's duty to God. Fulfilling a Scout's duty to God is shown through his dedication to worship and service as the Scout attempts to find strength deep in himself to complete these tasks. Scripture shows that our duty to God is repentance⁷⁴ and faith⁷⁵ in his promises. Searching deep inside ourselves for strength will only show us the Law, which proves us to be guilty of sin. Truly, as Romans tells us, we will not be justified through our deeds of the Law but rather will recognize the sinfulness inside each and every one of us.⁷⁶ Our forefathers also recognized our failings to keep this duty by our own works. "This (teaching) conflicts with the Scripture (sic) doctrines of Original Sin, Faith, and Conversion. The Scriptures tell us that natural man is born in sin, that he is an enemy of God, and that he cannot please God. They teach that our first duty is to repent of our sins and believe in Christ Jesus. They insist that only he who believes in Christ can do work acceptable to God."⁷⁷

The Boy Scout Movement testifies that what Paul says in Romans 2 is true. Every person has a natural knowledge of God and recognizes certain things about him. They see through creation his power, glory, and wisdom.⁷⁸ Mankind does have the ability, through their conscience, to recognize their responsibility to act according to God's inscribed Law.⁷⁹ Their conscience confirms their inscribed Law as God's Law and declares to them that they must follow this Law or risk punishment. Mankind has forever

⁷² *Scouting in the Light of Holy Scripture*, pg. 16.

⁷³ Paul Randolph, "The Testimony of a Former Scout | Essay File," Essay File | Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, 2, accessed December 05, 2010, <http://www.wlsessays.net/node/1902>.

⁷⁴ Matthew 3:2, Mark 1:15, Mark 6:12

⁷⁵ Acts 14:7-15, Acts 17:18-30, Acts 20:21

⁷⁶ Romans 3:2

⁷⁷ Conference of Presidents of The Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Wisconsin and Other States, *Continuing in His Word*, 6, accessed December 05, 2010, <http://www.wlsessays.net/node/1000>.

⁷⁸ Romans 1-2; Acts 14:15-17; 17:24-27; Psalm 19

⁷⁹ Romans 2:14-16

attempted to appease God's wrath and their conscience through good works to merit God's love.⁸⁰ Mankind's *opinio legis* believes that they can satisfy their conscience and fulfill God's requirements through doing the good that is inside them. This is clearly seen in Scouting. "You have it in your power to make the right sort of track in your brain that will determine how you act. Every boy can say to himself, "I will be what I want to be." Your actions follow your thoughts. You can control your thoughts. It comes down to a matter of right thinking, and building right habits."⁸¹

If this were true, we would all be justified before God by living lives of right thought, word, and deed. However, as Paul pointed out to the Galatians, you cannot be justified by the Law. We are by nature sinful and cannot fulfill even one of God's commands perfectly. Following our *opinio legis* does not help us; it harms our spiritual nature and condition by thinking that we are performing pleasing works to God when in reality we are alienating ourselves from him. The Scouting Movement not only ignores the natural depravity of man and follows their inbred *opinio legis*, but it also encourages Scouts in fulfilling the Law by the force of numbers. For a Scout, he should take encouragement knowing that he is part of a brotherhood worldwide which is following these laws and meriting favor. "The moment you join a patrol or troop you enter a brotherhood that spans the world. The boys in it are of different countries and colors and creeds, but they are brothers' together, living up to the same Scout oath and Law that you are following."⁸²

For a Scout to keep himself "morally straight" according to the Scout Law requires him to deny his original sin and conform his life to perfection. His motivation is not the glory of God but rather his own glory. "And you owe it to yourself to aim to become a man of strong character. Be thoughtful in the

⁸⁰ Romans 1:21; Acts 14:8-18; 17:22-31

⁸¹ Boy Scouts of America, *Handbook for Boys* (New York: Boy Scouts of America, 1951), 25.

⁸² Boy Scouts of America, *Boy Scout Handbook*, 7th ed. (New York: Boy Scouts of America, 1971), 43.

rights of others. Be clean in speech and actions. Be faithful in your religious beliefs. Your life as a Scout will take you along the train that leads to strong, self-reliant manhood."⁸³ Is this the message we want our impressionable young boys in our congregations to hear? The Boy Scouts find the source of a boy's motivation for good works in himself while the Church finds it in the Gospel.⁸⁴ The Boy Scouts encourages self-reliance while the Church calls for Christ-reliance.⁸⁵ The Boy Scouts describe successful manhood as strong character while the Church affirms that one is successful in the eyes of God through faith⁸⁶, not through character.

This self-reliant model and denial of natural depravity is upheld by the Scouting Movement in other ways. "God cannot do your life task for you. You must do it yourself, in the faith that 'God helps them that help themselves.'"⁸⁷ What faith is this? Faith that God will love and care for me as long as I help myself? This is truly no faith at all but rather this would drive any young Scout to despair and heartache seeing that God will only help him if he helps himself. Who is worthy of such a task? The Scouting leaders recognize that these high standards will, in fact, often overwhelm a boy. "A beginning Scout is often involved so greatly in trying to meet the requirements for his Scout rank that the additional burden of participation in the program might prove detrimental to his progress in either field."⁸⁸ This does not surprise us. We know what Scripture says about the insurmountable odds against us if we try to obtain righteousness by our own works. We are all descendants of Adam and therefore sinners⁸⁹ having been conceived and born in sin.⁹⁰ We find that we only desire to do evil⁹¹ since nothing good lives

⁸³ Boy Scouts of America, *Boy Scout Handbook* (New York: Boy Scouts of America, 1979), 29.

⁸⁴ Galatians 5:6, 2 Corinthians 5:14-15, Colossians 3:17, Titus 2:14

⁸⁵ Matthew 6:25-34, 1 Peter 5:7, James 4:13-15

⁸⁶ Romans 1:17, Romans 3:22-28, Romans 4:5

⁸⁷ Boy Scouts of America, *Boy Scout Handbook* (New York: Boy Scouts of America, 1979), 525.

⁸⁸ Roy P. Adelberg, *God and Country Counselor's Manual* (St. Louis: Bethany Press, 1969), 14.

⁸⁹ Genesis 5:3

⁹⁰ Psalm 51:5

⁹¹ Genesis 8:21

in us.⁹² Scouting upholds deeds of righteousness done out under the Law, while Scripture calls them “filthy rags”.⁹³ No matter how many “good turns” are done daily they are not good in God’s eyes.

Christians believe that God works faith through the Gospel⁹⁴ and the Gospel, not the Law, powerfully creates new spiritual life⁹⁵ that motivates and maintains believers to follow the Law. Scouting unfortunately finds their motivation in their own honor⁹⁶ and even swears by it. Scouting not only ignores the depravity of man but even swears an Oath by their depraved honor. Scripture clearly warns us against taking unnecessary oaths. James 5:12 says “Above all, my brothers, do not swear – not by heaven or by earth or by anything else. Let your “Yes” be yes, and your “No,” no, or you will be condemned.” We find warnings from the Old Testament⁹⁷ and New Testament⁹⁸ against swearing an oath and thereby taking the Lord’s name in vain.⁹⁹ Hear what our forefathers had to say about taking an unnecessary oath on one’s honor.

Our honor is a gift from God. We must thank God for it, but we must not abuse it. If God should withdraw His support, our honor would fall to the ground. We cannot uphold it; left to ourselves we should sink into shame and disgrace. Before Peter went into the high priests’ palace he was strong in his own honor, claiming that he was ready to die for his Lord. But then his honor vanished into nothing, and he most shamefully denied his Savior. If the phrase On my honor is not to be a meaningless babbling, if it is not to be an expression of arrogant self-reliance, and thus a gross abuse of God’s gift to us: then it is an implied reference to God, the Giver and Preserver of our honor. It is an oath, no matter how much men may try to tone it down.¹⁰⁰

In swearing this Oath and following this Law, the Scouting Movement attempts to make their boys morally right through the Law, not through the Gospel. Scripture is clear on this as well. Good works can

⁹² Romans 7:18

⁹³ Isaiah 64:6

⁹⁴ Romans 1:16

⁹⁵ Ephesians 2:10, Galatians 2:10-11

⁹⁶ Romans 8:8 is especially applicable here. “They that are in the flesh cannot please God.” We cannot on our own honor fulfill any duty to God, since our honor and self-worth without Christ is worthless.

⁹⁷ Deuteronomy 6:13

⁹⁸ Genesis 21:24

⁹⁹ Deuteronomy 5:11

¹⁰⁰ Carl J. Lawrenz, “The History of the Boy Scout Issue | Essay File,” Essay File | Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, 30-31, accessed December 05, 2010, <http://www.wlssays.net/node/1329>.

only be done when someone is connected to Christ¹⁰¹ and his merits. This connection, faith, allows us to please God¹⁰² and produce the many and varied fruits of faith¹⁰³ that God requires. These fruits of faith can only be done following God's commands not man's.¹⁰⁴ A boy who is led to believe that he is morally right through his works will be led to doubt. Paul Randolph, a former Scout, was such a boy.

From my own experience I have come to the conclusion that scouting amounts to a laboratory course for teaching the un-Christian doctrine of work-righteousness – the earning of one's way to reward, including heaven, by good works... In my boyish way, I used to wonder if I had to be good to have this great scoutmaster and if my efforts were good enough. These thoughts seemed to cloud over the fact that I do have a Father in Heaven, who does love me and is concerned about me, and who even sent His Son to die for me, whether I have been good or bad.¹⁰⁵

The scariest thing about Scouting is the deceptive nature in which it teaches work-righteousness.

Randolph now knows that we as Christians obey God's Law out of love for him, but when he was a Scout he was induced to obey the Scout Law to earn the reward of advancement. He confesses he was blind to their subtle teachings.

During my several years of scouting I never suspected that I was being taught a religious theory... thus one may ask why we make such a fuss and bother over such a seemingly obscure point. The reason is that our scouting youth is (sic) being taught un-Christian theories in a costly and deceiving manner.. the religious doctrines of scouting not only become the convictions of many scouts, but also the very basis of their outward life. Eventually scouts not only think these theories, but do them. They do good, obey the law, and go through religious motions to merit praise and to earn their way further up in scouting. I cannot help but feel that such a sly system of spreading un-Christian teachings bears evidence of some tampering by Satan himself.¹⁰⁶

Scouting is deceptive and unscriptural not only on its Oath and Law, but also on its concept of the Church. It holds the Church to be "the divinely appointed agency through which men are helped to keep close to God, in harmony of spirit."¹⁰⁷ Scriptures sees the Church as "divinely appointed" because it

¹⁰¹ John 15:5

¹⁰² Hebrews 11:6

¹⁰³ Galatians 5:22-25

¹⁰⁴ Matthew 15:9

¹⁰⁵ *Testimony of a Former Scout*, page 2

¹⁰⁶ *Testimony of a Former Scout*, page 3

¹⁰⁷ Boy Scouts of America, *Handbook for Boys* (New York: Boy Scouts of America, 1943), 108.

teaches God's Word in truth and purity.¹⁰⁸ Not all churches that exist are part of the Church, for unfortunately there are some who teach contrary to Scripture. Scouting truly believes that all religions are alike before God and so we should all respect them accordingly. Scripture will not allow us to give them the respect that Scouting gives to any church. We cannot respect the convictions of any religion that doesn't have Jesus as the cornerstone. We are called to confess Christ¹⁰⁹ before the world not deny him and pretend that those who reject Jesus will also be saved. Hear another quote from our Lutheran forefathers who understood this well. "If a man confesses that he must pray to Mary to be saved, that he must keep the Ten Commandments in the spirit of the Old Testament to gain righteousness, if he denies the resurrection of Christ, or the universal resurrection or any other doctrine of Scripture, I may not, in fact I must not respect those convictions."¹¹⁰ The Boy Scout Movement insists that their boys be respectful, and ultimately indifferent, towards the customs and religions of others. We heed Jesus' words who call us to listen to him and follow his word only. That is the true test of discipleship.¹¹¹

When the young Christian boy joins the Scouting Movement following their principles, he is doing more than depriving himself of pure scriptural teaching and admonition. He is also by his presence strengthening and encouraging others who follow the abuses of Scouting. He is failing to warn them about their natural depravity of sin. He is failing to help them realize their guilt and condemnation before God. He is failing to point them to the Gospel which is the only thing that can change hearts and lives. Truly, as Prof. Lawrenz put it, "In other words he vitiates his Christian testimony to sin and

¹⁰⁸ John 8:31-32

¹⁰⁹ Matthew 10:32-33

¹¹⁰ Edwin A. Breiling, "The Boy Scout Movement in America | Essay File," Essay File | Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, 11, accessed December 05, 2010, <http://www.wlssays.net/node/229>.

¹¹¹ John 8:31

grace."¹¹² This is also true of the Church. When she participates in Scouting or associates herself with it, she fails to give a testimony to those who are not Christians that they will stand before God condemned if they try to justify themselves on the basis of the Law instead of the Gospel. In fact, the Church seems to indicate by its involvement with Scouting that the moralizing basis for Scouting and the Gospel basis for the Church are one and the same. They are most certainly not.

Some have attempted to incorporate Scouting into the church through an independent, closed Lutheran troop. They then feel that they are able to sanitize the Law-based nature of Scouting and bring it forth in Gospel glory. This is not the mission of the Church. It is not to be promoting civic righteousness among the youth, upholding public morals, or leading men to live outwardly decent lives. Rather her mission is preaching the Gospel¹¹³ and thereby equipping the saints. The Church is called to preach the whole counsel of God as revealed in his Holy Word, which is centered in Jesus Christ.

The Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod in the 1910s and early 1920s would agree with the Wisconsin Synod with the previous two paragraphs. Their own theologian, Dr. Theodore Graebner, produced a tract called "*Y Religion and Boy Scout Morality*. These tracts were heralded in the *Theological Quarterly* as "valuable testimonies against cancerous modern evils."¹¹⁴ He clearly found the Boy Scouts to be a religious organization.

The literature of the Movement abounds in statements which stress the moral, even religious purpose of Scouting. Biblical characters are said to exemplify the virtues and accomplishments of the Boy Scout. (For instance, David: Scouting, III, 15.) Among the reasons why a church should adopt Scouting as a part of its work for boys, a folder mentions these: "Scouting is a religious education. Jesus is the Master Scout. The knightly oath taken by a boy of twelve years is not

¹¹² Carl J. Lawrenz, "Natural Law, Natural Knowledge of God, Civic Righteousness, and Their Application to the Boy Scout Question | Essay File," *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly* 69 (1972): 3, accessed December 05, 2010, <http://www.wlsessays.net/node/1331>.

¹¹³ Matthew 28:19

¹¹⁴ Theodore Graebner, ed., "Theological Quarterly Published by the Lutheran Synod of Missouri, Ohio, and the Other States," *Book Review of "Y Religion and Boy Scouts Morality* 11 (1920): 245.

different in principle from Jesus' confession before the doctors in the Temple, 'I must be about My Father's business.' The ideals of obedience, cheerfulness, service, and the twelve Scout laws are ideals and principles from the teachings of Jesus. The practise (sic) of Scouting is exemplified most perfectly in His life... Scouting is a true form of Christian democracy... Scouting fulfills the prophetic ambition of the Church towards universal brotherhood."¹¹⁵

Graebner recognized some of the weaknesses of Scouting. He saw how they failed to lead a boy to repentance and faith and thereby Scouting was merely a moralizing agent in the world. In continuation of that thought, he offered a quote from *The Presbyterian* in 1911 which summarized what this Movement would eventually lead to.

"The Boy Scout Movement... affords no evidence of coming into existence with a view of bringing boys to realize the sinfulness inherent in their natures, and through such awakening lead them to accept the Atonement of Christ as their only hope, and thus cause them to consecrate themselves to Him forever... If evangelical Christian Sabbath-school teachers are encouraged in bringing their boys into such free-and-easy organizations, under the pretext that these things will form a primary method of leading the scholars to become followers of God, what is the use of Episcopal, Baptist, Methodist, Presbyterian, and other branches of Christ's Church trying to teach their children of their need of a Savior, and of the atonement on Calvary¹¹⁶ to meet their need?¹¹⁷

Graebner also found similar problems in the fruitless swearing of the Scout Oath. "The Scout oath surely falls under the Lord's injunction: "Swear not at all." It is a frivolous oath, exacting of boys the common virtues of life which they should be expected to do as a matter of course."¹¹⁸ Graebner also found the principle of Scouting to lead directly in to unionism. "This principle will inevitable lead the boys united in Scouting into unionistic worship and work. Most troops are organized in connection with churches. Scouting, of course, claims to be "undenominational." But this only means that the Scout is taught to treat all religions and churches alike. And since he must obey his officers, he will wave to attend, when commanded, any church-service to which the troop is invited to attend in a body."¹¹⁹ He then noted a multitude of examples of unionistic worship practices. His solution to this problem of unionistic

¹¹⁵ Theodore Graebner, "Y" *Religion and Boy Scout Morality* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1920), 10.

¹¹⁶ Ibid pg 10.

¹¹⁷ Ibid pg. 4.

¹¹⁸ Ibid pg. 12

¹¹⁹ Ibid pg. 13.

worship? He hints that composing an entirely Lutheran troop may solve this problem, as long as the Scout Master is Lutheran.¹²⁰

Graebner seven years later fleshes out this idea of a closed Lutheran troop. He believes that a Lutheran Scout Master can “utilize out of the scouting program those features which are valuable for outdoor training and healthful companionship.”¹²¹ He warns in the following quote against adopting the methods offered by the pamphlet *Scouting under Protestant Leadership* and instead offers these three guidelines to govern the Missouri Synod position on Scouting.

1. Its handbooks and its literature represent an attitude toward religion which is fundamentally unionistic and which we cannot share. 2. The congregation now has complete control of troop activities, thus eliminating in entirely (sic) Lutheran troops the necessity of participation in unionistic services. 3. The Lutheran Scout Master will ignore the official Scout view regarding religion, education, the development of character and will substitute for Scout ethics those motives for good conduct which are supplied by the Christian Gospel.¹²²

Graebner believes one can cleanse the Scouting Movement under proper Lutheran leadership and substitute for Scout ethics Gospel motivated hearts and lives. The Missouri Synod in Convention five years later¹²³ agrees with Graebner and his board for Young People’s work, confessing that “We cannot endorse the Boy Scout Movement in its present state” and also acknowledging “the willingness of the officials of this organization to remove objectionable features.”¹²⁴ After years of study on this issue, the Missouri Synod declared in their 1944 convention that each congregation is able to decide for herself the matter of Scouting.¹²⁵ The Missouri Synod by this time had already cooperated with other Lutheran

¹²⁰ Ibid pg. 13

¹²¹ Theodore Graebner, *The Secret Empire; a Handbook of Lodges*, (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1927), 222.

¹²² Ibid pg. 223.

¹²³ Note this is also the convention where “The Brief Statement” was adopted.

¹²⁴ The proceedings of the 35th regular convention 1932, page 110, as quoted in *History of the Boy Scout Movement* page 4.

¹²⁵ Conference of Presidents of The Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Wisconsin and Other States, *Continuing in His Word*, 2, accessed December 05, 2010, <http://www.wlsessays.net/node/1000>.

churches which it was not in fellowship with on the production of *Scouting in the Lutheran Church*, for which Dr. Graebner was a contributor.

The Wisconsin Synod did not believe that cooperating with the Boy Scouts was proper for the Church to concern herself with. Our Wisconsin Synod fathers thought it better to keep the mission of the Church the proclamation of Gospel truth instead of the sanitation of moralizing youth training programs. The Synodical Conference in 1944 passed a resolution for a forum called the Committee on Intersynodical Relations to discuss the differences among synods. These conversations recognized a disturbing difference of opinion had arisen among the Synodical Conference.¹²⁶ After opportunity for study of the issues by all Synods involved, it was apparent by 1947 that agreement could not be reached before the Conference in 1947. Two memorials, one from the Wisconsin Synod and one from Pastors within the Missouri Synod, were presented at this Conference expressing objections to the acceptance of the Boy Scouts.¹²⁷ The Conference decided to appoint a 3 person committee, along with the Bureau of Information and Board for Young People's Work of the Missouri Synod, to restudy the matter and report to the next convention. The next four years brought volumes of discussion among the members of the Synodical Conference on this matter.¹²⁸ At Convention in 1950 this issue was again sent back for further discussion. Finally, the Missouri Synod and Slovak Synod presented in the 1952 Synodical Conference a report on Scouting. The two basic principles Scouting was to be judged by were "1. On the basis of its constitution which describes its character, aims, and purposes; 2. On the basis of official interpretations of Scout headquarters."

Before we even get into the findings of the committee, we should note a few weaknesses of these principles. While it is fine and good to judge an entity on the basis of its constitution that shouldn't be

¹²⁶ Carl J. Lawrenz, "The History of the Boy Scout Issue | Essay File," Essay File | Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, 7, accessed December 05, 2010, <http://www.wlssays.net/node/1329>.

¹²⁷ Note that both memorials in their entirety can be found on pages 9 and 10 in *The History of the Boy Scout Issue*.

¹²⁸ One could write Church History paper on these three years alone!

the only publication we judge it upon. The Boy Scout Movement had produced reams of documents which clearly communicated its beliefs as held in the Constitution in a practical way. While it would have produced more work for the Committee to evaluate this entity on the basis of those volumes of published materials, they would have gotten a more accurate picture about the practice of the Boy Scout Movement. Principle two also allows for a great amount of wiggle room by limiting the Scout Movement to the official interpretations of Scout headquarters. Clearly, their interpretations should be solicited and studied! Yet, the Missouri Synod and the Slovak Synod closed its eyes to the great problems of the Boy Scout Movement by ignoring the practical problems in adhering to only official interpretations. Here are their findings.

1. Scoutism is a secular boy's organization designed to promote good citizenship. (That Scoutism advocates a life governed by religious principles does not make it a religious Movement.)
2. Scoutism does not teach religion. (Scoutism expects the churches to add the religious element without which the program is incomplete). There are indeed in the Scout handbooks occasional religious statements which are in conflict with our religious convictions and the professed purpose of Scoutism. However, the Church¹²⁹ has the opportunity to express its concern to Scout headquarters regarding such statements, and we know from experience our concerns are headed.
3. Scoutism "maintains that no boy can grow into the best kind of citizenship without recognizing his obligation to God." (Scoutism, however, does not *demand* a *deistic* concept of God.)
4. Scoutism does not promise spiritual blessings such as forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation, peace with God, etc., to those who obey the Scout law.
5. The Scout oath is not an oath in the religious sense, but a pledge.
6. Scouting has eliminated features which were objectionable (e.g., the original deistic concept of God, unionistic practices, naturalistic instruction).
7. "There is no Boy Scout authority which supersedes the authority of the local pastor and the congregation in any phase of the program affecting the spiritual welfare of Lutheran men and boys in Scouting."
- D. Inevitable conclusions:
 1. We dare not burden the conscience by making something a sin which is not sin.
 2. The matter of Scouting on the local level should be left to the judgment of the local congregation.
 3. Certain voiced objections to Scouting stem from
 - a. false views concerning Scout principles;

¹²⁹ Interesting choice of the Church, not the church here. It seems to indicate they've abandoned their previous unionistic concerns about the Boy Scouts although those concerns still remain valid.

- b. false views or false applications of Scriptural teachings in the area of the natural knowledge of God and the natural law;
- c. an apparent unwillingness to accept documented evidence in support of principles under which Scouting is now conducted in its relation to the churches.¹³⁰

Are the Missouri and Slovak Synods correct? There have been plenty of papers and correspondence written on the basis of Scripture showing the weaknesses of their argument. The statements that were offered by the Norwegian Synod and the Wisconsin Synod at that same convention were true and remain true because they are based on Scripture, while the Slovak and Norwegian Synod's findings are both empty of scriptural references or complete truth.¹³¹ I wonder if Missouri would have changed their guiding principles. What if they would have investigated the Boy Scouts on Scripture and came to conclusions about Boy Scout teachings from reading all of the Boy Scout publications instead of just their official responses? Might we have a different result today? Potentially. It's clear for the Missouri and Slovak Synod that if the Boy Scouts of America say their institution doesn't teach religion, then it doesn't. It is also clear for the Missouri and Slovak Synod that having a closed troop sponsored by a Lutheran church would be free to follow their own principles and rules.

Is that true? Perhaps in official statements, but not in practice. As shown before the statements of the Boy Scout Movement leaders, especially Dr. West, may seem like an individual church has control over their closed troop, but the church does not. The church still reads and subscribes the moralizing propaganda found in *Boys' Life* and other publications. The church still subscribes to the Scout Law and

¹³⁰ Carl J. Lawrenz, "The History of the Boy Scout Issue | Essay File," Essay File | Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, 23, accessed December 05, 2010, <http://www.wlsessays.net/node/1329>.

¹³¹ Fairness demands we recognize that not all of the statements Missouri and the Slovak Synod made in this report were incorrect. We would agree with their first finding that Scouting is a boy's organization designed to promote good citizenship. However, we would add to that statement by stressing how they also teach scriptural truths to the children in a deceiving way. Likewise, finding number three is also correct as it stands, but there needs to be more said on how Scouting views God. Finally, we would in agree in principle with their inevitable conclusion number one that church bodies should avoid burdening consciences by making something a sin which is not sin. Yet, the issue with Scouting is not of burdening conscience but instructing consciences towards works-righteous behavior without Gospel motivation. That's a great burden for any conscience to bear that one must be perfect and keep themselves straight to merit favor.

Scout Oath. They still give the impression that they are united with other Boy Scout troops worldwide by assuming their name and uniform. They still pay dues which support the Boy Scout's unionistic practices worldwide. They still utilize the official handbooks and literature. The Missouri Synod has attempted to throw out the bathwater and keep the baby but unfortunately the darling child of West in America is dirty through and through. No amount of scrubbing, no matter how Lutheran and no matter how Gospel centered, will cleanse this entity of the dirt of work-righteousness, unionism, and other filth which pervade it.

How can I back up such a bold statement? I direct you in this next section, the final section of this paper, to see from the horse's mouth yet again how organizations such as the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod cannot cleanse Scouting from its inbred characteristics. Graebner was spot on in his recommendation of his own tract in the 1920 edition of the *Theological Monthly* when he called Boy Scouting a modern cancerous evil. The Boy Scout Movement is still a works-righteous moralizing and unionistic organization that teaches boys to listen to their *opinio legis* and this truth will be shown from their own teaching manuals.

We will undertake each one of the seven findings of the Missouri and Slovak Synod and see from pre-1952 and post-1952 Boy Scout literature that these findings are simply indefensible when one looks at the whole Boy Scout Movement instead of just limiting their search to the official Constitution or official interpretation of Scout headquarters. The Boy Scout Movement has truly "interpreted" its Movement through its many tracts, pamphlet, and studies. On their basis, as well as the official publications of the Boy Scouts, we will see practical examples of their teachings.

One further note before we get started. There has been a great amount of scholarship done on the scriptural weakness of the seven findings and their inevitable conclusions. Suffice it to say, the report of the Missouri Synod and Slovak Synod clearly does not address the scriptural concerns that the Wisconsin and Norwegian Synod held.¹³² Instead, they find our views on Scouting false as we in their mind burden consciences on a synod-wide level. Let's handle the first finding that Scoutism is a secular boy's organization designed to promote good citizenship. One can hardly disagree that citizenship building is an important part of the Boy Scout Movement. Scouting in the Lutheran Church, a unionistic joint Lutheran project with contributions from the Missouri Synod, attests to this.

The aim and purpose of the Boy Scouts of America, according to its Constitution and By-Laws, is "to develop and train for citizenship." By a unique program, peculiar to Scouting alone, these objectives are accomplished through the means of a cleverly devised and graded schedule of tests including nature lore, camping, handicraft, first aid, signaling, physical development, etc., and an elaborate system of merit badges offered for specialization in the various professions, trades, arts and crafts.¹³³

Yet, Scouting does more than just making good citizens. Scouting is an important part of the Church's ministry. "The church's ministry to youth is multifaceted. Among its many facets are: 1. Providing conditions under which growth in understanding of the good news of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ can be nurtured."¹³⁴ In fact, integrating Scouting into the Church's Ministry will increase growth in sanctification. "Here are other ways Scouting methods are far more effective in a church setting: By employing Scouting ideals as found in the promises, laws, mottoes, slogans and creeds, relationships with

¹³² For more detail on this, please see the *Tale of Two Synods An Ecumenical Endeavor*. The Missouri Synod's handling of our memorials, reports, requests from our Standing Committee on Church Union and *Study of Boy Scoutism* showed not only a unbrotherly spirit by the Missouri and Slovak Synod but also an unwillingness to discuss in writing the plain Scriptural problems found in the Boy Scouts. One can find this spirit ever clear in comparing the LC-MS's *Fraternal Endeavor* and the WELS's *Continuing in his Word: Our Position against Scouting*. The LC-MS will refer you not to Scripture but to official statements of the Boy Scouts to determine the feasibility of the Boy Scouts.

¹³³ Lutheran Committee on Scouting, *Scouting in the Lutheran Church* (New York: Boy Scouts of America, 1943), 2.

¹³⁴ Church Commission on Scouting (National), *Scouting in the Church's Ministry* (New Brunswick: Church Commission on Scouting, 1971), 7.

God, others, and self are fostered.”¹³⁵ In fact, this development in the spiritual life of the boy is the foremost responsibility of the Scouts. “Scouting is willing to lose its own life to serve boys in the church...To win, develop, and conserve youth for God is our foremost responsibility.”¹³⁶ Truly, the Church and Scouting work cooperatively together for spiritual growth. “Spiritual growth and Scouting go hand in hand. The AAD program will help you advance spiritually in Scouting and to live fully to the Scout Law.”¹³⁷ It’s clear that to say that Scouting is merely a citizenship building program is missing the point of what Scouting aims to do: develop the moral character of the boy by all means necessary, which include providing spiritual development. In 1946 a Lutheran Pastor by the name of Reginald Siegler warned his congregation about these goals of the Scouting Movement in this tract.

We do respect everyone’s right to choose his own religion. We do not respect false religions. Scouting is in that way exactly as dangerous as is sending our children to a Sunday School of another denomination. Let us presume as a fact that no single false doctrine is taught in that Sunday or Summer School during an entire term. What impression will this child have? Isn’t it this: It makes no difference where I go to church? Finally all churches are the same? How many children have lost their life because they felt that everything in a bottle must be pop? There are some bottles, as we all know, that contain poisons. Parents usually are careful to place such bottles out of the reach of little fingers. False doctrines are spiritual poisons. Teach your children to avoid such spiritual poisons bottled and packaged in false churches, just as they are to avoid actual bottles of poison. That means, and God’s Word it is, that forces us to say it: Scouting is not for our children.¹³⁸

Siegler and others realized that Scouting was not just a citizenship program but that it actively and deceptively taught religion to our boys. The Missouri Synod denies this statement in their second finding quoting statements like the following that the Boy Scout Movement leaves the religious training to the church. “The Church spiritualizes the Movement, adding the religious element without which the

¹³⁵ Lutheran Council in the USA, *The Lutheran Congregation Side by Side with Boy Scouts* (New York: Lutheran Council in the USA, 1980), 4.

¹³⁶ Protestant Committee on Scouting, *Scouting Serves the Church* (New York: Protestant Committee on Scouting, 1948), 2-3.

¹³⁷ National Catholic Committee on Scouting, *Ad Altare Dei* (New Brunswick: National Catholic Committee on Scouting, 1975), 4.

¹³⁸ Reginald A. Siegler, *Scouting: What of It for Our Boys and Girls*, Part 1 for Friedens Lutheran Congregation Kenosha (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House), 4.

program is not complete.”¹³⁹ The Missouri Synod would further see that the religious training of a child happens at home and with his parents.¹⁴⁰ Yet this is not completely accurate. Scouting does involve religious training to complete its goals. “Only with spiritual dynamics can Scouting achieve its noble purposes in the lives of youth.”¹⁴¹ These spiritual dynamics do not come wholly from the Church but from the Scouting Movement. “As a nonsectarian Movement, Scouting does not give instruction in religion, but it is not silent on the subject. There is a conscientious acceptance of responsibility for giving incentive and encouragement to religious experience in the lives of all Scouts and Scouters.”¹⁴²

At this point Missouri might interject, “Aha! For exactly these reasons you’ve listed we incorporate a closed Lutheran troop under Lutheran leadership to protect ourselves against the false incentives and encouragements of the Boy Scout Movement.” We might respond, “That may be true. Yet, as a closed troop of the Boy Scouts, what doors are you leaving open? What are the true purposes of the Boy Scouts with regards to religion?” We see that the Boy Scouts seek to be in partnership and has its own program for religious development. “The relationship between the Boy Scouts of America and the church is a partnership... Scouting has always taken a definite stand on the importance of religion in the lives of boys and leaders. It has a positive program to support the development of spiritual values in American Life.”¹⁴³ This program of religious development believes itself to have the same rule set as the Church. The Boy Scouts believe both they and the church stress “duty to God” and find the core of their religious teachings in following the Law.

The Scout Oath or Promise place emphasis on “duty to God.” The Scout Law paraphrases in language meaningful to boys the Ten Commandments and the Golden Rule. These statements,

¹³⁹ Lutheran Committee on Scouting, *Scouting in the Lutheran Church* (New York: Boy Scouts of America, 1943), 5.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid* pg. 10.

¹⁴¹ Church Commission on Scouting (National), *Scouting in the Church's Ministry* (New Brunswick: Church Commission on Scouting, 1971), 27.

¹⁴² Church Commission on Scouting (National), *Scouting in the Church's Ministry* (New Brunswick: Church Commission on Scouting, 1971), 29.

¹⁴³ *Ibid* pg. 27.

together with the Scout motto and Scout slogan, provide the basis for what is often referred to as the "spirit of Scouting."... Scouting supplements the educational program of the church and the two blend harmoniously in the work of producing men of Christian character, trained for leadership in the church and in the community.¹⁴⁴

One particular way the Boy Scouts believe their religious training "blends harmoniously" with the Church is its God and Country¹⁴⁵ program. This religious system is for advancing Scouts to grow and actively live their faith. "Scouting seeks to bring a boy's faith into his life as a Scout. The God and Country program seeks to bring a boy's life as a Scout into his faith."¹⁴⁶ The Boy Scouts do this by adopting synergistic practices of faith and conversion. Here is a description of their first recommended project entitled "Project Faith" attempts to do for the Boy Scout. Would we preach or teach this in our churches? "Explore what it means to accept responsibility as a person who responds to God's call in Jesus Christ."¹⁴⁷ For the Boy Scouts, faith is a synergistic response mankind can perform. We know from Scripture that Faith is not our doing but entirely the work of the Holy Spirit through the Gospel.¹⁴⁸ The problem with the God and Country program is not only that it develops a synergistic view towards Faith, but it also develops Scouts zealous for the fulfillment of the Law through Law-based incentives, not through the Gospel. "The God and Country Award is not a merit badge in Scouting, it is an award of the Church in recognition of spiritual achievement... The God and Country program stimulates a Boy Scout to more zealous fulfillment of the Scout Promise and the Twelfth Scout Law."¹⁴⁹

Another way that the Boy Scouts teach religion is through their worship practices. Scouts define worship as "the personal, intimate experience of people which is most really theirs at moments when

¹⁴⁴ Ibid pg. 10-11

¹⁴⁵ Deo and Patria

¹⁴⁶ Roy P. Adelberg, *God and Country Counselor's Manual* (St. Louis: Bethany Press, 1969), 11.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid pg. 32.

¹⁴⁸ 1 Corinthians 12:3, Romans 10:17

¹⁴⁹ Protestant Committee on Scouting, *Scouting Serves the Church* (New York: Protestant Committee on Scouting, 1948), 4.

they most really feel God's presence."¹⁵⁰ Since these worship services ^{are} based on feelings, not facts, a Scout Master's feelings may lead him to invent or develop worship services specifically suited to his purposes of religious development. "Therefore we envision these worship services to be used in various situations of interpersonal relationships in which personal identity must be maintained and understood...Sometimes leaders may feel that none of these services of worship answers the particular needs of his particular Scouts at a certain time. It is then that the leader is heartily encouraged to create his own services of worship."¹⁵¹ A Scout in worship doesn't worship Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, but rather Jesus Christ as symbol and motivator. Here's a responsive reading lifted directly from a worship service. The Boys would respond about Christ's cross "and that cross became a redeeming symbol in the history of mankind."¹⁵² As this worship service continues, justification by grace alone through faith is completely missing. They do quote 18 different Bible passages about the purpose of Christ and Easter, but their quotations strip the heart and core of Christianity, the grace of God in Christ, down to teaching Jesus as example.¹⁵³ Clearly Scouting has its own system of religious principles that are taught to the Scouts.

The Missouri and Slovak Synod in their third finding attempted to quickly discuss the connection found in Boy Scouts to religion. They agree that the foundation principle of the Boy Scouts is that no boy can grow into the best kind of citizens without recognizing and fulfilling one's duty to God. Scouting has made obligation to God the focal point of its program for boys, as follows:

The Boy Scouts of America maintains that no boy can grow in the best kind of citizen without recognizing his obligation to God. In the first part of the Scout Oath or Promise the boy declares, "On my honor I will do my best to do my duty to God and my country and to obey the Scout Law." The recognition of God as the ruling and leading power in the universe and the grateful acknowledgement of His favors and blessings are necessary to the best type of citizenship and

¹⁵⁰ Church Commission on Scouting (National), *When Scouts Worship* (St. Louis: Bethany Press, 1968), 2.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid* pg. 3-4.

¹⁵² *Ibid* pg. 38.

¹⁵³ *Ibid* pg. 42.

are wholesome precepts in the education of the growing boy. No matter what the religious faith of the boy may be, this fundamental need of good citizenship should be kept before him. The Boy Scouts of America therefore recognizes the religious element in the training of the boy, but it is absolutely nonsectarian in its attitude toward that religious training. Its policy is that the home and the organization or institution with which the Scout is connected shall give definite attention to his religious life. Only persons willing to subscribe to this declaration of principle shall be entitled to certificates of leadership in carrying out the Scout program.¹⁵⁴

The preceding paragraph in many shapes and sizes is a familiar quote for Missourians. They love to stress the nonsectarian nature of the Boy Scouts and that the home and religious institution shall give definite attention to the boys religious life. The Missourians get a little uneasy with this idea of obligation to God, so they attempt in their works to sanitize the concept. "According to Lutheran teaching, fulfillment of the Scout Promise and the Scout Law is god-pleasing so as the motivation, means, and end remain in keeping with Scripture."¹⁵⁵ The motivation and means for performing good works, at least according to Scripture, has been shown earlier to be the Gospel. Yet the Scouting Movement finds their means and motivation in Scripture as the Law. Missouri's attempt to make the fulfillment of the Scout Oath and Law God-pleasing cannot be justified on the basis of Scripture or the writings of the Boy Scouts. Note also the change here in wording. The Missouri Synod interprets the word "Oath" as "Promise. This is a common switch produced only in Lutheran writings. When one reads, for instance, material for Catholics, Protestants, or Jews, it's evident that the whole of Boy Scouts recognize the Scout Oath as truly an Oath. The Lutheran Movement attempts to relabel this Oath as a Promise which it certainly is not. A relative once told me that calling a dog a cat doesn't change a thing. This is true for calling this Oath a Promise.

Yet, we digress. Are the Boy Scouts nonsectarian? Of course not! If one looks at their materials prepared for different religious groups, they see their core teachings conformed to fit the needs of the current

¹⁵⁴ Church Commission on Scouting (National), *Scouting in the Church's Ministry* (New Brunswick: Church Commission on Scouting, 1971), 38.

¹⁵⁵ Lutheran Committee on Scouting, *Scouting in the Lutheran Church* (New York: Boy Scouts of America, 1943), 6.

situation. To a Catholic troop, Boy Scouts honor Mary. To a Lutheran troop, Boy Scouts are about Jesus. "Church membership is not a requirement for the God and Country program, although it is difficult to imagine a Scout participating fully in the program without coming to some decision regarding his acceptance of Jesus Christ and his full participation in the fellowship of the church."¹⁵⁶ A Lutheran Scout, while accepting Jesus into his life, projects his future spiritually through the Boy Scouts. "We are talking, of course, about vocation or calling... is to have the Scout project his considerations into the future of his own life, determining for himself what possibilities for service and responsibility await a person who responds to God's call."¹⁵⁷ What is the purpose of such considerations through the completion of the God and Country Award? "As a special incentive to encourage development along the lines mentioned above, *First Class, Star, Life and Eagle Scouts* may be given a special citation known as the *Pro Deo and Patria Award*.... Great care must be taken that the Scout has achieved the citation for the sake of its significance and not the citation itself."¹⁵⁸

We see sectarian practices even in their attempt to be non-sectarian. One might applaud the Boy Scouts for being all things to Catholics and Lutherans alike. We would not. They dilute the basic teachings of the organization so as to sound pleasing to all. Look at the last quote in the above paragraph. It's a typical example of Boy Scout doublespeak. In a context where they are encouraging service due to one's obligation to God, the singular example of service in a Lutheran congregation, the God and Country award, should be awarded to Scouts only who have achieved this award solely for its significance. We might ask the Boy Scouts "What is this significance, again?" This award is not attained by the Gospel producing fruits of faith. This award is not a free expression of the grace given us in Christ Jesus. Rather, this award is given to merit achievement in one's spiritual life. The significance of this award shows the

¹⁵⁶ Roy P. Adelberg, *God and Country Counselor's Manual* (St. Louis: Bethany Press, 1969), 14.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid* pg. 15.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid* pg. 65-67

Scout to have followed the Scout Law better than the rest of his other Scouts. The same award ^{is} given in a variety of other churches¹⁵⁹ to encourage service.

What does a young Lutheran boy think when he receives an award from his Lutheran church and a fellow boy receives an award from the Mormon church? Does the young Lutheran boy think they have both served God? Does the young Lutheran boy think his award is "better" than the Mormon's award? Does the young Lutheran boy glory in his own accomplishments produced by the sweat of his brow and his own hard work? Any of these thoughts that would conceivably run through that young Lutheran boy's mind are not praiseworthy. They are sinful. The Mormon boy has not served the Triune God for he doesn't believe in him. Lutherans are not better than Mormons in regards to their works. Lutherans should not revel in their works but in the work of Christ for us. When the Boy Scout Movement attempts to be as non-sectarian as possible through its awards and practices, they fail in doing so. They continue to foster false pride, hope, and confidence in boys (Lutheran or not) around the world who revel in their accomplishments. They imply that one boy's obligation to his god, whomever that might be, is just as good as the other boy's obligation to his god.¹⁶⁰ This unionistic view is upheld ⁱⁿ one of their worship services on Unity. Here is the statement by the leader to which the boys would confess agreement.

Leader: Where sincere conviction and honest belief compel us to differ sharply with our fellow Christians, help us find a depth of fellowship ⁱⁿ which dialogue may continue and we may know and cherish the faith of all. Everyone: There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of us all who is above all and through all and in all.¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁹ According to Page 37 of *Scouting in the Church's Ministry*, Protestants and LDS receive the God and Country emblem, Eastern Orthodox boys the Alpha Omega, Catholic boys the Ad Altare Dei, Jewish boys the Ner Tamid, Mormon boys the Duty to God, Buddhist boys the Sangha, Moslem boys the In the Name of God, Unitarian boys the Religion in Life, and Armenian Boys the Ararat.

¹⁶⁰ Please note that we have not capitalized God here not to demean the might and power of the one true God. No, we do this because the deistic concept of God offered in the Boy Scouts is not truly God, but rather a god or false idol. This god is what boys are taught to worship and praise together.

¹⁶¹ Church Commission on Scouting (National), *When Scouts Worship* (St. Louis: Bethany Press, 1968), 60.

The fourth finding of the Missouri Synod and Slovak Synod report states that Scoutism does not promise spiritual blessings such as forgiveness of sins, salvation, and peace with God to those who obey the Scout Law. As we've seen before under point one, this is certainly not true. Scouting is not solely a citizenship-building organization but rather promises blessings of peace, fulfillment, and new life through fulfillment of the Law. Note again what was quoted before in pamphlet entitled *The Lutheran Congregation Side by Side with Boy Scouts*. "By employing scouting ideals as found in the promises, laws, mottoes, slogans, and creeds, relationships with God, others, and self are fostered."¹⁶² It's clear from the teachings of the Boy Scouts that they believe if one follows the Boy Scout Law and Oath one will have a better relationship with God. Boy Scouts look at the ministry of the Church as seeking their services.

The church has become deeply concerned about providing a program under Christian leadership that reaches into the boy's own world to guide his conduct and mold his character as he engages in leisure-time activities. The Scout program... provides a channel seldom equaled through which the congregation and its members can render much need services to the community. One of the most important is the training of the youth to be participating Christian citizens.¹⁶³

Notice that the Boy Scouts view the Church's primary concern with the youth is to be guiding their conduct and character. While these concerns are important, the primary concern of the Church is to teach and preach Christ crucified and consequently the outpourings of that Gospel proclamation will guide his conduct and mold his character. Notice also how Scouting views itself as attracting boys to the Church.

The outstanding God-given responsibility of the church is the sharing of the love that God expressed in the sacrifice of his Son for the sins of all people. What better way to attract boys to the church where that love can be shared than through Scouting... The Scout program, then, serves a dual purpose as part of the mission and evangelism effort of the congregation: It provides an appealing opportunity for men and boys of the church to grow in their mission and evangelism experience; and it serves as an attractive invitation to boys of the neighborhood to make an initial contact with the church.¹⁶⁴

¹⁶² Lutheran Council in the USA, *The Lutheran Congregation Side by Side with Boy Scouts* (New York: Lutheran Council in the USA, 1980), 4.

¹⁶³ Church Commission on Scouting (National), *Scouting in the Church's Ministry* (New Brunswick: Church Commission on Scouting, 1971), 8-9.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid* pg. 9-10.

Unfortunately Scouting doesn't stop there. They hold that they not only attract people to the Church, but bring people into the Church and help maintain their membership in the church. Quite clearly, Scouting believes itself in practice to give spiritual blessings which reap eternal rewards.

There are millions of boys in America growing up without the blessings of religious instruction. Every possible resource should be employed to bring them into Christian fellowship and experience. Scouting is one of the mediums that have proved its effectiveness in attracting boys and guiding them to the sources of spiritual power in religion. Many a lad and his family have been brought into the Church through Scouting. Now is the time for the Church to open the door for a million more!¹⁶⁵

The fifth point of their report sees the Scout Oath as a Pledge, not an Oath. I refer you to the *Scouting in the Lutheran Church* pamphlet. "The Boy Scout "Pledge" is a promise, not an oath in the scriptural sense of the term. The upraised hand with the three fingers extended has reference to the threefold pledge, not to the Trinity."¹⁶⁶ We will agree with them on the second half on that statement but not on the first half. It's true that the three fingers are referencing the three foundational principles of Scouting: The Scout Oath, the Scout Law, and the Daily Good Turn. However the Scout Oath is more than a pledge. For an organization like the Boy Scouts which "desires to co-operate in every respect with the Church"¹⁶⁷ and finds their "emphasis on duty to God",¹⁶⁸ it finds the motivation for such good works based on the Scout Oath. Scouts are instructed to make up prayers on this Oath.¹⁶⁹ They run their Boy Scouting life according to this oath. It is the basic fundamental truth behind their duty to God and the moral good deeds they must produce. To call this a Pledge would be to ignore the entire focus and structure that the Scout Oath puts on their lives.

¹⁶⁵ Protestant Committee on Scouting, *Scouting Serves the Church* (New York: Protestant Committee on Scouting, 1948), 10.

¹⁶⁶ Lutheran Committee on Scouting, *Scouting in the Lutheran Church* (New York: Boy Scouts of America, 1943), 10.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid pg. 11.

¹⁶⁸ Church Commission on Scouting (National), *Scouting in the Church's Ministry* (New Brunswick: Church Commission on Scouting, 1971), 10.

¹⁶⁹ National Catholic Committee on Scouting, *Ad Altare Dei* (New Brunswick: National Catholic Committee on Scouting, 1975), 9.

The sixth and seventh points of their report were really the bulk of discussion and controversy between the Wisconsin and Missouri Synod. Missouri, as shown before under Graebner, had recognized the spiritual problems present in the Boy Scouts. They sought to eradicate these problems by appealing to the Boy Scout authorities. Missouri feels that the Boy Scout authorities have eliminated those original features which both Missouri and Wisconsin found objectionable. Did the Boy Scouts remove those features? No, they did not.

The Boy Scouts would like the Missouri Synod to believe that they had removed their unionistic teachings and allowed for independent operation of a Lutheran troop within the whole of Boy Scouts. "Religious elements can be brought into the unit program that will not violate the religious convictions of boys from other churches. With guidance from their spiritual advisors, boys of other faiths should be encouraged to participate in the religious programs of their church."¹⁷⁰ However, their practice shows otherwise. Here are examples of their worship services as found in their worship book *When Scouts Worship*. The first quote is their liturgical outline in the beginning of their Worship Service IV.

Expressing our Christian Beliefs in Singing
 Moments of Silence
 Doxology "Praise God from whom all Blessings Flow"
 Unison: I believe in God the Father Almighty....
 Hymn: "Holy, Holy, Holy"
 Unison: Maker of heaven and earth.
 Hymn: "He's got the whole word in his hands"
 Unison: and in Jesus Christ, his only Son our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary....¹⁷¹

What an example of unionistic worship! Boys of all faiths, regardless of their religious conviction, shall join together to express their Christian beliefs in singing the doxology and chanting the Creed? What of our impressionable youth who speak and sing these same words and songs in both their regular Sunday

¹⁷⁰ Church Commission on Scouting (National), *Scouting in the Church's Ministry* (New Brunswick: Church Commission on Scouting, 1971), 20.

¹⁷¹ Church Commission on Scouting (National), *When Scouts Worship* (St. Louis: Bethany Press, 1968), 14.

worship and their Boy Scout Worship? Will they not think that we all believe and worship the same thing? Won't they believe that their Mormon or Jehovah's Witness friend in Boy Scouts really and truly believes in the Triune God? The Boy Scouts teach the youth unionistic worship not only in their liturgical services, but also in the calls to worship. Under the heading of Church and Christian Fellowship, they have the youth read Ephesians 4:4-6, Romans 12:4-5, and 1 Corinthians 10:16-17¹⁷². What a perversity of clear Christian doctrine! These very same passages which we would teach our youth, according to Scripture, prevent such worship and prayer are being ingrained into them at their tender years that this unionistic worship is commanded and blessed by God. That belief is confirmed in them as they would leave their finish their join prayer with these words "We rejoice in thy church which declares thy love and provides the nurturing warmth of fellowship to us all. Amen."¹⁷³ How can the Missouri Synod think that the Boy Scouts have removed unionistic worship from their midst when these worship practices are promulgated?

Not only did the unionistic worship remain, but Boy Scouts continued to allow a naturalistic interpretation of their principles. Missouri subjected themselves to the interpretation when they participated in a joint production of *Scouting in the Lutheran Church*¹⁷⁴ where they recognized that the duties of the Boy Scout Committee are to "Interpret to Lutheran Pastors and people the entire Scout program, including the Scout Promise and the Scout Law – especially the Twelfth Law, a Scout is reverent."¹⁷⁵ How has the Lutheran Council interpreted these laws? "These religious standards represent the Lutheran interpretation of the Scout requirements for advancement, that a boy must "furnish

¹⁷² Ibid pg. 21.

¹⁷³ Ibid pg. 30.

¹⁷⁴ We do note on page VI of the introduction to *Scouting in the Lutheran Church* the various Synod representatives who cooperated in producing this document. American Lutheran church, Augustana Synod, Lutheran Free Church, Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod, Norwegian Lutheran Church, United Danish Church, United Lutheran Church, and the American Federation of Lutheran Brotherhoods.

¹⁷⁵ Lutheran Committee on Scouting, *Scouting in the Lutheran Church* (New York: Boy Scouts of America, 1943), 9.

satisfactory evidence that he has put into practice in his daily life the principles of the Scout Promise and Law.”¹⁷⁶ The interpreted motivation once again for Boy Scout’s participation is all Law driven. This motivation drives not only the Scouts, but their Scoutmasters as well to develop these qualities in the Scouts. “These leaders must be Christian men of strong, upright character, as they cannot develop in the boys basic qualities which they themselves lack.”¹⁷⁷ Quite simply, the interpretation of these laws by the Lutheran Council is not scripturally sound. They still find the motivation for a Boy Scout to be reverent is within him. They judge each boy’s motivation and dedication by their fruits of faith. While fruits of faith can be used to judge hearts, we would never want our motivation to produce fruits of faith to be driven by the Law, but the Gospel, which can produce good works in keeping with repentance.

The most important point for the Missouri and Slovak Synods in the acceptance of the Boy Scouts was the seventh point they made. They hold to Boy Scout correspondence which states that the Boy Scouts cannot supersede the authority of the local Pastor or congregation in anything that affects their spiritual welfare. This statement assumes that the Lutheran Church is primary and the Boy Scout Movement secondary when it comes to boys’ spiritual welfare. Is this truly how the Boy Scout Movement views their relationship with the Church? Sadly, it isn’t. They view their relationship with the church as a symbiotic partnership where both parties are strengthened.

When like-minded groups work together, more can be accomplished than when each tries to achieve some of the same goals working separately. This basic truth gives rise to alliances of many kinds at all levels. It underlies the formation of Lutheran congregations into church bodies or synods. The term “synod” illustrates well the side-by-side concept. It is derived from Greek words which mean “a going, or walking, together.” A church synod is a gathering of Christian congregations that hold mutual beliefs and agree to work together to accomplish mutual goals. The overarching goal is to “preach the gospel to the whole creation” (Mark 16.15). The local congregation too is a gathering of like-minded Christian believers who work together in a particular location to evangelize the community and provide spiritual guidance and support for its individual members. The side-by-side relationship between Lutheran congregations and Boy Scouts of America is a similar “walking together” to develop sound leadership for the church and

¹⁷⁶ Ibid pg. 69.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid pg. 17

nation, to help young people become loyal citizens with reverence for god and to aid them in developing to their fullest potential the gifts God has given them.¹⁷⁸

The Boy Scouts see many benefits to themselves from this Synodical relationship they share with the Lutheran Church. "For the BSA, the church's use of Scouting also: Provides a spiritual "conscience" to help the Movement maintain the spiritual base on which it is founded and to observe principles and practices that strengthen rather than jeopardize the relationships with religious institutions. Enlists additional moral and financial support for the total Scouting Movement."¹⁷⁹ Did you notice how the Lutheran church succinctly serves the Boy Scouts? They serve them by providing moral and financial support for the Scouting Movement. The Lutheran Church is not supreme in that aspect of their symbiotic relationship. Instead, it is forced to serve the Scouting Movement as the monies of their church support the Boy Scout Movement and the moral work of their Scouts, Scoutmasters, and Chaplains give glory to the Boy Scout Movement. Notice what else they receive from their financial support of the Boy Scouts. "Each boy pays an annual registration fee of \$1. Each leader pays \$2, which includes his subscription to Scouting Magazine, mailed to his home bimonthly. This magazine gives inspiration articles, leadership guidance, and training helps for its program. Registration fees help defray the essential expense of the Scout organization and make possible the extension and maintenance of Scouting through the United States."¹⁸⁰ Not only does the Lutheran Church support the Boy Scouts through paying its dues, it also receives in return inspirational magazines which seek to guide one's understanding and application of the Boys Scouts.

A Missouri^{an} might interrupt here and say, "Well, just because we receive their magazine doesn't mean we have to use them!" That would be a fair statement but it misses the point. The reason that the Boy

¹⁷⁸ Lutheran Council in the USA, *The Lutheran Congregation Side by Side with Boy Scouts* (New York: Lutheran Council in the USA, 1980), 5.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid pg. 4.

¹⁸⁰ Church Commission on Scouting (National), *Scouting in the Church's Ministry* (New Brunswick: Church Commission on Scouting, 1971), 24-25.

Scouts send out this material is that they wish to inform and teach the Scout Masters and Chaplains of the Lutheran Church how to apply the teachings of the Boy Scout Movement. Even if a church would throw out the mailings, they cannot refuse the fact that this Movement is setting itself up to instruct the church on the spirituality of the child in the most discreet of ways. The fact still remains that by sending these fees in the Lutheran Church they are supporting an unchristian organization. Even if an individual Lutheran church would reject all of the false teachings found in the Boy Scouts, yet by their support they are willingly planting, fostering, and supporting false doctrine worldwide. How can any Lutheran church have that on their conscience?

The Lutheran Church is also subservient in this Synodical relationship when it comes to the God and Country program. It must follow the rules mandated by the Boy Scouts for a boy to be recognized for spiritual achievement. Doesn't that seem odd that the church can only recognize spiritual achievement when the Boy Scouts approve? The Boy Scouts have a worship manual for churches that they should follow in recognizing this boy.

The God and Country program of the church and of the Boy Scouts of America is a program of searching and exploration on the part of the boy into the realm of faith in action. It is not entered into lightly or for the sake of reward... (Name of Scout), will you repeat the Scout Oath? (Scout repeats in full the Scout Oath and the Twelfth Point of the Scout Law) (Name of Scout), do you promise diligently to participate in the God and Country program, seeking no reward but a deeper understanding of your relationship to God and Jesus Christ, looking to the Holy Spirit and the church for counsel and guidance?¹⁸¹

A Missourian might respond, "Those suggestions are well and good, but they do not require us to have such a worship ceremony." Here again is where Missouri has been blind. The recognition of a Scout shall happen in worship. "Boys should be received into the Troop in accordance with the Lutheran Investiture Ceremony as approved by the Church, and they should advance through the various grades of Scouting

¹⁸¹ Roy P. Adelberg, *God and Country Counselor's Manual* (St. Louis: Bethany Press, 1969), 27.

with a similar Lutheran ceremony.”¹⁸² This previous quote not only applies to closed troops but was written with the full support of the Missouri Synod. There is even a picture on the page preceding this quotation showing a Pastor in full worship regalia performing this worship ceremony.¹⁸³ Scouts are not only taught that this recognition ceremony is something that they should look forward to¹⁸⁴ and enjoy but also they learn stewardship training through the giving of their Scout dues!

Troop dues, like Sunday School collection, should be considered a part of Scout’s stewardship training. That which is set aside for the Church out of the regular Troop budget should be supplemented from time to time by special offerings. Every offering laid upon the Altar of God honors his name. As a Scout is trained in the joy of giving to the Kingdom of God he considers his stewardship a glorious privilege to be continued and increased according to the measure in which it has been blessed.¹⁸⁵

Yet, with all of these false doctrines illustrated through the practices of the Boy Scouts, the Missouri and Slovak Synod defended their freedom to participate in these unionistic practices. If there was any doubt that the Missouri or Slovak Synod undertook this decision with questions or concerns, may this next statement put that concern to rest. The Missouri Synod and Slovak Synod understood some of the false doctrine in the Boy Scouts and yet allowed their churches to utilize the Boy Scouts anyway. The man who began the study of the Boy Scout Movement for Missouri Synod and through whose work on their board for youth work popularized and promulgated its use, Dr. Theodore Graebner, explains the rationale behind Missouri Synod’s full acceptance of the Boy Scout Movement.

As for the attitude of Scouting towards religion, an official statement from (Boy Scout) headquarters, under date March 6, 1945, answers an inquirer to this effect: “You ask if the Boy Scouts has a religion of its own as implied in our statement on Duty to God in the *Handbook for Boys...* The Boy Scouts of America therefore recognizes the religious element in the training for the boy, but it is absolutely non-sectarian in its attitude toward that religious training. Its policy is that the organization or institution with which the Boy Scout is connected shall give definite attention to his religious life.” It then continues: “The Boy Scout Movement has never assumed to set up standards of religion, nor have we arrogated to the Boy Scout Movement any of the

¹⁸² Scouting in the Lutheran Church 31

¹⁸³ The ceremony is conveniently held under the statue of Christ’s outstretched arms as if he was blessing such an event.

¹⁸⁴ Lutheran Committee on Scouting, *Scouting in the Lutheran Church* (New York: Boy Scouts of America, 1943), 39-40.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.* pg. 49.

functions of the church... The Boy Scout Movement has no religion of its own and no religious standards. It does not teach salvation by good works or by obedience to the Scout Law... In our interpretation the Boy Scout Movement is not a religious organization, and it prescribes no creed, no way of salvation. It subscribes to the moral law and recognizes that these laws are inspired by religion." We thought it well to place on record these authentic statements, since we still hear an occasional reference to a tract on Scouting which our Synod published many years ago and in which charges were made which no longer can be made today in view of the clear-cut official references which declare it to be a "presumption" if the Scout Movement were to transgress into the province of the church and give the boy religious indoctrination. Scouting leaves the choice of church and religion to the Scout's parents exactly as the public school, while encouraging religious instruction as an ingredient of good citizenship, under its released-time arrangement leaves the choice of instruction to the parents. G.¹⁸⁶

In conclusion, the decision is clear. One cannot with a good conscience and his feet firmly planted in all of Scripture participate in the Boy Scout Movement. It is more than an Americanized version of teaching woodcraft and scoutcraft. Through the work of Dr. West and others the Boy Scouts in America have grown into an organization solely dependent upon moralizing agents to produce good works and character building in the lives of little boys across our nation. Although the Missouri Synod, as evidenced by their Report in 1952, would believe that Lutherans can in good conscience sanitize scouting, we have seen that you cannot. This compulsory program of work-righteousness, which at its very core requires unnecessary oaths (Scout Oath) motivated by rewards (Scout Law) lived daily in boys' lives (Daily Good Turn), ignores the sinful condition we were born into and the Gospel which Christ has redeemed us with. For a Lutheran Church which recognizes that we are saved by grace alone through faith to subject its youth to being taught we are blessed by works alone through honor fails to train a child up in the way they should go.¹⁸⁷

¹⁸⁶ Theodore Graebner, "Changes on Scouting," *The Lutheran Witness* 64, no. 14 (July 3, 1945): 212.

¹⁸⁷ Proverbs 22:6

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