

# The History of the Boy Scout Issue

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You are assembled as a district in special convention for the express purpose of discussing certain matters which have a vital bearing upon relations between our own synod and the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod (LCMS). These matters threaten our fellowship as sister synods which we have enjoyed for almost eighty years in the Synodical Conference. The principle matter is that of the *Common Confession*, the joint confession drawn up and accepted by both the LCMS and the American Lutheran Church (ALC) as a settlement of past doctrinal controversy. It has been officially submitted to our synod for approval. At its general convention in August our Joint Synod will be making its decision as to whether it is a settlement of past controversies whereby the doctrinal confession of the Synodical Conference remains unimpaired and is safeguarded against past errors.<sup>1</sup>

The other matter which you are undertaking to discuss at this special Michigan District meeting is the issue of Scouting, which has likewise arisen between our own synod and the Missouri Synod. Our synod in its August convention will have to voice its decision concerning the *Common Confession* and consider what effect the decision which it makes has upon its relation with the LCMS. It will not yet be faced with making similar decisions concerning the Boy Scout issue. This issue is at present again committed for study to a committee, this time a Synodical Conference committee. Since our synod, in accordance with the resolution of the 1951 Synodical Conference convention, has entered in upon the appointment of this Synodical Conference committee, our synod will undoubtedly await a report on this restudy before it will want to make any conclusive decision on the bearing of the Boy Scout issue on its relations with the LCMS.

Yet the fact that the Boy Scout issue is at present still being studied by a Synodical Conference committee does not and cannot relieve each and every member of our synod from the obligation of studying it for his own person. No committee can ever decide any matter of Christian faith or life for us; each one of us will ultimately have to judge such a committee report in the light of our own convictions won from God's Word. Such an individual study is all the more urgent inasmuch as a divergent practice concerning Scouting is all the while facing us in sister congregations of the LCMS. This makes the Scout issue an ever-present practical problem which we must meet with conviction even while it is still under study. It is quite proper, therefore, that you should be undertaking to discuss also this matter at this special district meeting by having requested an essay on *The History of the Boy Scout Issue*.

It is of importance that we know what has been done in the way of admonition and testimony, which we always owe to our brethren before we take decisive action and treat an issue as divisive. It is important that we know that every orderly avenue has been sought out and is being employed to reach agreement once more also on this issue.

## The Issue Itself With the Boy Scout Program

Before we enter upon the history of our issue with the Missouri Synod on Scouting, it may be well to point out briefly why the Boy Scout program itself has been an issue for us. Why have we consistently held that our young Christians cannot identify themselves with the program which Scouting offers? Why do we hold that the church cannot use the program of Scouting for the purpose of training its own children for a God-pleasing life? A great deal might be said here. At this point, however, we shall concentrate on the religious objections

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<sup>1</sup> At this special district convention Professor Edmund Reim presented *An Evaluation of the Common Confession*.

which we are compelled to raise against the mandatory features of the Boy Scout program. Every boy scout must know and subscribe to the Scout Oath or Promise and the Scout Law. These mandatory features are the very heart and essence of the Scouting program. They have not changed and cannot change. To give up these mandatory features and not make them obligatory for every Scout would mean giving up the very program of Scouting.

The Scout Oath asks every Boy Scout to say: “On my honor I will do my best to do my duty...to God...” *Thereby Scouting endeavors to lead boys to do their duty to God without conversion.* A Christian youth will say: “For Jesus’ sake and by the power of his grace and pardon I will strive to do my duty to God.” In Galatians 2:19-20 we hear: “For I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God. I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.”

The Scout Oath says: “On my honor I will do my best...to keep myself morally straight.” By asking every Boy Scout, regardless of his religion, to make this promise *Scouting aims to train character without the Gospel.* God’s Word says (Ro 8:8): “So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God.”

*The Scout Oath itself is condemned by God’s Word.* 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 of our honor—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, and a God-displeasing oath. We cannot leave it to the Scout authorities to decide whether it is an oath or not. They may be personally sincere enough in the answer which they give to us, but this cannot decide the matter for us. If we ask a Catholic theologian whether there is anything in Catholicism that is against the Bible, he would unequivocally deny this. Yet we would feel constrained to form our own judgment on the basis of God’s Word. We need to do the same thing when we judge the religious features found in Scouting. Concerning its Oath we need to heed the Savior’s word in Matthew 5:33-37.

*Scouting compromises our Christian confession which we are to make before the world.* The 12th Scout Law says: “A Scout is reverent.” This is explained to mean that he is faithful in his religious duties. Yet it defines neither these religious duties nor the God whom he is to serve. Scouting is basically syncretistic and unionistic. It holds that the work of the various religious bodies serves the carrying out of the Scout program. At the same time it imagines that its own program will materially aid all religious programs in carrying out their educational work. Scouting assumes that such an integration can be effective with benefits to both parties under the tacit assumption that Scoutism as such represents what is basic to all religions. This is the spirit which Scouting naturally engenders by insisting on belief in God but allowing all forms of worshipping God to be of equal value. With its practical declaration that all religions are of equal value, that all religious education, whether based on man’s innate goodness or solely on God’s grace in Christ Jesus, is equally effective for true character building, Scouting produces a unionistic view of life, even though upon request unionistic worship may be discouraged.

### **The Period of Agreement on the Issue**

As we enter upon a discussion of the history of our synod’s Boy Scout issue with Missouri, we want to point out, first of all, that there was a time when there was general agreement in our Synodical Conference on this matter. It was generally recognized that neither the code of Scouting, its path, nor its method of character training fit into the pattern of Christian education. Baden-Powell’s British Boy Scout movement was transplanted to the United States in 1909. Its incorporation was effected in 1910. In the early years when our church body was still largely a German-speaking church, involvement in the Boy Scout movement only slowly became a temptation for our youth. Where individual cases occurred they were handled by the pastors in conjunction with their congregation. The aim was to settle the matter by patient instruction. Where differences of practice did occur they were usually discussed privately between brethren.

When the movement, however, spread and faced the youth of our church more extensively, also the general testimony against its unscriptural elements became more pronounced. It was at this time that our own synod was strengthened in a firm stand by the warning reports of Missouri Synod committees and by pamphlets issued by some of its leading theologians.<sup>2</sup>

We wish to point particularly to Dr. Theodore Graebner's pamphlet on Boy Scout morality released around 1917 or 1918. He refers to it in his 1927 edition of *The Secret Empire* and lists the following conclusions concerning Scouting which he had set forth in this pamphlet:

1. Scouting has a moral, even a religious purpose, which it wants to attain without the use of the Law and the Gospel. It aims at character without conversion.
2. While the Scout obligation has not the form of an oath, yet it is officially called an oath and is treated as having the force of an oath.
3. Its custom of receiving reports on daily "good turns" tends to foster a pharisaic pride.
4. Inasmuch as the scout troops are bound up in a local organization, they are frequently called upon for joint (unionistic) worship and work.

Dr. Graebner's points are the very objections which we still raise against Scouting. They deal with features in Scouting that did not change and do not change. Only the fourth point is somewhat weak since it does not touch upon the basic syncretism and unionism which is inherent in Scouting.

The position of the Misericordias Domini Mixed Conference of the larger Milwaukee area, numbering over 100 pastoral members somewhat equally divided between the Wisconsin and Missouri Synods, exemplifies the former agreement on the evaluation of Scouting. In the early '30s it still bore unanimous testimony against one brother in its midst who condoned Scouting. His dissent was referred for further fraternal dealing to Missouri's English District to which he belonged.

### **The Gradual Weakening of the Missouri Synod's Stand Against Scouting**

This weakening manifested itself in two directions. It showed itself, first of all, in toying with the idea that the Boy Scout program might be made acceptable for our Lutheran youth if they pursued their Scouting activities in separate Lutheran troops under Lutheran leadership. Secondly, it consisted in embarking upon the unsound procedure of trying to make an organization of the world, having a religious and moralistic program, acceptable by reforming it, by getting its proponents to eradicate this or that objectionable statement. The Lord has not bidden his church to reform the world but to lead it to repentance. When we try to reform an organization which is based on the religious and moral concepts of natural man, we merely run into the danger of making it a greater snare. Natural man's basically erroneous ideas concerning religion and morality—and these are always those of the law and of work righteousness—will remain. Only this or that crass expression is removed. As a result the error may even become a bit more difficult to detect and recognize.

This was also the inevitable result when the above procedures were applied to the Boy Scout movement. Boy Scoutism was willing to insert constitutional safeguards so that the Lutheran Scout would no longer be obligated to participate in unionistic worship services. Yet the basic syncretism and unionism inherent in the Boy Scout Oath and Law remained. The successful deletion of this or that objectionable statement in the handbooks likewise did not eradicate Scouting's basic moralistic errors. It often made room for even worse statements in the next edition. The 1946 edition of the *Handbook for Boys* had stated: "The real man keeps himself in conscious harmony with God and with God's other creatures, his fellowmen, and in active

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<sup>2</sup> *The Concordia Cyclopedia*, issued by Concordia Publishing House, 1927, under the rubric "Boy Scouts," states: "Considering that the Boy Scout movement seeks to develop character and virtue and love to God, the organization not only has a religious character, but seeks to do on the basis of natural religion what can only be done by means of the Gospel. Such effort is in line with the attempt made by many churches today to develop character without a thorough regeneration of the heart and without considering it necessary to be guided in spiritual matters only by the inspired Word of God."

participation with the church.” Upon its deletion the 1948 *Handbook for Boys* offered the new statement: “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.”

The weakening in these two directions had already shown itself in Dr. Theodore Graebner’s discussion of the Boy Scout issue in his 1927 edition of *The Secret Empire*. There, on pages 222-223, he had stated:

The case is conceivable that a congregation which is now able to control absolutely the activities of its troop [note a concession that has been won] can find a Scout master who will lend his influence as a Christian and fellow-Lutheran instead of employing the Scout oath and Scout law as a means of grace. It is conceivable that such a Scout master will utilize out of the scouting program those features which are valuable for outdoor training and healthful companionship. But it should be remembered that in such cases the church will succeed, not inasmuch as it adopts the methods basic of “Scouting under Protestant Leadership,” but inasmuch as it is able to keep its program free from them.

Our position toward Scouting will, then, be governed by the following considerations:

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 absolute control of troop activities, thus eliminating in entirely 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, etc., and will substitute for Scout ethics those motives for good conduct which are supplied by the Christian Gospel.

The fallacy of these suggestions should be apparent. It involves a use of the Boy Scout program by which you reject and correct in the privacy of the Lutheran troop what you publicly endorse by identifying yourself with the Boy Scout organization in establishing a Boy Scout troop. In according a congregation absolute control over the activities of its troop the Boy Scout organization hardly envisioned such control to include the right to reject and redefine the Scout Oath and Law which the constitution of Scouting declares to be mandatory features of the Boy Scout program to which every Boy Scout must subscribe.

The same weakening features also become evident in the Missouri Synod’s official resolutions concerning Scouting from 1929 to 1941:

*Proceedings of the 34th regular convention, 1929, page 200:*

Memorial 31, emanating from the school board, petitioned Synod to instruct its president to appoint a committee whose duty it shall be to inform itself thoroughly on the Boy Scouts and Campfire Girls movements and advise Synod at its next convention what stand to take in the matter. In the meantime all boards and organizations within Synod are to refrain from making any recommendations about these movements.

*Action:* The report of committee 6 was amended to read as follows: Resolved, that Synod instruct the Board for Young People’s Work to study the Boy Scouts and Campfire Girls and other similar movements and to report its findings to the conference as soon as it is ready, as well as to the next convention. The amended report was then adopted.

*Proceedings of the 35th regular convention, 1932, page 110:*

Regarding that part of the report of the Board for Young People’s Work which refers to *Junior Organizations*, and regarding unprinted Memorial 70 and 87 concerning the *Boy Scout Movement*, committee 7 brought in the following report, which was adopted by Synod.

Whereas, We agree with the Board for Young People’s Work that Synod cannot endorse the Boy Scout movement in its present state; and

Whereas, We must acknowledge the willingness of the officials of this organization to remove objectionable features, therefore be it

Resolved, That the Board for Young People's Work be requested to continue its study of this and similar organizations.

*Proceedings of the 36th regular convention, 1935, page 106f.:*

Due consideration was given by your committee to the Boy Scout movement. We recognize gratefully the work done by the Board for Young People's Work, especially by Dr. Graebner, for the corrective and constructive work done in the elimination of undesirable elements in the Scout program or literature, with the courteous cooperation of the Scout authorities. We encourage the Board for Young People's Work to continue its efforts in this direction.

The Board has not come to a conclusion in the dealings with the Scout authorities, but these dealings have clarified a number of matters and should be continued. On the other hand, various difficulties present themselves. It may be added, to correct a possibly wrong impression, that no "open door policy" has in any way been encouraged.

Resolved, That pastors and teachers be urged to avail themselves of information provided by the Board for Young People's Work and that, before taking steps towards affiliation with the Boy Scout movement, they confer with this board, so that a more uniform practice may be followed.

*Action:* These recommendations and resolutions were adopted.

*Proceedings of the 37th regular convention, 1938, page 341:*

With respect to an unprinted memorial from the Colorado district, in which Synod is petitioned to take a definite stand regarding the Boy Scout movement, your committee begs leave to submit the following statement for adoption:

1. It is not within the province of Synod to endorse any secular movement or organization nor, for that reason, to advocate the establishment of Boy Scout troops in our congregations.
2. We have been informed by the Board of Young People's Work that the national headquarters of the Boy Scout organization have so modified their position as to grant to the individual congregation complete control of its troop and that the members of such church groups are in no wise required to take part in any activities which are contrary to our principles.
3. Because of the naturalistic and unionistic tendencies still prevalent in the Boy Scout movement, membership in non-Lutheran or sectarian troops cannot be sanctioned.
4. We suggest that Synod encourage the Board for Young People's Work in collaboration with the Walther League to provide our congregations with an educational and recreational program that will attract the interest of our youth and thus counteract the inclination to affiliate with the Boy Scout organization.

*Action:* This statement was adopted.

*Proceedings of the 38th regular convention, 1941, page 418f.:*

The Concordia College (Milwaukee) pastoral conference, by M. F. Kammrath, secretary, presented an unprinted memorial "requesting Synod to define its policy on the Boy Scout movement so that dissimilar practice in our midst concerning Boy Scout troops under a Lutheran Scout master may be removed and uniformity of practice may be achieved."

*Report of Committee:* Your committee reports that nothing was brought to the attention which would at this time call for either a more favorable or more unfavorable treatment of the Boy Scout movement than the one outlined in the resolutions on page 341 and 122 of the 1938 proceedings. We deem it advisable, therefore, to leave these 1938 resolutions unchanged for the present and to refer the whole matter for further study to Synod's Committee on Lodge Information, in conjunction with Synod's Board for Young People's Work.

*Action:* This report was adopted in the above amended form.

### **The Period of Our Synod's Official Dealing With the Missouri Synod on the Boy Scout Issue**

This period was ushered in by the Missouri Synod's 1944 convention resolution concerning Scouting. At its previous convention this synod had authorized its Bureau on Lodge Information jointly with its Board for Young People's Work to devote further study to the matter of Boy Scouts. The object was to remove dissimilar practice in their midst concerning Boy Scout troops under a Lutheran Scout master. These committees reported that under these instructions they had obtained all the official handbooks both for Scouts and for Scout masters, covering every phase of the work. They had examined them for any ingredients of the program which would militate against the Lutheran Scout master's committing himself to the program. Strangely enough, the committee stated that they were unable to find any factors which would violate their principles and that they had not been able to discover anything in the practices of Scouting, as outlined in these handbooks, to which a Christian parent, Scout master, or pastor would take exception.

It was also reported that a Lutheran committee on Scouting had issued a manual entitled *Scouting in the Lutheran Church*, which definitely claimed for the pastors and congregations the sole and unrestricted right of the Lutheran church committee (of which the local pastor is understood to be a member) to control everything of a religious nature that is to be super-imposed upon the official Scout program. To verify this contention they quoted from a letter of the committee, in which Chief Scout Executive Elbert K. Kretwell from Scout headquarters wrote: "We recognize that 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 program of the church." Here we again meet the fallacy of having a Scout official decide what affects the spiritual program of the church. His assurance is undoubtedly given from the assumption that there is nothing in the Scouting program that is out of harmony with the spiritual program of the church.

On the basis of this report the joint Missouri Synod committee recommended: "Accordingly, your committee believes that the matter of Scouting should be left to the individual congregation to decide in that under the circumstances Synod may consider her interests sufficiently protected." This action and recommendation was adopted by the Missouri Synod.

Herewith the Missouri Synod had now given Scouting a clean bill of spiritual health. It had commended an official manual, *Scouting in the Lutheran Church*, itself a unionistic endeavor in which Lutherans not in fellowship with one another had jointly written a book on Christian sanctification. Participants in the issuance of this manual were the ALC, the Augustana Synod, the Lutheran Free Church, the Missouri Synod, the Norwegian Lutheran Church, the United Danish Lutheran Church, the United Lutheran Church and the Federation of Lutheran Brotherhoods.

The Missouri Synod had declared that on the basis of certain Scout concessions the interests of its synod were sufficiently safeguarded.

Now the number of troops in the Missouri Synod increased rapidly, resulting in great difficulties, especially in such fields where the Missouri Synod and the Wisconsin Synod were working side by side. If we meant to uphold the stand which we had once held jointly with the Missouri Synod, grave and dangerous strains were inevitable.

It became evident that the issue would now need to be taken up between the two synods who were in fellowship with one another. In undertaking to report on the history of these dealings, your essayist is, of course, not in a position to report on the discussions which took place between individuals of both synods, or even on the discussions of mixed conferences. It has already been stated that the Misericordias Domini Mixed Conference of our own larger Milwaukee area took the matter of Scouting under very thorough discussion for a long span of time. Undoubtedly this was true also of many other areas. The history of our dealings with Missouri on the Boy Scout issue which we are undertaking to present must restrict itself to the discussion on this issue between official representatives of both synods.

*The first forum for such official discussions between the synods of the Synodical Conference was the Committee on Intersynodical Relations.* It was called into existence by resolution of the 1944 Synodical Conference convention, the very year in which the Missouri Synod had passed its disturbing resolutions concerning Scouting. The immediate occasion for this committee appointment was not the Scout issue. The appointment of a Committee on Intersynodical Relations was principally prompted by formal testimony voiced by President Brenner in a letter and by Pastor Schweikert of the Missouri Synod in a memorial against the Missouri Synod's 1938 union resolutions, and against the various practical cases by which such union with other Lutheran Synods was being anticipated. The Synodical Conference asked that two men be appointed by the respective presidents of the four synods who together with these presidents themselves should form a standing committee to be called the Committee on Intersynodical Relations. They were not only to discuss this particular letter and memorial and all the questions connected with these communications but also other issues which had arisen between the synods of the Synodical Conference.

Thus the Committee on Intersynodical Relations became the first official forum in which also the Boy Scout issue was discussed during the next two years, 1944 to 1946. The committee consisted of President John Behnken, Vice President Herman Harms and Pastor J. H. Meyer of the Missouri Synod; President John Brenner, Vice President Arthur Voss and Professor Edmund Reim of our Wisconsin Synod; President Andrew Daniel and Pastors J.S. Bradac and Stephen G. Mazak of the Slovak Synod; President Norman Madson and Pastors Adolph Harstad and C. M. Gullerud of the Norwegian Synod.

At the end of this biennium this committee reported at the 1946 convention of the Synodical Conference at Milwaukee, stating that also the Boy Scout issue had been taken up in their discussions. They realized that due to the Missouri Synod's 1944 resolution concerning Scouting a disturbing difference of opinion on this matter between the synods of the Synodical Conference was very apparent. The committee agreed that no unbrotherly action had been intended by these Missouri Synod resolutions. They felt constrained to say, however, that in such matters in which a common policy was involved the synods of the Synodical Conference ought to counsel with one another.

The committee reported that in its discussions particularly the objections of the Wisconsin Synod to Boy Scoutism had been taken under consideration, but a hearing had also been granted to the Missouri Synod's Bureau on Lodge Information.

The committee itself had not yet reached an agreement on the issue. It recommended that the Missouri Synod be asked to restudy the matter and to consult with the other synods of the Synodical Conference regarding it. At the same time this Committee on Intersynodical Relations expressed the desire to continue to study the matter and advocated that it be made a matter of study throughout the constituent synods of the Synodical Conference. The Norwegian and Wisconsin Synod segments of the committee added the recommendation that while a study, respectively a restudy of the Scout issue, was being made all members of the Synodical Conference should respect the consciences of the protesting brethren by refraining from further committing themselves to a program of Scouting and in the meantime await the outcome of this study.

Upon the recommendations of its floor committee the Synodical Conference asked all the synods to restudy the Boy Scout issue and to consult with one another concerning it. At the same time the floor committee asked the Missouri Synod at its next convention once more to consider its 1944 resolutions concerning Boy Scouts. This floor committee also asked all the synods to call the attention of their individual pastors and congregations to the request of the Wisconsin and Norwegian members of the Intersynodical Relations Committee to the effect that the brethren be urged not to organize new troops or to make public propaganda for the Boy Scouts pending the outcome of this restudy. This recommendation was discussed by the convention at great length, but no action resulted. The Synodical Conference convention did, however, pass the additional resolution that the Intersynodical Relations Committee as now constituted should continue to function and that this committee should provide pastors, teachers, and interested laymen with materials pro and con on the Boy Scout question.

During the next biennium the Intersynodical Relations Committee, meeting several times a year, again discussed the Boy Scout question at each held meeting. The committee drew up a set of questions which was to

guide it in its deliberations on the Boy Scout issue. These questions are familiar to us since they are the very questions which occur in the Study of Boy Scoutism which our synod adopted at its 1947 convention. Not everyone may know that this was the history of the particular wording of these questions:

- I. Does Scoutism as it stands today have objectionable religious features? Specifically,
  - A. May we condone the fact that the Scout Law demands “Reverence to God” and the Scout pledge insists on “Duty to God”?
  - B. Is its “Brotherhood” one which rests on the natural relation of all men to each other, or has it a spiritual basis?
  - C. May the church accept the assurance that the pledge is not in fact an oath?
  - D. Is the moral principle of Scouting in agreement with the Word of God?
- II. Is Scouting unobjectionable if it is placed under the supervision and guidance of a Lutheran congregation and its pastor? Specifically,
  - A.1. Can a Lutheran troop maintain its connection with the national Boy Scout organization without thereby becoming guilty of upholding unscriptural principles and practices?
  - A.2. If so, is such membership in this organization truly “expedient” (profitable) for the “edification” (upbuilding) of the church? 1 Cor. 6.;12; 10:23.
  - B. Can the Boy Scout oath and law be integrated in the Lutheran education of the youth without approval thereby being given the righteousness of natural man, which the Scout program seeks to develop?
  - C. Does membership in the national and international body interfere with the clear confession and firm testimony which the Christian church owes to the world?

Both those pro and those con were to supply their answers to these questions. This assignment, if it had been carried out, might have fulfilled what was in the mind of the Synodical Conference when it asked the Intersynodical Relations Committee to provide pastors, teachers, and interested laymen with materials pro and con the Boy Scout question. President John Behnken and the other Missouri Synod members of the Intersynodical Relations Committee, however, questioned the authority of the Synodical Conference to send out material on the Boy Scout issue, since this had not been authorized by the constituent synods. Thus the questions were only used in the discussions of the committee. The Wisconsin Synod members immediately drew up their substantiated answers to these questions in writing so that the discussion could proceed. The answers were substantially those which are found in the 1947 Wisconsin Synod essay, *A Study of Boy Scoutism*. The Missouri Synod committee members, while they set forth their answers verbally, failed to furnish anything in writing.

Another year was passing by and no agreement could be reached by the committee on the material to be sent out to people generally before the synodical convention of 1947. All four synods of the Synodical Conference were meeting in 1947. It was thus suggested that if the brethren of the other synods wanted the matter to be taken up again by the Missouri Synod, they might ask for this. The Wisconsin Synod, deeply interested in getting its objections to Boy Scoutism before the Missouri Synod convention so that it might reconsider its 1944 resolution acted upon this suggestion. Since our synod was meeting in August after the July convention of the Missouri Synod, it could only act through its Standing Committee on Matters of Church Union.

This standing body prepared the following memorial on the matter of Scouting for the Missouri Synod’s centennial convention in Chicago on July 20-29, 1947 (It was sent to President Behnken on May 6, 1947. Without any fault on our part, this date was too late to have it appear in the Missouri Synod Book of Memorials so, that it would become known to all of its delegates in this manner.):



*The 1947 Memorial to the Missouri Synod*

Acting upon the report of its Intersynodical Relations Committee which stated that a difference of opinion had become apparent between the synods because of the Saginaw resolutions of the Missouri Synod concerning Scoutism, the 1946 convention of the Synodical Conference asked the synods to restudy this matter and to consult with each other. It also asked the committee to supply material pro and con the Boy Scout question. We had hoped that this matter would come before your body at this 1947 convention by way of some report of this Intersynodical Committee. Since this hope was not realized, and the desired material has not been forthcoming, our Standing Committee on Church Union is addressing this memorial to your convention asking you to reconsider your 1944 resolution on Scouting.

We feel constrained to make this appeal because of the many years during which our synods were united in their stand against participation of our young people in either the Boy or the Girl Scouts of America. During that time we were strengthened by the reports of your committees and by pamphlets issued by some of your leading theologians.

All this was changed in 1944 by your acceptance of a report which gives Scouting a clean bill of health, commends an official manual entitled *Scouting in the Lutheran Church* and gives the assurance that the interests of synod are sufficiently protected by the concessions which have been made. Since then, the number of troops in your synod has multiplied rapidly, resulting in great difficulties, especially in such fields where our synods are working side by side, and creating grave and dangerous strains. We confess that we find it difficult to reconcile the Saginaw report with the 1938 resolution of your synod on this subject, particularly paragraph 3 in which you speak of "naturalistic and unionistic tendencies still prevalent in the Boy Scout movement." We note that this pronouncement was made even after the only material change in the Scout program of which our synods have been informed had already been made. That those unionistic features have not been eliminated, even now, is indicated, we believe, by the book *Scouting in the Lutheran Church* which to us is a plain instance of unionism with Lutheran synods with whom we are not in fellowship.

Our own restudy of the question of Scouting has confirmed us in our conviction that Scouting is not consistent with Scriptural principles. In order to indicate our findings, we enclose a paper entitled *A Study in Boy Scoutism*. This paper is still entirely unofficial but will serve to show the trend of our thought and argument. We ask that you give it serious consideration in your deliberations and pray that it may help to re-unite us in our view of this problem and allay the confusion which your 1944 resolution has created.

We have undertaken to speak for our synod in his matter because our convention does not meet until August and we feel that the urgency of the issue and the danger which it holds for our mutual relationship admits of no postponement of this discussion.

Upon the request of our Standing Committee on Matters of Church Union Professor Edmund Reim and Pastor Arthur Voss were asked to attend the Missouri Synod convention as announced observers who would be willing to speak for our memorial if they should be requested or if an occasion should arise.

Besides our own synod's memorial, another one from the midst of the Missouri Synod, from Pastors H. J. Eggold, Sr., and Fr. F. Selle, and Professor C. A. Hardt of Milwaukee, lay before the convention. This memorial likewise requested a restudy through a committee of the report of the Bureau of Information and of the Board for Young People's Work, which had led to the 1944 resolution on Scouting. It may be of interest to hear the points with which this memorial supported its request, since they express our own synod's objection (In quoting we have left off the whereases.):

1. The Boy Scouts are not a purely secular organization but must be regarded as one having a moral, even a religious program, in view of the following statements: "The 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—an 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 and with God’s other creatures, his fellowmen, and in active participation with the church” (*Handbook for Boys*, page 108); “Every educational system implies a philosophy; every institution has its own spirit, or better, its soul, by which it lives and expresses itself. The soul of Scouting, its vital principle and its living expression, is the Scout promise and the Scout law” (*Scouting in the Lutheran Church*, page 6);

2. The Boy Scouts through their Scout oath (“I will do my duty to God”) demand recognition of a God without specifying whether it is the only true God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, and thereby encourage reverence of any God, and religious indifference;
3. The motivation for doing one’s duty to God (“on my honor”) is not Scriptural (“the life which I now live I live by the faith of the Son of God” [Gal. 2:20]);
4. According to the Scout program the means for development of character is not the Gospel (Rom. 8:7; Rom. 1:16), but the law (the Scout oath and law);
5. The Scout law (“a Scout *is* trustworthy, a Scout *is* obedient, etc.”) is not the language of a Christian, but is unscriptural and tends to self-righteousness;
6. The statement of Scoutism: “The church is the divinely appointed agency through which men are helped to keep close to God,” is a perversion of the Biblical doctrine of the church, recognizing any and all churches, regardless of what they may teach;
7. Every Lutheran boy who is a member of the Boy Scouts identifies himself with the erroneous views set forth in their official publications and helps to propagate them;
8. The statement in the manual *Scouting in the Lutheran Church*: “Scouting activities must be carried on in such a way that Scouting shall not be placed in the position of competing with any other agency for the boy’s loyalty, but, on the contrary, Scouting should *supplement* the church school and other organizations in aiding the church in her efforts to help the boy lead a true, Christian life,” cannot remain unchallenged since it declares the program provided by the educational agencies of our church as inadequate and deficient.

When the floor committee which had considered this memorial reported to the Missouri Synod convention body, it merely recommended that the individuals in their midst who by way of a memorial had expressed their doubts about the 1944 resolutions on Scouting be asked to allay their apprehensions by consulting with the Committee on Young People’s Work and the Bureau on Lodge Information. No mention was made about their carefully worked out objections to Scouting. More than that, no mention was made of the fact that also a memorial concerning Scouting and an accompanying *Study of Boy Scoutism* from the Standing Committee on Union of the Wisconsin Synod had been in the hands of the committee for study as an unprinted memorial.

We need to note that this memorial had been sent upon the counsel of the Intersynodical Relations Committee which included President John Behnken and Vice-President Herman Harms. As a result, Professor Edmund Reim who was present as an announced guest undertook to ask for the floor, which was granted to him by President Behnken. In a few words he called attention to the fact that the earnest plea of a sister synod in this matter, submitted in the form of a memorial, and a detailed study had not been brought to the attention of the body or been given consideration.

As a result the floor committee was sent back into committee meeting and later presented a revised report which was adopted in the following amended form:

Whereas, It became apparent from discussion on the floor of synod that a number of brethren are disturbed as to the Boy Scout question; and

Whereas, The Synodical Conference has requested its constituent synods to restudy their respective position with regard to the Boy Scouts; therefore be it Resolved, That the president of synod appoint three men who, in conjunction with the Bureau of Information and the Board for Young People's Work, shall restudy the matter and report to the next convention.

To complete the picture it needs to be said that on the following day a Missouri Synod convention member expressed himself during the session concerning the impropriety that a member of the Wisconsin Synod should have spoken on the floor of the convention and influenced its action. His remarks were not rebuked by the chair. We say this to show the difficulty which confronted those who were to act in the name of our synod in bringing its convictions concerning the Boy Scout issue to the attention of the sister synod.

When our Wisconsin Synod in August 1947 now met in convention at Watertown, Wisconsin, the memorial and the accompanying *Study of Boy Scoutism* which had been addressed to the Missouri Synod convention was a part of the report of our Standing Committee on Church Union. It also reported on the above action of the Missouri Synod and recommended:

1. That we stand ready at all times to discuss the matter with the brethren.
2. That this convention take up the *Study of Boy Scoutism* which appears on page 46 of our convention program in order to determine how it stands toward this official document.

The floor committee appointed to handle this report then held a number of well attended open meetings in which it gave the union committee's essay on Scouting a thorough study and opened it up to free discussion. Thereupon the floor committee reported to the convention body that the conclusions reached in the essay were based on Scripture, that the argumentation was sound, the language moderate, and made the following recommendation:

1. That the synod adopt this statement as a declaration of its position regarding the religious principle represented by Scouting.
2. That the synod make copies of this essay available so that all conferences, pastors, teachers, and congregations may make it the subject of thorough study, the purpose of this essay being not to establish a synodical rule that must be mechanically or legalistically applied but rather to offer instruction and information on a matter that is troubling the church.
3. That this action be at the same time considered action on memorials submitted by the New Ulm Delegate Conference<sup>3</sup> and the Western Teachers' Conference<sup>4</sup> insofar as they refer to this subject and that these conferences be so informed.
4. That the synod approve the action of the Standing Committee on Church Union in memorializing the sister synod of Missouri in the matter of Scouting.
5. That the Standing Committee on Church Union continue its discussions on this subject with the appropriate committee of the sister synod as opportunities offer.

A *Study of Boy Scoutism* was then explained and discussed point for point on the convention floor and the convention adopted each point and the entire essay unanimously. Also all the above recommendations of the floor committee were adopted.

<sup>3</sup> "We condemn the principles of religion as they are embodied in the teachings of the Boy Scout organization as anti-Scriptural."

<sup>4</sup> "Whereas some congregations, pastors, and teachers permit fellow Christians to join Boy Scouts, while other congregations, pastors, and teachers definitely oppose such practice, and whereas said difference in practice interferes with the harmonious work within our congregations and synod, Therefore we, the Western Teachers' Conference, memorialize the Ev. Luth. Joint Synod of Wis. a. o. States to declare whether the Boy Scout movement is Scriptural, unScriptural, or adiaphorous, and if said practice be declared unScriptural, that the Ev. Luth. Joint Synod of Wis. a. o. States deal with such brethren who do not abide by said declaration."

Because of its importance in setting forth our Wisconsin Synod position on Scoutism, we are herewith inserting the full text of this synodically adopted document. (Note: Since those attending the special Michigan District convention were still familiar with this recently-adopted document, it was not read as a part of this essay.)

### *A Study of Boy Scoutism*

#### I. Does Scoutism as it stands today have objectionable religious features?

Official representatives of the Boy Scout organization state that they do not desire to provide the religious element in the training of youth. The sincerity of this statement is not to be questioned, but that does not relieve us of the necessity of investigating carefully whether the movement is now actually purged of the religious element which it admittedly once had. Scouting still sets forth a moral code of its own (the Scout Law) and by means of the Scout Oath impresses this upon its members as a matter of responsibility to their God<sup>5</sup> and as something which the Boy Scout owes to the “immortal personality which he is.”<sup>6</sup> We hold that this makes it a religious movement in fact, even though it may not enter upon the specific question of eternal salvation. Having this moral objective and employing religious motivation for attaining it, Scouting may not be considered a purely secular movement.<sup>7</sup> Since its religious features are not those of the revealed religion of the Gospel, they must from a Christian point of view be rejected (Luke 11:23). Specifically:

##### A. May we condone the fact that the Scout Law demands “Reverence to God” and the Scout Pledge insists on “Duty to God”?

The question here is not whether one can see some good in this sense of reverence and duty from a civic point of view, but rather whether Lutheran pastors and congregations may consent and approve that these demands are made upon our Lutheran youth by an organization outside of the church,<sup>8</sup> moreover, one which acknowledges gods different from the God of the Bible.

##### B. Is its “brotherhood” one which rests on the natural relation of all men to each other, or has it a spiritual basis?

Scoutism teaches a special “brotherhood” among Scouts.<sup>9</sup> This relation is obviously not the universal bond between all men, based on their common blood (Acts 17:26), but it is

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References from *A Study of Boy Scoutism* are included here in brackets[ ]. Emphasis in the following quotations is by the committee: [ <sup>5</sup> “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 and with God’s other creatures, his fellowmen, AND in active participation with the Church.*” (*Handbook for Boys*, 1946, p. 108).]

[ <sup>6</sup> “DUTY TO SELF—What is a Boy Scout’s duty to himself? What does he owe to the *immortal personality which he is?* He needs to grow—in stature, in strength, in knowledge and wisdom, *in favor with God and man*—to grow into greater value and usefulness and skill. He will be alert to grasp opportunities for Scout advancement, for Merit Badge explorations, or outreach through reading. The last words of the Scout Oath clearly point to a balanced duty of self—‘Keep myself physically strong, mentally awake, and morally straight’” (*Handbook for Boys*, 1946, p. 110).]

[ <sup>7</sup> “Add to that (good citizenship through service) the *religious emphasis of the Scout Promise and Law*, which recognize above all else the necessity for the fulfillment of one’s duty to God, and the picture of Scouting is complete” (Scouting in the Lutheran Church, p. 2.).]

[ <sup>8</sup> “*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. No matter what the boy may be—Catholic or Protestant or Jew—this *fundamental need* of good citizenship should be kept before him” (Constitution, 1943, Art. III, Sec. 1, p. 3-4.).]

This natural knowledge of God is not all, however. Scripture goes beyond this and reveals to us the true God. We are agreed that the “God” of Scoutism is not the Triune God. Acknowledging any other god, however, is a clear violation of the First Commandment. Furthermore, to cultivate a “reverence to God” and a sense of “duty to God” by which this basic distinction is ignored is positively harmful from a spiritual point of view (2 John 9-10).]

[ <sup>9</sup> The Fourth Scout Law: “*A Scout is friendly*. He is a friend to all and a brother to every other Scout” (Const., p. 51.).]

a restricted one based on the principles set forth in the “Scout Law and Promise.” By the testimony of the *Handbook for Boys* (page 108, quoted above), this “brotherhood” clearly has a spiritual basis and religious implications. Since this “brotherhood” is not that of faith in the atonement of Christ, it must necessarily be in conflict with the brotherhood of believers (John 14:6; Gal. 3:26).

C. May the Church accept the assurance that the pledge is not in fact an oath?

Assurance that the pledge which is required of the Scout is not to be considered an oath is given by responsible officials of the organization. There is no need to question their sincerity. But the Christian still has the duty of “proving all things,” of applying the test of Scripture. Judged by Mt. 5:33-37 and James 5:12, does not the “Boy Scout Pledge” or “Promise” clearly have the force and implication of an oath?

D. Is the moral principle<sup>10</sup> of Scouting in agreement with the Word of God?

In order to attain these objectives which are set up in the Handbooks and the Constitution, Scoutism advocates observance of a moral code and the performance of good deeds. Defenders of Scouting admit that this moral principle can be utilized by the Church only if the necessary correction (viz: of the Gospel) is applied to Scoutism’s teaching of the “good deed”.<sup>11</sup> They concede that otherwise both the motivation and the premise, namely, that truly good works can be done without faith, are false. Thereby even its defenders demonstrate conclusively that the moral principle of Scouting is not in agreement with the Word of God (John 15:5). But then Formula of Concord will apply: “When under the title and pretext of external adiaphora such things are proposed as are in principle contrary to God’s Word (although painted another color), these are not to be regarded as adiaphora, in which one is free to act as he will, but must be avoided as things prohibited by God” (*Trigl.*, p. 1053,4.).

II. Is Scouting unobjectionable if it is placed under the supervision and guidance of a Lutheran congregation and its pastor?

It is claimed that the supervision and guidance of a Lutheran congregation and its pastor will remove any objections which may arise concerning the program at large, and provide adequate safeguards against its questionable features. However, a Lutheran troop is not permitted to operate without recognizing the *mandatory* features of the Scout program: Acceptance of the “Law” and the “Pledge”;<sup>12</sup> acceptance of a certain measure of inquiry and supervision by the Scout organization;<sup>13</sup> acceptance of the name which identifies the Lutheran troop with the larger body;<sup>14</sup> financial and, therefore, moral support of the general program of the national body.<sup>15</sup> Since the “God” of the Scout Law and Pledge is not the Christian God, we hold that the objectionable features are still present, even under Lutheran supervision. The safeguards have proved wholly inadequate. Specifically:

A.1. Can a Lutheran troop maintain its connection with the National Boy Scout organization without thereby becoming guilty of upholding unscriptural principles and practice?

Our answer to Question 1-A (that acknowledgment of any other “God” than the Triune God is a clear violation of the First Commandment) answers this question also, because,

<sup>10</sup> The Boy Scout movement firmly insists “...the real man keeps himself in conscious harmony with God...” etc. (*Handbook for Boys*, 1946, p. 108. Cf. also Constitution, p. 51.)]

<sup>11</sup> “According to Lutheran teaching, fulfillment of the Scout Promise and the Scout Law is God-pleasing *so long as motivation, means, and end remain in keeping with Scripture.*” “*For our own boys we interpret religion in accordance with the teaching of the Church as revealed in the Word of God. Thus understood, Scouting becomes an integral part of the Church’s program and life.*” (*Scouting in the Lutheran Church*, pp. 6,10.)]

<sup>12</sup> Const., p. 51, Art. VI.]

<sup>13</sup> Const., p. 8, Art. X, XI.]

<sup>14</sup> Const., p. 53, Bylaws, Sec. 3.]

<sup>15</sup> *Handbook for Scoutmasters*, 1947, p. 373.]

to the general public, membership in a national organization which upholds this false “God” will mean that serving such a God is at least to be tolerated among Christians, and will thus drown out any testimony to the true God which the local troop may voice. Does not 2 Cor. 6:14-18, then apply, especially “Come out from among them and be ye separate, saith the Lord”?

- A.2. If so, is such membership in this organization truly “expedient” (profitable) for the “edification” (upbuilding) of the Church? (1 Cor. 6:12; 10:23).

In the previous paragraph we have stated our conviction that such membership is not permissible and may therefore not be considered an adiaphoron. But, even if it were, we would still question the wisdom of a procedure which sets a group of Christian boys apart from their brothers in faith and confers upon them a name and a uniform which at least to some people constitute a special badge of distinction and superior merit, in a field where such discrimination is particularly out of place.

- B. Can the Boy Scout oath and law be integrated in the Lutheran education of the youth without approval thereby being given the righteousness of natural man, which the Scout program seeks to develop?

If one grants what the question implies, namely that the Scout program seeks to develop the righteousness of natural man, it must follow that the Oath and Law, which supply the basis and the motivation for this program, constitute an element utterly foreign and contrary to Lutheran education.

For according to the Scriptures the natural man is not able to receive anything spiritual (1 Cor. 2:14) and is characterized by positive enmity against God (Rom. 8:7). Such righteousness is, therefore, an abomination in the sight of God.

To use this Boy Scout Oath and Law, nevertheless will inevitably be understood as implying toleration and approval for the program.

- C. Does membership in the national and international body interfere with the clear confession and firm testimony which the Christian Church owes the world?

In the national organization the moral principle of Scoutism receives interpretations at the hands of Catholic, Protestant and Jewish committees, interpretations which are clearly at variance with the Lutheran “correction.” We hold that by accepting a parity status with these other church committees (cf. the authorized Handbook, “Scouting in the Lutheran Church”), Lutherans incur a clear responsibility for the entire national set-up, including its false religious views, and promote them by their financial support (2 John 11, compared with verses 9 and 10).

But above all, in order to arrive at our real mission of preaching the Gospel, we owe the entire world a clear and unmistakable testimony of the total corruption of natural man, of his utter inability to measure up to the requirements of God’s Law. It must be said again and again, with all power at our command, that to be without Christ is to be “strangers from the covenants of promise, having *no hope*, and *without God* in the world” (Eph. 2:12). This vital truth is compromised and obscured as soon as the Church allies itself with an organization which, by its program, seeks to develop the natural righteousness of man.

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During the following year the Committee on Intersynodical Relations continued its discussions on the Boy Scout issue without reaching agreement. When the Synodical Conference met in convention at Concordia College, Milwaukee, August 3-6, 1948, it reported on its work during the biennium, that it had discussed the issue in all of its meetings, that a set of questions had been set up to guide the deliberations, that the Synodical Conference directive to send out pro and con material to the members of the synods could not be carried out,

that the Missouri Synod at its convention in 1947 had been memorialized by one of the synods (Wisconsin), and that as a result it had made provision for the appointment of three men, who, in conjunction with the Board of Lodge Information and the Board of Young People's Work should restudy the matter and report to its next convention. They added the recommendation: "Since the procedure is in keeping with the 1946 resolution of the conference that the constituent synods restudy the matter and consult with one another, we recommend that an earnest attempt be made to solve this vexing question by this method of study and consultation."

The Synodical Conference Floor Committee moved adoption of this report and recommendations with the following addition: "In the meantime, congregations and pastors are urged to avoid any action that would commit them more deeply to a course disturbing to fraternal relations in the Synodical Conference." (This was meant as an admonition to both synods.) These recommendations of the floor committee were adopted by the Synodical Conference. *This led to the appointment of the second forum of discussions on the Boy Scout issue within the Synodical Conference.*

When our synod again met in convention in August 1949 at St. Lucas church, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, our Standing Committee on Church Union could report that in keeping with the 1947 Missouri Synod resolution on Scouting President Behnken had appointed a committee of three, Pastors John F. Choitz and Felix Kretzschmar, and Teacher George C. Stohlmann to confer with a similar committee from our own Wisconsin Synod on the issue of Scouting. Our own synod's committee consisted of Professor Edmund Reim and Pastors William Sauer and Erhard Pankow.

Two meetings had been held, on March 31 and May 11, 1949. The March meeting was of an exploratory nature arriving at a procedure that was to be followed in the discussions: The Wisconsin committee would be given an opportunity to present their objections to Scouting; the Missouri committee of three would then discuss the same matter with their own Committee on Lodge Information (Professors Theodore Graebner and Paul Bretscher and Pastor J.W. Acker) and with their Board for Young People's Work (Professor L.W. Spitz, Pastor Clarence Peters, High School Teacher Homer Gruber and Teachers Paul Jabker and Gilbert Muchow); the Missouri committee of three would then bring about a joint meeting of all these committees; finally it would present its findings to the 1950 convention of the Missouri Synod.

The May 11 meeting was devoted to hearing the Wisconsin position on the basis of a condensed statement prepared by Professor Reim and then submitted and approved by his co-workers on our committee. The Missouri committee was given to understand that this *Memorandum*<sup>16</sup> was not to take the place of the *Study of Boy Scoutism*, which had been heard and adopted by our 1947 Watertown convention, but was to serve only for the purpose of limiting the discussion to the most essential points. Our committee gained the favorable impression that this Missouri committee of three was making a sincere effort to understand our Wisconsin position on Scouting and were therefore very ready to say this, though they ventured no prediction as to the

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#### MEMORANDUM

(Presented May 11, 1949, to the Missouri Committee on Scouting)

In compliance with your request for a concise statement of the issue which we wish to discuss with you in regard to Scouting in the Lutheran Church we submit the following MEMORANDUM:

The objections of the Wisconsin Synod to the introduction of Scouting into the Lutheran Church are based on the following considerations:

- 1) That Scouting contains certain religious features which we cannot accept without offending against the Word of God, e.g.:
  - a) recognition of a God apart from Christ;
  - b) the doctrine concerning the boy's moral duty to God, especially the "Good Turn";
  - c) the Oath which is demanded;
  - d) the "brotherhood" of Scouting.
- 2) That under the constitution of the organization the provisions for operating Scout troops under the control of Lutheran pastors and congregations do not adequately exclude these objectional features.
- 3) That before the general public acceptance of the Scout program implies an endorsement of the unbiblical views of the organization concerning the moral perfectibility and spiritual self-determination of natural man and thus compromises the clear testimony concerning the doctrines of sin and grace which we owe to the world.

The Wisconsin Committee on Scouting

outcome of these discussions. We are pointing this out in order to show that now that a new official forum had been provided by the Missouri Synod for bringing our testimony concerning Scouting to its attention, our own committee was deeply intent upon making full use of it. They were encouraged even by the fact that this committee was giving a fair hearing to our innermost convictions concerning Scouting.

The 1949 Wisconsin Synod convention floor committee on the report of its Standing committee on Church Union expressed hope that the Missouri and Wisconsin committees of three on the Scouting issue would reach a complete and satisfactory agreement. This was accepted by the convention. This same convention of 1949 took one further action in reference to the Scouting issue. In the letter which it addressed to the 1950 Missouri Synod convention, in which it pleaded with the sister synod to rectify the offense created by a series of incidents involving unionistic activities, it also asked the question: "Does the Missouri Synod approve of the arrangement whereby prominent members of its official committees are serving with representatives of other Lutheran bodies as sponsors of the book *Scouting in the Lutheran Church*, published by the National Scout Organization? If not, what will you do about the offense that was just given?"

Before the 1950 convention of the Missouri Synod at Milwaukee, June 21-30, 1950, another all-day session of the Missouri and Wisconsin Synod committees of three on the Scouting issue was held and finally the envisioned joint meeting of all the pertinent groups was arranged.

This arranged meeting was a two-day session at St. Louis, Missouri. On the first day the Missouri Synod committee of three met with its Bureau on Lodge Information and its Board for Young People's Work. For a part of the second day also our Wisconsin committee of three was invited to be present. Our committee had always realized that this would be the really vital meeting and that everything would depend on whether they would have a full opportunity to bring their complete testimony before this plenary session.

The time allotted to them for discussion did not afford to them the opportunity to come to the very heart of our objection to Scouting, namely this that the moralistic program of Scouting which seeks to build character and to lead boys to do their duty to God without conversion stands in bold contradiction to the church's Gospel message of salvation and of a new life through God's grace in Christ Jesus. Though our committee stated that it had not had opportunity to present the heart of our objections and pleaded for a further session, either in the evening or on the following day, the discussion was terminated during the afternoon and the three Missouri groups went into executive session.

In their joint report for the 1950 Milwaukee convention they stated: "The special committee authorized by the 1947 convention of Synod, the Bureau of Information, and the Board for Young People's Work unanimously declared to synod as their position that in their opinion the policy with regard to Scouting adopted by Synod in 1944 should be sustained."

Though this report is preceded by a formal listing of an array of investigations and measures undertaken in their restudy, including a formal mention of the meetings with our Wisconsin Synod committee, it neither mentions nor enters in upon any of the objections which our synod had raised against Scouting in its *Study of Boy Scoutism* and in the presentations of our committee. Thus this information was furnished to the Missouri Synod delegation at Milwaukee in 1950 neither in the *Book of Memorials* nor on the floor of the convention. There is also no indication that it was furnished to the floor committee which presented the following report to the convention delegates:

Whereas, The Boy Scouts of America have repeatedly assured us that "no Boy Scout authority supersedes the authority of the local pastor and the congregation in any phase of the program affecting the spiritual welfare of the Lutheran men and boys in Scouting" [note that they are according competence to the Boy Scout authorities in judging this]; and Whereas, In instances involving the violation of the right and religious convictions of individual Scouts, the avenue of appeal to the local Scout Council or to higher Boy Scout authority is open; and Whereas, Scout authorities have shown every consideration to appeals directed to them by Scout leaders and pastors of our church and have shown a readiness to conform to their stated principles bearing on religious matters; therefore be it



*Resolved*, that we accept the report of the Joint Committee on Scouting (special committee appointed by the president in accordance with the proceedings of 1947, page 538ff, Board for Young People's Work, Lodge Information Bureau) and with them declare that "the policy with regard to Scouting adopted in 1944 should be sustained."

This report was adopted by the convention without debate or discussion.

The text of this resolution showed that there would be no change in the Missouri Synod's policy toward Scouting. The avenue which its 1947 synod had opened in form of a committee before which we could register our convictions against Scouting was now closed. The committee had completed its restudy and simply recommended that no change of policy concerning Scouting be made. They had heard the factual evidence concerning the elements in the Scout program which we hold to be in conflict with Bible principles<sup>17</sup> but had not touched upon it in their report. Above all, our committee had pointed out that the claims which are made for the teachings of Scouting are not compatible with the gospel of salvation by grace alone and of a Christian's life

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<sup>17</sup> The testimony which our committee had given includes also the following:

#### THESES ON SCOUTING

1. Is Scouting as it stands today still a religious movement?  
Through its officials the Boy Scout organization disclaims any desire to provide the religious element in the training of youth. The sincerity of this statement is not to be questioned. But the fact that Scouting sets forth a moral code of its own, impressing it upon the boy as a matter of responsibility to his God, and as something that he owes his immortal soul, surely means that it is a religious movement in fact, even though it does not enter upon the specific question of eternal salvation. Having a religious objective, and employing religious motivation, it may not be considered a purely secular movement. It is a religion of *this* life (*Diessseitigkeitsreligion*).
2. Is its "brotherhood" one which rests on the natural relation of all men to each other, or has it a spiritual basis?  
Since the "brotherhood" of Scouting is a restricted one, based not upon any natural relation of man to man, but on principles set forth in the Scout Law and Promise, and since there is no evidence that the term is being loosely or inadvertently used, it clearly has a spiritual basis. Since this "brotherhood" is not that of faith in the atonement of Christ, it must necessarily be in conflict with the Brotherhood of Believers.
3. May we accept the assurance of Scout officials that the "pledge" is not an oath?  
When officials state that the pledge required of the Scout is not to be considered an oath, there is no need to question the sincerity of this assurance. But the Christian still has the duty of applying the test of Scripture. Judged by Mt. 5:33-37, the Boy Scout "pledge" or "promise" is clearly an oath.
4. Is there room in Lutheran preaching and education for the righteousness of reason?  
Lutheran preaching and education is essentially the preaching of salvation *sola gratia, sola fide*. To this end the doctrine of the total corruption of man is the indispensable foundation. Any departure from, or weakening of, this foundation has always been disastrous.  
While sound Lutheranism will gladly accord to the righteousness of reason the praise which is due to it in its field, it must in its preaching and teaching always apply the judgment of Isaiah 64:6: "all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags," or Gal. 3:10: "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them."  
When the Church justifies an alliance with Scouting on the grounds that this movement teaches this righteousness of reason, and accepts this as a contribution to its own work, it abandons the very promise from which its message must proceed.
5. May we accept the responsibilities and implications of membership in the national organization?  
Here it will be necessary to discuss only such responsibilities and implications as are not included in the points mentioned above. A group seeking membership in an established and widely known organization accepts responsibility for the avowed principles and the essential practices of that body. In the case of Scouting this includes a policy of religious indifferentism which places widely different religions on a par, a condition which the member is not only required to accept, but which, by his contributions, he must help to spread. This is a responsibility which the Church may not accept.  
Membership furthermore implies acceptance of the Scout Law. The correctives which admittedly are needed to make this Law tolerable from a Lutheran point of view are, of course, not known to those without, not even to all members within the Church. A church which would keep its witness clear cannot accept this implication.  
Furthermore, membership implies recognition of the charter authority of the national body, and this in the work of training our Christian youth, a field where the Church should rightly assert sovereignty which bows only to the Word of God, and jealously guard its independence. Therefore this also constitutes an implication which the Church may not accept.  
Note: Between the time of the St. Louis meeting and the 1950 Missouri Synod Convention no further opportunity was given to our Committee of Three to meet with the corresponding Missouri committee. Pastor Choitz, however, submitted the above five questions to Professor Reim, asking him to submit the Wisconsin Synod Committee's answer to them in writing.

of sanctification. Even if they considered our evidence inconclusive, brotherly action would have demanded that this be pointed out to us. Even if they considered the charges which we raised against Scouting to be wrong, the brotherly thing would have been to point out where and why they were wrong. Nothing of the kind was done. The 1950 Missouri Synod convention did not take note of the case which we had lodged against Scouting. Neither were the convention delegates apprised of the nature of the Wisconsin Synod charges against Scouting and of the Scriptural basis which we had adduced for our objections. Our 1947 memorial and *Study of Boy Scoutism* had not received the consideration which would seem proper between sister synods (consider in comparison our Wisconsin Synod detailed study and criticism of the Common Confession).

Now there was only one more thing left for our synod to do in the matter, namely, to bring these facts to the attention of the 1950 Synodical Conference convention at Fort Wayne. For it was, after all, the Synodical Conference which had requested a restudy of the Boy Scout issue by its constituent synods; and after the appointment of the Missouri Synod's committee for a restudy had been authorized in 1947 it was the Synodical Conference that had expressed the hope that a solution of the problem might now be effected through the method of study and consultation.

A report to the Synodical Conference that this objective had not been attained was in place. Since the report of the Intersynodical Relations Committee to the Synodical Conference convention included nothing concerning Scouting, our own Wisconsin Synod's Standing Committee on Church Union resolved to draw up a statement calling attention to the disappointing outcome of the restudy in that the Missouri Synod had simply reaffirmed its 1944 policy. At the same time the statement was to express the conviction that our memorial on Scouting addressed to the Missouri Synod in 1947 had not received the consideration which was due to such a communication from a sister synod. The prepared statement read as follows:

At its 1948 convention the Synodical Conference adopted the report of the Committee on Intersynodical Relations concerning the Boy Scout issue. This report (Proceedings, 1948, p. 145) endorses the proposed procedure, viz., "that the constituent synods restudy the matter and consult with one another," and recommends, "that an earnest attempt be made to solve this vexing question by this method of study and consultation."

In keeping with this resolution a committee of the Missouri Synod and a corresponding committee of the Wisconsin Synod engaged in a series of discussions based on a memorial and other material submitted by the Wisconsin representatives.

The report of the Missouri Special Committee on Scouting (acting in conjunction with the Bureau of Information and the Board for Young People's Work) appears on page 524 of the 1950 Book of Reports and Memorials. Its recommendation was adopted by the unanimous vote of the Missouri Convention.

Upon careful scrutiny of this report our committee finds itself constrained to make the following observations:

1. While giving a detailed account of the activities of the "Special Committee," the "Joint Report" arrives at its findings without listing any supporting reasons, merely stating "that in their opinion the policy with regard to Scouting adopted by synod in 1944 should be sustained."
2. While the resolution of the convention offers a number of supporting reasons, they are strictly of a formal nature, asserting the readiness of Scout authorities to conform to principles bearing on religious matters. The material issues listed by our Wisconsin Synod and the factual evidence of matters which are held to be in conflict with Bible principles are not touched upon.
3. Neither of these two documents has therefore informed the members of the Missouri Synod of the true reasons for our Wisconsin objections to Scouting. They have, in fact, interposed an effective censorship, defeating the intention of the Synodical Conference resolution.

4. We finally note that neither the “Joint Report” nor the resolution of the convention are cast in the form of a reply to specific communications submitted by our Wisconsin Synod. Nor has any such reply been made since.

We therefore find ourselves compelled to state to this convention that it is our considered judgment that the Memorial of our Wisconsin Synod and the accompanying material, *Study of Boy Scoutism*, have not been given the consideration which we deem necessary for communication between sister synods of the Synodical Conference.

The reading of this Wisconsin Synod statement on the convention floor was, however, made impossible by a ruling of the chairman, President Christian Barth, that this was a matter which would have to be taken up directly with the representatives of the Missouri Synod.

In the closing minutes of the Fort Wayne convention the Synodical Conference did resolve to call for a new committee on Scouting in which the four constituent synods should be fully represented. *This held out the offer of a third forum for the discussions of the Boy Scout issue.*

This brought things very much back to where we had started in 1946 when the Synodical Conference first resolved upon a restudy of the question by the synods. Thus our own Wisconsin Synod had every reason to consider earnestly the practical nature of this resolution whereby the Scout issue was once more relegated to a committee for study. It would take time for the new committee to be appointed, to organize and to get its bearings. In the meantime the Scout troops were multiplying in the sister congregations of Missouri. What effect would all this have upon our own congregations? Would seeing Scouting approved in ever more congregations with which we stood in fellowship weaken them in their own firm stand against Scouting? Would they probably conclude that there must be an inherent weakness in a stand for which its leaders had been unable to gain recognition in one committee after another? This is often the effect when an issue clear enough in itself is permitted to be drawn into endless discussion.

After the Synodical Conference convention of 1950 President John Brenner sent the statement which our Standing Committee on Church Union had not been permitted to read at the Fort Wayne Synodical Conference convention to President John Behnken. He informed him at the same time that it was our intention to have it printed in *The Northwestern Lutheran* so that our people might be informed concerning the recent resolutions of the Missouri Synod on Scouting and concerning the lack of consideration which it had given to our synod's earnest memorial.

President Behnken asked our president to refrain from such publication of the statement until a meeting of the Intersynodical Relations Committee had taken place.

This meeting took place on October 8, 1950. Also the president of the Synodical Conference was present. The plea was addressed to our members not to disrupt the fellowship of the Synodical Conference by refusing to use the avenue of the new committee for still reaching a possible agreement on the Boy Scout issue. As a result President John Brenner in consultation with the Standing Committee on Church Union on October 17 appointed the following five Wisconsin men to serve on this committee: Professor Walter Schumann, Professor Carl Lawrenz, Pastors Harry Shiley, Waldemar Pless and Harold Wicke. The five men appointed by President Behnken were Professors Paul Bretcher and Paul Koehnecke, Pastors Arthur Meyer and R.W. Hahn, and Mr. T.G. Eggers. The Norwegian men serving on the committee are Professor S.C. Ylvisaker, Pastors M. Tweit and M.H. Otto; the Slovak men, Pastors J.G. Majoros, John Daniel, and J.M. Kolorik.

This new forum held its initial meeting on January 24-25, 1951, at Milwaukee. President Christian Barth of the Synodical Conference made a brief appearance at this session to give the committee an outline of its assignment. He urged a careful and thorough restudy of the Boy Scout movement as expressed in its official literature in the light of God's Word. Upon a discussion of procedure it was resolved to study the Boy Scout movement on the basis of the Wisconsin Synod's objection to the Missouri Synod's resolutions concerning Scouting. Thereupon Professor Bretcher presented and explained the various Missouri Synod resolutions concerning Scouting from 1929 to 1950 in their historical sequence. He pointed out that the following considerations marked these resolutions:

1. The willingness to continue to study the Boy Scouts.
2. Any action was based on the *present* status of the Boy Scouts.
3. There was consistent approval of the reports of the various board and committees handling the matter. From 1932 on there was also appreciation for the willingness of Boy Scout leaders to cooperate.
4. There is a progression of views discernible, yet also a basic consistency.
5. Although in the earlier years the impression is given that synod is considering the Boy Scout movement *in toto* the resolutions of 1944 and 1950 have dealt specifically with the questions of Lutheran Scout masters, Lutheran Scout troops, and the sovereignty of the local congregation.

He then gave the following summary of the Missouri Synod's position:

1. Synod neither approves nor disapproves of the Boy Scout movement as a whole.
2. The individual congregations should decide the matter of Scouting in their own midst.
  - a. Whether to have a congregation-sponsored troop.
  - b. What to do with Scouting in general. (This is by inference.)
3. On the basis of extensive study, the willingness of Scout officials to cooperate, and subsequent corrections in the Scout programs, Synod feels that it can be satisfied in whatever way the local congregation handles the matter.

Following this presentation it was resolved to take up the Wisconsin Synod resolution of 1947 entitled *A Study of Boy Scoutism*. The discussions did not get beyond the Preamble. The sessions ended with an effort to establish the points of controversy thus far revealed and to formulate points which might be made the subject of special study in preparation for a subsequent meeting. The Wisconsin Synod members submitted the following propositions for special study:

1. We urge a study of the question: Has the Missouri Synod changed its former evaluation of Scouting as such?
2. We urge a study of the question: What bearing has the truth of the natural knowledge of God upon the evaluation of Scouting?

The Missouri Synod members submitted the following propositions for study:

1. We dissent from the judgment: "We hold that this makes it a religious movement in fact, even though it may not enter upon the specific question of eternal salvation."
2. We suggest a study of an approach to the Boy Scout problem as presented by the Milwaukee-Missouri panel members.

All of these propositions were adopted.

The second meeting of this third forum for discussion of the Boy Scout issue took place at Milwaukee on May 22-23, 1951. The first matter that was taken under discussion was the question: Has the Missouri Synod changed its former evaluation of Scouting as such? The Wisconsin Synod answer, presented by Pastor Harry Shiley, was that which had been set forth at the beginning of this essay. The Missouri Synod members contended that whatever change might be evident in the stands of their synod over against Scouting was due to changes in the Boy Scout movement. No agreement was reached.

The second matter taken up for discussion was the judgment expressed in our synod's 1947 *Study of Boy Scoutism*: "We hold that this makes the Boy Scout organization a religious movement in fact even though it may not enter upon the special question of eternal salvation."

The remainder of the session was devoted to hearing and discussing some theses, prepared by this essayist, on the question: *What Bearing Has the Truth of the Natural Knowledge of God Upon the Evaluation of Scouting?*<sup>18</sup> The sessions ended with the thought of continuing the discussion on this matter in a future meeting.

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<sup>18</sup> Though the theses on the natural knowledge of God were not presented in the essay, we are here supplying the text: *What Bearing Has the Truth of the Natural Knowledge of God Upon the Evaluation of Scouting?*

In this question we are, of course, thinking of an evaluation of Scouting in which we ask: Can our young Christians identify themselves with the program which Scouting offers for keeping themselves morally straight and for doing their duty to their God and country? Does Scouting offer a program in which the church can participate for the purpose of training its own children for a God-pleasing life? Those who have answered these questions in the affirmative have repeatedly sought to defend such an evaluation of Scouting on the score that what Scouting has to say about God, about duty to God, and a morally straight life is after all an expression of the natural knowledge of God and of civic righteousness. This has led us to assign for special study the question: *What Bearing Has the Truth of the Natural Knowledge of God Upon the Evaluation of Scouting?*

1

This very question affirms that there is a natural knowledge of God, a knowledge of God outside of God's revelation of Himself in Scripture. This natural knowledge of God, though limited in scope, is true as far as it goes (Rom. 1:18,25 *aletheia*). God implanted a concept of Himself in the hearts of men (Rom. 1:19). God gave them their conscience to bear witness to them about their relation to Him as their God and of their accountability to Him for their conduct over against His inscribed law (Rom. 2:14-15). This inborn knowledge of God can be deepened and developed by a study of nature (Rom. 1:20) and of history (Acts 14:15-17; 17:24-27). This natural knowledge of God in man goes beyond the bare realization that there is a God (Psalm 14:1) and embraces a consciousness of His eternal power, glory, wisdom, goodness, righteousness (Rom. 1:20,32; 2:4; Acts 14:15-17; 17:24-27; Psalm 19).

2

The natural knowledge of God, though true in itself so far as the substance is concerned, inevitably becomes false when handled by natural man. For he applies it, and by himself can apply it, only according to the basic lie introduced by Satan into the world, the *opinio legis* (Gal. 3:3; Rom. 7:5). Instead of honoring and serving God in the spirit of grateful love natural man invariably deals with God in the spirit of the law on the basis of his natural knowledge of Him, endeavoring to appease His wrath and to merit His favor (Rom. 1:21; Acts 14 and 17).

This is the initial catastrophic step in repressing the truth of the natural knowledge of God; this repressing Paul ascribes to all men as they are by nature (Rom. 1:18). This repressing of the truth is not due to ignorance but to his inborn wickedness, to the fact that man is steeped in unrighteousness. The *opinio legis* in which he operates with his natural knowledge of God leads him to neutralize it with further vain and foolish ideas and actions so that it may not interfere with the satisfactions of the evil lusts of his heart (Rom. 1:21-32). Some, indeed, turn moralists, trying to curb by their judgments the reckless living of their fellowmen (Rom. 2:1-8). But in doing so, guided by the same *opinio legis*, they only condemn themselves, for in essence they commit the same things. Particularly do they stand condemned in that they harden their hearts in impenitence over against the revelation of God's goodness, as it appears even in their own personal history (Rom. 2:4). With impenitent hearts they act on the assumption that man's nature is inherently good, that in order to achieve real goodness of life it is enough to instruct the understanding properly and to influence the will by censure or praise. It never occurs to them that the evil goes deeper, that crimes and vices are merely symptoms of the total corruption of the human heart, that a complete change of heart is necessary, repentance which only the Gospel can effect. It is this activity of the moralist which also characterizes the expression of the natural knowledge of God as it manifests itself in the program of Scouting.

3

Consequently, Scripture assigns no positive spiritual value or function to the natural knowledge of God. It knows only of the negative one of depriving man of any pretext for his failings so that he may realize to his consternation that he is without excuse (Rom. 1:20; 2:1,5). In the interest of the Gospel program of the church we, too, can only make use of man's natural knowledge of God for the purpose of bringing the sinner to a realization of his damnableness that he may despair in himself, in order that we may preach repentance to him and proclaim the Gospel to him to effect true repentance and to enable him to lead a thankful life of Christian sanctification. Thus Paul used the natural knowledge of God in Romans 1 and 2; thus he used it also at Lystra and Athens (Acts 14 and 17).

4

This is not the use to which the natural knowledge of God as it expresses itself in Scouting is put when individual Christians simply identify themselves with this program. Neither is it put to this use when the Church participates in this program of moralistic activity on the basis of the natural knowledge of God, identifies itself with it, and tries to integrate it in its own Gospel program of character training. With both procedures we would be vitiating the testimony which we owe to the sponsors and adherents of Scouting. We would fail to testify to them that they stand condemned before God in their effort to do their duty to God and to keep themselves morally straight on the basis of their natural knowledge of God. We would be confirming them in their false and fatal convictions and would be failing to testify to them that what they need is a complete change of heart, repentance which only the Gospel of Christ Jesus

The Missouri Synod members also stated that they would try to arrange for a brief essay in which they would give their answer to the Wisconsin Synod's presentation of this matter. The committee also addressed the request to the Missouri Synod members that they offer a presentation in which they would set forth the historic changes in the Boy Scout program. The next meeting was set for November 7-8.

#### END OF THE ESSAY BEFORE THE SPECIAL CONVENTION OF THE MICHIGAN DISTRICT

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The special Michigan District essay could present the *History of the Boy Scout Issue* with the Missouri Synod only up to June 29, 1951. The restudy of Scouting in the third forum created by the Synodical Conference was still not finished. This therefore calls for a supplement to the essay.

At our WELS convention in August 1951 it was noted that the Synodical Conference had again committed the Scouting issue to another committee. It was realized that the work of the committee could not at best be finished until the next Synodical Conference convention. In a resolution at the New Ulm convention our synod therefore insisted that the final report of this committee would be heard and acted upon at that time. This was done at the St. Paul Synodical Conference convention August 12-15, 1952. As the appended text shows, the report was a divided one:

#### **Report of the Synodical Conference's Committee on Scouting**

The Honorable Evangelical Lutheran Synodical Conference of North America, in convention assembled at Concordia College, St. Paul, Minn., August 12-15, 1952.

ESTEEMED BRETHERN:

This Committee was appointed by the Presidents of the constituent synods of the Synodical Conference in accordance with a resolution of the Synodical Conference convention of August 8-11, 1950, and in this resolution received the general assignment "to study the question of Scouting and to submit its report to the next convention of the Synodical Conference." (Cf. *Proceedings of the 41st Convention*, page 138.)

In the interest of this assignment four two-day meetings of the Committee were held at Milwaukee, Wis., January 24-25, May 22-23, November 7-8, 1951, and May 7-8, 1952; also a subcommittee meeting was held on March 12, 1952. Two of the originally appointed sixteen committee members found it necessary to resign during the course of these discussions. Pastor J. W. Acker was appointed to succeed Mr. T. G. Eggers. No successor was appointed for Prof. S.

can effect. We would be making it to appear as though the moralizing activity of Scouting and a Christian's life of sanctification wrought and motivated by the Gospel were really akin, while they stand diametrically apart, as far apart as a life before God on the basis of the law and a life before Him on the basis of the Gospel. The explanation that in Lutheran Scouting the attempt is made to use the program of Scouting in the light of the Gospel only verifies these facts, for the vital correction is applied merely in their own group and withheld from the larger membership with which the Lutheran Scout identifies himself.

5

The natural knowledge of God is the basis of civic righteousness (Rom. 2:14-15). In a certain measure it can and does serve to hold some back from gross crime and vice and to incite them to outward decent living. Thus God in His world government uses man's natural knowledge of Himself to preserve a measure of outward order and decency in this world and, as our Confessions point out, to this very end even extends certain earthly rewards to those who adjust their lives to the outward demands of the inscribed law. In this way God may also use the civic righteousness fostered by the Boy Scout program on the basis of the natural knowledge of God. From this point of view we may also rather see an organization like Scouting in the world about us than an atheistic society flouting even every outward observance of the demands of God's law. Yet this value of civic righteousness lies outside of our evaluation of it with reference to Scouting. For in our evaluation we are raising the question of identifying ourselves with it. Then it is no longer merely a question of whether it is good from a social standpoint but whether it is pleasing in the sight of God. Yet civic righteousness, though of value for the outward preservation of human society, stands condemned as sin in God's holy eyes from a spiritual standpoint.

6

Only after repentance, in a Christian's life of sanctification motivated by the Gospel, can the natural knowledge of God play a similar role to that of the law in its third use (Psalm 19 et al).

(End of footnote)

C. Ylvisaker, whose resignation because of ill health occurred shortly before the final committee meeting.

The study of Scoutism undertaken in these meetings has led to the following divided report:

## I

### **The Report of the Missouri Synod and Slovak Synod Members of the Synodical Conference Committee on Scouting**

- A. A general statement of fact: Scoutism is not agitating the Missouri Synod, nor is it a problem in the Slovak Lutheran Church.
- B. Two basic principles: Scoutism must be judged
  - 1. On the basis of its constitution which describes its character, aims, and purposes;
  - 2. On the basis of official interpretations of Scout headquarters.
- C. Findings based on these principles:
  - 1. Scoutism is a secular boys' 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 Church has the opportunity to express its concern to Scout headquarters regarding such statements, and we know from experience that our concerns are heeded.
  - 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 no 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;
    - 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.

Pastor J. W. Acker (Mo.), Prof. Paul Bretscher (Mo.), Pastor R.W. Hahn (Mo.), Prof. Paul F. Koehneke (Mo.), Pastor J.M. Kolarik (Slov.), Pastor J.G. Majoros (Slov.), Pastor Arthur J. Meyer (Mo.), Pastor J. Daniel (Slov.)

## II

**The Report of the Norwegian Synod and Wisconsin Synod Members of the Synodical Conference Committee on Scouting**

- A. After discussing the Scout movement in the aforementioned meetings we are of the conviction that in some of the fundamental features of the Scout program there are religious elements with which a Christian cannot identify himself without offending against the Word of God.
1. In its mandatory Scout oath and law Scouting endeavors to lead boys to do their duty to God without conversion, cf. Rom. 8:8; John 3:6;
  2. By means of its mandatory Scout oath and law Scouting endeavors to train character without the motivation of the Gospel, cf. Ga. 2:19-20; Gal. 3:10; Eph 2:8-10; John 15:5;
  3. The "Scout oath or promise" is an oath condemned by the Word of God, cf. Matt. 5:33-37; James 5:12; Matt. 23:16-22;
  4. The twelfth Scout law is basically unionistic, since it obligates every Scout to faithfulness in his religious duties without defining these duties or the God whom he is to serve, cf. 2 John 9-10; 2 Cor. 6:14-18.
- B. After discussing the Scout movement in the aforementioned meetings we are also of the conviction
1. That these objectionable features have not been removed by any changes that have been made in the organization and program of Scouting.
  2. That our objections to Scouting are not invalidated by anything that the Word of God teaches concerning the natural knowledge of God and civic righteousness;
  3. That the objectionable features of Scouting are still not excluded by the provisions which this organization makes for operating Scout troops under the control of Lutheran pastors and congregations;
  4. That membership of Lutheran troops in the national Scout organization vitiates the clear testimony to sin and grace which the Christian Church owes to the world.

Prof. Carl Lawrenz (Wis.), Pastor M.H. Otto (Norw.), Pastor W.O. Pless (Wis.), Prof. Walter A. Schumann (Wis.), Pastor H. Shiley (Wis.), Pastor M. Tweit (Norw.), Pastor H.E.C. Wicke (Wis.)  
 Respectfully submitted by the Synodical Conference Committee on Scouting.  
 Arthur J. Meyer, Chairman; Carl Lawrenz, Secretary

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The divided conclusions in this report were in substance and in points of argumentation the same divided conclusions in which the discussions on Scouting had ended in the two previous intersynodical committees (the Intersynodical Relations Committee, 1944-48, the Missouri-Wisconsin Committee, 1948-1950). In other words, three official committees had come to the same divided conclusions. A situation was at hand concerning which it could no longer be said that the material had not been thoroughly studied on both sides, or that the objections raised by those who opposed Scouting and the manner of defense presented by those who condoned Scouting were not mutually very clearly understood. This was particularly true also of the third committee. The discussions had been many and lengthy.

The floor committee at the Synodical Conference of 1952 was at a loss as to what to recommend concerning this deadlocked issue and thus contented itself with bringing the recommendation to the floor that the issue be discussed on the convention floor.

This discussion was broken off by a resolution proposed by a Slovak Synod delegate that the Synodical Conference authorize a joint study of natural law, natural knowledge of God, and civic righteousness by all the seminary faculties of the Synodical Conference. Here we need to bear in mind that this did not offer any new solution whatsoever. These doctrines in their bearing on Scouting had been under thorough discussion in all of



the previous committees at which also representatives of all the theological faculties had been present with the exception of the Springfield faculty.

This resolution was passed, however; but, like the Synodical Conference resolution on the *Common Confession*, also this one was passed over the Nay votes of all the Wisconsin and Norwegian Synod delegates. Our synod could see no hope in the work of a further committee on an issue in which the points of controversy, as well as the argumentation on both sides, had already been made clear and in fact had crystallized through the activity of three previous committees whose work had ended in identical results. A situation had come about in this issue where a confession to either stand was called for rather than a future study. On the other hand, we realized that a committing of the issue to further study would be unfavorable to our stand of opposition to Scouting. Under these circumstances we again realized that the promotion of Scouting in the congregations of our sister synod would continue and present a vexing problem to our own congregations. Our own people might readily come to feel that there must be something inherently weak and exceedingly complicated in an issue which is committed to ever further committees for study. Sight would be lost of the fact that our objections to Scouting involve simple, basic scriptural truth which every child in confirmation instruction can grasp and on which it is able to judge Scouting.

Representatives of our theological faculty, Professors Gerald Hoenecke and Carl Lawrenz, met with representatives of the other theological seminaries in the one meeting that was held in March 1953 in Chicago in compliance with this Synodical Conference resolution. These representatives of our synod did so with the understanding that our synod's action at its forthcoming convention in August 1953 would also in the issue of Scouting not be dependent upon the completion of this committee's work, which had really been undertaken in spite of our protest. Our representatives were merely ready to repeat their testimony also here until the issue would be brought to a conclusion in some form or manner. Professor Carl Lawrenz read an expanded essay entitled *Natural Law, Natural Knowledge of God, Civic Righteousness, and Their Application to the Boy Scout Question* (a copy is appended to this history; see pp. 34-40).

President Brenner in his letter to the June 1953 Houston convention of the LCMS repeated the request that it reverse its 1944 resolution on Scouting.

What answer did we receive at Houston? This was the one point among all the specific requests addressed to the Houston convention which received no direct answer at all. No reference whatsoever was made to it in any convention resolution, though the two Wisconsin Synod representatives, Professors Edmund Reim and Carl Lawrenz, were invited to sum up our synod's objections to Scouting before the floor committee to which President Brenner's communication had been referred. At this floor committee meeting two representatives from the convention Floor Committee on Scouting and Lodges were also present. Since this floor committee had stated that it did not consider it a part of its work to debate any issue with our representatives, its meeting with us was closed with the presentation of our testimony.

A Missouri Synod congregation from Milwaukee, Wisconsin, had, however, presented a memorial on the matter of Scouting in which it asked its own synod to clarify its resolution on Scouting. The point on which the congregation desired to be clarified was in substance this: How was it feasible in a practical way to leave the decision on Scouting to the individual congregations when one congregation might consider it a matter against conscience to receive into communicant membership young boys who after patient admonition retained their Scout membership while another congregation might tolerate or promote Scouting in its midst?

In its resolution on this memorial the Houston convention reaffirmed its 1944 resolution which leaves it to each congregation to establish its own policy, as pastoral wisdom on the part of the congregation in its own particular situation dictates; and the convention recommended to this particular Milwaukee congregation the services of its official Committee on Fraternal Organizations, and then urged all of its congregations to avoid extremes in either direction in the matter of Scoutism lest consciences be burdened. Before the vote was taken by which this resolution was adopted, one pastoral delegate put the question to the chairman, President Behnken: "What is the matter with Scouting?" This question left the impression that he could not understand why so much of synod's time should be taken up by a memorial on this particular subject.

The chairman, President Behnken, then referred this question to Pastor Acker, the representative of the aforementioned Committee on Fraternal Organizations, in whose field the matter of Scouting belonged. Pastor Acker gave this brief answer: "It was once theistic, but that has been removed. It is now simply a secular boys' organization." No further answer was given. No mention was made of the years of controversy on this issue between the various synods of the Synodical Conference. No mention was made that even before this convention there was an official request of the Wisconsin Synod that the Missouri Synod reverse its position on Scouting. There was no mention of the divided report of the Synodical Conference Committee on Scouting that had been presented to the Synodical Conference convention in 1952. There was not even a mention of the committee of theological faculties inaugurated at the 1952 Synodical Conference convention to discuss natural law, the natural knowledge of God and Civic Righteousness relative to its bearing on the Boy Scout program. There was only the brief reply that there was simply nothing wrong with Scouting in itself and that thus, as an indifferent thing, it should be handled as a matter of individual judgment.

On the second-last day of the Houston convention all further resolutions that would still come before the convention were in the hands of all the delegates and visitors, and none of these resolutions made any reference to our questions on Scouting. This induced our Wisconsin Synod representatives privately to call this to the attention of President Behnken and to representatives of the pertinent floor committee. None of these official parties felt moved to initiate any action on the matter. It is this action of the Houston convention that led our Standing Committee on Church Union to the conviction that their efforts at coming to agreement on this issue had come to a conclusion. Even the committee of theological faculty members would be of no avail if its activity, or even its existence, was not reported to the Missouri Synod, that it simply reaffirmed its previous stand without any reference to objections voiced and negotiations that had been implemented.

In the Congress of our United States putting something into the hands of a committee and never permitting that committee to report its findings is the accepted means of avoiding an issue and of killing it. It lies beyond our sphere to say that the Missouri Synod's failure to report on the third Boy Scout committee in which its own representatives had participated was an intentional way of avoiding, or killing, the Boy Scout issue. We have no right to judge intentions and motives unless they are expressed. In effect, it removed the Boy Scout issue, however, from the minds of the Missouri Synod's convention delegates at Houston.

What has troubled us considerably in our Boy Scout discussions with Missouri Synod representatives is the fact that much was made of the argument that only by working with the Boy Scout program can we gain and hold a religious audience among our American youth which is so deeply wrapped up in the Scouting program. This argumentation came up a number of times during the lengthy discussions and the restudy of the third forum. It was heard again after the floor committee meeting at which our representatives had given their testimony. One of the floor committee members expressed himself that it was unrealistic of us to think that the Missouri Synod would publicly condemn the international organization of Boy Scouts and thus estrange the youth of our country; that the Missouri Synod rather chose to work with the Boy Scout organization and speak up when anything in its program should undermine its spiritual testimony. If no concessions to scriptural principles are to be advanced by this argument of estranging the youth of our country, then there is no call whatsoever for voicing this argument. It should certainly be understood that we, too, have no desire whatsoever in estranging our youth by condemning Scouting on the basis of Scripture. If, on the other hand, the argument is meant to make us willing to work with an organization whose mandatory aspects still involve unscriptural features, then it manifests a unionistic spirit.

The *Proceedings of the 43rd convention of the Synodical Conference* convention assembled August 10-13, 1954, East Detroit, Michigan, includes an essay, *The Military Chaplaincy and Scouting*, by Professor Edward C. Fredrich. Of this essay the *Proceedings* states that it was "Prepared at the Behest of Wisconsin Synod Officials for the Synodical Conference Convention."

As the final portion supplementing the special Michigan District essay, *The History of the Boy Scout Issue*, we are quoting pages 69-76 of the aforementioned *Proceedings* from Professor Edward C. Fredrich's essay. It can be considered as a good summary of the Wisconsin Synod's response to the points which were made in *the Report of the Missouri and Slovak Synod members* of the Synodical Conference Committee on

Scouting in the divided report which this committee had submitted to the Synodical Conference convention at St. Paul, August 12-15, 1952:

*I. Does Scouting Today Have Objectionable Religious Features?*

The Missouri Synod and Slovak Synod members of the Synodical Conference Committee on Scouting in their report claim: "Scouting is a secular boys' organization designed to promote good citizenship. (That Scoutism advocates a life governed by religious principles does not make it a religious movement.) Scoutism does not teach religion. (Scoutism expects the church to add the religious element, without which the program is incomplete.)...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." (Cf. *Syn. Conf. Proceedings*, 1952, p. 146.) These claims are to lead to the conclusion that Scouting is a harmless secular organization which the Church can embrace in the interest of its youth-training program.

*Is Scouting Merely a Secular Organization?*

While much of Scouting is concerned with the purely material and devoted to citizenship training, we are not ready to follow the claims quoted above to their intended conclusion. The first of these claims conveys the incorrect impression that the only alternative to a secular organization is a religious movement. There is a middle ground between the two. There are secular organizations that have religious features and seek religious ends, often improper and false, without ever becoming completely religious. To say that Scouting is not a religious movement is not identical with proving that it is a secular organization free of all objectionable religious features. Furthermore, the lack of reference to "spiritual blessings such as forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation, peace with God, etc." in the principles of an organization does not in itself mean that the organization is wholly secular and devoid of all religious aspects. The existence of religions that deal exclusively with the things of this life has led to the coining of the untranslatable terms *Diesseitigkeitstheologie*, *Diesseitigkeitsreligion*. And the very claim that "Scouting expects the churches to add the religious element without which the program is incomplete" seems to warrant the conclusion that in the complete Scouting program there are essential religious features.

*The Religious Features of Scouting*

By insisting on the oath or promise: "On my honor I will do my best...to do my duty to God," by defining "duty to God" as regular worship, faithfulness to Almighty God's Commandments, gratitude, helping others (cf. *Handbook for Boys*, Fifth Edition, Sixth Printing, June 1953—hereafter referred to as *Handbook for Boys*, pp. 20,21), Scouting indicates that there is in its platform a solid, substantial religious plank. By its twelfth law: "A Scout is reverent. He is faithful in his religious duties and respects the convictions of others in matters of custom and religion," and its explanation that this requires the Scout to pray to God, to love God, and to serve Him (cf. *Handbook for Boys*, p. 39), Scouting shows its concern for something that lies far beyond and above the field of citizenship. When its interpretation of its slogan, "Do a Good Turn Daily," states that "these small *Good Turns* are the boy's first steps toward service to others...By encouraging the boy to replace Self with Service to others you aid him in fulfilling his promise "to do my duty to God and my country." (*Handbook for Scoutmasters*, Fourth Edition, Sixth Printing, 1952—hereafter referred to as *Handbook for Scoutmasters*, p. 20), then it becomes plain that the Scout slogan has a definite religious implication.

Since these religious features are contained in the mandatory Scout oath or promise, law, and slogan, which are called the "rules of Scouting" (*Handbooks for Boys*, p. 17) and which are stressed at the time of initiation, in the course of activities, and when promotion is determined, it follows that they are not a relatively unimportant and often-ignored part of Scouting, but will be brought to bear upon members of the organization heavily and steadily and serve to give the

movement a distinctly religious character. In fact, one of the main ideas on which the movement rests is the assumption that Scouting contains what is basic and fundamental to all religions and can therefore be of assistance to all Christian and non-Christian religious bodies in their work, supplying what is common to all and being modified only by the details the various churches desire to add. "The Boy Scouts of America maintains that no boy can grow into the best kind of citizenship without recognizing his obligations to God... 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" (Constitution, Article IV, Principles, Section 1).

#### *Standards for Evaluating These Religious Features of Scoutism*

Are these religious features contained in Scoutism objectionable or unobjectionable? Scout authorities maintain that its program can be adopted by, and will prove beneficial to, any church. They are, no doubt, sincere in their opinion. But it would be an act of folly and unfaithfulness if the Church were to surrender blindly its God-given duty to judge such matters, "to prove all things" (1 Thess. 5:21) and permit others to decide for it what is objectionable and unobjectionable according to Scripture.

Advocates of Scouting will, in this connection, advance the argument that there need be no fear of objectionable religious features in the movement, since Scouting says: "Its policy is that the organization or institution with which the Boy Scout is connected shall give definite attention to his religious life" (Constitution, Article IV, Principles, Section 1), and promises: "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." But even though the religious elements of Scouting are employed and applied according to the beliefs of the various churches, the fact remains that religious features are being applied. Before we are willing to apply them, we will have to be sure that they pass the test, the acid test of the Word. They will be found wanting, not only if they are false as can be, but also if they are only slightly adulterated. Anything less than pure religion and undefiled is unacceptable.

And we should not be too ready to accept such religious features on the grounds that they have their origin in natural knowledge of God and His Law and lie in the field of civic righteousness. In the first place, civic righteousness can hardly be stretched so wide that it covers things like regular worship, faithfulness to Almighty God's Commandments, prayer, love to God, all of which are, according to Scouting itself, included in its oath or promise, law, and slogan. And secondly, not all religious elements born of natural knowledge of God and His Law will be unobjectionable. This natural knowledge of God and His Law is a gift of the Creator and serves a good purpose, as Paul clearly teaches in Romans 1 and 2. But at the same time it is to be remembered that this gift is constantly being perverted by sinful man, as Paul also clearly teaches in Romans 1 and 2. The Church will thank God for this gift and make good use of it when it can, but it will also testify with Paul frankly and fearlessly regarding the limits of natural knowledge of God and of His Law and against any human perversion of the same. These are points to be remembered when the religious features of the Scout movement are being judged.

#### *Evaluation of the Religious Features of Scoutism*

To which "God" does Scouting refer when it in its handbook speaks about "God," "duty to God," "worship of God"? Obviously not the true God, for it offers its "God" also to non-Trinitarian churches. We know that Scouting, operating with natural knowledge, will not be able to ascertain the truth regarding the loving, saving Triune God revealed in Christ Jesus. But we will, as confessors, point out this deficiency and term such recognition of a "God" not identical with the Triune God a sin in the light of the First Commandment and the Savior's word: "He that honoreth not the Son honoreth not the Father which hath sent Him" (John 5:23). A report that excuses Scouting because it "does not demand a deistic concept of God" (*Syn. Conf. Proceedings*, 1952, p. 46) is evading the issue. The question is not whether a deistic concept of

God is better or worse than any other false one. We are to maintain the truth that failure to confess the Triune God and transfer of His honor to another is sin.

Scouting requires the boy to say, “On my honor I will do my best...to do my duty to God,” and in describing this duty instructs him: “Above all you are to be faithful to Almighty God’s Commandments” (*Handbook for Boys*, p. 20). “It is something to be good, but it is far better to do good” (*Handbook for Boys*, p. 23). Thereby Scouting is attempting to foster a fulfillment of the Law, a righteousness that it is man’s duty to offer to God and that, in the case of the non-Christian, will and must be self-righteousness. It speaks of “duty to God,” “faithfulness to His Commandments,” without any reference to the basic duty, repentance, or to faith, without which it is impossible to please God. Scouting’s “neutral position,” whereby “it leaves the question of the motivation for ‘doing their duty to God’ to the churches the boys are affiliated with” (cf. *Another Fraternal Endeavor*, p. 85), is a false position, conflicting with the Bible doctrines of original sin, conversion, and sanctification. The claim is made that Scouting, when it speaks of “duty to God,” is merely applying natural knowledge of God’s Law and promoting civic righteousness. But civic righteousness and “duty to God,” as Scouting defines it, ought not and cannot be made synonymous. Civic righteousness lies in the field of earthly relationships. It is not fulfillment of God’s holy Law. And when natural knowledge of the Law is applied, it ought to be applied in the right, God-intended way—as a mirror to arouse terrors of conscience, as a curb to limit wickedness, as a guide in fostering civic righteousness. When Scouting applies it, without any distinction between the regenerate and unregenerate, as a guide in doing “duty to God” and keeping His Commandments, then the satanic lie of self-righteousness is fostered.

“The twelfth Scout law is basically unionistic, since it obligates every Scout to faithfulness in his religious duties without defining these duties of the God whom he is to serve, cf. 2 John 9,10; 2 Cor. 6:14-18” (*Syn. Conf. Proceedings*, 1952, p. 147). The twelfth Scout law reads: “A Scout is reverent. He is faithful in his religious duties and respects the conviction of others in matters of custom and religion,” and is interpreted to include prayer, love and service to God (cf. *Handbook for Boys*, p. 39). Scouting insists on belief in God, granting to all beliefs in all “Gods” equal value and validity. It requires faithfulness in religious duties, implying that any kind of worship and duty is good and God-pleasing. That is the obvious intent of the twelfth law. That is the basic assumption on which Scouting’s relationship to the various churches rests. That is the idea that underlies all unionism. Scouting may leave “to the parents of the boys and to his church everything that deals with the application of these goals (i.e., of the twelfth law), their motivation and carrying out” (*Another Fraternal Endeavor*, p. 86). But when it obligates Scouts to faithfulness in religious duties, whether true or false, and when it says, “Your own spiritual leader, minister, priest, or rabbi will teach you how to know God better” (*Handbook for Boys*, p. 25), it is promoting the spirit of unionism. Without too much of a struggle Scouting has eliminated the rule obligating Scouts to attend grossly unionistic services. But it has not yet eliminated the more subtle and, consequently the more dangerous unionistic idea inherent in its twelfth law. This is another objectionable religious feature in the movement that compels us to take a stand against Scoutism.

## II. *Is the Scout Oath or Promise an Oath Forbidden by God’s Word?*

A religious feature of Scouting that warrants individual treatment is its mandatory oath or promise. The question: “Is the Scout oath or promise an oath forbidden by God’s Word?” cannot be answered by the movement itself. Scouting employs two designative terms, “oath” and “promise,” and is, in any event, incompetent to receive a soundly Biblical verdict. Up until twenty-five years ago there was general agreement within the Synodical Conference that the Scout oath or promise was contrary to the Bible, as the literature of that period indicates. But now those who advocate Scouting maintain that the same oath or promise “is not an oath in the

Biblical sense of the term,” saying, “God’s name is not involved at all” (*Another Fraternal Endeavor*, p. 85). By way of reply a lengthy quotation from an article by Prof. J.P. Meyer is offered, which clearly sets forth the Biblical principles involved. Discussing the Scout oath, Prof. Meyer writes:

Although the three upraised fingers may not refer to the Trinity, and although the pledge itself is not made with an express appeal to God, yet it is a promise re-enforced with an appeal to one’s own honor. Very definitely so: “On my honor I promise...”

#### *What Says Scripture?*

We compare a few Scripture passages that speak of paths. St. James says: “Above all things, my brethren, swear not, neither by heaven, neither by the earth, neither by any other oath: but let your yea be yea, and your nay, nay, lest ye fall into condemnation” (chap. 5:12). Does St. James say that because an oath does not contain a direct reference to God, it loses its nature as an oath? Jesus Himself warned His disciples: “Let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay; for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil” (Matt. 5:37).

Jesus also explained why an oath, though it contains no direct reference to God, must still be regarded as an oath in the strict sense of the word. “Again, ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time, Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shall perform unto the Lord thine oaths. But I say unto you, Swear not at all: neither by heaven, for it is God’s throne; nor by the earth, for it is His footstool; neither by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. Neither shalt thou swear by the head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black” (Matt. 5:33-36).

The Jews were trying to salve their consciences when *in their daily dealings* they went beyond a simple yea or nay and re-enforced their statements with an appeal to heaven, to the earth, or to their own head. They considered such language as not being oaths in the proper sense. They tried to draw some very fine distinctions, as we read in Matthew 23, where Jesus rebukes the scribes and Pharisees: “Woe unto you, ye blind guides, which say, Whosoever shall swear by the Temple, it is nothing; but whosoever shall swear by the gold of the Temple, he is a debtor!...And, Whosoever shall swear by the altar, it is nothing; but whosoever sweareth by the gift that is upon it, he is guilty” (vv.16,18).

Does Jesus explain that they really have no cause for worry, that they are worrying about nothing; that, since they make no express reference to God, they were not using an oath at all? He calls them “fools,” but for a very different reason: “Ye fools and blind: For whether is greater, the gold or the Temple that sanctifieth the gold?...Ye fools and blind: For whether is greater, the gift or the altar that sanctifieth the gift?” (vv. 17,19).

#### *The Real Meaning*

What is the real meaning of phrases that are thus introduced to reinforce a plain statement with an appeal to heaven, to the Temple, to the altar, and the like? If they are not to be empty words, then they contain an implied reference to God, as Jesus explains: “Whoso therefore shall swear by the altar, sweareth by it and by all things thereon. And whoso shall swear by the Temple *sweareth by it and by Him that dwelleth therein*. And he that shall swear by heaven *sweareth by the throne of God and by Him that sitteth thereon*” (vv. 20-22).

On swearing by one’s own head Jesus sharply calls attention to the fact that we cannot even so much as change the color of a single hair. God created our head, He alone. This applies also to our 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 priest’s 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.

Let us beware. Let us not trifle with the Name of God (*Northwestern Lutheran*, July 6, 1947. J.P.M.). [Note: This presentation of Prof. J. P. Meyer was presented and fully discussed in the third forum on the Boy Scout issue.]

### *III. Is Scouting Unobjectionable When Carried on in a Church-sponsored Troop?*

The question needs to be considered because the Missouri Synod resolutions on Scouting in recent years have dealt primarily with the matter of Lutheran Scoutmasters, Lutheran Scout troops, and the sovereignty of the local congregation, and because the argument is frequently advanced that there could be no harm in a church troop since "there is no Boy Scout authority which supersedes the authority of the local pastor and congregation in any phase of the movement affecting the spiritual welfare of Lutheran men and boys in Scouting."

#### *Church Troops Must Accept Mandatory and Objectionable Features of Scouting*

The obvious advantage of a church troop lies in the authority of the sponsoring body to apply Scout principles according to its own belief. But its authority is not so supreme that it can reject and discard the mandatory oath or promise, law, and slogan which contain objectionable features. At best the sponsoring body will have to be satisfied with superimposing its alterations and corrections on objectionable religious elements in Scouting. And it would even then find itself in the position of sponsoring elsewhere by moral and financial support of Scouting the very same objectionable religious elements it corrects in the privacy of the church troop, for membership in a well-known organization like the Boy Scouts cannot but imply agreement with, and sponsorship of, its widely publicized oath or promise, law, and slogan and the religious implications they are known to have.

#### *Church Troops Hinder the Church's Confession*

And then the Church would be doing the very opposite of what it should. The church-sponsored troop would be a contradiction of the confession the Church owes the world regarding the depravity of natural man, the sin of false worship, the evil of false doctrine. The Gospel would be compromised in the all-important field of youth training. Now, all this will make no impression at all on him who maintains there is absolutely nothing objectionable in Scoutism. But to those who have objections to certain religious features in the movement it ought to mean that they dare not condone objectionable features in Scouting with the thought that these can be corrected in the church troop. If Scouting is altogether acceptable, then so are church troops. If Scouting is objectionable because of elements of false religion, then it remains so also in a church-sponsored troop.

A final point to be considered is the question:

### *IV. Has the Missouri Synod Changed Its Position on Scouting?*

The question is not raised in order to provoke feelings of discomfort, nor does it imply that a church body is to be faulted in every case when it changes its position. We in the Wisconsin Synod are still thanking God for using the Missouri Synod to help guide our founding fathers from the path of indifferentism onto the way of conservative, confessional Lutheranism. But the question has been raised repeatedly since 1944. It receives considerable attention in the Scouting article in *Another Fraternal Endeavor*. And it is of some interest to the Wisconsin Synod because it feels strongly that its plea to the sister synod for joint testimony against Scoutism is not an unwarranted demand, but simply the request for a return to a position but recently abandoned. The Missouri Synod, on the other hand, maintains that its position has not changed and that a change in Scouting is the explanation for its 1944 resolutions.

#### *Has Scouting or the Position of the Missouri Synod Changed?*

But as late as 1938 and after years of dealing with Scout authorities the Missouri Synod resolved: “Because of the naturalistic and unionistic tendencies still prevalent in the Boy Scout movement, membership in non-Lutheran or sectarian troops cannot be sanctioned” (Missouri Synod *Proceedings*, 1938, p. 341). This resolution is preceded by one stating that Scout authorities had “so modified their position as to grant to the individual congregation complete control of its troops,” and followed by another that congregations be provided “with an educational and recreational program that will attract the interest of our youth and thus counteract the inclination to affiliate with the Boy Scout organization.” Though at this time there may have been “neither unanimity of opinion nor conformity of practice” (*A Fraternal Word*, p. 13), though there was assurance of local sovereignty over the church troop, yet there was testimony against objectionable “naturalistic and unionistic tendencies still prevalent in the movement,” and countermeasures were urged to discourage affiliation with Scouting. In 1941 a committee report was adopted by the Missouri Synod to the effect that “nothing was brought to its attention which would at this time call for either a more favorable or unfavorable treatment of the Boy Scout movement than the one outlined in...the 1938 *Proceedings*” (Missouri Synod *Proceedings*, 1941, p. 418f.).

Then in 1944 the recommendation was adopted that “the matter of Scouting should be left to the individual congregation to decide and that under the circumstances Synod may consider her interests sufficiently protected” (Missouri *Proceedings*, 1944, p. 257). The Board originally advocating such action reported at length about its search in official handbooks “for any ingredients of the program which would militate against a Lutheran Scoutmaster’s committing himself to the program” and stated that “it was unable to find any factors which would violate our principles.” It referred to the guarantee of Scouting: “We recognize that there is no Boy Scout authority which supersedes the authority of the local pastor and congregation...”—a guarantee which, however, could in substance be offered already in 1938 and even before and which, therefore, was no new change effected between 1938 and 1944. But the Board was strangely silent about the “naturalistic and unionistic tendencies still prevalent in the Boy Scout movement” in 1938 and 1941. A clear explanation as to how the objectionable “tendencies” of 1938 and 1941 had been corrected was to be expected. That explanation is not found in the 1944 report.

The Scoutism essay in *Another Fraternal Endeavor* (pp. 83-87) deals at some length with the matter of change in Boy Scout policy. But the changes it lists and documents all antedate 1938 and 1941 by a number of years. These changes did not prevent the Missouri Synod’s unfavorable reports on Scouting in 1938 and 1941 and cannot logically be used to support the dissimilar report of 1944. Concern over objectionable “tendencies” in Scoutism in 1938 and 1941 should not have been removed completely three years later by the assurance of local sovereignty over troops which had been offered already in 1938 and according to *Handbook of Organizations* (pp. 350f.), as early as 1927.

#### *Plea for a Return to the Former Stand Against Scouting*

We are compelled to ask, “When and how have the ‘naturalistic and unionistic tendencies still prevalent in the Boy Scout movement’ as late as 1941 been corrected?” It is our contention and conviction that these tendencies were in 1944 and are now still, prevalent in Scouting, inherent in its mandatory unchanging oath or promise, law, and slogan, and that they will not be removed unless Scouting alters itself so radically as to become the converse of itself. That certain changes in Scouting have been made we readily grant. But a major change in its principles must still be made before its objectionable religious features are eliminated. Whatever changes have been effected have only served to correct glaring outward faults and thus to obscure the greater evils within. We point out the change in the position of the sister synod on Scouting, not to gain a pound of flesh, but to reinforce our fervent plea that the Missouri Synod say with us now, as it



did in 1938 and 1941, “There are naturalistic and unionistic tendencies still prevalent in the Boy Scout movement.” As long as there are objectionable religious features in Scoutism, we should all refrain from sponsoring them, also and especially in church-controlled troops, and should stand together, as we once did, in testifying against the movement.  
(End of the quotation from the E. C. Fredrich essay)

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After discussion and restudy in three different forums over a decade, from 1944 to 1954, the synods of the Synodical Conference had not reached agreement on the Boy Scout issue. Thereby this issue did not go away, but by this time the main focus of attention in the Synodical Conference had already been directed upon differences concerning the *Common Confession*. All attention was finally centered on the scriptural principles of confessional fellowship.

It was the conviction of the Wisconsin Synod that a unionistic spirit and unionistic practices on the part of the Missouri and Slovak Synods were behind all the issues which had arisen between them and the Wisconsin and Norwegian Synods. Because agreement on the scriptural principles of confessional fellowship could not again be reached, the Synodical Conference ultimately broke up in 1963.

Valuable supplementary material concerning the unsolved Boy Scout issue:

- *Our Position Against Scouting*, Tract Number 7, *Continuing in His Word*, issued by the Conference of Presidents, the Ev. Lutheran Joint Synod of Wisconsin and Other States, 1954. Tract 7 was meant to give information to our Wisconsin Synod members but was at the same time to be available to any interested Synodical Conference member.
- *Scouting in the Light of Holy Scripture*, by Erhard C. Pankow. This essay was adopted by and published at the request of the Milwaukee City Pastoral Conference (Wisconsin Synod), Northwestern Publishing House, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, 1947. This essay offers valuable information concerning the Boy Scouts of America at the time of its writing. As pastor of Garden Homes Ev. Lutheran Church, Erhard C. Pankow had through correspondence with the Boy Scouts of America informed himself well concerning what was mandatory and what was optional for a Boy Scout troop and for its individual members. Thus he was able to serve well as a member of the Wisconsin Synod committee in the second forum on the Boy Scout issue, 1948-1950.

Professor emeritus Carl J. Lawrenz  
June 18, 1988

(Copy to be appended, according to page 25)

## **Natural Law, Natural Knowledge of God, Civic Righteousness, and Their Application to the Boy Scout Question**

### 1. *The Scope of the Natural Knowledge of God and of His Law*

There is a natural knowledge of God, a knowledge of God outside of God's revelation of Himself in Holy Scripture. This is not a saving knowledge of God. Though therefore limited in scope, this natural knowledge of God is true as far as it goes (*aletheia*, Rom. 1:18,21). Through the works of creation God has made Himself known to man (Rom. 1:19,21). God has also endowed all men with their conscience to bear witness to them about their relation to Him as their God and of their accountability to Him for their conduct over against His inscribed Law (Rom. 2:14-16; 1:32). This natural knowledge of God in man goes beyond the bare realization that there is a God and embraces a consciousness of His eternal power, glory, wisdom, goodness, righteousness (Rom. 1:20,32; 2:4; Acts 11,15-17; 17:24-27; Psalm 19). Man's natural knowledge of God can be deepened and developed by a stuff of nature (Rom. 1:20) and of history (Acts 14,15-17; 17:24-27).

Even as natural man has a certain knowledge of God, so he also has the ability to discern in a measure, as far as outward deeds are concerned, what is morally good and evil. This ability comes from the inscribed Law. Man has a realization of the divine authority of this inscribed Law, a realization of his accountability before God to act according to this inscribed Law (Rom. 2:14-16; 1:32).

*Notes on Rom. 2:14-16:* St. Paul distinguishes between three things: the inscribed Law, conscience, and a flood of judging thoughts. The Apostle asserts that also the Gentiles, which do not have the revealed Law, do the things contained in the Law. He does not say that they do them regularly; much less that they do them properly, so that God's Law is satisfied with their obedience. The whole context makes it clear that the Gentiles are not capable of performing truly good works. Paul is speaking of outward acts which men can see and evaluate. He points out that with their occasional efforts, whenever they do the things contained in the Law, these unregenerate Gentiles give unmistakable evidence that the work of the Law is written within their hearts. This inscribed Law is not something that they have acquired through speculation by the trial and error method; it is not a summary of what through experience and observation they have found to be most expedient in regulating human conduct; it does not consist of conventions which through usage and training have gradually acquired the force of law. No, this inscribed Law forms the starting point of all ethical thinking and judging. Man did not write it into his heart; he finds it there written by another hand. Paul speaks of the Gentiles doing by nature the things contained in the Law. The same God who created their nature is also the author of the inscribed Law. They may not like it, but it is unrelenting in its demands.

St. Paul adds: "their conscience also bearing witness." Conscience corroborates the testimony of the inscribed Law. Conscience is more than an activity of the intellect discerning what is morally good and evil; it is more than a moral function, judging the ethical merits or demerits of specific human conduct. *Conscience is a religious function, a consciousness of God which confirms the inscribed Law as the Law of God and declares the demands of this Law as divinely binding.* In performing this function conscience calls forth the flood of accusing and excusing thoughts which Paul mentions. The Apostle does not say that the conscience of man is always correct, just as little as he says that the inscribed Law is always correctly understood. When God at creation inscribed the Law, it was a perfectly reliable expression of His holy will. When God at creation gave man his conscience, it was likewise an infallible witness. As man's entire nature became corrupt through the Fall, also the inscribed Law became blurred and his conscience subject to error. Yet for the purpose of bringing forth civic righteousness both still function sufficiently,

inducing man to accept God's judgment, based on the inscribed Law and the testimony of conscience, as just and inescapable.

2. *The Use that Natural Man Makes of his Natural Knowledge of God and of His Law*

The natural knowledge of God, though true in itself so far as the substance is concerned, is inevitably turned into something false when handled by natural man. For he applies it, and by himself can apply it, only according to the basic lie introduced by Satan into the world, the *opinio legis* (Gal. 3:3). Instead of using his natural knowledge of God to honor and serve God in the spirit of grateful love, natural man invariably deals with God, insofar as he has a natural knowledge of Him, in the spirit of the Law, endeavoring to appease His wrath and to merit His favor (Rom. 1:21; Acts 14:8-18; 17:22-31). This is the initial catastrophic step in repressing the truth of the natural knowledge of God. This repressing Paul ascribes to all men as they are by nature (Rom. 1:18). It is not due to ignorance but to his inborn wickedness, to the fact that man is steeped in unrighteousness.

The *opinio legis* in which he operates with his natural knowledge of God leads man to neutralize this knowledge with further vain and foolish ideas and actions so that it may not, interfere with the satisfaction of the evil lusts of his heart. Hence many ultimately sink through God's judgment into the depths of filth and vice (Rom. 1:21-23).

Some, indeed, turn moralists, trying to curb by their judgments the reckless living of their fellowmen (Rom. 2:1-8). But in doing so, guided by the same *opinio legis*, they only condemn themselves, for in essence they commit the same things. Particularly do they stand condemned in that they harden their hearts in impenitence over against the revelation of God's goodness as it appears even in their own personal history (Rom. 2:4). With impenitent hearts they act on the assumption that man's nature is inherently good, that in order to achieve real goodness of life it is enough to instruct the understanding properly and to influence the will by censure or praise. They are blind to the fact that crimes and vices are merely symptoms of the total depravity of the human heart, that a complete change of heart is necessary, which only the Gospel can effect.

*Application:* It is this activity of the moralist which characterizes the use to which the natural knowledge of God and of His Law is put in the program of Scouting. In its basic oath and law, to which every Scout must subscribe, Scouting expresses a recognition of God and of an obligation to Him. In offering this oath and law as something that is adapted to every boy, it operates with the assumption that it lies within the power of every boy ("on my honor") to make a proper use of his recognition of God and to fulfil his duty toward Him. Scouting says of its entire program:

"In these activities add contacts emphasis shall be placed upon practice in daily life of the principles of the Scout Oath or Promise and Law. By these means, the Program shall seek to develop traits of character which Scouts shall express in consideration and helpfulness toward others, in personal courage, and, above all, in lives of useful citizenship, patriotism and reverence toward God" (Constitution, Article 4—Program, page 7).

Scouting as set forth and unfolded in its official literature is blind to man's natural depravity and his need of a complete change of heart through faith in the Savior's pardoning grace. It is therefore not at all incidental to find expressions like the following:

"You promise on your honor to keep yourself morally straight. No one but yourself will know how faithfully you practice this part of your Oath. It is a test of your honor and your strength. Science tells us that every time we do anything, nerve impulses make trails in our brain. When we repeat that action, we widen the trail. Our actions tend to follow that trail as water runs down a creek bed, and so we form a habit. Try moving the furniture in your room, and see how you stumble over it. The same thing happens in your mind when you rearrange your habits. If you form the right sort of habits, your actions follow automatically.

"You have it in your power to make the right sort of track in your brain that will determine how you will 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” (*Handbook for Boys*, p. 25).

3. *The Spiritual function of the Natural Knowledge of God and His Law in Natural Man*

Scripture assigns no positive spiritual value or function to the natural knowledge of God and of His Law in natural man. It knows only of the negative one of depriving man of any pretext for his failings, so that he may realize to his consternation that he is without excuse (Rom. 1:20; 2:1,5). In the service of the Church’s commission to preach the Gospel, we, too, can make use of man’s natural knowledge of God and of His Law only for the purpose of bringing the sinner to a realization of his guilt and condemnation that he may despair in himself. Man’s natural knowledge of God and of His Law forms the starting-point (*Anknuepfungspunkt*) for the Church’s preachment of the Law, whereby the sinner is humbled in preparation for the Gospel message, which alone can produce saving faith and a thankful life of Christian sanctification. Thus Paul used the natural knowledge of God in Romans 1 and 2; thus he used it also at Lystra and at Athens (Acts 14 and 17).

*Application:* This is not the use to which the natural knowledge of God and of His Law is put in Scouting. The Scout program abuses this knowledge in the manner of the moralist. When the individual Christian associates and identifies himself with Scouting, he therefore strengthens and confirms all those in the Scout organization who are not Christians in this abuse of their natural knowledge of God and of His Law; he fails to help them to a realization of their guilt and condemnation, of their need of a complete change of heart through the Gospel. In other words he vitiates his Christian testimony to Sin and Grace.

This is also true when the Church participates in Scouting, associates and identifies itself with it, and tries to integrate it in its own Gospel program of character training. The Church thereby fails to testify to the sponsors and adherents of Scouting who are not Christians that they stand condemned before God in the efforts that they make on the basis of their natural knowledge of God and of His Law to do their duty to God and to keep themselves morally straight. The Church is confirming them in their false and fatal convictions, is withholding the testimony which it owes to them, that what they need is a complete change of heart, which only the Gospel of Christ Jesus can effect. The Church lets it appear as though the moralizing activity of Scouting and a Christian’s life of sanctification wrought and motivated by the Gospel were really akin, while they stand diametrically apart, as far apart as a life before God on the basis of the Law and a life before Him on the basis of the Gospel.

This is not remedied by the arrangement that the advocates of Scouting in the Lutheran Church endeavor to carry out the Scout program in their own troops in the light of the Gospel. For this vital correction, even if we assume that it can be carried out effectively in Lutheran Scout troops, is still withheld from the larger Scout membership, with which the Lutheran Scouts are identified in one organization. Scouting operates with the assumption that the work of the different religious bodies, Christian and non-Christian, can all render service in carrying out the Scout program, and that Scouting will materially aid all the religious bodies in carrying out their own educational work. It holds that such an integration can be effected with benefit to both parties under the tacit assumption that Scoutism as such represents what is basic to all religions, while the various religious bodies differ merely in some details which they find helpful to add (Constitution, pages 5-6: Twelfth Scout Law; Principles). By participating in Scouting the Church fails to bring clear testimony against these false assumptions.

5. *The Function of the Natural Knowledge of God and of His Law in the Life of a Christian*

In a Christian’s life of sanctification the natural knowledge of God and the inscribed Law perform a function similar to that of the revealed Law in its third use (Psalm 19).

6. *The Function of the Natural Knowledge of God and of His Law in Promoting Civic Righteousness*

The natural knowledge of God and of His Law performs a vital function in promoting civic righteousness (Rom. 2:14-16). In a certain measure it can and does serve to keep people as they are by nature from gross crime and vice and to incite them to outward decent living.

7. *Civic Righteousness, Its Nature and Purpose, and How it is Maintained*

Civic righteousness is a term which has been coined by the Church. Our Lutheran Confessions speak repeatedly of *iustitia civilis*, which is translated in the English text of the Triglot as “civil righteousness.” Though Scripture does not use the term civic or civil righteousness, it does teach the substance that is meant to be covered by it

Ever since the Fall the earthly life of mankind is meant to be covered by it. God has permitted fallen mankind to sojourn here on earth that He might carry out His eternal purpose of redeeming all sinners through His incarnate Son and of proclaiming the Gospel of His saving grace to make them partakers of this salvation from sin and death. Not until He has called, enlightened, sanctified, and gathered the entire number of His elect through the Gospel and thus perfected His Church of believers unto eternal life, will He destroy this world and bring mankind’s earthly life to an end. In the meantime men are to live and dwell together here on earth, each for his appointed time. To make this possible for God’s gracious purposes, when mankind is by nature totally depraved, at least a measure of outward decency, peace, and order needs to be maintained.

To effect this God has established certain ordinances for mankind. The institution of marriage and the home, established in paradise, remained in effect also after the Fall. God has ordained human authority beyond the home in the form of civil authority (Gen. 9:6; Rom. 13:1-7; I Peter 2:13-14; John 19:11). No specific kind of government is prescribed by God, nor any specific manner of establishing it, but “the powers that be are ordained of God.” With threats of punishment human government acts and is to act as a deferent, checking and restraining the evil designs of the wicked, preventing crime and violence. After a foul deed has been committed, government is to be a revenger, inflicting speedy and adequate punishment on the guilty one. On the other hand, government is to protect the law-abiding citizen that he may be benefited. It is this righteousness among men which God maintains through civil authority that we mean when we speak of civic or civil righteousness. It has to do with outward deeds and acts insofar as they make for a measure of peace and order quite apart from the motivation by which they are performed. In maintaining civic righteousness human government is not interested in motives as such, in their spiritual value, but merely insofar as motives are effective in promoting certain outward deeds and restraining others.

God has not merely ordained civil authority to maintain civic righteousness. He has at the same time left natural man, though corrupt in sin, the ability to show an understanding for such civil authority, the ability to see its necessity and usefulness, the ability to establish it, and to make necessary and appropriate laws and ordinances, and finally the ability to render in a measure the civic righteousness which it demands. Our Lutheran Confessions sum up this ability of man as “human reason,” meaning the full scope of the abilities which Scripture ascribes to natural man, and which are sufficient unto these ends.

This is, first of all, a measure of ability to distinguish in purely earthly and secular affairs between that which is beneficial and that which is detrimental. Out of this ability the smaller and larger human communities set up adequate police regulations: health rules, sanitation ordinances, traffic laws, building codes, banking rules, trade statutes, zoning regulations, tax measures (I Pet. 2:13-14).

Included in the natural endowment of man which promotes civic righteousness are also certain natural impulses and emotions: the impulse of self-preservation, the natural love between parents and children, between husband and wife, the affection of human friendship, the patriotic love of country, the sympathetic feelings toward fellowmen in misery and need (Luke 11:11,13; Isaiah 49:15; John 15:13; Luke 23:27). These emotions as they manifest themselves in the unregenerate and lead them to outward action are something different from love which flows out of faith-born fear and love of God. Hence they have no spiritual value in God’s sight. Yet they promote civic righteousness.

When we speak of human reason we furthermore include the ability to discern in a measure, as far as outward deeds are concerned, what is morally good and evil. This ability comes from the inscribed Law.

Included is a realization of the divine authority of this inscribed Law, a realization of man's accountability before God to act according to this inscribed Law (Natural knowledge of God, conscience). This endowment enables man to establish civil authority to exercise the function which God would have it perform of punishing the evil doers and of protecting the law-abiding. It enables human government to enact suitable laws and statutes and to acknowledge the criteria of common law and equity for judging ethical acts. At the same time it leads men to show a measure of respect for such laws and to guide their conduct according to them.

All of these human endowments summed up as "human reason" do *to a certain degree* serve to hold *most people* back from gross crime and vice and to incite them to *a measure* of outward decent living (Triglotta, pages 121,7; 157,9; 335,70; 127,22-24). These outward deeds when effected in the unbeliever, of course, have no spiritual value before God, inasmuch as they are born out of slavish fear, out of the vain attempt to justify themselves, out of selfish motivations of pride, honor, and reward. They do, however, make for a measure of decency, peace, and order in human relations; they make for civic righteousness. God is not interested in civic righteousness for its own sake. The maintenance and safeguarding of civic righteousness, which God effects through civil authority on the basis of all that belongs to "human reason," is not God's ultimate aim. It is merely a means to an end. God's ultimate aim is the peaceful development, internal growth, and external spread of the Church, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty (I Tim, 2:2), that the churches may have rest to be edified and built up (Acts 9:31).

*Application:* For the preservation of human society God also uses the civic righteousness fostered by Scouting on the basis of the natural endowment of man. From this point of view we may also rather see an organization like Scouting in the world about us than an atheistic society flouting every outward observance of the demands of God's Law. For a Christians to participate in Scouting, however, involves other considerations.

#### 8. *The Civic Righteousness of the Christian*

The Christian, while a member of Christ's Church in the spiritual sphere, is at the same time a citizen in the secular sphere. As such he is obligated to fulfil all that civil authority looks for and has a right to demand in the way of civic righteousness. Yet as a Christian he will fulfil all these demands as a part of his life of sanctification. For when the Christian according to the new man shuns the gross works of the flesh and shows himself honest, trustworthy, temperate, and chaste in his human relations, works faithfully for his living, provides for his dependents, respects the rights of others, pays his taxes, conscientiously obeys civil laws and ordinances, he does all these things out of faith-born fear and love of God. They are then fruits of the Spirit pleasing in God's sight. But this is an evaluation which lies beyond the function and judgment of civil authority. Before the bar of civil authority the deeds which the Christian actually renders as a part of his life of sanctification and similar deeds which the unregenerate perform as mere outward works of the law, both alike count as civic righteousness. Of course when the Christian in his weakness still fulfils the demands of civil authority out of motives of his flesh, such as fear, pride, and reward, then also his deeds lie on the same spiritual plane as the outward works of the unregenerate; then they are *mere* civic righteousness. Yet such works of the flesh the Christian will want to mortify and restrain. Wherever and whenever motives are stressed the Christian will want to give a clear testimony that his conduct is prompted by thankful love for the Savior.

#### 9. *The Promotion of Civic Righteousness is not Assigned to the Church as its Specific Task and Function*

The Church as the Communion of Saints, as the spiritual body of believers in Christ, has only one entrusted task and function: It is to preach the Gospel to all creatures (Mark 16:15; Matthew 28:19,20; Luke 24:47,48). This however means proclaiming the whole counsel of God in His Word to all men. For the entire Word of God, which the Church is to proclaim without human alterations, subtractions, or additions, stands in close relation to the central message of pardon and salvation in Christ. In proclaiming and applying any part of God's Word to men, the Church is to keep it in its proper relation to this message and to divorce no part from this message. Only thus will all of its testimony remain a part of the proclamation of the Gospel, the one task assigned to the Church.

The Church is to preach the Gospel, the whole counsel of God, to the unregenerate that through its testimony the Holy Spirit may bring ever more sinners to saving faith in Christ. With its testimony the Church is not bidden to reform sinners, to induce them merely to outwardly decent and orderly lives, but to convert them so that the number of Christ's believers may be increased.

The Church is to preach the Gospel, the whole counsel of God, to those who have already come to faith, that they may be strengthened and furthered in their Christian faith, joy, comfort, understanding, love, sanctification, and hope, that the body of Christ may be edified from within.

Whatever does not serve the edification of Christ's Church of believers either by adding to their number or by furthering those who already belong to it in faith and life, cannot rightfully be called the function and work of the Church. The Church is not bidden to be the guardian of public morals, to function as the instructor of civic authority to initiate and to foster social reform, to induce men to lead outwardly decent and orderly lives.

In the interest of winning sinners to faith and of perfecting them in faith, the Church is also to preach the Law, God's holy will, to all men. The only use of the Law that can come into consideration in the Church's testimony to the unregenerate is that of a mirror, that through it sinners be brought to a knowledge of their sins and their utter condemnation before God. Thus the real message of the Church, its message of gracious pardon and salvation in Christ, is served. For the sinner must be humbled and crushed before the Gospel can awaken blessed faith in his heart. By preaching the Law to unbelievers for the express purpose of leading them to outward decency and uprightness, before they have been converted, the Church would hinder its real work and fall into the role of a reformer. It would contribute toward hardening people in their self righteousness.

*Application:* For this very reason we hold that the Church cannot identify and associate itself with the program of Scouting, which is intended for every boy as he is by nature and yet endeavors to use the Law as a guide and a rule. By endorsing this program the Church is vitiating its testimony to sin and grace.

To those, however, who have already come to faith, to its members, the Church is to preach the Law in all of its uses. Because of his flesh, still clinging to him, because of the bitter battle which the Christian must wage with his Old Adam in his daily life of sanctification, he needs to hear the Law as a curb, as a mirror, and as a guide.

10. *In the Pursuit of its God-entrusted Activity the Church at the Same Time Promotes Civic Righteousness*
  - A. Through the Gospel the Church gives its members a motive, the motive of faithborn fear and love of God, which will constrain them to render all that civic authority looks for and has a right to demand in the way of those deeds and actions which make for decency, peace, and order in human relations. The more sinners that the Church through its testimony leads to bow before the condemning verdict of God's Law and to accept salvation and a new life in Christ, the more people will there be who out of thankful love for the Savior will be constrained to meet all the demands of civic righteousness. But it is sanctification, not civic righteousness as such, that the Church fosters in its members. In a similar manner the Church also promotes civic righteousness as it instructs *its members* for their life of sanctification concerning the divine origin and true purpose and function of human government.
  - B. Inasmuch as the Church commits all of its own needs and the needs of all men to the Lord in confident prayer, it prays also for the establishment and maintenance of civic righteousness. In this it heeds the admonition of St. Paul (I Tim. 2:1,2). The Church is mindful in its prayer for civic righteousness of the purpose which such outward peace and order is to serve under God's provident guidance, namely the purpose of providing a time of grace for men that His ultimate purpose of the salvation of man, of the growth and completion of His Church, be furthered. As in all prayers for earthly gifts so also in this one the believers confidently leave it to the Lord to answer it in His own time according to His wisdom, power, and grace. Thus the Church continued to voice this prayer even in the midst of war, disasters, and social upheavals, knowing that such judgments also have a wholesome purpose under God.

C. In an indirect way the Church also promotes civic righteousness in those who have not come to faith in Christ. This is a by-product of the Church's God-given activity, of its God-given testimony. It is simply this that the Church through its testimony to sin and grace in the midst of a human community, particularly also through the sanctified life of its members, exerts a marked influence even upon the conduct and behavior and the judgments of those who are not believers or have not yet come to faith. Their conscience is sharpened, the inscribed Law and their natural knowledge of God is confirmed. For example, the faithful testimony of the Apostolic Church in word and deed and its growth through such faithful testimony had a remarkable influence upon the social order of its day, eradicating many of its abuses. A great deal might be said on this point. This is not necessary, however, inasmuch as it is a by-product of the Church's activity. Over-stressing it always brings with it the temptation of making it an end in itself for the Church. Let the Church be true to its God-given function, and God will also bring forth this by-product according to His purposes.

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