

Scouting: Are our Objections Still Valid?

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[Presented to the Seaway Circuit Colonial North Conference Assembled at
Springville, New York, February 3, 1986]

"Isn't your church the one that is *against* Scouting?" How long has it been in your ministry since you last heard that question? It is a question which I am sure that most WELS pastors will get asked at least once or twice in their ministry. The question, however, might not always be worded quite the same way each time it is asked. Sometimes it comes out this way: "What's wrong with the Scouts?" Sometimes it is asked this way: "Why don't you allow your members to participate in the Scouts?" And sometimes it comes out with a little tinge of sarcasm: "What's the matter with you people, how can any sane person be against such a beneficial and American institution as the Boy Scouts?" No matter how the question is asked, the thought always is the same: "Isn't your church the one that is *against* the Scouts?"

Not all WELS pastors have to face this menacing question with the same amount of frequency. In some areas of our countries the Scouts are not that active, or at least they aren't climbing to great new heights. In such areas the WELS pastor will be spared from the onslaught of questions like: "Isn't your church the one that is *against* Scouts?" In other areas of our countries the Scout movement is very active and flourishing. In such areas WELS pastors have to face the infamous question quite often.

In my short ministry I cannot remember how many times it has been that I have been asked this question, or how many times the whole subject of Scouting has come up for discussion. I've been asked it by prospective members, by interested outsiders, and by people who are just looking to get involved in a long discussion. The congregation which I serve is located in an area of Western New York which is dominated by the Scouting movement. There are at least a dozen Scout troops within a ten-mile radius. Two or three times a year the local newspaper dedicates an entire issue to supporting and promoting the Scout programs in the area. There are at least fifteen members of my congregation who have at one time in their life been actively involved in the Scout program. They have ranged from Boy Scout to Den Mother to Scoutmaster. There have been district Girl Scout leaders and representatives, speaking on behalf of the Western New York District, who have knocked on my door wanting to discuss why our church is *against* Girl Scouting. You see, I've been asked this question quite often. Although that doesn't make me an expert on the Scout movement, it does put me in the same group of WELS pastors who have to deal with the Scout question on a regular basis.

When someone comes to me with the question: "Isn't your church the one that *against* Scouting?", I always tell them that we are not *against* Scouting, it is just that we don't agree with everything that is being taught in the Scout organizations. But most people don't see any difference. After all, if you aren't for something, you must be against it. If you don't promote it - if you don't allow your members to participate in it - if you go and set up an organization of your own, patterned after it and competing with it - if you speak out against certain aspects of the program, then obviously you must be *against* it. Even though we may try to discuss the question of Scouting in a positive sort of way, it still remains in the eyes of many that we are *against* it. In that we object to certain aspects of the Scout program, and as a result object to the program as a whole, I think it is a fair assessment that we are *against* Scouting, in a certain sense of the word.

But are our decades-old objections still valid? That is the question being asked by this paper. Many of the objections that our church has leveled against the Scouts have resulted from statements in Scout manuals and handbooks which are, for the most part, ancient history. When many of these position papers and publications were written by WELS pastors and theologians in the past, they were using material which for them was current at the time, but now is out of date. The same will most likely hold true for this paper - one day it will be out of date. The reason for this is because the Scout movement is changing. There have been a lot of changes in recent times. And because of these changes, maybe our objections to Scouting aren't as valid as they used to be.

Maybe our objections are based solely on outdated material. Maybe all the objectionable material in the various Scout programs has been deleted. It is only fair and honest that we review periodically the changes made and the current status of an organization which we are against.

In this paper we are going to consider whether or not our objections to Scouting are still valid. That presupposes that we know what our objections have always been. We will consider that first. Secondly, we will review these objections in light of current information and official publications of the Scouts. Thirdly, we will look at some of the developments and trends in the Scout movement, and fourthly, we will briefly touch on the subject of how to deal with the Scout question. Since there are many branches of the Scout movement - Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts in America, Boy Scouts and Girl Guides in Canada and other parts of the world, together with their supporting units - we will mainly be focussing our attention on the Boy Scouts. I think it is safe to say, on the basis of my research, that as the Boy Scouts go, so goes the rest of the Scouting movement.

1. What Our Objections To Scouting Have Been In The Past

Somewhere along my educational path I acquired a study entitled "What's The Issue With The Lodge, The Scouts, And Public Prayer." It studies these three subjects in considerable detail. I believe it gives an excellent overview of what our position is and has been regarding the Scouts, the Lodge, and public prayer. I wish that I knew who the author was so as to give him proper acknowledgement and credit for his work. From this study I have gleaned much helpful insight into the subject of Scouting. We will use the basic outline of this study as we review briefly what our objections to Scouting have been in the past. We will also use the outline in determining whether our objections to Scouting are still valid.

The study is divided into eight sections:

- A. Concerning the Bible, the Word of God.
- B. Concerning the one true God, the Triune God.
- C. Concerning the natural depravity and sinful condition of man.
- D. Concerning Jesus Christ and His rescue for us.
- E. Concerning good works.
- F. Concerning Christless prayers.
- G. Concerning religious unionism.
- H. Concerning the giving of offense.

We will consider each of the eight sections listing the points of Scouting which we object to.

A. Concerning the Bible, the Word of God

1. Scouting does not teach that the Bible is the Word of God. They consider it only to be a helpful book in showing us how to live.
2. Scouting does not teach that the Bible is the only source of Divine Truth. They teach that it is only one of many sources for Divine Truth.
3. Scouting does not teach that the Bible is a Means of Grace by which the Holy Spirit brings us to faith and makes us heirs of eternal life.
4. Scouting does not teach that the Bible is the only rule and guide which gives direction and purpose to a person's life. They look to the Scout Law for such direction.

B. Concerning the one true God, the Triune God

1. Scouting teaches that there is a God, but defines this God so vaguely and generically that all religions can count him as their own.
2. Scouting does not teach that the only true God is the God of the Bible, the Triune God.
3. Scouting does not recognize Jesus Christ as being true God and part of the Trinity.
4. Scouting does not make a clear confession of who the true God is.

C. Concerning the natural depravity and sinful condition of man

1. Scouting denies in general the natural depravity of man.
2. Scouting teaches that an individual, on his own, is able to reach ideals of character and morals.
3. Scouting teaches that an individual can overcome all temptations by his own efforts.
4. Scouting teaches that by keeping the Law an individual will be able to do his duty to God.
5. Scouting gives an individual the idea that they are able to attain an acceptable righteousness before God on their own.

D. Concerning Jesus Christ and His rescue for us

1. Scouting does not teach that Jesus Christ is the only way to salvation. Rather, their teaching emphasizes that everything is done on our own. Even our "getting right" with God is not done because of anyone else, it is accomplished by our own efforts.
2. The need for a Savior from sin is never mentioned or even alluded to. In fact the word "sin," or any word describing it, never occurs in Scout materials.

E. Concerning good works

1. Scouting teaches that good works, or as they call them, "Good Turns," are essential in order to be a Scout. "By doing your best to live up to the Scout Law, you are a Scout."
2. Scouting teaches that an individual Scout cannot advance through the program unless he does Good Turns. Advancement results from Good Turns.
3. Scouting teaches that a Scout ought to re-evaluate his Good Turns and tell others of them.
4. Scouting does not teach that only Christians can do good works.
5. Scouting does not teach that good works are a fruit of faith.

F. Concerning Christless prayers

1. While within a Christian church a local troop may use prayers addressed to Christ. However, at all rallies, area meetings, etc. prayers cannot contain the name of Christ so as not to offend anyone.

G. Concerning religious unionism

1. Scouting allows and encourages joint worship of those not united in the same faith. For example: prayers, worship services, devotions.

H. Concerning the giving of offense

1. Scouting's over-all accumulative effect could easily lead an immature Christian to stumble in his faith. He could easily be led to put his hope for salvation in his Good Turns.

These eight areas pretty well sum up our objections to Scouting. But the key to the objections lies in the reason for the objections. All of the preceding statements concerning what Scouting teaches or doesn't teach are based on statements printed in official Scouting publications. For example, some of the objections we've made **concerning what they teach about the Bible** come, in part, from a Girl Scout devotional booklet entitled *The Way of Understanding*. This devotional booklet is also quoted as a source for our objections to what the Scouts say **concerning Jesus Christ and His rescue for us**. The problem is, as we have stated earlier, that some official publications, from which our objections are raised, are no longer in use. On one occasion I tried to get a copy of this Girl Scout devotional booklet. I thought to myself that if I had a copy of this it would be much easier to explain why we have objections to Scouting. I asked a district representative from Western New York. She apologized and told me that she had never heard of such a book. It apparently was used in the past, but not any longer. Some of our objections to Scouting are based on materials which are no longer part of the Scouting program.

But not only have such sources fallen into disuse, the ones that remain have been significantly changed over the years. For example, **concerning religious unionism**, a statement has been often quoted from the older versions of the Boy Scout Handbook:

"All your life you will be associated with people of different faiths. That is why we respect others whose religions may differ from ours, although for reason of conscience we do not agree with them. Their customs may be different from ours, but their hearts are just as true, their faith just as sincere." (BS Handbook, p. 51).

One thing that is being proposed in this statement is similar to the old adage: It doesn't matter what you believe, as long as you are sincere." We are right in objecting to such statements and principles of Scouting. But you will not find this statement exactly the same way in the newer versions of the Boy Scout Handbook. The new version reads this way:

"All your life you will be with people of different faiths and customs. The men who founded the United States of America gave us a heritage of religious freedom. It is our duty to respect others whose religions may differ from ours, even though we do not agree with them." (BS Handbook, p. 41, 1984 edition).

They have taken out one of the most objectionable statements in this edition. There are many such charges which occur in the newer editions. We ought to be aware of them. With such changes we ought to ask ourselves whether **OUR OBJECTIONS TO SCOUTING ARE STILL VALID?**

2. Our Objections Viewed In Light Of The Current Position Of Scouting

To determine whether or not our objections to Scouting are still valid, we will have to examine the most recent materials available of Scouting Literature. And again, we will be focussing our attention specifically on the Boy Scout organization.

A. Concerning the Bible, the Word of God

The more recent publications of Scouting literature have less and less to say about the Bible. I found only one reference to the Bible in *The Official Scoutmaster Handbook* (SMH): "There are many books important to good Scouts; the handbooks to help us with our Scoutcraft skills; the merit badge pamphlets with information about special skills; and most important of all, the Bible to guide our daily lives." (p. 314). It is interesting to note what the purpose of the Bible is for the Scout - "as a guide for our daily lives." When you read the Scouting literature it becomes very evident that the purpose of the Bible, according to Scouting, is not that it tells us the way to salvation, but that it is the source of the Golden Rule. It is that which tells us how we ought to live in this world. Only when we realize what the Bible means to Scouting can we understand why the Bible is the most important book to a Scout - it is the ultimate Golden Rule Book.

It is, however, not the only source for how a Scout must live in his daily life. It is not the only guide. In fact, "the Scout Law is the foundation on which the whole Scouting movement is built." (The Official Boy Scout Handbook - OBSH, p. 30). The Scout Law is the real source of direction for a Scout's life. "When you are a Scout, the Scout Law becomes your code," and "By doing your best to live up to the Scout Law, you are a Scout." (OBSH, p. 30). Even though the Bible is given a high place in the Scout's life, it is not the final authority of how a Scout should live his life - the Scout Law is. There is another guide for the Scout. It is his conscience. It plays a very important role in the life of a Scout: "It is your conscience that makes it possible for you to distinguish between right and wrong, that helps you follow the right trail through your life." (OBSH, p. 525). The Boy Scout Handbook speaks further on the subject of conscience being the guide for the Scout's life:

"It tells you the moral obligation you have to make your life count ... God cannot do your life task for you. You must do it yourself, in the faith that 'God helps them that help themselves' - your conscience speaks to you of yourself... Let your conscience be your guide. Know what is right. Do what is right." (OBSH, pp. 525-526).

I sometimes wonder how Scouts keep from getting confused about what their guide is for their lives. They are told that the Bible is the book which "guides our daily lives." They are told that the Scout Law is "their code for living." And they are told that their conscience "is their guide." Which one is it?

Well, it is certainly not the Bible. The Bible is not a Golden Rule Book able to be equated with the Scout Law or man's conscience. Scouting makes it clear that, although the Bible is a valuable book, it is no more valuable for guiding a person's life than the Scout Law or man's conscience. About the Bible being the inspired Word of God or being a means of grace, the Scouts obviously say nothing. We believe that the Bible is God's Word, that it is the only source of Truth, and that it is the only rule and guide which gives direction for our lives. Concerning the Bible, the Word of God, **OUR OBJECTIONS ARE STILL VALID.**

B. Concerning the one true God, the Triune God

The Scout handbooks have much to say about God. The most familiar is the Scout Oath:

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

The Scout Oath is used constantly by Scouts. It is used to start meetings. It is used to re-affirm one's commitment to the Scout ideals, and so on. The reference to "doing one's duty to God" is explained this way: "Your parents and your religious leaders teach you to know and love God, and the ways in which you can serve Him. By following these teachings in your daily life you are doing your duty to God as a

Scout." (OBSH, p. 28).

A second area where God is referred to is in the Scout Law: "A Scout is reverent toward God. He is faithful in his religious duties. He respects the beliefs of others." This is further explained: "You show that you are reverent to God by serving Him in what you do, and by worshiping Him in the way your parents and spiritual leaders taught you." (OBSH, p. 41).

A third area where God is mentioned is in the Scout Benediction: "May the Great Master of all Scouts be with us till we meet again." The Scout Benediction is used frequently to close meetings and activities.

In addition to these three specifically there are numerous references to God throughout Scouting literature:

"Duty to God is first in our lives." (SMH, p. 200).

"One of the colors in our (American) flag is white. It is the symbol of purity, of perfection. It is like the first point of our Scout Oath, our duty to God." (SMH, p. 308).

"Wearing the uniform is a way of making visible a Scout's belief in God." (SXH, p. 332).

"You who are Scouters and Guiders, are not only doing a great work for your neighbor's children, but are also helping in practical fashion to pass God's Kingdom of peace and goodwill upon earth." -Robert S.S. Baden-Powell. (SMH, p. 360).

"When you take the Scout Oath you pledge yourself to live up to your duties to God, and your country, and to other people, and to yourself." (OBSH, p. 26).

There is a great importance placed in Scouting on God and one's relationship with Him. God is an integral part of the Scouting movement. In the Girl Scouts they assert that spiritual matters are very important indeed: "We believe that the motivating force in Girl Scouting is a spiritual one." (Constitution of the Girl Scout's of the United States of America, Preamble). The founder of the Scout movement, Robert Baden-Powell, included God as an important part of the Scout movement. If you remove God from the Scouting principles and aims, you will no longer have the Scouting program. The two are inseparably joined.

The objection which we have raised on this point in the past will be the same one that we raise now - which God is this? The God of Scouting is not the Triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. They can't have the Triune God be the God of their organization because then they would have to restrict membership to just Christians and exclude those who professed to be Jews, and Muslims, and Hindus, and Buddhists, and so on. The God of Scouting is not the God of the Bible, the Triune God. It is a generic god, a god which is so general and so vague that anyone from any religion can claim him as his own.

What an unclear confession we would make if we went to church on Sunday morning and confessed our faith in the Triune God and then went to the local troop meeting on Monday and confessed our trust and faith in a generic god! What an unclear confession of God we would be having our children make if we permitted them to be part of the Scouting program. Concerning the one true God, the Triune God, **OUR OBJECTIONS ARE STILL VALID.**

C. Concerning the natural depravity and sinful condition of man

Scouting, whether it realizes it or not, spends a great deal of time speaking about the moral fitness of a Scout and what kind of thoughts and feelings are in the heart of a Scout. In the Scout Oath a Scout promises to "Keep himself morally straight." In the Scout Law a Scout is told what he *is*. He *is*:

"Trustworthy - he tells the truth; he keeps promises"

"Loyal - he is true to everyone"

"Helpful - he is concerned about other people"

"Friendly - he is a friend to all; he seeks to understand others"

"Courteous - he is polite; he has good manners"

"Kind - he is gentle"

"Obedient - he follows the rules"

"Cheerful - he cheerfully does tasks that come his way"

"Thrifty - he pays his way by working; he saves for unseen needs"

"Brave - he can face danger even if he is afraid"

"Clean - he keeps his body and mind fit and clean"

"Reverent - he is reverent toward God; he is faithful in his religious duties; he respects the beliefs of others."

Scouts are told that the way they keep themselves morally straight is by listening to their conscience and by following the Scout Law.

The Scout Law leads one to believe that he has a spiritual condition which is good. I would never be a good Scout because I have a sinful nature which causes me at times not to be trustworthy - I've lied in my life. I haven't always been loyal and helpful. I haven't always been friendly, and courteous, and kind. I haven't always obeyed the rules. Sometimes I do things grudgingly - certainly not cheerfully. I haven't been as thrifty as I should be. I wouldn't call myself brave. When it comes to being clean - physically, maybe, but in my mind, no. And reverent? - God expects me to be perfect, but I haven't come close on that one either. My spiritual condition is one, which by itself, is depraved and rotten. Yet, the Scouting program teaches and emphasizes that the spiritual condition of a Scout is one that is good and upright. A Scout *is* all of these things! At least, so they say.

How Scouting deals with the sinful condition of man is of interest too. Scoutmasters are told that if a Scout is caught cheating, he should "try to help the boy understand that cheating gets them into trouble." (SMH, p. 126). If a boy is caught lying the Scoutmaster is to stress that "a Scout cannot afford the reputation of being a liar." (SMH, p. 126). There is never any talk about the natural depravity of human beings. Sin is never mentioned as the reason for why Scouts cheat, and steal, and lie. The reasons given why a Scout cheats is because "of adult carelessness" or because "it is a way to gain quick recognition." The reasons why a Scout lies are given as "it is a way the Scout can get recognition" or "it is a demonstration of his loyalty to another Scout." Lying and cheating and stealing are not tolerated in the Scouting movement, but the reason for these sins is never dealt with.

Under this same heading we also address how Scouting, especially through the Scout Law, confuses the purpose of God's law. There are numerous references to Scouts doing their "duty to God." They can be found in the Scout Oath, the Scout Law, and in other various places. The thought that comes through is that a Scout is able to fulfill his duty toward his God. A Scout is told that if he obeys the Scout Law that God will be pleased with him, his parents will be pleased, his country, his friends, his religious leaders, and so on. Scouting teaches that we have some inherent ability to fulfill whatever obligations we owe our God. Scouting maintains, even though the Bible says differently, that a Scout can indeed do his duty to God. Concerning the natural depravity and sinful condition of man, **OUR OBJECTIONS ARE STILL VALID.**

D. Concerning Jesus Christ and His rescue for us

I was not too surprised when I could not find any references to Jesus Christ in any of the Scouting literature. There used to be in use a devotional booklet entitled "With Jesus On The Scout Trail," but it has been discarded from regular use for quite some time. I would not expect that the name of Jesus would ever appear in print in an official Scouting publication. I doubt very much whether you will hear the name of Jesus being spoken at the worship services or in the devotions or in the prayers of the Scout troops. You will not see the name in print or hear the name of Jesus spoken, because they are not to use it. The name of Jesus is offensive to too many people.

If the name of Jesus is never used, it stands to reason that His work of redemption is never mentioned either. There is never any mention of the work of salvation which Christ has won for lost mankind. But that

would not be so bad in an organization which is supposed to be "secular," except for the fact that the redemption and salvation by Jesus is being substituted by redemption and salvation by way of one's own Good Turns and duty toward God.

In the past we have objected not to what the Scouts have said about Jesus, but to what has not been said. Concerning Jesus Christ and His rescue for us, **OUR OBJECTIONS ARE STILL VALID.**

E. Concerning good works

The one area of Scouting which is tied together with its teachings of the Bible, of God, of Jesus Christ, and of its religious principles in general is the subject of good works, better known in Scouting as Good Turns. The Good Turns are another essential part of the Scouting movement.

The Scout Slogan keeps this idea of the Good Turns before the Scout always: "Do A Good Turn Daily." How important is this idea of a Good Turn? "There probably is no device so successful in developing a basis for personal growth as the daily Good Turn." (SMH, p. 108). "The daily Good Turn is one of the finest features of our movement." (OBSh, p. 495). Good Turns are to be part of a Scout's every day existence. They are planned, special ones, by the troop at its monthly meeting. By doing these Good Turns a Scout is told: "You do your part and make this a happier world." (OBSh, p. 29). What is meant by a "Good Turn?" "The Scout Slogan is

DO A GOOD TURN DAILY. This does not mean that you are to do *one* Good Turn during the day and then stop. It means looking for chances to help throughout each day ... Remember always, that a Good Turn is an extra act of kindness. It is not just something you do because it is good manners." (GISH, p. 44).

Another question we can ask is "how good must a Good Turn be to be GOOD? The Boy Scout Handbook asks this same question. It also gives us the answer:

"On a foggy day in 1909, a British Boy Scout guided an American businessman, William D. Boyce, to his destination and refused a tip for his Good Turn. Boyce, impressed with the boy's spirit and learning that he was a Scout, brought Scouting to the U.S.A. *One* Good Turn to *one* man became a Good Turn to millions of American boys. Such is the power of a Good Turn. You can never tell..." (OBSh, p. 475).

Some other references to doing good works or Good Turns specifically are as follows:

"As a Scout improves himself, he will be recognized. Those who do the most, get the most recognition." (SIMH, p. 16)

"The Good Turn idea is the happiest thought anyone can have." (SMH, p. 95).

"The Scout Law lights the good things inside of us." (SMH, p. 312).

"The Good Turns we do in our daily living are the things that make us useful. The Good Turn raises us above the ordinary. It makes our lives worthwhile." (SMH, p. 315),

"You owe it to yourself to aim to become a man of strong character. Be clean in speech and actions." (OBSh, p. 29).

"You do your duty to God by following these (religious) teachings in your daily life." (OBSh, p. 28).

"Be prepared for life - to live happy and die happy, knowing that you have done your best. That's the big idea," (OBSh, p. 43).

Yes, the big idea in Scouting is doing Good Turns. They are required by each and every Scout. No one ever is advanced in the Scouting program unless he demonstrates that he has successfully done a certain number of Good Turns. "In order for a Scout to advance in the program, he first must show active participation in the troop; second, he must show Scout spirit; third, he must master certain Scout skills; and finally, he must show that he knows the ideals of Scouting and is trying to live up to them" (-RSH. D. 4531). And "doing a Good Turn is one of the best ways to show Scout spirit." (OBSH, p. 456). Two out of the four requirements for advancement in the Scouting program center on good works.

Good works have a very important place in our lives as Christians. The Bible tells us that only Christians can do good works which are pleasing to God - "Without faith it is possible to please God." (He 11:6). Even then, our good works only come because of our God working in us (pH. 2:13). That is not what is being taught in Scouting. Scouting is instilling in young people, as well as its adult leaders, that by doing good works we will please our parents, our country, and our God. The emphasis in Scouting is always on the number of Good Turns one does, the examining and re-examining of them, and also of telling others about them. It is a self-righteous morality which is being espoused in Scouting. Concerning good works, **OUR OBJECTIONS ARE STILL VALID.**

F. Concerning Christless prayers

Prayer is a part of being a Scout. It is part of being reverent. Prayers can begin a troop meeting. Prayers can begin a rally or an area meeting. One of the most famous of the Scout prayers is the Philmont Grace: "For food, for raiment, for opportunity, for friendship and fellowship, we thank Thee, O Lord. Amen." Philmont is a Scout ranch in New Mexico. The Philmont Grace became famous when Norman Rockwell painted a picture about it in 1974. Prayer, as with other religious elements, are all part of Scouting.

All the prayers, however, are Christless. There is never any mention of Christ. None are ever closed with our familiar phrase "in Jesus' name." The reason, again, as with any mention of Jesus, is not allowed because of the offense that the name of Jesus causes some people. We believe that to pray to God without recognizing Jesus as our Mediator is to pray to a false god. True prayers are always prayed in the name of Jesus. (Din. 16:23; an 14:13, Eph. 5:2). The prayers of the Scouts are not prayed in the name of Jesus, therefore they are false. Concerning Christless prayers, **OUR OBJECTIONS ARE STILL VALID.**

G. Concerning Religious Unionism

Scouting has no difficulty with the problem of religious unionism. It is an accepted part of Scouting. Part of the leadership of each troop consists in a troop chaplain. The responsibility of the troop chaplain is to "provide a spiritual tone for troop meetings and activities; he gives guidance to the chaplain aide; he gives spiritual counseling service when needed or requested; he encourages Boy Scouts to earn their appropriate religious emblem; and to provide opportunities for Boy Scouts to grow in their relationship to God and their fellow Scouts." (SMH, p. 62). The chaplain aide, who is a member of the troop, is to "help in troop program planning for the considering of religious holidays in planning and to include religious observances in activities; assist the chaplain in planning and carrying out religious services at troop activities; tell troop members about religious emblem program of their faith and how to earn one; and also encourage troop members to live up to the ideals of the Scout Oath, Law, and slogan." (SMH, p. 53). Every troop is to have both a chaplain and a chaplain aide who are to carry out their respective duties.

Some of the other statements which reflect an unionistic spirit can also be found in the Scout manuals:

"The ceremony to mark the beginning of a meeting may be religious" (SM11, p. 84);
 "Boy Scouting works best when it is used by and becomes part of the home, school, and religious community. Boy Scouts add to them. It may even substitute for one or another of them as well. Not every boy is influenced by a church or synagogue. In the lives of such boys as these, Boy Scouting is even more important as an influence." (SMH, p. 98); "By wearing the uniform Scouts give each other Support. Boys need that and they can give it to each other. It's good to discover that others share our beliefs. It means all Scouts are brothers." (SMH, p. 331).

The problem of religious unionism is especially prominent in Scouting because you have so many troops which are sponsored by local church groups. Occasionally a troop or group of troops will involve themselves in a local church, coming together as a larger group for the purpose of holding a worship service. When a troop goes to a rally or to a campout religious services are provided. There is the Roman Catholic service and there is the Protestant service. There is no distinction made between the various denominations which come under the heading of Protestant. Our Lord wants us to make a clear confession of Him when we worship (Mt 10:32). That cannot be done within the scope of the religious unionism found in Scouting. Concerning religious unionism, **OUR OBJECTIONS ARE STILL VALID.**

H. Concerning the giving of offense

There are many aspects of Scouting that could serve as a stumbling block in the life of a Christian (not only a weak one, but also one who is strong). It is very easy for someone to begin to rely on his Good Turns as a way to get right with his God. The aspects of Christless prayers and religious unionism could lead a person to think that it doesn't matter what you believe because we're all going to the same place anyway. There are too many aspects of Scouting which could cause someone to fall in their faith or give them a false hope and security. Concerning the giving of offense, **OUR OBJECTIONS ARE STILL VALID.**

The objections to Scouting which we have held to for decades are still valid. There have been changes in Scouting, some small, but others of greater significance. In some cases, we can no longer object on the basis of a particular document or publication when that literature is no longer used or available. In some cases we have to get the latest edition in order to be accurate with our objections. Even with the changes that have been made recently in the written publications it is evident that Scouting is not really changing any of its principles or attitudes. Since that is the case, and as long as that is the case, our objections to Scouting are and will remain valid.

3. Current Developments And Trends In The Scout Movement

Last summer you may remember hearing news accounts about a conflict arising because of Scouting's requirement of belief in a "Supreme Being." The conflict involved Paul Trout, a fifteen-year-old boy of Shepherdstown, West Virginia and the Boy Scouts of America. The parents of the boy received notice that their son would not be promoted to the rank of Life Scout because he refused to affirm belief in a Supreme Being. The rank of Life Scout is second only to the coveted highest rank, Eagle Scout. The boy was denied the Life Scout rank because he told his local review board that while he respected the religious views of others, he did not believe in God as a Supreme Being.

As a result of this ruling by the Boy Scouts, they began to get some bad press. They were attacked by the Unitarian Universalist Association who criticized the promotion denial as a violation of religious liberty. The Unitarian Universalists were concerned that if there was such a religious test many of their young people, who don't speak of their faith and spirituality in terms of God, might be excluded from Scouting. A great

amount of criticism also came from the public at large. Even "Dear Abbey" and other prominent individuals got involved in condemning the Boy Scout's ruling that Paul Trout could not be promoted because of his denial of a Supreme Being.

It looked as though a blow might be dealt the religious aspects of Scouting. It looked as though Scouting might take a good, serious look at eliminating the dominant religious aspects of their movement. The national Executive Board of the Boy Scouts of America met in Irving, Texas, in October of last year to discuss their situation and stand. What they approved in this meeting was a "Reaffirmation of the Boy Scouts of America on 'Duty to God.'" Part of the resolution reads: While not intending to define what constitutes belief in God, the Boy Scouts of America is proud to reaffirm the Scout Oath and its declaration of 'Duty to God'." (Christian News, Vol. 23, Issue 39, p. 15). All the national board did was to eliminate the definition of God. God is no longer defined as a "supreme being."

As a result of this Paul Trout was allowed to continue as a member in good standing and would receive his Life Scout Award. His mother said that the less restrictive definition of duty toward God made it possible for her son to take the Scout Oath in good conscience.

Within the past few months we have been eyewitnesses to a change that has occurred in Scouting. In keeping with this paper we need to ask whether or not our objections to Scouting are still valid on the subject of "God." The answer to that question is yes, and all the more. Scouting is now saying that God, whom Scouts are to be reverent to and to whom they are to do their duty, may not necessarily be a Supreme Being. That opens the door for a god who is understood in mystical terms. That opens the door for people like Paul Trout who does not believe in God as we know him. "God" can now be defined in any way a person chooses. This new change

in Scouting adds weight to our objections both in the area of "Concerning the one true God, the Triune God," and also "Concerning religious unionism." Concerning the most recent developments in Scouting, **OUR OBJECTIONS STILL ARE VALID.**

There is one other perspective on this latest ruling that is of interest. It is the perspective of some of the conservative evangelicals:

"It was probably the finest organization for boys in the world when it was launched 75 years ago - and one of the twelve requirements in the Scout Law was that participants be reverent. In fact more troops were started in local churches than anywhere else... But the idea of reverence has now been thrown out and one can be a top Scout and still be an atheist!... In our judgment, the 'death' of religion in the movement means the 'death' of the movement itself. We have lost all confidence in the Boy Scouts of America; we cannot and will not recommend it to anyone!" (CN, 23, 45, p. 3).

Rather than to say that the "death of religion will mean the death of the movement," we might say that the "proper realization of what kind of religion the Scouts have might bring about the death of something, but not the death of the movement." Some conservative evangelicals might leave the Scouting program, but I believe the program will continue to go strong. Until the time comes when "religion" is really and completely excluded from Scouting - which may never happen - you will not see the death of the movement. However, if all the religious aspects of Scouting are taken out, then I would agree that you will see the death of Scouting because the religious aspects are the very foundation of the movement itself.

4. How to deal with the Scout Question

Although the purpose of this paper was to consider whether or not our objections to Scouting are still valid, it does serve us well to consider how we might best deal with the question of Scouting when it arises in our ministry.

There are two ways to approach the Scouting question when you are dealing with present members, prospective members, or just interested bystanders. One way is to take out your sword of vengeance and start slicing Scouting to pieces. I've done that on occasion. Sometimes it is very appropriate. But I've learned from experience (also known as "learning the hard way") that to take a more positive approach to the subject will be more beneficial to us as pastors as well as to the people you are discussing the matter with. In most cases I will opt for the positive approach.

What is meant by the positive approach is this: that first of all you know your subject, that you know what you are talking about; secondly, that you are not afraid to admit that the secular activities of Scouting can be very beneficial to young people (so much so that we have patterned our own organization after it); and thirdly, that you point out the objections you have to Scouting's various religious principles and that you do it in a way *which shows* that you are concerned about the spiritual health of people who are associated with Scouting. I have found that most people, leaders in Scouting as well, do not realize what exactly Scouting is teaching about God, and the Bible, and so on. Nine times out of ten I have found that once a person, who believes the Bible as God's Word, is shown the problems with Scouting, that they will not have a big problem in understanding it. The Holy Ghost, through the Word, works amazing wonders! However, if all we do is slice and dice the Scouting movement to pieces before people who are connected with the Scouting movement, we may never get the opportunity to show them what God's Word has to say on the subject. What a lost opportunity that would be! May we, as pastors, deal with the Scout question with people in mind, with their souls as the main concern.

Objecting to such a popular and "American" or "Canadian" tradition does not put us always in the most favorable of lights. For decades we have been criticized as "that church which is *against* Scouting." Since our objections to Scouting are still valid and look as though they are going to be valid for some time to come, we can expect that the criticism and the questions will continue. It is my prayer that this paper will give you a better and more recent knowledge of Scouting so that you will be well prepared the next time someone asks you: "Isn't your church the one that is *against* Scouting?"

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