

The Boy Scout Movement in America

By Edwin A. Breiling

[A paper delivered to the 15th Biennial Convention of the Nebraska District, Garrison, Nebraska, on June 21-22, 1946]

I. History and Essentials of the Movement

The theme above indicates that the subject to be covered is the Boy Scout Movement in our country. However, I believe that it will not be amiss to also give a brief sketch of the history of the organization from the time of its inception to its introduction in the US. Thus we immediately begin with:

A. The History of the Boy Scouts

The month of August, 1907, is listed as the official birth of the boy scout movement, when “Lord Baden-Powell, then known as Lt. General Robert S. S. Baden-Powell, operated the first known boy Scout troop with 20 scouts and himself as Scoutmaster, at a camp on Brownsea Island off the coast of England. The members of this troop were recruited from various classes of English boys and put into a simple uniform designed by Baden-Powell, organized in patrols, and for two weeks carried on a program on the patrol basis.” (*Fundamentals of the Boy Scout Movement*, p. 7)

However, even before this so-called birth of the boy scouts there were events which quite accidentally led up to the formation of the boy scouts.

Briefly the facts are that Baden-Powell as an officer of the British Constabulary discovered many years before he ever had any thought of scouting for boys, that the formal routine of military training was not effective in the development of qualities essential for those who enlisted for service. He set himself to the task of developing a program which would be more effective. As he stated, he found the men who were brought to South Africa from the large cities of the British Isle lacking in fundamental values such as dependability, initiative, and resourcefulness, self-reliance and cooperation. They figuratively expected to be tucked at night.... They had been denied the experience of doing simple chores, they did not know woodcraft; they did not know how to keep themselves physically fit. So he developed a scheme which he called stunts in scouting. (Here it should be noted that *scouting* is used in its army sense.) His program was popular with his men, and resulted in improved service, and also so greatly reduced desertions that his material was in great demand by other military leaders. And, incident to his dramatic experience in the Siege of Mafeking during the Boer War, his material was put in book form under the title of *Aids to Scouting*. (*Fundamentals*, p. 8)

In 1903, he returned to England and was amazed to find that his program material in *Aids to Scouting* was being used by leaders in various groups of boy work, which he had never intended. However, he considered it a challenge and undertook to adapt his material in a program suitable for boys. After a number of years he put out his *Boy Scouts – A Suggestion*.

He made as an essential part of the scheme of Scouting not only a Promise (this is British. In America it was changed to “Oath” or “Pledge”) and laws covering ideals, but he stipulated that the scout must promise to be helpful to others at all times and do a good turn daily, the first time such a code had been adapted for boys. The uniform, the motto, the insignia, and badges are also his creation.

On a foggy night in the fall of 1909, there occurred in London an incident which brought Scouting to America. Wm. D. Boyce, a Chicago publisher, was looking for a difficult address in old London when a small boy came up to him, saluted, and asked if he could help. Boyce asked the boy how to reach the address which he was trying to find. The boy led him to it. Boyce offered the boy a shilling for his help. The boy said, “No, thanks sir! Sorry, sir. I am a scout. And a scout never accepts tips for being helpful.”

Boyce inquired as to what he meant. The boy, surprised that not everyone knew of Boy Scouts, invited and took Boyce to the headquarters of the British Boy Scouts Association after his business was finished. Here at the headquarters he was quite impressed by what he learned, so impressed that when he left for America, he brought with him a trunk full of literature, uniforms, badges, insignia etc., and proceeded to take steps for the incorporation of the Boy Scouts of America, which was effected on February 8, 1910. On June 15, 1916, it was chartered by Congress and the charter was signed by President Wilson.

Introduced in America, many men helped to adapt the English version of Boy Scouts to American conditions. A few of their adaptations are these: the word Promise as used the British obligation was changed to “Oath” or “Pledge.” Although the nine laws of the British organization were retained, different explanatory material was given in connection with each of the nine laws. The American organization added three new laws covering bravery, cleanliness, and reverence.

Once started, the organization expanded rapidly. Statistics show that at the end of 1919, it numbered nearly a half million; by 1930, there were 847,000; and at the end of 1940, nearly one and a half million. According to its membership expansion the leaders also expanded the program with Senior Scouting to include the older boys, and with Cub Scouting to snatch the younger boys. Then also with Sea Scouting and lately also Air Scouting. Likewise Scouting boundaries expanded from local to regional territories, and finally to include our entire continent, and has expanded to supra-continental or international lines.

B. The Essentials

Again in the booklet *Fundamental of the Boy Scout Movement*, we read in the second chapter entitled “Essentials of the Movement,” “The aim and purpose of the Boy Scouts of America is to develop character and train for citizenship.... The program is a simple one consisting of five essentials – the Boy, Leadership, Activity, Organization, and the Scout Oath and Law with its ideals of service” (p.21).

1. The Boy

Regarding the boy they say, “In Scouting each boy is treated as an individual not just as a member of a group. We insist that character building can be accomplished only after study of each individual boy and his needs.... Scouting caters to the capacities of each individual” (p. 24). It should be said also that scouting caters to almost all age groups of boys in what is called its “Long-span program of scouting.” It consists of the following:

For boys 9, 10, and 11 years of age—

- The Cub Pack
- Lone Cubbing
- The neighborhood den

For boys 12 years and over—

- The Scout Troop
- The neighborhood Patrol
- Lone Scouting
- The Lone Scout Tribe

For boys 15 years and over—
 Senior Scouting in the troop
 Explorer Scout Patrol in the Troop, or
 Separate Explorer Troop
 Sea Scout Patrol in the Troop, or
 Sea Scout Ship
 Air Scout Patrol in the Troop or separate
 Air Scout Squadron

For young men 17 years and over—
 The Rover Scout Crew

For graduate Scouts 21 years and over—
 The Old Scout or Alumni Association
 (*Fundamentals*, p. 35)

Also: “The boy is provided with an opportunity to wear a distinctive and distinguishing uniform which gives the wise leader an opportunity to create a definite consciousness in the mind and heart of each boy that he is a member of the patrol and the troop and a part of a large National organization and a great world brotherhood. The uniform not only provides the physical outward appearance of equality, but is a constant reminder to the boy of his obligation as a scout and as a member of his patrol and troop. It contributes to his effectiveness as a representative of the Scout Movement, not only because of what it says to the general public, but what it says to the conscience of the boy himself... Regardless of race, creed, or economic status, every boy in the patrol is on the same level” (*Fundamentals*, p. 25).

2. Leadership

“From the earliest days it has been recognized that the only leadership that could accomplish the aims for which we strive was that given voluntarily by men who see in Scouting a real opportunity to help boys. Therefore, we have insisted that leadership positions directly related to boys, beheld by men who have volunteered their services, men whose leadership is strong and purposeful and who, because of their interest in boys and their enthusiasm for those principles and activities which constitute the program of Scouting, find therein a fascinating and constructive hobby.”

“But mere willingness on the part of men to step in as Scoutmasters is not in itself sufficient. Any capable volunteer recognizes that he needs help and avails himself of opportunities for training. He also recognizes the importance of the Scout uniform and his wearing of it. It establishes him as a leader of future men in the community and contributes to the spirit and moral of the troop” (*Fundamentals*, p. 25-26).

3. Activities

The activities of Scouting are centered in and revolve around the many crafts they teach and in the Daily Good turn. Concerning the crafts we quote from *Fundamentals*, p. 26, “All agencies dealing with boys have activities, but the Scout Movement is distinctive in that it has a program of activities in which achievement is definitely recognized. These activities are for the most part related to the motto, “Be prepared!”, and the obligation of the boy to be helpful to others at all times.”

“The very word Scouting with its tang of the outdoors suggest its activities of hiking and camping...” ‘By the term scouting,’ explains Baden-Powell, ‘is meant the work and attributes of backwoodsmen, explorers, and frontiersmen. The requirements for First Class Scouts were laid down with the idea that a boy who proved

himself equipped to that extent might reasonably be considered as grounded in the qualities which go to make a good, manly citizen!’ So far the quotation of Baden-Powell. But the booklet goes on to say, “The founder of the Scout Movement knew well what he was doing when he chose these particular subjects as the basis of a boy’s Scout life. He knew that they would fascinate the boy—hiking through the woods or over the mountains, camping primitively in the wilderness, games and stories around the campfire, projects, handicrafts, and hours of stalking and trailing in the outdoors.”

Of the daily good turn, scouting says, “A scout is expected to do at least one good turn daily. Yes, more—a scout develops an attitude or mind because of his obligation to be helpful to others at all times, which leads him to accept opportunities for service to his community or for his country.... Yes, it makes him care about other people.... It definitely affects his attitude of mind.... In other words, the value of the daily good turn and organized service for others is not so much in the things themselves accomplished as a result of the Good turn, as in the educational process to the scout or group involved” (*Fundamentals*, p. 27).

“To help leaders and to insure that the standards of the movement are upheld, organization is necessary. To have the boy meet his requirements under conditions where he and the other boys respect them also requires organization” (*Fundamentals*, p. 27).

Institutional. “The first step of organization is on an institutional basis. An institution or a group of citizens in the community, adapts the program of the Boy Scouts of America as part of its total program for boys. It forms a committee and organizes its troop, Pack or Senior group under a charter from the Boy Scouts of America. The committee made up of three or more men in addition to stimulating and aiding the leader, had the responsibility of preserving the traditions and idealism of both the movement and the sponsoring institution” (*Fundamentals*, p. 27-28).

Local. “To establish the institutional organization, direction must be given. This direction and the subsequent service of each Pack, troop and ship is provided by the Local Council through its committees, its Commissioner Staff, and its employed personnel. The Local Council does not create itself. It operates under and annual charter from the National Council of the Boy Scouts of America. The functions of the local council primarily involve service to the leadership of the Cub Packs, Scout Troops, and Senior units. The Local Council is a service station for all volunteer workers carrying on the activities of the Scout Movement, and is responsible for making sure that they have adequate opportunity for training” (*Fundamentals*, p. 28).

National. “Each Local Council receives service from the National Council which stimulates it to better planning and greater achievements, national goals and guided the local council towards the accomplishment of these objectives. Twelve regions, covering the country, help perform this important function. The Regional Committee and staff are a part of the National organization.”

“The Local Councils, the Regions and the National Council have a joint responsibility for two factors which are fundamental for the success of Scouting:

1. To create and maintain conditions so that boys intensely desire to be scouts.
2. To create and maintain conditions so that men are willing to give volunteer service and the general public will adequately support the Boy Scout program” (*Fundamentals*, p. 28).

International. “The B.S.A. and the national organizations of other Scout countries around the world cooperate with each other through an international bureau—for inspiration, for service and for the fostering of world brotherhood in the growing generation” (*Fundamentals*, p. 28-29).

4. Scout Oath and Law

“And finally there is the fifth essential, the most important of all, the Scout Oath and Law and the Scout ideal of service as expressed in the daily good turn.

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 awake, and morally straight.

The Scout Law:

1. A scout is *trustworthy*. A scout's honor is to be trusted. If he were to violate his honor by telling a lie, or by cheating, or by not doing exactly a given task, when trusted on his honor, he may be directed to hand over his scout badge.
2. A scout is *loyal*. He is loyal to all to whom loyalty is due – his scout leader, his home and parents and country.
3. A scout is *helpful*. He must be prepared at any time to save life, help injured persons, and share the home duties. He must do at least one good turn to somebody every day.
4. A scout is *friendly*. He is a friend to all and a brother to every other scout.
5. A scout is *courteous*. He is polite to all, especially to women, children, old people, and the weak and helpless. He must not take pay for being helpful or courteous.
6. A scout is *kind*. He is kind to animals. He will not kill nor hurt any living creature needlessly, but will strive, to save and protect all harmless life.
7. A scout is *obedient*. He obeys his parents, Scoutmaster, Patrol leader, and all other duly constituted authorities.
8. A scout is *cheerful*. He smiles whenever he can. His obedience to orders is prompt and cheery. He never shirks nor grumbles at hardships.
9. A scout is *thrifty*. He does not wantonly destroy property. He works faithfully, wastes nothing, and makes the best use of his opportunities. He saves his money so that he may pay his own way, be generous to those in need, and helpful to worthy objects. He may work for pay, but must not receive tips for courtesies or good turns.
10. A scout is *brave*. He has the courage to face danger in spite of fear and to stand up for the right against the coaxing of friends or the jeers or threats of enemies, and defeat does not down him.
11. A scout is *clean*. He keeps clean in body and thought, stands for clean speech, clean sport, clean habits and travels with a clean crowd.
12. A scout is *reverent*. He is reverent toward God, he is faithful in his religious duties and respects the convictions of others in matters of custom and religion.
 (*Fundamentals*, p. 29-20).

And of the Scout Law, Scouting says, “The Scout Law is a positive living ideal suitable for every boy. It is devised as a guide to his actions rather than a repression of his faults. It is a statement of facts, of responsibilities which a scout assumes when becomes a member the patrol and troop. A scout **IS** trustworthy, loyal, helpful, etc” (*Fundamentals*, p. 31).

II. Our Objections to Boys Scouts' Religion

A. No Objections to Crafts

With a first and cursory reading of the history of the Boy Scout Movement and its essentials most people would and do heartily approve of it and affiliate themselves with the movement through their children's membership therein. They see in the program, among other things, a fine opportunity to have their children trained in many useful arts and crafts. The useful crafts and the wholesome recreations offered in the Boy Scout program are commendable. With them we are in hearty agreement, and regarding those things we have no issue with the Boy Scout Movement. But still the Lutheran Church has taken and still does take issue with the Boy Scout movement. Or I should more correctly say that the more conservative element in the Lutheran Church still takes a position against the Boy Scout Movement. Why this censure of the Boy Scout Movement? Why do we object to it?

B. It is a Religion and False

Because it has the element of religion in its program. Even though it teaches crafts and has a program of wholesome recreation for children, it does not confine itself to those activities. It does not concern itself only, not even chiefly with the physical side of a boy's life. The emphasis in this movement is quite definitely placed on the spiritual side of the child's life. Its documents and literature abound with pronouncements which speak of God and the Scout's relationship and obligation to God; of the Church and the scout's obligation and relationship to the church. Moreover, its intentions, and its strongly religious character is clearly stated by one Barry Chalmers, whose book *The Boy Scout and His Law* is "approved by the Chief Scout Executive" who also recommends it to all who are "interested in discovering what lies at the heart of the Scout Movement." This Barry Chalmers makes such remarks as these, "In the Scout Law we have the key to the kingdom of righteousness" (p. 172). It is "in itself a religion of a very excellent sort" (p. 171). Scouting "is practical Christianity. It believes in 'Salvation by character' and the brotherhood of man" (p. 172-173). Also David in *Scouting* says, "Scouting is a religious education. Jesus is the Master Scout. The knightly oath taken by a boy of twelve years is not different in principle from Jesus' Confession before the doctors in the temple. 'I must be about my Father's business.' The ideals of obedience, cheerfulness, service and the twelve Scout Laws are ideals and principles from the teachings of Jesus. The practice of Scouting is exemplified most perfectly" (III, 15).

Scoutism thus itself confesses to be a religion consisting of the development of character by which they are to be saved. And since it has placed itself into the field of religion, we must follow the Scriptural injunction, "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God" (1 John 4:1). And to try the "spirits" we must compare the teachings of the "spirits" with the teachings of the divine word of truth. If both agree then we can be certain the "spirits" teach the truth. But if Scouting's teachings were not congruous with God's truth, then we can be just as certain that Scouting is a false religion, which we must avoid, to which we must not attach ourselves; and if we have attached ourselves to it, to obey God to come out of it and be separate from it.

In the past the Lutheran Church has objected to and fought against Scoutism because of the fact that it is a false religion, which besides being false leads to indifferentism and unionism.

Let us examine and analyze the documents and literature of Scouting and see if our attitude toward the movement has been correct. Since the aim and purpose of scouting according to its constitution and official literature is: character building, citizenship training and physical fitness; and since the means through which these aims are to be won and effected are the Scout Oath, Scout Law, and the ideals of services; it is imperative that we consider and study these three essential elements.

1. The Scout Oath

The Scout Oath, which is given with right hand raised and three fingers extended, reads:

"On my honor I will do my best

1. To do my duty to God and my country and obey the Scout Law;

2. To help other people at all times;
3. To keep myself physically strong, mentally awake and morally straight
(*Const.* p. 51).

First of all, the term, *The Scout Oath*, and the fact that an oath is exacted of the boys is repugnant to us, especially since it is required of children who in many cases are too young to know the meaning of an oath and its implications. However, Scouting has been trying to explain away the difficulty by saying that in effect it is perhaps only a promise which was “probably” misnamed. But I wonder as to the truth of that explanation! We stated in the first part of this essay that when Scoutism was introduced into America, the English manual was used and adapted to American conditions. One of these adaptations was the change of the word “Promise” in the British obligation to “Oath.” It is hard to believe that this change as well as other changes made, was made rashly, indiscreetly, or carelessly – for a change is that the change was deliberately made. And furthermore, in every copy of official Scout literature which contains the “promise” it is in capital letters called *The Scout Oath*.

Some oaths are binding before God, (court and confirmation oaths) and to break them would result in sin against God. But there are many kinds of oaths that are obnoxious to God, one of which is a frivolous oath, which is made carelessly, without much thought as to its meaning or its implications. And certainly, if this Scout Oath can be listed in no other category it does fall under the heading of Frivolous Oaths.

Deuteronomy 6:13, and the example of Abraham (Gen. 21:24, Abraham swears to Abimelech and Phisal not to deal falsely), teach us that whenever the glory of God or the welfare of our neighbor demands it we are enjoined to swear (court and confirmation) and where such a vow has been made Scripture demands that we keep it! And to the contrary all other vows made for any other purpose, even a good oath when not kept is an abomination in the sight of God.

Such an oath is the Boy Scout Oath. Neither the glory of God nor the welfare of one’s neighbor demands it. Consequently, in my opinion, the Scout Oath is a frivolous oath, and amounts to taking the Lord’s name in vain, and “the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain” (Deut. 5:11).

In the matter of oaths we should remember that Scripture enjoins us saying, “Ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time, thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths; But I say unto you, Swear not at all” (Matt. 5:33), and also James 5:12, “but above all things, my brethren, swear not.”

All in all, if the Scout Oath is not an oath, then the term should be eliminated from all Scout literature and speeches. And if it is an oath, what right has Scouting to demand an oath of our boys?

Another point in relation to the oath. Beginning the oath with, “On my honor,” is repulsive to a Christian. What honor do the boys have? There is no honor except the honor which God has bestowed upon us in Christ, and then only those who accept Christ as the only Savior from sin have that honor. Again we find that an oath in which one swears on his honor or something similar is an oath which is far from pleasing to God for the above-quoted passages when quoted in their entirety tell us, “Ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time, thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt 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 thy head because thou canst not make one hair white or black. But let your communication be, Yea, Yea; Nay, Nay; *for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil*” (Matt 5:35-38). And James 5:12, “But above all things, my Brethren, swear not, neither by heaven neither by earth, *neither by any other oath*. But let your yea be yea; and your nay, nay; *lest ye fall into condemnation.*”

In the first part of the oath the scout swears to do his duty to God. Which God? Scouting doesn’t say. It carefully conceals the identity of that God to which the Scout is to do his duty, by such description as “the leading power in the universe” (*Const.* p. 3), “the infinite creator of the universe,” “the Source of life” (*Handbook for Boys*, p. 108), and in a suggested benediction for Scoutmasters, “the Great Master of all Good Scouts” (*Handbook for Scoutmasters*, Vol. 1, p. 71). Thus, if a Lutheran boy were a member of a Boy Scout

troop, he may be standing between a Jew, who denies the divinity of Christ, and, let us say, a Christian Scientist, who denies every principle doctrine of the Bible; and together with them he must pledge to do his duty to God. The Lord says to the Lutheran boy in 2 Corinthians 6:14, “Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness?” etc., etc. and ending with verse 17, “Wherefore come out from among them and be ye separate, saith the Lord.” As far as scoutism is concerned, it purposely makes no clear cut pronouncement on the person and nature of God, for the very obvious reason of keeping its doors open to boys and men of every race, creed and class.

Its Constitution openly declares, “No matter what the boy may be – Catholic or Protestant or Jew – this fundamental need of good citizenship (the need they refer to is the recognition of some deity) should be kept before him” (Art. III). “The Boy Scouts of America recognizes the religious element in the training of a boy, but it is absolutely *Non-sectarian* in its attitude toward that religious training” (Art. III, p. 4).

“In other words,” says Pastor E. C. Pankow in *Scouting in the Light of Holy Scripture*, “the Christian Church is to teach its boys that the true and living God is the Triune God – Father, Son and Holy Ghost. The Jews, Unitarians, and Universalists are to teach their boys that the true and living God is a deity in which Christ the second person of the Godhead has no place. Boys who have church affiliations at all are to picture ‘the leading power in the universe’ to themselves in whatever form or fashion they chose” (p. 16).

“Thus Scoutism gives recognition to *any* and *all* gods. In its Oath and Law it demands ‘reverence’ toward any and all gods, irrespective of who or what they may be, and consequently finds itself under the thundering condemnation of the very First Commandment of the one and only true God, the triune God, ‘I am the Lord thy God. Thou shalt have no other gods before me’ (Ex. 20:2-3). ‘There is none other God but one,’ admonishes the divinely inspired apostle! Again, ‘There is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we by Him’ (1 Cor. 8:4-6). ‘Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth. For I am God, and there is none else’ (Is. 45:22)” (p. 16).

The Scout movement must of necessity omit mention of the Lord Jesus when it speaks of God, even in this Scout Oath. And since it purposely leaves out Christ lest it offend those who do not believe in Christ, the oath which speaks of duty to God, is entirely wrong. Here would apply, “All men should honor the Son even as they honor the Father. He that honoreth not the Son, honoreth not the Father which hath sent him” (John 5:13), and, “Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God, and every spirit that confesseth *not* that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is *not of God*” (1 John 4:23).

Further, the Scout Oath speaks of the scouts duty to God, the vague and false God just shown in the foregoing part. We find what Scoutism means when it speaks of duty to God from its official *Handbook for Boys* under the caption “Duty to God.” There we read on page 163, “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. 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 fellow men *and* in active participation with the church.”

“In doing this scouts extend to everyone of the other faiths the same *courtesy and consideration and respect for the other man’s sacred things* that the scout expects for his own. That is the spirit of Scouting in religiously free America, ‘A Scout is reverent’” (p. 108).

Here again we find that Scouting’s views as to duty to God are wholly false since the things that God requires of us, and could therefore be termed as our duty to him, are omitted. An omission of them is a denial of those things which God requires. And Scripture tells us, as also Paul testified, “both to the Jews and also to the Greeks, *repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ*” (Acts 20:21). And repentance presupposes a knowledge of sin, which knowledge of sin must be awakened in man by God’s holy law. And after man has come to know and acknowledged his sin, there must be genuine sorrow for it, (repentance) and couple with repentance faith in Christ Jesus for the forgiveness for those sins. These are the first and foremost requirements of God. Without them there is no chance of being saved. And yet Scouting makes no mention whatsoever of sin, grace, repentance and faith in Christ as the Savior from sin.

2. The Scout Law

In the next part of the Scout Oath, every Scout must promise to obey the Scout laws. That must of necessity follow since the Scout Law and ideals of service together with the Scout Oath are the essential elements of its training program. In the Scout Law we cannot and need not consider each of the twelve laws. It will be sufficient to consider only four.

Scout Law #3 reads, “A scout is helpful. He must be prepared at any time to save life, help injured persons, and share the home duties. He must do at least one good turn to somebody every day.” When we at first read this Scout Law – a scout is helpful – we would label it commendable. So also the second part of the Scout Oath, “On my honor I will do my best to help other people at all times.” Even the good turn per day seems to have no fault in it, for every true Christian does good turns out of love for Christ. But these things, when placed under closer scrutiny show us that Scouting’s moral righteousness, the means whereby it is to be effected and the motives from which it is to flow is contrary to that of Scripture.

Scouting says, “*Character and citizenship – those are our law for character development, citizenship training and physical fitness*” (*Const. Art. II*). “It tends to conserve the moral, intellectual and physical life of the coming generation” (*Constitution, House Report, Sixty-Fourth Congress, p. 122*). And the boy must in the Scout Oath swear on his honor to keep himself “morally straight.”

Those statements should make it clear to us that Scouting’s aim, among other things, is the training also of the *moral* life of boys. And the means whereby that moral righteousness is to be effected is the Scout Oath, Scout Law and ideals of service. In the *Handbook for Scoutmasters*, we read this statement, “It is by aiding him to keep that oath and to live that law that we *shall most surely reach our goal of fashioning his character* and prepare him for participating citizenship” (p. 38).

And this same oath, law and ideals of service, should be the motive which impels the boys to proper service to God, country, and fellowmen, and proper development of self. And all of Scout literature, the Scout Oath, the Scout Law, especially this third law and the ideals of service are permeated with the “daily good turn.” And in Scout literature we find such remarks as these about the good turn and the reason for performing it.

The real secret of doing good turns is an *attitude of mind*. The scout who cares about other people’s comfort, happiness, welfare, finds hundreds of chances *to get a thrill out of* being helpful to others. Soon this tends to become a habit and marks the scout as a real citizen” (*Handbook for Boys*, p. 25). On page 19 of the same book, the good turn is called a “sacred heritage direct from the days of chivalry ‘When knighthood was in flower.’” A boy is to do his daily good turn to keep “himself in conscious harmony with God and with God’s other creatures, his fellowmen” (*Handbook for Boys*, p. 108), “just for the pleasure of doing it as a good citizen” (*Handbook for Boys*, p. 32), “to grow in stature, in strength, in knowledge and wisdom, *in favor with God and man*,” to “have the full measure of fun and happiness, and joy from living” (*Handbook for Boys*, p. 110).

Furthermore, when passing from one scout grade to another, he must pass certain requirements, such as “properly use knife and hatchet,” “build fire in the open” and also he must furnish “definite, concrete, satisfactory evidence from parents, school teacher, employer, pastor, Sunday School teacher, Scoutmaster, member of his troop Committee, or others, that the scout has actually put into his practice in his daily life the ideals and principles of the scout oath and law, the motto ‘Be prepared,’ and the daily good turn” (*Bylaws*, p. 60, 54, 57; also *Handbook for Patrol Leaders*, p. 197). From these quotations we can readily see that the purpose of doing good turns is a selfish one, the scout must do them for advancement. And that is purely, unquestionably and undeniably Pharisaical. It is, no doubt, for this reason that some years ago the *Chicago Tribune* made this statement, “A simpler and more effective way than this to manufacture Pharisees is not on record.”

Such righteousness as that of the Scouts is offensive to God, is “as filthy rags.” Since such righteousness is based on one’s own honor, on manmade obligations and selfishness, it makes it highly repugnant to God,

because “without faith it is impossible to please Him” (Hebr. 11:6). The only righteousness that avails before God is the righteousness of Christ, that righteousness of which the Gospel tells us. That gospel is the only proper means of training youth and building character (Matt. 28:18-20, Rom. 1:16-17, Eph. 6:4). “Through the gospel, and the gospel alone,” says Pastor E. C. Pankow, “the Holy Spirit of God works faith in the heart of man, causes it to grow and increase (Acts 20:32), and also produces in man the proper and only God-pleasing, impelling motive for righteous living, which is the love of Christ. Eph. 2:10 – ‘For we are His workmanship, *created in Christ Jesus unto good works*, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.’ John 15:5 – ‘I am the vine. Ye are the branches. *He that abideth in Me and I in him, the some bringeth forth much fruit; for without Me, ye can do nothing.*’ Paul confesses, ‘I am crucified with Christ. Nevertheless I live. I live *by the faith of the Son of God*, who loved me and gave Himself for me. I do not frustrate the grace of God. For if righteousness came by the law, then Christ is dead in vain’ (Gal. 2:20-21). Luther expresses this very correctly and beautifully when he begins the explanation to each commandment with the words, ‘We should fear and love God that’ . . .” (*Scouting in the Light of Holy Scripture*, p. 23-24).

The next law which we wish to discuss is the fourth which reads, “A scout is friendly. He is a friend to all and a brother to every other scout.” Every scout must be a friend to all people, which he becomes when he does a good turn toward them, and a brother to every other scout. A clear-cut distinction is made between being a friend and being a brother. A friend includes all mankind, also all scouts; but a brother includes only those who are scouts; and in scout literature mention is made of the Scout Brotherhood. A brotherhood in its worldly sense is an association of men for any purpose, a fellowship without any religious connections. Such a false and artificial brotherhood is the brotherhood of scouts.

The only real and true brotherhood is the brotherhood of all true believers – “the communion of saints” for in Mark 3:35, Christ says, “For whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is My brother and sister and mother.” And surely a Christian boy could not lightly be a brother to a Jew or Christian Scientist who deny the very essence of Christianity, which he would be required to be if he were a scout.

The Scout Movement may deny that the scout brotherhood is a religious brotherhood, and yet it is just that, for it has invaded the field of religion and is bound together by an oath which promises to do its duty to God and a law which demands reverence from God.

The seventh scout law demands obedience. It reads, “A scout is obedient. He obeys his parents Scoutmaster, Patrol Leader and all other duly constituted authorities.” At first glance this seems to be a very commendable thing. Scripture too speaks of obedience. God wants all men to be obedient to their superiors as God’s own appointed agents, for in obeying his superiors, man is obeying God. The agencies to which man is to be obedient as God’s agencies or representatives are the home, school, church and state – the home and church, and also school if it is a church school in spiritual matters, and in purely civil and worldly matters the state and school if a public school. Scouting is not one of these divinely appointed agencies. And even if it claimed to be, obedience to it would fall way under the Scriptural injunction, “We ought to obey God rather than men” (Acts 5:29).

However, Scoutism makes no false claims as to obedience, but there is a great danger in their kind of obedience, strict obedience to its officers, prime obedience to God not excepted. It seems to be a preparation for the obedience demanded of lodge members to its officers. On this point I should like to quote Dr. Theodore Graebner’s *Y Religion and B. S. Morality*,

The Law of obedience to officers is one of the points of contact of Scouting with Secretism. Obedience to the lodge officers is part of the obligation of every lodge member. We can conceive of no better preparation for this enslavement of the will than the training which Scouting affords in this direction by its seventh law. However, the resemblance between the systems of Scouting and lodgery extends to other points, and not a few. The official literature says, ‘The boy is taught that a scout is a brother to every other scout. . . . This demand is very much like the oath of the lodge. . . . The older orders, among them the Elks, have furnished the

pattern for the scouts.... Like the older orders, Scouting teaches that the scout is necessarily a person of distinction, of whom more is expected than others. The same tendency toward Pharisaism.... Like the Blue Lodge of Masonry, Scouting has three degrees (*viz.* Star, Life, Eagle). And as Masons may continue to proceed into higher degrees, so scouts are given merit badges for progress up the ladder of accomplishments until the degree Eagle Scout is reached.... All of which seems to justify the conclusion that the Boy Scout movement is patterned upon lodging, specifically Freemasonry, and is in its religion, morality, secretism, organization, oath and symbolism a pro-gymnasium for secretion, specifically Freemasonry.

The conclusion drawn by Dr. Graebner is strengthened by the attitude Masonry takes toward scouting. The Masonic Service association commission of Oklahoma in a report to the M. W. Grand Lodge, Ancient Free and Accepted Mason of the State of Oklahoma, says, "We believe that we, as an organization, should keep in touch in some way through some organized effort with the boys after they have put on long pants and after they have graduated from the Boy Scout Movement. There is an organization today known as the 'Order of DeMolay' which is at this time gaining headway especially in some of our larger cities. This organization takes the boys after their 16th year and directs their movements, looks after their interests, and aids in the molding of their character until they become of age. There is one organization that says, 'Give me the child until he is 12 years of age, and you can have him the rest of the time.' In other words, if the boys are taken as they are now in the Boy Scout Movement, and after the boy is 16 years of age, DeMolay continues the work of the Boy Scout Movement, a larger percent of the boys so trained will become useful and serviceable men in this life" (*The Builder*, Masonic monthly magazine, Sept. 1920).

One more scout law demands our special attention. It is the twelfth, which reads, "A scout is reverent. He is reverent toward God. He is faithful in his religious duties and respects the convictions of others in matters of custom and religion."

"He is reverent toward God." Which God it doesn't say. It may be any God, Nature, Buddha, or Mohammed. Scouting wants the boys to be reverent toward some God, but dare not be particular about any certain one. All scouts are taught that all scouts *are* reverent toward God. That's a falsehood for only a true Christian can be reverent toward God. It is impossible for a heathen and unbeliever to be reverent toward God for Psalm 89:7 reads, "God is greatly to be feared in the *assembly of the saints*, and to be had in reverence of all *that are about Him.*" And yet Scouting baldly asserts that all scouts revere God.

"He is faithful in his religious duties." Just one question in this connection. How can a scout be faithful in his religious duties when his scoutmaster schedules a hike for the troop on Sunday morning and the seventh scout law demands obedience to the officers.

"And respects the convictions of others in matters of custom and religion." A scout, if he would *be* a scout must respect the convictions of others, for the law reads, "a scout *is* reverent." To respect means to consider worthy of respect, to esteem, to show deferential regard, honor. No Christian can respect any convictions in matters of religion where Christ Jesus is not the cornerstone, the Savior. He cannot, for example, respect the convictions of a Catholic in matters of custom (relic or saint worship) or religion. A Christian will be called upon to openly testify *for Christ*. God demands of him that he continually testify against all heretical and Christless religions. Christ, the Savior, says, "Whosoever therefore shall confess Me before men, him will I confess also before My Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny Me before men, him will I also deny before My Father which is in heaven" (Matt. 10:32-33). If a man confesses that he must pray to Mary to be saved, that he must keep the Ten Commandments in the spirit of the Old Testament to attain righteousness, if he denies the resurrection of Christ, or the universal resurrection or any other doctrine of Scripture, I may not, in fact I *must* not respect those convictions. But the Scout Law insists the boy must respect the convictions of others in the matter of custom and religion, which makes him indifferent.

The idea behind Scouting in connection with this twelfth law is that one religion is as good as the next. And for that very reason is it demanded of the scouts to respect the convictions of others in matters of custom

and religion. Scouting could not include Christ or even the triune God in the oath or law, because no Jew or heathen would submit to that; if Scouting would define God as a triune God, its ranks would be smaller by far. And so Scouting takes it upon itself to encourage every scout to be faithful in his own religious duties, to worship his own God whoever it might be, and thereby assumes an indifferent attitude toward doctrinal differences. The *Handbook for Boys* says on page 30, "In Scouting all creeds, races and classes are as one."

Indifferentism is that spirit which places all religions on the same level. "After all," it says, "there is only one God, one heaven. We are all heading for the same place." And that spirit of indifferentism persuades the entire Boy Scout Movement. In its oath it demands that the scout swear allegiance to God. *Which* God is of no importance. Just *any* God. And truly that is the spirit of indifferentism. The Scout brotherhood smacks after it also. It is evident in the twelfth law. "He is reverent toward God" (whichever one it may be), "He is faithful in his religious duties" (whatever they may be), "and respects the convictions of others in matters of custom and religion" (because after all there is no difference). Thus if a scout as a member of a heathen church denies Christ, Scouting encourages him therein. No Christian can be a member of such an organization which fosters indifferentism.

Such indifferentism will lead inevitably to unionism. To be sure, the Scout Movement in principle is free of unionism, but not in practice. Nowhere in its handbooks does it advocate unionism but at the same time, nowhere does it forbid its practice. With such a spirit of indifferentism in Scoutism, what is there to stop them from unionizing? When the spirit is this that there is no difference between religions, that they're all the same, what is to stop them (the boys) from following their natural inclination to get together, to fellowship, "since there is no difference" between their respective religions, as the Movement has taught them, especially by the twelfth law?

Scoutism as a whole, even though being free of unionism in principle, has practical unionism. At its Grand National Convention at the National Jamboree (July 4, 1937), all the scouts assembled together in the arena at the foot of the Washington monument, and there prayed together, gave their oath together, sang together, and listened to addresses by Scout officials and clergymen of a number of denominations who gave unionistic addresses. And attendance for scouts was *compulsory*. Isn't that unionism?

And in Geneva, on some occasion which I forget, (I think it was the birthday anniversary of Scouting), the scout troop in a body attended and led the services in the Congregational Church and the next Sunday in a body attended the services at the Methodist Church where Scouting was extolled. No unionistic tendencies in the Scout Movement? But definitely!

C. Citizenship Training

Even its training of boys for good citizenship is not God pleasing. Pastor Pankow says, "According to Scripture, loyal citizenship is a Christian virtue which is practiced by the believing child of God. The Lord does place upon His children the duty to pray for the government (1 Tim. 2:1-3) to obey its laws and ordinances, so long as that does not involve transgression of His holy will (Titus 3:1; 1 Pet. 2:13-14) and to support it by the payment of customs and taxes (Matt. 22:21; Rom. 13:5-7). However, as is the case with all Christian virtues, so this virtue, too, is the 'fruit of the Spirit' and, if it is to be God-pleasing *must* flow from love for God, our Father in Christ."

"Scouting's program for 'citizenship training' therefore, its method and means for producing the 'best kind of citizenship,'" since it is based on selfish motives in Scout Oath and Law, "in the Scriptural sense of the term is not God-pleasing" (*Scouting in the Light of Holy Scripture*, p. 25).

III. Scouting in the Lutheran Church

A. Conclusion Reached by Lutheran Church Committee on Scouting

In about the last decade and a half, efforts have been made to coordinate the Scout program with the Lutheran Church's programs for their youth. The Missouri Synod's Board for Young People's work had been instructed in 1929 to undertake a study of the Boy Scout Movement with the purpose of determining whether the affiliation of Lutheran boys with the Scout organization was possible or desirable. This committee made its report in 1930. Incidentally in the eyes of the Chief Scout Executive and consequently in the eyes of the entire Movement, Missouri's committee also represented our Synod, because in a letter to the Lutheran Committee on Scouting, Chief Scout Executive E. K. Fretwell writes, "We are especially pleased to note that *all* the Lutheran Churches are represented on the Lutheran Committee on Scouting." In fact since no other Synodical Conference Synod was represented on the Lutheran Committee on Scouting, the Boy Scout Movement evidently took it for granted that Missouri Synod's committee represented the entire Synodical Conference.

Like Missouri Synod's Board for Young People's work, other Lutheran branches such as The American Lutheran Church, The Augustana Synod, The Lutheran Free Church, The Norwegian Lutheran Church, The United Danish Church, The United Lutheran Church and The American Federation of Lutheran Brotherhoods, likewise had committees which composed the Lutheran Committee on Scouting, whose deliberations resulted in the booklet, *Scouting in the Lutheran Church*. And in the foreword to that booklet is given a summarization of the conclusions reached. I will quote from page three of the foreword, "The conclusions arrived at in *all* sections of the Lutheran Church may be summarized as follows: 'Under proper guidance, the Boy Scout Program may be successfully integrated with the program of the church for the moral and spiritual development of its growing boys. The Scout Law and Pledge contain no elements which cannot with proper instruction and motivation be utilized in the Lutheran Scout troops.'"

I do not deny that in a closed Lutheran troop many, perhaps even all the aforementioned difficulties could be explained properly in the true Scriptural sense, especially since Scouting permits us to do just that. But our explanation would not be consistent with Boy Scout principles, nor with the explanation given in other church bodies. And in the eyes of the world, our Lutheran boys would still be "brothers to every other scout." In the eyes of the world, they would seem to agree with Scoutism and perhaps even other denominations which would further give the impression of being indifferent, and of unionizing. In my opinion, the passage "Can two walk together except they be agreed" (Amos 3:3) applies.

Because there has been a Lutheran Committee on Scouting and so many Lutheran branches were represented on the committee; because of the appearance of the booklet, *Scouting in the Lutheran Church*; because of the organizing of Lutheran Boy Scout troops in many churches bearing the name Lutheran, including our sister synod of Missouri, the impression is received that all former difficulties have been removed and that the Lutheran Church can conscientiously sponsor a Boy Scout troop in its midst. But I can take the booklet, *Scouting in the Lutheran Church*, and perhaps in another hour show that the difficulties have not been removed, for there is hardly one of its 70 odd pages that does not contain at least one remark or explanation which could not be challenged with Scripture or Scriptural principles.

B. Many Difficulties Not Removed¹

And even if all the former difficulties had been removed, or in a Lutheran troop could properly be explained to be in accord with Scripture there are a number of things which have not and cannot be changed or removed even in the Lutheran troop. Membership in the B. S. A., even on the part of an exclusively closed Lutheran church, involves the following:

¹ If example is wanted – see p. 26 of *Scouting in the Lutheran Church*, in the section entitled, *The Pastor*, especially the last two lines.

1. Applying for and annually renewing the official charter granted by National Headquarters.

This is mandatory. Its constitution, its handbooks and other official literature plainly state that no one can use the Scout program without first receiving a charter from the organization. To use its program in whole or part, without a charter would invite a lawsuit (*Const.* Art. X, p. 8).

2. Use of the official corporation name, “Boy Scouts of America.”

This is obligatory. The name, “Boy Scouts of America,” is fully and permanently protected by law, by an Act of Congress, and dare not be altered or changed in any way nor under any circumstances (*Const.* Art. III, p. 3, 119).

3. Payment of an annual Registration Fee on the part of Scouts & Scouters.

This is imperative too. Scouting demands a fee of \$1 from all Scout leaders and 50 cents from the scouts.² And these fees are used for but two purposes: Administration and Extension of the Movement. (*Handbook for Scoutmasters*, p. 80, 82; *Handbook for Boys*, p. 13).

4. Acceptance and use of Scout Oath & Law.

This also is a Must. As a member of the B. S. A., one dare not refuse to, but must use its pharisaic Scout Oath & Law. “All Scouts and Scouters *must* know and subscribe to the Scout Oath & Law,” says *Const.*, Art. VI, p. 51.

5. Use of the official Scout Uniform and insignia.

This, however, is not obligatory. Still a knowledge of their significance is a requirement for admittance into their Tenderfoot rank. (*Const.*, p. 53). Use of the scout uniform is encouraged, and the *Handbook for Boys* on p. 115, says, “Remember, you represent the entire Scout Movement when you wear the Scout uniform.” And (*Fund.*, p. 26) when speaking of Scout leadership demands that the Scout leader “also recognizes the importance of the Scout uniform and his own wearing of it.”

6. Use of official Scout literature, Handbooks, & the like.

Here let me quote Pastor Pankow again, “This, too is not imperative. However, since a Scout without a handbook is like a catechumen without a Catechism or a student of Geography without a geography textbook, the use of official Scout literature is all but indispensable. In it are contained the various requirements for advancements, instructions on crafts requisite for such advancements, and the like. In the clause on charter renewals the Constitution states, ‘Troop or Pack Charters may be renewed upon application where the evidence shows a satisfactory effort to carry out the scout program *as set forth in the official Handbooks* and compliance with the regulations of the Boys Scouts of America’ (*Const.*, p. 79)” (p. 29).

7. Affiliation and cooperation with the Local Council through a member of the Church Troop Committee.

This also is taken bodily from Pastor Pankow, p. 29. “This, too, is not imperative. Which each sponsoring institution is entitled to a vote in the Local Council (*Const.*, p. 81), it need not exercise that right or

² Copier’s Note: These were the fees in 1946. It is very likely that they have risen over time for a variety of reasons.

privilege. By its non-participation it, of course, waives its rights and declares its satisfaction and agreements with the will of the majority.”

C. Conclusion

Thus by assuming its official name, by operating under its official charter, by submitting to its Oath and Law, by contributing to its financial support – *all of which is imperative and obligatory* – the Christian boy or adult who becomes associated with Scoutism *identifies himself with* and *promotes* the whole Movement and its religious perversions, as before described, and becomes a partaker of its evil deeds. “If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him ‘Godspeed,’ for he that biddeth him ‘Godspeed’ is a *partaker of his evil deeds*” (2 John 10-11).

As a member of the B. S. A., the Christian boy or adult would further seem to compromise the falsity of the Boy Scout religion with the truth of God’s Word, which cannot be done, “for what concord hath Christ with Belial” etc. (2 Cor. 6:15). And Christ says, “He that is not with Me, is against Me and he gathereth not with, scattereth abroad” (Matt. 12:30).

As a Scout or Scouter, a boy or man places himself to a certain extent under the government in the matter of religion. Scouting openly admits that it is a religion, and it is chartered by congress. Thus, through membership in the B. S. A., one would violate the Scriptural principles of separation between Church and State, guaranteed also by the Constitution of the United States.

And finally, a Christian boy or adult as a member of the B. S. A. would give grave offense to their fellow Christians and the world and would be living in open disobedience to the Lord’s command to “come out from among them” and “be ye separate” (2 Cor. 6:17). Likewise any pastor or congregation who tolerate and even foster the Scout Movement in their midst. And the giving of offense is indeed a serious thing, for the Savior says, “Woe to that man by whom the offense cometh” (Matt. 18:7).

The wearing of the Scout uniform and insignia, the use of Scout literature, and the cooperation with Local Scout Councils which, although not obligatory, and of such a nature that they could hardly be omitted, would, if carried out by the Scout or Scouter, only add to participation in Scouting’s “evil deeds.”