

An Evaluation of Popular American Youth Organizations from a Confessional Lutheran Perspective

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Preface

Before I begin with the subject assigned to me, permit several personal remarks. I must confess that I step before you with somewhat mixed emotions. On the one hand it is a pleasure to meet with you brethren here in Ohio. Some of you I have had the pleasure of knowing since my college or seminary days. A larger number I have gotten to know in your seminary days since I came to Mequon, and the rest of you I have the privilege of meeting and learning to know at least a little bit today. I must say, too, that I consider it an honor that you have put up the money to fly me here to Cincinnati so you can hear something I have to say. —I say an honor, I don't know it's a good investment. (I don't know if I would chip in for a speaker like you picked.) Anyway, I'm happy to be here and meet with you and discuss a mutual problem with you.

On the other hand, I must admit to being a bit uneasy when I think of the assignment that brings me here. By virtue of the fact that the Lord has put me to work on the hill in Mequon, and the fact that I have been asked to serve on our WELS Committee for Information on Organizations, you may be expecting that, for your good money, you today will have an expert, an authority on hand who will give you finished and definitive answers to the perplexing questions you have in this rather difficult area of dealing with the various national youth organizations. I am sorry to disillusion you so early in my presentation, but I really am not yet an expert on youth organizations, and I don't intend to **give** you the final answers—if such exist. My dealing with the various youth groups has been almost entirely in the form of reading materials by them and about them. Now, while it is necessary and valuable to evaluate the documents of an organizations (and sometimes that is all we can do in a given situation), it is good to remember that the printed word does not always fully and faithfully mirror the living organization it is meant to describe and define. Official documents do sometimes contain dead letter articles. Things go on in an organization at times that are in no way reflected in its official documents. And so I think it wise to emphasize before I begin that my information presented today is gained almost entirely from the official and unofficial documents of these organizations and from reference works in a library. Direct personal contact, observation, and evaluation of the organizations in action might result in somewhat altered insights and evaluations and emphases. Perhaps someone or the other of you has had more direct contact and can add personal evaluation in the course of the discussion of this study.

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I. Factors in the Rise of the Youth Organizations

This paper presents an evaluation of five popular and well known youth organizations. Before getting at the individual organizations, I'd like to call your attention to what might appear to be unrelated and unimportant statistics concerning the Boy Scouts, the Girl Scouts, the Camp Fire Girls, the Boys' Clubs of America, and the 4-H Clubs. Statistic number one: All of these organizations had their beginnings between 1900 and 1912, a brief period of only twelve years. Statistic number two: The number of young people who belong to these five organizations today totals nearly 13 million, an estimated one third of the total population of that age group. The fact that all these organizations arose at about the same time might be a mere coincidence. Again, it might have been a fad. But the fact that today nearly 13 million young people belong to these organizations certainly indicates it was no short-lived fad that brought them into existence. Rather these statistics would seem to suggest that there was a need for organizations of this type, a need which they apparently have been meeting successfully, if one is to judge by their large membership today.

If we look back to the beginning of the century and ask what might have occasioned the appearance of these youth organizations, one quickly after the other, it is not difficult to see several developments which must have been contributing factors. The latter part of the 19th century was a time of rapid industrialization. In earlier ages the large majority of people were engaged in agriculture. In the towns and cities trades and crafts occupied the largest numbers of people. Few children attended school beyond eighth grade. Many dropped out earlier or received no schooling at all. Staying home from school to help with the work was a common occurrence. When school days were over girls helped their mothers at home or got a job as a hired girl in some other home. Boys on the farm helped their fathers with the farm work or were hired by a neighbor as a hired man. In town boys also went to work at a relatively early age either as apprentices learning some trade or craft from a master or as hired boys to do menial work. The situation there was not totally unlike that in the home. A large portion of the education and training for adult life and work was imparted by parents as children helped with the housework or farm work or worked in a shop learning a trade. The rise of industrialization of large cities and large factories changed this. A father who worked in a factory or an office for 9-10 hours a day, six days a week, wasn't home much to train his son, to pass on the skills his job had. After a long day on the job he often was too tired to give much thought or effort to training a boy in practical skills. His factory or office job often was too specialized or required too costly equipment to permit passing on its skills from father to son.

At the same time laws were passed restricting child labor and making school attendance to eighth grade and beyond mandatory. The schools kept the children busy only six or seven hours, leaving them considerable free time and energy. While the schools provided training in the academic subjects far beyond what most children had learned earlier, the schools were not equipped or suited to provide training in the practical skills that had been passed down from father to son. Modern industrialization tended to separate the members of the family from each other, greatly reducing the amount of training and education imparted by parents.

The change from agriculture to industry, from country to city had another effect. No longer did the urbanized population live and work among fields and woods under the open sky. A schoolroom, a factory or office, enclosed them, shut them away from nature for most of their waking hours. It is not difficult to see why just at this time camping by individuals and organized groups became a popular form of recreation, or why the study of and return to nature became a conscious need, why fresh air, sunshine, trees, grass and wild animals became a source of enjoyment, relaxation and fulfillment for many people. On the farm all these had been a fringe benefit.

Although the youth organizations we wish to evaluate were established by people of widely differing backgrounds, in far apart places, they had much in common. They all provided and continue to provide opportunities for camping, for getting to know nature better. All of them were intended to provide activities and recreation for young people in after-school hours, all of them saw a need to provide training in crafts and skills that the schools could not, or at least did not provide. And all of them took it upon themselves to attempt to provide opportunities for the development of character traits which parents and schools seemed to be neglecting. All of them took up the challenge of developing programs which would be interesting, enjoyable, and challenging enough to induce the youth to come back voluntarily week after week. Most of them came up with rather similar solutions: Working with small, rather informal groups of 5 to 10, working with a varied offering of games and learning activities planned and supervised by adults, but offering youth opportunities for choice, for growing participation in planning and decision making, and of course, all offering opportunities for the upper grader and teen-ager to enjoy the company of peers in a setting away from the routines of home and school. All offered an opportunity to get rid of some still unexpended energy. All offered something different “to do.”

II. Guidelines for evaluation

In 1980 there were some 5,234,000 4-H Club members, over 3,200,000 Boy Scouts, 2,400,000 Girl Scouts, 1,000,000 members of the Boys’ Clubs, and some 750,000 Camp Fire Girls. It is not likely these organizations will just fade away if we ignore them. It is quite likely that some of our young people will want to join one or the other of these groups, or the children of prospective members may already belong. You and I as shepherds of Christ’s flock have the responsibility of warning our people if there are aspects to the activities and the philosophy and purpose of any of these popular organizations that are or could be spiritually harmful. We have the God-given assignment to “watch for their souls” and will one day have to give an accounting of our watching. It is important then that we evaluate correctly and thoroughly the philosophy, objectives, and programs of each of these large and popular groups. To evaluate them we need to set down some guidelines to help us.

Permit me first to make some practical suggestions:

1. The eighth commandment applies here too. Yielding to the impulse to “put the worst construction on everything,” putting features in the worst possible light or interpretation, painting the picture as black as possible is likely to be considered “picky” or unfair by those we are seeking to convince and will lessen the effectiveness of our arguments.

2. Use the most up-to-date documents and information available. Organizations do change. Usually those changes are not 180 degrees or even 90 degrees. But they do change positions or directions at times. Our synod’s early history is just one example; the recent history of the LCMS another. Basing accusations or argu-

ments on documents no longer in force and using them with someone we are trying to persuade can only lessen our credibility.

Now to move on to the more important matter, that of setting down some theological guidelines for actually evaluating the documents and practices of the organizations under investigation. In *The Shepherd under Christ* Prof. Schuetze, in discussing objectionable and doubtful organizations, points out five areas where conflicts frequently arise, five typical elements that are objectionable for us in these organizations. Permit me to refresh your memory on these objectionable features.

The first is a **false view of Scriptures**. What is the religious authority for the group? Some lodges openly state that whatever is the accepted religious writing in the given area may serve as the “Book of the Law” for the lodge that is formed there—whether that be the Bible of the Christians, of the Jews, or of Mohammedans. Or a group might make human reason either the highest authority, or an authority equal with Scripture.

The second problem area to look for is a possible **false view of God**. How is God defined and described? Again, the Masons like to speak of God as the “Grand Architect of the Universe,” or the “Supreme Grand Master,” identifying Him as the God of the Lodge. Is the Biblical description of God as Triune, Father, Son and Holy Ghost accepted, allowed as one of a number of possible descriptions, or is it excluded?

Problem area number three is that of a **false view of salvation**. What does the organization say about the hereafter, about divine judgment, and eternal life, or eternal condemnation, about heaven and hell? The Moose assure their members that the circle of fellows broken by death will be restored in the hereafter. All Moose are promised salvation and eternal life. Or does the organization teach salvation by works, tying our fate in the hereafter to the kind of life we live here? The pass that assures admission to the Masons’ Celestial Lodge is a “pure and blameless life.”

Another likely problem area to look for is that of a **false view of prayer**. What is stated or assumed about prayer? To whom are we to pray, on what basis may we pray? Is prayer made in Jesus’ name? Is such prayer even allowed? While the Masons promise prospective members that nothing in their rituals will offend against the prospect’s belief, they do not allow prayer in Jesus’ name.

The fifth area mentioned by Prof. Schuetze is that of the **false or ungodly fellowship**. Again the various lodges strongly stress the fellowship that exists among members: they worship together, have special signs and handshakes to identify themselves to brothers, go out of their way to be helpful to brothers whether the brother mason is a Protestant, Catholic, Jew, or Mohammedan, whether he is rich or poor, Democrat or Republican. For the Christian there surely is a conflict here.

To these five subject areas listed by Prof. Schuetze one might add another. How does membership in a given organization relate to our confession of Christ? Christ calls on all believers to confess Him before men. He warns of the grave consequences of denying Him before men. And so as Christians, if we consider joining some secular organization we ought to ask: Will my membership in this group contradict, prevent or limit my testimony to what Christ is for me?

III. Evaluation of the Scout Type Organizations

We are ready now to evaluate the various major youth organizations. We will deal with them in two groups. As the first group we will take up the Boy Scouts, the Girl Scouts, and the Camp Fire Girls. They share common roots and display a number of similarities.

Boy Scouts

The Boy Scouts are the oldest and largest of these three groups. The father of the Boy Scouts and of the “Scouting idea” was Sir Robert S. Baden-Powell. Born in England in 1857, he became a British cavalry officer at 21. Military service took him to India, Afghanistan, Malta, and West Africa. In the course of the Boer War in South Africa he became a national hero in Britain when he successfully lead the defense of the town of

Mafeking with a small force of about 1000 men against the Boer besiegers for over 7 months. After the war he gained wide recognition for his effectiveness in organizing the South African constabulary. The men he recruited and trained became noted for self-reliance, resourcefulness and courage. Returning to Britain about 1907 he became involved in youth work. He began to use some of the ideas and practices that he had developed in training soldiers with boys. In 1908 he established the Boy Scouts. His efforts were considered so outstanding and beneficial that he was knighted in 1909 by King Edward. In 1910, at the request of the king, he resigned his commission to devote himself completely to the development and promotion of Scouting. That same year he together with his sister organized the Girl Guides, the British equivalent of Girl Scouts. He had found that wherever Boy Scout troops were organized girls would come and ask for something similar. Besides his organizational and promotional work which kept him traveling, he found time to write quite a number of books on Scouting. Further royal recognition came to him in 1922 and again in 1929 when he was named a Baron. He died in 1941.

Already in 1908 Scout troops were organized in various cities in Canada and the United States. In 1910 William Boyce, a Chicago publisher who had met Baden-Powell on a trip to England and had become an enthusiastic promoter of the organization, obtained a congressional charter and succeeded in uniting the until then independent local Scout organizations into the Boy Scouts of America.

From the beginning Scouting proved to be highly popular and spread to numerous other countries, so that already in 1920 the first international jamboree was held in London. Today the Boy Scouts of America claim almost 3.2 million boys as members. There are over 58,000 scout troops, 1.2 million adult leaders and volunteer workers and a full time staff of 6,500. Worldwide Scouting is found in over 100 countries and numbers over 10 million boys, all of whom have the same motto, "Be Prepared," the same Scout slogan, "Do a good turn daily," and pledge themselves to the Scout Oath or Promise and the Scout Law.

Although the Scouts are called a non-military organization, the influence of Baden-Powell's military career certainly can be seen clearly in such features as the Scout uniform, the salute, the many insignia and badges, and the highly structured organization with its Cub Scouts for 8-10 year olds, the Scouts, and the Eagles, open to those 15 and over. The local group is organized into troops and patrols. There are three ranks of Scout, Tenderfoot, First and Second Class. Along with the organization of the boys and their leaders there also is a highly structured educational program intended to lead the boys progressively from basic to highly developed knowledge and skills. The merit badges play a large roll in motivating the individual boy to stay on and keep on working at developing his knowledge and skills. Ever since Baden-Powell conducted his first experiments in 1907, camping and the learning of nature lore have been hallmarks of the Scouting program. From the beginning Scouting has also stressed service to the community and the development of individual talents in the widest possible variety of fields.

There is much, we will all agree, that is commendable about the work of the organization founded by Sir Baden-Powell. But that cannot close our eyes to the fact that there are also features we as faithful Christians find objectionable. These involve the ethical-moral-religious aspects of the program as they find expression in the Scout Oath or Promise and Scout Law, and in the explanations and discussions that accompany them.

What does the current Boy Scout literature reveal as to its attitude toward Scripture? The Bible is not mentioned anywhere that I could discover, but the Scouts accept members of all religions. All boys are referred to their own religious leaders and the sacred writings they use. So by implication or indirectly, we must assume, equal status is given to each religion's writings.

As to a definition or description of God, while the Scouts assume the existence of God, they refuse to define or describe Him. This is left to the various religions and their religious leaders and sacred writings. The Scouts wish to be impartial but this in effect gives equal validity to each religion's teachings about God.

The Scouts have no direct explicit teaching concerning salvation. But it must also be noted that, while they do not expressly oppose the Biblical truths of man's lost condition in sin and God's gracious work of salvation in Christ, their use of the Scout Law promotes spiritual self-sufficiency. The motivation they use in the Promise is an appeal to one's own honor or sense of pride. The Scout literature does not speak of sin, although it is granted that perfection is beyond our grasp. The Scout Law can be kept by doing one's best. A

boy in Scouting is not helped toward a knowledge of his sinfulness and need of a Savior, but rather encouraged in the direction of thinking that he can, out of the resources within himself, do his duty to God, his country, and his fellow man. Scouting literature makes no mention of the hereafter. The closest thing to pointing a boy to an ultimate life-goal is this statement: “Be prepared for life—to live happy and to die happy, knowing that you have done your best. That’s the big idea.” (p. 43, *The Official Boy Scout Handbook*, 9th ed. 2nd printing, 1979)

Instruction on Prayer is left to each boy’s religious teachers. Again, for practical purposes, this gives each religion’s teachings an equal validity. The Lord’s instruction that we are to pray in His name is reduced to one view among many on the subject. Although no prayers are called for nor are chaplains provided for regular Scout meetings, the organization does provide chaplains at summer camps. At least the Seminary recently received literature from BSA aimed at recruiting Seminarians for that purpose.

The Boy Scout Law instructs every member to consider all other Boy Scouts as brothers. This brotherhood is based on a mutual acceptance of and obedience to the Scout Law. Since, as has been pointed out, the Scout Law, in promoting good works and civic righteousness, but no knowledge of sin, works at cross purposes to God’s Law in its function of convicting human hearts of sin and showing them their need of a Savior, there is a conflict between the Scout Brotherhood and Christian Brotherhood. True brotherhood requires warning someone on the path to destruction—to avoid the danger and doom ahead.

Finally we look at the matter of confession versus denial. Again, the Scout literature nowhere explicitly rejects or denies Christ, but...suppose for a moment you are a Scouter—an adult leader. The Scout Law says a Scout is reverent, and amplifies this by saying, “He respects the beliefs of others,” (p.31 1979 *Handbook*). As a Christian you have no difficulty respecting the right of others to hold whatever beliefs they choose. We could add that we would avoid interfering with their practice of their religion, or purposely insulting or ridiculing them for their religion, but we cannot respect their religion in the sense of appreciating, finding worth or excellence in a religion that is false. But if you were a Scout adult leader the Scout Law and its requirements would certainly seem to interfere with our confession. Your membership in the Scout organization would tend to silence your confession of Christ. And insofar as it did you would be disregarding Christ’s call to confess him before all.

If one reads the literature of the lodges it is not hard to find statements and practices that clearly and explicitly are opposed to the teaching of the Bible. At first glance the Boy Scout literature by comparison may seem harmless. But encouraging all to practice their religion, regardless of what it is, inevitably involves Scouting in the approval and support of false religions. The Scouts use of their law to promote civic righteousness tends to work at cross purposes to God’s Law which first and foremost is to be a mirror to let us see how morally unacceptable we are in God’s eyes. But all of these things have been said before and better by Prof. Plitzuweit and by Prof. Lawrenz in his article in the 1972 *WLQ*: “Natural Law, Natural Knowledge of God, Civic Righteousness, and their Application to the Boy Scout Question.” (*WLQ* v.69, #2 April, 1972, pp. 67-69) Also worth reading for its demonstration of the fact the philosophy and methods of Boy Scout character training are diametrically opposed to the philosophy and methods of Christian training is Prof. J.P. Meyer’s article in the January 1931 *Theologische Quartalschrift* (vol. 28 #1) and also the pamphlet: *Our Position Against Scouting*, Tract #7 in the series *Continuing in His Word* 1954.

Girl Scouts

We turn our attention next to the Girl Scouts. The founder of the American Girl Scouts was Juliette Gordon Low who was born in Savannah, Georgia in 1860. Already as a girl she showed unusual imagination, leadership and organizational ability. She, her brother, her sister, and friends often made up new games of their own and wrote and put on plays. Juliette started a magazine written entirely by and for children and kept it going for five years. After her marriage in 1886 to a wealthy Englishman, William Low, she lived in England and was able to travel extensively. In 1911 she met Sir Robert Baden-Powell. From him she learned about the Boy Scouts and Girl Guides he had organized. She at once became very enthused about the Scouting idea and soon after organized a Girl Guide troop in Scotland where she was staying. When she returned to Savannah she

transmitted her enthusiasm for Scouting to a school teacher cousin and together in March, 1912, the two organized a Girl Guide troop among the cousin's pupils there in Savannah. Here, too, the idea caught on quickly and troops were organized in Georgia and elsewhere. In 1913 national headquarters were set up in Washington and the name of the organization was officially changed to Girl Scouts of the USA. In 1915 the Girl Scouts were incorporated. In 1916 national headquarters moved to New York, where they have remained ever since. Mrs. Low remained the leader of the organization until her death in 1927.

As you may be aware, Girl Scouts are organized into four age levels: Brownies, age 7-8; Junior Girl Scouts, 9-11; Cadette Girl Scouts, 12-14; Senior Girl Scouts, 15-17. According to the 1980 *Encyclopedia of Associations*, there are 2,400,000 girls and 571,000 volunteer adult leaders active in the organization. Their full-time staff numbers about 3,000. The purpose of the organization is described as being: "To inspire girls with the highest ideals of character, conduct, patriotism, and service, so that they may become happy and resourceful citizens." The Girl Scout Program offers girls four program emphases: Deepening Self-awareness, Developing Values, Relating to Others and Contributing to Society. These emphases are transmitted through Scouting activities carried out in five worlds of interest: 1) The World of Well-being, 2) the World of People, 3) the World of Today and Tomorrow, 4) the World of the Arts and 5) the World of the Out-of-Doors. At the hub or center of all Girl Scout activities are the Girl Scout Promise and Law, the "Foundation of Girl Scouting."

Since Juliette Gordon Low drew her inspiration for organizing the Girl Scouts directly from Robert Baden-Powell, it is not surprising that there are many similarities. Like the Boy Scouts, the Girl Scouts have uniforms (a different one for each age group), and offer a multiplicity of merit badges, pins and awards. They share the same handshake, the same motto, "Be Prepared," the slogan: "Do a good turn," and, in its original form, the Girl Scout Promise and Law were almost identical with those of the Boy Scouts (cf. Appendix).

The Girl Scout organization takes pretty well the same position on religion and its relation to and role in the Girl Scouts as the Boy Scouts do.

The Preamble to their Constitution begins with the words: "We the members of the Girl Scouts of the United States of America, united by a belief in God and by acceptance of the Girl Scout Promise and Law..." Thus belief in God is a condition of membership. Atheists need not apply. Furthermore, the Preamble states: "We believe that the motivating force in Girl Scouts is a spiritual one." What this spiritual motivating force is or how it functions is not elaborated on. The Girl Scouts' charter stipulates that it is to be a corporation with non-sectarian purposes. The Preamble of the Constitution affirms: "The Girl Scout movement shall ever be open to all who accept the Girl Scout Promise and Law." The Girl Scouts state that "religious instruction is the responsibility of parents and religious leaders." The organization follows this principle to the extent that no direct statement about God, Salvation or the Bible is made. But the organization does not follow that principle entirely. For instance there are these comments by way of explanation of the Girl Scout Promise in the new *Handbook for Brownie and Junior Girl Scouts: Worlds to Explore* (New York: G.S. of the USA, 1977 (1978 printing)):

"You will try to serve God." People serve God in many ways.

People of different religions have different customs and ways of worship, but they are all showing their love for God. In your troop, **talk about:**

--What serving God means to you.

--How people of many religions serve God.

--Why it is important to respect the beliefs of people who differ from you." (p.7)

(This is all I noticed about God or religion in the whole handbook.)

Again the organization claims: "Girls are encouraged and helped through the Girl Scout Program to become better members of their own religious group." Again, "Its informal educational program influences the lives of girls by reinforcing and **supplementing** the teachings of the home, the school, and the church or synagogue" (*The Girl Scout Program; Girl Scouting and the Lutheran Girl*. GSUSA, 1958). *The Program Update 1978-80*

for Leaders/Advisors, after printing the Promise and Oath, adds the brief comment: “The Girl Scout program is built on this ethical code. Its guiding principles are: **belief in God**, responsible citizenship, high ideals of character and conduct, and the appreciation of the worth of people.”

To summarize on the basis of the points in our guidelines: The Girl Scouts’ documents do not refer to Scriptures, nor express any opinion about the Bible or any other religion’s writings. However, their acceptance of girls from all religions, and their announced intention of encouraging and strengthening each girl in her own religion involves an implied acceptance and approval of the religious writings of those religions.

Concerning Teachings about God, the Girl Scout documents affirm the existence of God, and acknowledge that man has a duty or duties toward Him. They do not define or describe further. As with the teachings about Scripture, their acceptance, approval, and encouragement of all religions appears to involve an implied acceptance of the teachings about God held by all religions and a placing of all religions on a par.

Salvation as such is not mentioned. There is no reference to heaven, hell, judgment, eternal reward or punishment. The Girl Scout Promise and Law: “I will try,” “I will do my best” and what they say about good turns perhaps do not advance the idea of work righteousness as much as Boy Scout documents, but they still do make “doing your best” appear to be a satisfactory goal in life as far as goodness or holiness is concerned.

I found no references to prayer. Again their relationship of approval and encouragement of all religions can be interpreted as approval of the teachings and practices of all religions in this regard and a rejection of Christ’s claim that all God-pleasing prayer be made in and through Him.

The Girl Scout Law calls on every Girl Scout to be a sister to every other Girl Scout, as the Boy Scout is to be a brother to all Boy Scouts.

Finally, regarding the matter of confession or denial of Christian relation to membership in the Girl Scouts, the policy of promoting “respect” for the religion of others, to the extent that it means appreciating, finding value in the religion of others, is itself unacceptable, and something we wouldn’t want our children to be taught, and in a practical way would limit, if not rule out altogether, the possibility of testifying of Christ in a meaningful way.

If there is a difference between the Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts it is one of degree not kind. The basic approach to religion is the same. However, the Girl Scouts’ materials are not worded as strongly or clearly in the promotion of the Good Turn. Over the years there have been some rather blatant examples of work-righteous thinking in the Boy Scout materials. The Girl Scout literature has been more careful and restrained. The result is that, as both Prof. Lawrenz and Prof. Schuetze have put it more than once, “It’s harder to prove our accusations or criticisms against the Girl Scouts,” or to look at it from another angle, it may be more difficult for lay people, especially people without a good understanding about fellowship principles and grace versus work righteousness to become convinced that there is something objectionable about Girl Scouts.

Camp Fire Girls

We’ll look at the Camp Fire Girls next. Luther Halsey Gulick was the founder of this group. He suffered from rather poor health all his life. As a result he was a strong promoter of physical education and outdoor living as a means of safeguarding and promoting physical health. For many years he was an instructor in Physical Education working for the YMCA at their training school for full-time “Y” workers in Springfield, MA. He also served as a high school principal for 3 years. He lectured widely and turned out a continuing stream of articles and books. Not surprisingly he was an early advocate of camping and organized the first camp for girls in Connecticut in 1888. In the summer of 1909 Gulick and his wife worked out the program of what became the Camp Fire Girls. Gulick had named his camp WOHELO (Work, Health, Love). This became the watchword of the Camp Fire Girls. The Camp Fire Girls were incorporated in 1910, the same year as the Boy Scouts of America, and 2 years before the Girl Scouts. Whether there was any contact between Gulick and Baden-Powell or people influenced by him I am not able to say. There is no mention of such, but the date of the Camp Fire Girls’ organization certainly suggests the possibility of such contact. Gulick died in 1918. Today there are an estimated 750,000 Camp Fire Girls. The full time staff numbers 1000. Like the Girl Scouts, the

Camp Fire Girls offer activities at four age levels: Blue Birds, 7-8; Camp Fire Girls, 9-11; Junior Hi Club, 12-13; and Horizon Club, 14-18. These are the organization's objectives: To encourage in every girl:

- 1) The application of her religious, spiritual and ethical beliefs to her daily living.
- 2) A love of home and family that grows as she grows.
- 3) Pride in woman's traditional qualities—tenderness, affection and skill in human relationships.
- 4) Deep love of country, the practice of democracy and readiness to serve.
- 5) The capacity for fun, friendship and happy group relationships.
- 6) The formation of healthful living habits.
- 7) The ability to take care of herself, to do her work skillfully and to take pleasure in it.
- 8) Interests and hobbies she can enjoy with others and alone.
- 9) Love of the outdoors and skill in outdoor living.
- 10) A happy heart that will help her find beauty, romance and adventure in the common things of daily life.

(*Camp Fire Adventure; Leader's Resource Book*. 3rd pr. NY: CFG, Inc. 1974)

Although the Camp Fire Girls have uniforms which might suggest Scout influence, the Camp Fire Law appears to be entirely original. It reads: "Worship God. Seek beauty. Give Service. Pursue Knowledge. Be Trustworthy. Hold on to Health. Glorify Work. Be Happy."

One is happy to notice that the Scouts' pledge of fulfilling duty to God is missing. The command: "Worship God," is the only clearly religious element. *The Camp Fire Adventure Leaders' Resource Book* (New York: Camp Fire Girls, 1973) contains a CFG "Statement of Religious Policy, which is relevant to our discussions. It contains the following statements:

The National Council of Camp Fire Girls believes that spiritual development is essential to a healthy, wholesome personality and recognizes the importance of the church and synagogue and of religious experience and teachings in the life of a girl. The spiritual values of the church and synagogue are basic to the Camp Fire Girl program and the Camp Fire Girls' Law. Each part of this Law is related to ethical living, encouraging an appreciation for God's world, emphasizing the dignity of individual human worth and character, and recognizing that service to others is one of the essentials of full living...

There is no evidence of service or good turns as a form of self-justification.

The membership of Camp Fire Girls is open to girls of all races and religions. One of the important purposes of its program is to help girls become aware of the dignity of every individual and to accept people whose cultural and religious backgrounds may be different from their own...The National Council recognizes, however, that people differ in religious belief, in religious observance, and in religious heritage. It therefore urges Camp Fire Girls councils to be sensitive to and appreciative of those differences...taking them into account...in planning religious observances in camps, in planning menus for public functions, and in scheduling times and places...for events.

The National Council recognizes the right of religious groups to organize their girl membership of Camp Fire groups under their own leadership and sponsorship...The National Council of Camp Fire Girls seeks the cooperation of leaders of all religious groups in its work with girls, believing that, out of the faith we share, as well as our differences in belief, observance and heritage, we can together make our best contribution **to a more spiritual world** and one in which the concept of brotherhood of man finds reality and expression in the daily lives of girls and women. (Adopted 1948, NC CFG, Inc.)

To summarize briefly, the Camp Fire Girls have no positive tenets on Scripture. God's existence is affirmed. His work of creation is suggested. There is no direct or indirect statement on salvation that I have noticed. The mention of religious observances in camp could indicate unionistic services. There is no clam of a nation or worldwide sisterhood. The statements on the handling of the different religious beliefs of members involve the Camp Fire Girls in the encouragement of the religious development of all members of any religion. This seems to require, especially the leaders, to promote religions other than their own. If a Lutheran girl or leader participates under these circumstances it would seem to imply the acceptance of the equal validity and truth of the beliefs of all other religions. So although there are fewer objectionable features in the policies and practices of the Camp Fire Girls than in those of the Girl Scouts, we cannot give the Camp Fire Girls a blanket stamp of approval.

IV. Evaluation of the "Club Type" Organizations

Boys' Club of America

The first known Boys' Club was set up by civic minded women in Hartford, CT in 1860. The first in New York was opened as a result of a stone smashing a window. A wealthy financier, E.H. Harriman was visiting the principal of the mission school for poor girls when a stone smashed the office window. As a perturbed Mr. Harriman brushed off the glass he asked about the cause. "Lawless street-boys," he was told, "with nothing else to do find excitement and fun by teasing and scaring the girls in the school in this way." On the spot Mr. Harriman decided to do something to provide more wholesome and profitable activity for the poor boys on the street. The resulting Boys' Club flourished to such an extent that by 1887 it needed, and was provided with, a five-story building of its own. In 1906 a national organization, the Federated Boys' Clubs, was founded with about 40 member clubs. Today there are over 1100 clubs in all the larger cities and many smaller ones as well. These clubs serve over 1 million boys. The *Encyclopedia of Associations* lists the purpose of the Boys' Clubs as being: "To promote the health, and social, educational, vocational, and character development of boys," Boys' Clubs always operate a building. Depending on the extent of community support they will have a gymnasium, swimming pool, auditorium, classrooms, meeting rooms, game rooms, and in some instances some food facilities. Support of the Boys' Clubs originally came from wealthy friends and patrons. There still are many businessmen, industrialists, and financiers who support the movement. Today, however, most receive large amounts of support from United Funds. (In Milwaukee 49% comes from this source.) Most Boys' Clubs are located in the lower income areas of the cities. Poor boys make up the largest part of the membership. Membership dues are \$1.00 for younger boys and \$2.00 for older boys (ages 7-18 are accepted).

There is no test or limit for membership either as to income or religion. Although a history written for the centennial of the Boys' Clubs has what is called the "Boys' Club Code," which begins: I believe in God, and in the right to worship according to my own faith and religion," a local Boys' Club official claimed to know nothing about it. Nor does Prof. Nitz, one of our Seminary Professors who, while serving as pastor of Centennial Congregation on the south side of Milwaukee functioned as a leader in woodworking at a Boys' Club near the church.

Most large clubs have a number of full-time trained leaders and often a guidance counselor. The official I questioned, stated that when difficult moral or religious questions came up they might refer the boy to a trained authority qualified to help and advise him.

There appear to be no objections to membership in a Boys' Club. Given the facilities many provide, for \$1.00 or \$2.00 a year this is a good deal. The only drawbacks would seem to be that most of the clubs probably are located where our members aren't and some of the boys at a club might be rather tough.

4-H Clubs

The other “Club” we’ll evaluate is the 4-H Club. I would think that some of you might have had personal experience with 4-H in your youth. The movement began back about 1900. The exact date seems to be unclear. The agriculture departments of the land-grant universities were looking for practical ways to instruct and sell the farmers on the better methods and more productive strains of seed and livestock they were developing. In Wisconsin a Prof. R.A. Moore of the University of Wisconsin, who had previously been a rural school teacher, hit on the idea of having school children raise samples of the new varieties of seed he had developed. Hundreds and thousands of children participated until the school teachers became weary of all the work. In 1914 the federal Smith-Lever Act provided funding for work with boys and girls by the land-grant university Ag-schools. County agents were placed in charge of these activities, County Fairs became the stage for judging the projects of the boys and girls. In 1916 to further the activities a Boys’ and Girls’ Agriculture Club was formed. This organization chose as its symbol the four-leaf clover with an “H” on each leaf; representing: “Head, Heart, Hands and Health.” A pledge, the “4-H Pledge” was adopted (see the appendix). It contains no religious statement or reference. World War I prompted the diversification of types of activities, as children were urged to help the war effort by gardening, sewing, raising livestock and canning and drying fruits and vegetables.

Today the 4-H Clubs are the largest of our youth organizations with nearly 5 1/4 million boys and girls participating. Whereas it was largely rural and agricultural through much of its history, it has, in the last decade, expanded into the cities. Like the Boys’ Clubs it has no uniform with its expense and element of showing off. It is very flexible in organization. Depending on the wishes of the youth and leaders involved, the local club may meet every week, like Scouts, throughout the year or as an alternative the 4-H organization offers materials for a large variety of mini programs lasting 4-6 weeks. 4-H full-time workers funded by the state and federal extension services are willing to help organize informal clubs for teachers in schools or in churches as a form of variety or recreation with religious programs. They also are willing to provide materials to small groups of five or six children and one or two parents, or to existing groups who are looking for activity and program ideas. The 4-H Clubs are, as far as I can judge, ‘to be recommended to young people who ask “What can I join?” “What can I do?”’

V. Alternative Youth Organizations

For good reasons our parents and pastors may wish to avoid all the public youth organizations and opt for one made up entirely of our own children. There are several good options available.

I trust all of you are familiar with the Lutheran Pioneers and Lutheran Girl Pioneers. Both of them have been functioning over 25 years. The boys’ group was originated in Burlington, WI by Pastor Ruben Marti and Mr. Bruce Thompson, long time Pioneer leader who set up its program in imitation of the Boy Scout program, but without the objectionable religious features. For larger congregations these two groups offer a well-worked out program of many activities. The main draw back of the Pioneers appears to be the problem of finding and keeping capable adult leaders. The program does take up quite a bit of the volunteers’ time, I have been told.

In smaller congregations this could prove an insurmountable obstacle. You could still have a youth organization, one tailored to your needs and available talents and interest. Permit me to tell you of one such youth organization, operated by St. Mark’s congregation in Green Bay. President Carl Voss is the pastor. The group is known as the “Christian Knight.” The operation of the group is a part of the total educational program of the congregation and is under the supervision and administration of the congregation’s Board of Education. Its objectives are to provide the grade school age children of the congregation with opportunities for fellowship, recreation and service. The program has two age levels: Junior, Grades 1-4, and Senior, grades 5-8. Regular meetings are held once a month. Junior meetings last an hour, Senior meetings, 1 1/2 hours. In 1980 St. Mark’s, which was organized in 1960, had 709 communicants. There were 127 children in its Sunday School and 116 children in its newly opened parochial school. About 70 children participate in the “Christian Knights” programs. The pastor is not directly involved in the program. Three members of the Board of Education chair the three committees which run the program. Volunteers fill in the membership of the committees. The Planning

Committee is responsible for planning the whole year's program and for financing. (Children's offerings meet most expenses. The balance comes from congregational offerings. Council has to approve requests by the Board of Education.) The planning Committee also concerns itself with on-going evaluation of the programs offered—what worked, what didn't and why? The Project Committee is responsible for purchasing necessary equipment and supplies, gathering cost data on planned future activities. They arrange transportation when necessary and are responsible for setting up whatever is needed for each program and putting it away. The Program Committee is responsible for conducting actual programs, noting reactions of children to programs offered, receiving feed-back from children and parents, being on the look-out for new ideas, and providing regular reports to the Planning Committee.

The program has no awards for skills achieved. There is no advancement. It is not highly structured. The work is spread widely among volunteers. Parents' and children at St. Mark's are satisfied. There is no problem with Scouts.

I have perhaps devoted a rather large amount of time to one congregation's youth organization. My purpose has been to illustrate that with some thought and planning, a youth program can be set up in a smaller congregation which is not a problem or burden for the pastor or a small number of faithful volunteers. In a small mission congregation where members come from considerable distance a Sunday afternoon of fellowship involving a talk or exchange of information on a hobby or craft might provide recreation or entertainment for the whole family. Instead of once a month, meetings might be held for 4 or 6 weeks and then dropped for a while, if you have only a few talented people and don't want to tie them down all the time. With imagination and flexibility a congregation may have a youth program that suits its needs and abilities. As we noted at the beginning, youth organizations are very popular with young people. They appear to fulfill felt needs.

In his article on Boy Scouts in 1931 Prof. Meyer reacted to a suggestion of Theodore Graebner in St. Louis that Lutheran congregations borrow activities from the Boy Scouts, by commenting that if we Christians appreciate the wonders of God's creation and the wonderful, widely varying skills God has implanted in us as we should, we will have more than enough to show and tell our youth and provide them with sound activities without having to borrow from elsewhere.

All of this discussion of alternative youth organizations of our own is intended not as a substitute for careful and sound indoctrination in Lutheran doctrine. But it is easier and better to do this necessary teaching in an objective way, rather than in the heated situation of a confrontation of wills. As good shepherds we surely would rather teach the truths involved in our difficulties with the Scouts patiently, gradually, and in the proper place and sequence so that the members of our flock can learn, and absorb them readily and well.

Appendices

Boy Scout Oath or Promise

On my honor I will do my best
To do my duty to God and my country,
To help other people at all times,
To keep myself physically strong,
mentally awake and morally straight.

The Scout Law

A Scout is:

1. Trustworthy
2. Loyal
3. Helpful
4. Friendly
5. Courteous
6. Kind
7. Obedient
8. Cheerful
9. Thrifty
10. Brave
11. Clean
12. Reverent

Camp Fire Girls Law

Worship God
Seek beauty
Give service
Pursue knowledge
Be trustworthy
Hold on to health
Glorify work
Be happy

WO-HE-LO

Work
Health
Love

The Boys' Club Code

--I believe in God and the right to worship
according to my own faith and religion.
--I believe in America and the American way
of life...in the Constitution and the Bill of Rights
--I believe in fair play, honesty and sportsmanship.
--I believe in my Boys' Club which stands for
these things.

Girl Scout Promise

On my honor, I will try
To do my duty to God and my country,
To help other people at all times,
To obey the Girl Scout Law.

The Girl Scout Laws

1. A Girl Scout's honor is to be trusted.
2. A Girl Scout is loyal.
3. A Girl Scout's duty is to be useful and to help others.
4. A Girl Scout is a friend to all and a sister to every Girl Scout.
5. A Girl Scout is courteous.
6. A Girl Scout is a friend to animals.
7. A Girl Scout obeys orders.
8. A Girl Scout is cheerful.
9. A Girl Scout is thrifty.
10. A Girl Scout is clean in thought, word and deed.

Girl Scout Promise (1972)

On my honor, I will try:
To serve God,
My country and mankind,
and to live by the Girl Scout Law.

The Girl Scout Law (1972)

I will do my best:

1. To be honest
2. To be fair
3. To help where I am needed
4. To be cheerful
5. To be friendly and considerate
6. To be a sister to every Girl Scout
7. To respect authority
8. To use resources wisely
9. To protect and improve the world around me
10. To show respect for myself and others through my words and actions

4-H Club Pledge

"My Head to clearer thinking,
My Heart to greater loyalty,
My Hands to larger service,
and my Health to better living for
my club, my community, and my country."

Girl Scouts

1. “We, the members of Girl Scouts of the United States of America, **united by a belief in God** and by acceptance of the Girl Scout Promise and Law...” (Preamble to the Constitution; 1957; 1960; 1972)
2. “The purposes of the corporation shall be...**which purposes shall nonsectarian...**” (Sec. 3 of the Congressional Charter, Special Act of Congress: Public Law 460, 1950; Public Law 117, 1951; Public Law 272, 1953)
3. “**We believe that the motivating force in Girl Scouting is a spiritual one.**” (Preamble to the Constitution; 1957; 1960; 1972)
4. “Every Girl Scout group **shall respect the varying religious opinions and practices of its membership** in planning and conducting activities.” (Respect for Religious Opinions and Practices; Policies)
5. “She learns to appreciate the worth and dignity of each human being and to **respect and appreciate the religious convictions and practices of others.**” (The Lutheran Girl in Girl Scouting; Girl Scouting and the Lutheran Girl; GS of the USA; 1958)
6. “Girls are encouraged and helped through the Girl Scout Program **to become better members of their own religious group**, but every Girl Scout group must recognize that religious instruction is the responsibility of parents and religious leaders.” (Place of Religion in the Girl Scout Program; Policies)
7. “Its informal educational program **influences the lives of girls by reinforcing and supplementing the teachings** of the home, the school, and **the church or synagogue.**” (The Girl Scout Program; Girl Scouting and the Lutheran Girl; GS of the USA; 1958)
8. “In this way **the girls are helped to realize that the basic aims of their church and Girl Scouting not only are compatible, they supplement each other.**” (The Lutheran Girl in Girl Scouting; Girl Scouting and the Lutheran Girl; GS of the USA; 1958)
9. “We affirm that the Girl Scout movement shall ever be open to all girls **who accept the Girl Scout Promise and Law.**” (Preamble to the Constitution; 1957; 1960; 1972)
10. “The Promise—**On my honor**, I will try: **To serve God**, My country and mankind, And to live by the Girl Scout Law.” (Preamble to the Constitution; 1957; 1960; 1972)

Assembled by Paul Sullivan