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What We Christians Object to in the Scouting Movement

It has often been said that the Christians are a very gullible people. If such accusations were based upon the principle that Christians strive to follow that Eighth Commandment which tells us that “we should fear and love God that we may not deceitfully belie, betray, slander, or defame our neighbor, but defend him, speak well of him, and put the best construction on everything,” then we would certainly concur with that.

There are, of course, a number of Bible passages which substantiate the words of Martin Luther in his explanation of the Eighth Commandment. In our relationship to one another as brethren in the faith we are warned by the Apostle, “*Speak not evil one of another, brethren*” (James 4:11). And the Savior admonishes us against loveless judging saying, “*Judge not, and ye shall not be judged; condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned*” (Luke 6:37). But such an attitude on the part of a Christian is to be found also in his relationship with those who are not of the household of God. The Apostle Paul speaks of this in his Epistle to the Corinthians. While he urges the members of the congregation to put out the fornicator in their midst, he adds that those who are on the outside have God before whom they must answer: “*For what have I to do to judge them also that are without? Do not ye judge them that are within? But them that are without God judgeth. Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person*” (I Corinthians 5:12-13). How different it is when it comes to any *teaching* which comes forth from any individual's mouth or pen! There we Christians dare not be “*children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive*” (Ephesians 4:14). There we Christians dare not be gullible, for the spiritual welfare of our souls is at stake. The Apostle John instructs us, “*Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world*” (I John 4:1). And the sole standard according to which we Christians must judge is the Word of our Lord. This has always been the position of our orthodox Lutheran fathers as stated so clearly in the Lutheran Confessions: “We receive and embrace with our whole heart the prophetic and apostolic Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as the pure, clear fountain of Israel, which is the only standard by which all teachers and doctrines are to be judged” (*Formula of Concord, Thorough Declaration, Comprehensive Summary, §3,1, Triglotta, p. 851*). With these thoughts in mind let us direct our attention to the subject of the Scouting movement, or, as we often commonly refer to it by its tenets, simply as *Scoutism*.

First of all, it is helpful briefly to trace the **history** of Scoutism. When and how did it come into being?

The Boy Scout movement goes back to the beginning of the 1900's. The first manual of Scouting was written by British Lord Robert Baden-Powell, a war hero during the South African war with the Dutch Boers in 1899. It never took a foothold here in the United States until after millionaire Chicago publisher William Dickson Boyce became involved in Scouting in 1909. The story is told that, when he visited London in August of that year, one afternoon, when the city was virtually enshrouded in dense fog, he lost his way. A boy of about twelve years of age carrying a lantern offered to guide him to the address he was seeking. When Boyce produced a shilling, the boy replied, "No, sir, I am a Scout. Scouts do not accept tips for Good Turns." This young Scout then took him to British Scout headquarters. And from that moment on, Boyce's interest in Scouting grew. He came back to the United States determined to start Boy Scouting in America. Apparently he knew nothing of the troops already operating or of the YMCA's promotion of Scouting.

On February 8, 1910, William Boyce filed incorporation papers for the Boy Scouts of America in the District of Columbia. The purpose, he said, "shall be to promote, through organization, and cooperation with other agencies, the ability of boys to do things for themselves and others, to train them in Scoutcraft and to teach them patriotism, courage, self-reliance, and kindred virtues, using the methods which are in common use by Boy Scouts." In 1911 the first American Boy Scout manual was published which had the first American Scout Oath and Law. Then in 1916 on June 15, President Woodrow Wilson signed the bill which established Scoutism as a private organization. Basically Scoutism has three membership divisions: *Cub Scouting* is for boys between the first and fifth grades, or 7-10 years of age; *Boy Scouting* is for boys ages 11-17; *Venturing and Exploring* are for young men and women ages 14-20. At the present time the Boy Scouts of America's national office is located in Irving, Texas.

Particularly during the last several decades, Scoutism has struggled with a considerable amount of controversy. Two issues especially have been in the forefront of the country's attention: atheism and homosexuality. Scoutism insists upon a belief in God and prohibits openly declared homosexuals from becoming members. Scoutism has had to deal with those who protested against its discrimination against agnostic and atheistic scouts. In answer to the question "Can an individual who states that he does not believe in God be a volunteer Scout leader or member?" the answer from the Executive Board of the Boy Scouts of America is: "No. The Scout Oath, which documents the basic values of Scouting, literally and figuratively addresses the issue of one's duty 'to God' before duty to country, others and self." Lawsuits over these matters have gone as high as the United States Supreme Court. In 1992, for example, James Dale had his membership in the Boy Scouts revoked when it was learned that he was an avowed homosexual and gay rights activist. In 1992 he then filed a complaint against the Boy Scouts in the New Jersey Superior Court, which held that, under New Jersey's public accommodations law, the Boy Scouts were required to admit Dale. The case finally ended up in the U. S. Supreme Court, which reversed the decision of the New Jersey Superior Court in June, 2000, by a 5 to 4 vote. In 1993 an official position statement by the Boy Scouts stated, "The Boy Scouts of America has always reflected the expectations that Scouting families have had for the organization. We do not believe that homosexuals provide a role model consistent with these expectations. Accordingly, we do not allow for the registration of avowed homosexuals as members or as leaders of the B. S. A."

Scouting has made significant inroads into the vast majority of churches, including those that bear the name Lutheran. Since the early part of the 1900's, the Scout movement has

continued to infiltrate one Lutheran body after another. In 1944, at the National Convention of the Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod in Saginaw, for example, it unanimously approved of a committee report which stressed the sole and unrestricted right of church committees to control everything of a religious nature that might be superimposed on the official Boy Scout Program. The Synod resolved to leave the matter of Scouting to the individual congregation to decide. The report stated that the “synodical committees obtained all the official handbooks both for Scouts and Scoutmasters, covering every phase of the work, and examined these for any ingredients of the program which would militate against a Lutheran Scoutmaster’s committing himself to this program. We were unable to find any factors which would violate our principles and have not been able to discover anything in the practices of Scouting, as outlined in these handbooks, to which a Christian parent, Scoutmaster or Pastor would take exception.” This position was reaffirmed by the L. C. M. S. in 1950. Not all those who bear the name Lutheran share the position of the L. C. M. S. The Wisconsin Synod, for example, has voiced its disapproval of the Scout movement. Already in 1946 it published a tract entitled “Scouting in the Light of Holy Scripture.” This was an essay written by Pastor Erhard C. Pankow and adopted by, and published at the request of, the Milwaukee City Pastoral conference. The objections were submitted to the L. C. M. S. by the Wisconsin Synod and answered in *The Lutheran Witness*, August 16, 1955. Unfortunately, the Scriptural protests were not heeded, and the L. C. M. S. continued to defend the resolution which it had previously adopted in 1944 and reaffirmed in 1950.

Now what about our Concordia Lutheran Conference? Let it be stated at the outset that our Conference still holds to the same position it held since we were constrained on the basis of Romans 16:17 to leave the L. C. M. S. in 1951. At that time, we formed the Orthodox Lutheran Conference in Okabena, Minnesota. To show you that we have not changed our position on Scouting, permit me to direct your attention to a tract written by Pastor H. David Mensing, entitled, *The Orthodox Lutheran Position on Scoutism: An Examination of the Program and Principles of THE BOY SCOUTS OF AMERICA in the light of Holy Scripture.* This tract was published by the Orthodox Lutheran Conference in the early 1950’s. In it the author set forth first of all *Our Position* and then *Our Reason for This Position*. Since this very thorough essay is no longer available, as far as I know, it is well worth our time to hear it so that we can judge for ourselves that our position is indeed Scriptural. [NOTE: Since many of the citations from primary documentation are quite dated, a summary statement concerning their continuing timeliness and the essentially unchanged program and position of the Boy Scouts of America is included at the end of the tract itself. Ed.]

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1. OUR POSITION: If Scouting restricted its activities and interest to the purely physical and mental, secular and civic side of a boy’s life, it would not be sinful for any Christian body to join the organization and participate in its activities. This would then be an *adiaphoron*, i.e., a thing neither commanded nor forbidden in Scripture, a matter of our Christian liberty.

OUR REASON FOR THIS POSITION: The Bible makes it clear that all things, but only those things, which are contrary to the Word of God are sinful. “*Sin is the transgression of the Law*” (I John 3:4). “*All things are lawful unto me*” (I Corinthians 6:12). “*For every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving*” (I Timothy 4:4). “*Stand fast*

therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage” (Galatians 5:1). Scripture furthermore recognizes bodily exercise as profitable, although of little profit in comparison to godliness, when it says: “*Bodily exercise profiteth little; but godliness is profitable unto all things, having the promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come*” (I Timothy 4:8). Likewise the Lord teaches us to make good use of the talents which He entrusts to us, Matthew 25:14-30. He requires of us also to be dutiful and obedient citizens of our government, Romans 13. Nevertheless, there is no requirement in Scripture to join any kind of organization in order to carry out or develop these things. Therefore, the matter of joining and participation in the “Boy Scouts,” if this were purely physical, secular, and civic, would remain an *adiaphoron* for the Christian.

2. OUR POSITION: If the program of Scouting were purely physical, secular, and civic, Christian congregations (and church bodies, composed of congregations) should neither denounce the organization nor sponsor it or any of its constituent troops, simply because purely physical, secular, and civic matters are not the business of Christ’s church on earth.

OUR REASON FOR THIS POSITION: The work of the Christian Church on earth is clearly defined in Scripture as the preaching, teaching, and application of God’s Word, and the use of the Sacraments according to Christ’s institution, Matthew 28:19-20—“*Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you.*” Mark 16:15-16—“*Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.*” John 20:22-23—“*He [the Lord Jesus] breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost; whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whosoever sins ye retain, they are retained.*” II Timothy 4:1-5, concerning the duty of Pastors— “*I charge thee, therefore, before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom: Preach the Word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables. But watch thou in all things; endure afflictions; do the work of an evangelist; make full proof of thy ministry.*” The Lord also wants His Church to be known and reputed as a house of worship and thus not to be engaged in purely secular pursuits. Matthew 21:13—“*My house shall be called the house of prayer.*” John 2:16— “*Make not my Father’s house a house of merchandise.*” [NOTE: “My house” and “My Father’s house” signify not the mere temple-building but God’s people, the congregation or church of God, Psalm 69.]

3. OUR POSITION: Scouting, however, has as an essential and required part of its program the teaching and practice of definite *religious principles*. It is an organization that professes and teaches *a religion* (Compare *Synodical Catechism*, Question 186D.). For this reason, all Christians individually, as well

as Christian congregations (and church bodies), are required by God first of all to try or test Scouting in the light of His Holy Word.

OUR REASONS FOR THIS POSITION: Official Scout literature speaks freely of “God,” “Duty to God,” “Belief in God,” “Partnership with Church and Synagogue,” “Good works,” “Brotherhood of man and Fatherhood of God,” and even “going to heaven.” (See *Handbook for Boys*, 1948 Ed., especially p. 23; also the Scout Oath: “On my honor I will do my best: To do my duty to God and my country, and to obey the Scout law; to help other people at all times; to keep myself physically strong, mentally awake, and morally straight” (p. 19); also particularly the Twelfth Scout Law: “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” (p. 27). The Third and Fourth Scout Laws also refer to good works and brotherhood (p. 26). NOTE furthermore: “We started discussing the status of a Lutheran scout troop, or should I say, a Scout troop in a Lutheran church, since there is no such thing as a ‘Lutheran Scout.’ Mr. Holstad pointed out to me where Scout authorities come and humbly say: ‘Here is a program adapted to the needs of the boy...If you find that what we offer will help you in your youth program, take it and use it as you will.’ So I naively asked, ‘Well, then, if we can use this program as we want, and if we do not like the oath and laws, we can always leave those things out and utilize the non-religious things such as knot tying, seamanship, camping, etc.’ But, Oh, NO! I was told that the Scout Promise and Law are the very heart of Scouting. Or as the Lutheran Scout manual puts it, these are the ‘soul of scouting, its vital principle, and its living expression.’” (Quoted from *The Testimony of a Former Scout* by Paul Randolph). NOTE also: “Its policy is that the organization or institution with which the Boy Scout is connected shall give definite attention to his religious life. Only persons willing to subscribe to this declaration of principle shall be entitled to certificates of leadership in carrying out the Boy Scout Program.” (Quoted from the tract, “*A Scout is Reverent*,” 1941, by James E. West, Chief Scout Executive and Editor of *Boys’ Life*.)

God says in the Bible: “*Beloved, believe not every spirit [i.e., teacher of religion], but try [test] the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world*” (I John 4:1). Note that this is a duty which God places upon every Christian, beloved of God.

4. OUR POSITION: Scouting mixes church and state. In this it is contrary to the teaching of Holy Scripture.

OUR REASONS FOR THIS POSITION: Scouting has all the essential earmarks of a civic organization. It claims to train for good citizenship. It was granted a Federal Charter by Congress on June 15, 1916; and it is required by this charter to make reports to Congress. It is ADMITTEDLY GIVEN THE SAME RECOGNITION as the American Red Cross. It regularly engages in organized service together with the Red Cross, state militias, etc. in time of floods and other public disasters. (See “Fundamentals,” pp. 14-15). Yet it requires belief in “God,” religious affiliation, religious or church activity, and “maintains that no boy can grow into the best kind of citizenship without recognizing his obligation to God” (*B. S. A.*

Constitution, 1943, Art. III, pp. 3-4). NOTE: The constitution of the United States makes no religious requirement for good citizenship. Atheist, Jew, and Christian, etc., are alike before the Law of our Land. Christ, our Lord, teaches that church and state are to be kept separate, saying: “*Render unto Caesar the things which are Caesar’s and unto God the things that are God’s*” (Matthew 22:21). He also recognizes the splendid civic righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, who were unbelievers and yet “good citizens.” Matthew 5:20—“*Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven*”.

5. OUR POSITION: While Scouting requires recognition of, belief in, worship, reverence, and obedience to “God,” it teaches that this “God” need not be the Triune God, but may be any god. Thus its teaching of who God is is contrary to the teaching of Holy Scripture that the Triune God is the only true God, and all others, idols. It robs the TRUE GOD of the glory that belongs to Him alone and is in its very nature idolatrous.

OUR REASON FOR THIS POSITION: Scouting teaches: “...his obligation to ‘God.’” (*B. S. A. Constitution*, Art. II, as quoted in point 4 above). “On my honor, I will do my best to do my duty to God” (The Scout Oath). “A Scout is reverent. He is reverent to God” (Twelfth Law). “No matter what the boy may be – Catholic or Protestant or Jew – this fundamental need of good citizenship (the recognition of a deity) should be kept before him” (*B. S. A. Constitution*, Art. III.). NOTE: This latter quotation makes our point very clear, since it is well known that the Jewish people of today do not accept but reject Jesus Christ as the true Son of God and the Savior of the world. They accept Him only as a great man, a fine character, a renowned teacher, etc., as do also the modernistic Protestants. It is taught furthermore: “Color and religious beliefs are no basis for judging a man” (*Handbook for Boys*, 1948, p. 39). Again, Scouting’s teaching of “God” is couched in the vaguest of terms such as are used by the Lodge religion, Unitarianism, and by many others who try to avoid the confession of Christ. Compare: “The leading power in the universe” (*B. S. A. Constitution*, p. 3), “the infinite Creator of the universe,” “the Source of life” (*Handbook for Boys*, 1943, p.108), “the Great Master of all good Scouts” (*Handbook for Boys*, Vol. 1, p. 71). Scouting is “deistic;” any god is all right. But it also goes further than this. It actually prohibits the free confession of Christ, even in one’s own church troop. “I asked one of the Lutheran leaders in the movement if he would permit my boys, should I have a troop, to confess, ‘I will do my duty to God –as revealed in Christ Jesus’? But he replied that that would not be possible. You could believe that in your heart, but you didn’t need to say it. It would destroy the purpose of scouting that respects the convictions of others” (Randolph, p. 5, last paragraph).

All this is contrary to what Holy Scripture teaches about the true God, both in the Old and New Testament. Compare: Exodus 20:2-3— “*I am the Lord thy God. Thou shalt have no other gods before Me.*” Deuteronomy 6:4— “*Hear, O Israel, the Lord, our God, is one Lord.*” Isaiah 42:8— “*I am the Lord; that is My name; and My glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images.*” Isaiah 43:1-3, 11— “*But now saith the Lord [Jehovah] that created*

thee, O Jacob, and He that formed thee, O Israel: Fear not; for I am the Lord thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Savior. I, even I, am the Lord; and beside Me there is no savior.” Matthew 10:32-33— *“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.”* Matthew 28:19— *“All power is given unto Me in heaven and earth. Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost.”* John 4:22,24— *“Ye worship ye know not what; we know what we worship...God is a spirit; and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth.”* John 5:23— *“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 8:24— *“If ye believe not that I am he (the promised Savior of the world), ye shall die in your sins.”* Acts 17:22-23— *“Then Paul stood in the midst of Mars’ hill, and said, Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious. For as I passed by, and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, Him declare I unto you.”* I John 2:23— *“Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father.”* I John 4:2-3— *“Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: 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; and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come, and even now already is it in the world.”* I John 4:15— *“Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God.”* I John 5:10— *“He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself. He that believeth not God hath made Him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of His Son.”*

6. OUR POSITION: In its attitude toward the various religions in the world, Scouting is thoroughly unionistic, that is, disobedient to the command of God to mark and avoid and separate from all false religions, their teachers, and their adherents. This point is closely related to the foregoing, point 5.

OUR REASON FOR THIS POSITION: Scouting teaches: “Scouts extend to every one of the other faiths the same courtesy and consideration and respect for the other man’s sacred things that the Scout expects for his own. That is the spirit of Scouting in religiously free America: ‘A Scout is reverent’” (*Handbook for Boys*, 1943, p. 108). “There is another important thing in this Twelfth Part of the Scout Law. It is your respect for other people, for their religion and customs... For the rest of your life you will be associating with people of different religious beliefs and customs. It is your duty to respect these people for their beliefs, and to train yourself to respect others for what they are and what they do, instead of being influenced by their color or creed” (*Handbook for Boys*, 1948, p. 39). Note: By this required reverence and respect is meant not the toleration of false religions in this sense that one will not persecute or hinder them by force, but that, in their association together, each Scout must honor and esteem the other’s religion even as he does his own, whether it be true or false and make no attempt at all to show those holding to false religious beliefs the error and folly of their ways. That is evident from the following facts: Webster’s Dictionary defines “reverence” as “honor or respect felt or manifested,” “profound respect mingled with love and awe.” That this is the meaning here we now observe from the

wording above: “It is your duty to respect these people for their beliefs,” and again, “for what they are and what they do.” A Lutheran Scout is therefore required to honor a Roman Catholic Scout because he believes that the Pope is Christ’s Vicar on earth, because he prays to Mary and the “saints,” because he believes he must save himself partly by his own works, because he believes what his church teaches when it curses the most fundamental Christian doctrine, namely, that a sinner is justified by faith in Christ alone without the deeds of the law. Likewise, a Christian Scout must honor and esteem a Jewish Scout because he rejects Jesus Christ as God’s Son and the only Savior. Note furthermore this statement: “Many church troops include *boys from other churches,* and the Scoutmaster has an obligation to respect the religious convictions of these Scouts. They are not expected to participate in the religious program of the church which administers the Troop. They should be aggressively encouraged to carry out the religious program of their own church.” (From the tract: “*A Scout is Reverent,*” 1941, by James E. West, Chief Scout Executive and Editor of *Boys’ Life.*) Accordingly, a Lutheran Scoutmaster (if there were such a thing in truth) would be required aggressively to encourage a Scout holding to a false religion to continue faithfully to believe and practice his false religion. Moreover, Scouting periodically arranges for unionistic services to be held for Scouts of all faiths and churches. Note the gigantic Sunday service officially held in the summer of 1953 in connection with the National Jamboree in California, at which, it was reported in the press, Catholics, Protestants, Jews, and Buddhists all worshiped together! While one may argue that Scouts are not required to attend such a service (See “*Scouting in the Lutheran Church,*” p. 13), one need not be a genius in psychology to understand the dilemma in which a lone Lutheran Scout, still unconfirmed and of tender age, would find himself when confronted with the question of attending or not attending such services held in the midst of a great jamboree! After all, he has learned that a Scout is reverent. Should he not therefore at least attend the service in order to show that he is a “good Scout” as far as the other fellows’ religion is concerned? Such is the unionistic thinking which the very program of Scouting encourages in the minds of its youth.

But the Word of God teaches: “*Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned, and avoid them*” (Romans 16:17). “*Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers; for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? And what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? Or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? For ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be My sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty*” (II Corinthians 6:14-18). The Bible teaches, moreover, that Elijah did not reverence the prophets of Baal but apprised them fully of their folly in worshipping idols: “*And it came to pass at noon, that Elijah mocked them, and said, Cry aloud; for he is a god; either he is talking, or he is pursuing, or he is in a journey, or peradventure he sleepeth, and must be awaked*” (I Kings 18:27). St. Paul likewise plainly taught the Athenians on Mars Hill, who had erected an altar TO THE UNKNOWN GOD, that they were worshipping “*ignorantly*” (Acts

17:23; cf. also Galatians 1:8-9). The Word of God also in many places requires Christians to warn against sin and error, to restore the fallen, to preach the Gospel to every creature, etc. (Ezekiel 3; Galatians 6:1; Mark 16:15). This is also a requirement of Christian love (I Corinthians 13:6).

7. **OUR POSITION:** The Scout Oath is a **real oath**, not merely a solemn promise. It is a sinful oath in that it is unnecessary and unauthorized in Holy Scripture, emphasizes the honor of the natural man, and uses the name of God in vain.

OUR REASON FOR THIS POSITION: As to the first point, we note that Scouting itself, in all its literature before us, calls it an “**oath**.” The only exception to this that we have found is in the pamphlet “*Scouting in the Lutheran Church*,” which was prepared not directly by The Boy Scouts of America, but by the American Federation of Lutheran Brotherhoods, Chicago, for the purpose of introducing Scouting into Lutheran churches (See pages 12 & 13). Here the claim is made: “The Boy Scout ‘oath’ or ‘pledge’ is a promise, not an oath in the Scriptural sense of the term.” But the only reason given for this claim is: “The upraised hand, with three fingers extended, has reference to the threefold pledge, not to the Trinity.” This claim is plainly ridiculous in view of the fact that Scouting itself has purposely decided to call it, and has continued through the years to call it, an “**oath**,” obviously to make it more binding upon the boys than a mere pledge or promise would be. The fact that the Trinity is neither mentioned nor symbolized does not make it something different than an oath. Is the Trinity mentioned in connection with oaths required by the government? In fact, the use of the word “oath” is given by Webster as follows: “A solemn appeal to God, or to a sacred or revered person or sanction (as the Bible, the temple, the altar) by way of attesting the truth of one’s word, the inviolability of a promise, etc.” In the case of the Scout Oath, the revered person is apparently the Scout himself, for the Oath reads as follows: “The Scout Oath: On my honor I will do my best: To do my duty to God and my country; to obey the Scout Law; to help other people at all times; to keep myself physically strong, mentally awake, and morally straight.” The Bible also speaks of oaths taken upon other people and other things than God Himself. “*Neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black*” (Matthew 5:36).

The Scout Oath is sinful first of all because it is an *unnecessary* oath; it is not authorized by Holy Scripture or required by the government. As we confess in our *Catechism*, Question 40, an oath is not sinful when it is required by the government or when it is really necessary for the glory of God or the welfare of our neighbor (Matthew 26:63-64; Deuteronomy 6:13; Genesis 24:3; II Corinthians 1:23). In such cases, the Lord requires us to take an oath, saying: “Thou shalt fear the Lord, thy God, and serve Him, and shalt swear by His name” (Deuteronomy 6:13). In other cases, such as in the organization of the Boy Scouts, which does not exist by divine ordinance, as does the government, He says, “*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*” (Matthew 5:34-37).

The emphasis upon the honor and integrity of natural man is also sinful. The Scout oath is intended not for Christians only, but for all boys of all faiths – in short, also, or perhaps chiefly, for the natural man, one who has not been born again as God’s child by faith in Christ Jesus. God has indeed honored us in Christ. But man by nature has no honor or integrity before God. *“They are all gone aside, they are all together become filthy; there is none that doeth good, no, not one”* (Psalm 14:3). Even the Christian must confess with Isaiah: *“We are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags”* (Isaiah 64:6). Note also the publican in the Temple, Luke 18:13.

Although the Scout oath is not taken upon God’s name but upon one’s own honor, the name of God is used in the oath and used in vain; for, as pointed out in our 5th thesis, the very reference in Scouting to “God” as any god is itself idolatrous.

8. OUR POSITION: Scouting’s teaching on the subject of good works before God, or moral righteousness, is contrary to Scripture, being SELF-righteous. Specifically, it teaches that one can do good works in the sight of “God” without having the saving faith in Christ, merely by the law; that moral righteousness is the work of man himself, not of the Holy Spirit of God; and it presents fleshly, selfish motives, not the glory of God and love of Christ, as the reason for doing good works.

OUR REASON FOR THIS POSITION: Scouting teaches not a mere civic righteousness, (See Matthew 5:20 and remarks under our 4th thesis, p. 2) but righteousness or good works in the sight of God. The Scout Oath reads: “...I promise to do...my duty to God...” Yet it makes this a requirement both of the believing Christian and the unbeliever alike, stating also that such righteousness can be accomplished by both alike. Scouting teaches: “The final test of a good Scout is in his doing of daily good turns.... A Good turn is an extra kindness and service — something more than what courtesy and good manners would do” (*Handbook for Boys*, 1943 Ed., p. 25). “Color and religious beliefs are no basis for judging a man.... By living up to the Scout Oath and Scout Law, by doing good to your fellowman, you are doing your duty to God” (*Handbook for Boys*, 1948 Ed., p. 39). In contrast to this, Scripture teaches: “*Jesus answered them, and said, My doctrine is not Mine, but His that sent Me. If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of Myself*” (John 7:16-17). “*What shall we do, that we might work the works of God? Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on Him whom He hath sent*”(John 6:28-29). “*I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless, I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me. I do not frustrate the grace of God; for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain*” (Galatians 2:20-21). “*They that are in the flesh cannot please God*” (Romans 8:8). “*Without faith it is impossible to please Him*” (Hebrews 11:6; John 15:5).

Scouting teaches also that moral righteousness is the work of man himself, not of the Spirit of God. The Scout Oath reads, “...I promise...to keep

myself...morally straight.” “By keeping this inspiring guide [the Scout Law] before each individual boy from the minute he is received into Scouting, ...the wise Scoutmaster is able to instill into each individual boy a desire to help others and a yearning to do his utmost to keep himself ‘physically strong, mentally awake, and morally straight’” (*Handbook for Scoutmasters*, p. 249). “The real secret of doing Good Turns is in an attitude of mind” (*Handbook for Boys*, 1943 Ed., p. 25). “You have it in your power to make the right sort of track in your brain that will determine how you will act. Every boy can say to himself, ‘I will be what I want to be.’” (*Handbook for Boys*, 1948, p. 25). In contrast to this, Scripture teaches, “*The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned*” (I Corinthians 2:14). “*The carnal mind is enmity against God*” (Romans 8:7). “*No man can say that Jesus is the Lord but by the Holy Ghost*” (I Corinthians 12:3). “*We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them*” (Ephesians 2:10). “*Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me*” (Psalm 51:10).

Scouting’s motives for good works are fleshly and selfish. Nevertheless, in describing these motives, Scouting boasts of how unselfish and thoughtful of others a Scout is. Scouting teaches, “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” (*Handbook for Boys*, 1943 Ed., p. 25). “The Scout promise to do a Good Turn daily means that, like the ancient knight, the Scout helps others as he would want them to help him—but does it with no thought of return—just for the pleasure of doing it as a good citizen” (*Handbook for Boys*, 1948 Ed., p. 109). “The knot in the Scout Badge is a symbol of your Good Turn, and you tie a knot in your Scout neckerchief to remind you to do it” (*Handbook for Boys*, 1948, p. 30). NOTE also the system of awards of merit, the “Court of Honor,” the various ranks such as Tenderfoot, First Class, Second Class, Eagle, Life, Senior Scout, Scoutmaster, etc., and particularly the religious awards: *Ad Altare Dei* for Catholic, *God and Country* for Protestant, *Pro Deo et Patria* for Lutheran, and *Ner Tamid* for Jewish. (See “Merit Badge Program” – *Handbook for Boys*, 1948 Ed., pp. 420-445). In contrast to all of this, Scripture teaches, “*I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies and of all the truth which Thou hast showed unto Thy servant*” (Genesis 32:10). Contrast also the “I” of the Pharisee in the temple with the humility of the Publican: “*And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful unto me a sinner*” (Luke 18:13). “*Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility; for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble. Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time*” (I Peter 5:5-6). Speaking precisely of our duty both to God and to our fellow man, St. Paul writes in Colossians 3:17, 23 and 24: “*And whatsoever ye do in word or in deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by Him. ...And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as unto the Lord, and not to men; knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance; for ye serve the Lord Christ.*” Again, I Corinthians 10:31— “*Whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.*” As the glory of God and not our own should be our goal, so also the love of Christ should be our

compelling motive for all good works. *“If ye love Me, keep My commandments”* (John 14:15). *“I speak not by commandment, but by occasion of the forwardness of others, and to prove the sincerity of your love. For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that ye through His poverty might be rich”* (II Corinthians 8:8-9).

9. OUR POSITION: Scouting does not limit its teaching regarding righteousness to moral righteousness for this life, but teaches also a way to eternal salvation in heaven. Its way, however, leads not to heaven but to eternal damnation; for it teaches salvation not by God’s grace, through faith in Christ Jesus, but by virtue of one’s own righteousness, by the deeds of the law.

OUR REASON FOR THIS POSITION: Scouting teaches, “I often think that, when the sun goes down, the world is hidden by a big blanket from the light of heaven; but the stars are little holes pierced in that by those who have done good deeds in this world. The stars are not all the same size; some are big; some are little; and some men have done small deeds, but they have made their hole in the blanket by doing good before they went to heaven. Try and make your hole in the blanket by good works while you are on earth” (*Handbook for Boys*, 1948 Ed., p. 23). Moreover, on page 42 of the same book, the Good Turn of Scouting is compared with the “Bible Story of a Samaritan’s Good Turn.” This parable in Scripture was told by Jesus chiefly for the purpose of showing that the way to eternal life in heaven is NOT by the works of the law, as is pointed out by the words, *“What shall I do to inherit eternal life?”* by Christ’s reference to the Law, and then by His words, *“This do, and thou shalt live,”* which should have made it clear that it is impossible for any man to keep the Law and do his full duty before God. Scouting claims that the Scout does his duty to God, that he does what Christ told the lawyer to do *“to inherit eternal life.”* In contrast to this, Scripture teaches, *“No man is justified by the Law in the sight of God”* (Galatians 3:10). *“For by grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest any man should boast”* (Ephesians 2:8-9). *“And if by grace, then it is no more of works, otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then it is no more grace; other wise work is no more work”* (Romans 11:6). *“Christ is become of no effect unto you whosoever of you are justified by the Law; ye are fallen from grace”* (Galatians 5:4).

10. OUR POSITION: The teaching of Scouting definitely tends to create the impression that the Bible is not the verbally inspired Word of God, but that it is rather one book among many others, a code of morals to be compared with such things as ancient Knighthood and the ideals of the Boy Scout, and that it without question contains error.

OUR REASON FOR THIS POSITION: Scouting teaches, “When people hear the words ‘Good Turn,’ they almost always think of Boy Scouts. Not that the idea of helping others started with Scouts, because, of course, it didn’t — the Bible story of a Samaritan’s Good Turn is known to millions, as are the adventures of King Arthur’s Knights bringing help to those in distress. But in

this modern world, people do associate the words ‘Good Turn’ with Scouts” (*Handbook for Boys*, 1948 Ed., p. 42). Regarding the Scout being courteous, we are told, “The caveman was all right in his day. He squatted beside the fire, snatched his lump of meat, pulled it apart with his hands and teeth. If he saw anything he wanted, he grabbed it. If someone was in his way, he knocked him down. But who wants a caveman around today?...” (*Handbook for Boys*, 1948 Ed., p. 33). If this is intended for the boys to believe, and it is presented here not as a theory, but as a fact, then it also surely means to convey the thought that Boy Scouts should not believe the account of Creation and of early man as presented in the Bible. According to the Bible, the very first man and woman were civilized, in fact “*very good*” as they came from the hands of their Creator (Genesis 1:31). The fourth chapter of Genesis also shows that the very first generations after Adam were dwellers in tents, tillers of the soil, shepherds, artisans in iron and brass, and musicians. As to the teachings of Scouting disparaging the truthfulness of Scripture in the minds of its boys, compare also all the things in Scouting which conflict directly with the teachings of Holy Scripture, as presented in our examination.

11. OUR POSITION: Scouting has in its program all the essential, objectionable features of the antichristian lodges. It is therefore a kind of junior lodge, which conditions boys to find little or nothing wrong in affiliating with the lodges when they have reached manhood.

OUR REASONS FOR THIS POSITION: The lodge (we refer especially to Free-Masonry) requires its members to believe in “God,” any god; it is open to “Christian,” Jew, Moslem, and many others who acknowledge a supreme being. Scouting professes and requires belief in exactly the same kind of “God” (See our Fifth Thesis.). The Lodge is unionistic, bringing people of varying faiths into one so-called “brotherhood” and conducting unionistic services, etc. Scouting does likewise (See our Sixth Thesis.). The Lodge requires sinful oaths of its members. Scouting does likewise (See our Seventh Thesis.). The Lodge teaches and practices the same kind of moral righteousness as does Scouting (See our Eighth Thesis.). The Lodge deliberately avoids the name of Christ as the Son of God and Savior of the world and teaches salvation apart from faith in Him by a man’s own works of righteousness. Scouting does likewise (See our Theses Five and Nine.).

The Lodge does not regard the Bible as the verbally inspired Word of God and His only revealed Truth; it uses the Bible together with and on the same basis (plain) with the Koran and other so-called “sacred books.” Scouting does practically the same (See our Tenth Thesis, and our reference in our Sixth Thesis to the service held in the summer of 1953 for Protestants, Catholics, Jews, and Buddhists alike.). Scouting requires its members to reverence even a Buddhist for believing the teachings of Buddha as a true Christian believes the Bible. The advancement of lodge members from one degree to another bears much similarity to the advancement in Scouting (See our Eighth Thesis, last paragraph of reasons.). Even such externals as the grip of Masonry, the pass-words, the insignia of square and compass, and the regalia are essentially similar to the

hand-shake, the three-finger sign, the fleur-de-lis badge, and the uniform of Scouting (See “Signs of a Scout,” chapter 3, p. 44 ff., *Handbook for Boys*, 1948 Ed.).

12. OUR POSITION: Because of what we have pointed out regarding Scouting in all of the foregoing theses and the reasons therefor, boys who join the organization, parents who permit their boys to do so, and churches which sponsor Scout troops or which take a non-committal attitude toward Scouting, sin against the only True God, against the clear teachings of His Word, against Christ Jesus, the only Savior of men, and against His Holy Spirit. And any and all such should without delay sincerely repent of this sin; for, if any should continue and persist in this sin willfully and against better knowledge, they would not be Christians and heirs of salvation.

OUR REASONS FOR THIS POSITION: *“Sin is the transgression of the Law”* (I John 3:4). *“For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse; for it is written, Cursed is everyone that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them”* (Galatians 3:10). *“Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us; for it is written, Cursed is everyone that hangeth on a tree”* (Galatians 3:13). *“For God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life”* (John 3:16). *“Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out”* (Acts 3:19). *“Repent and believe the Gospel”* (Mark 1:15). *“Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance”* (Matthew 3:8). *“Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which He hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, His flesh; and having an High Priest over the house of God; let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for He is faithful that promised;) and let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as ye see the day approaching. For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries. He that despised Moses’ law died without mercy under two or three witnesses. Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace? ... It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God ... Now the just shall live by faith; but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him. But we are not of them who draw back into perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul”* (Hebrews 10:19-29; 31; 38-39).

—H. D. M.

NOTE: While the above tract is over fifty years old, its representation of the program and position of *Scouting*, particularly of the *Boy Scouts of America* as an organization, is still accurate inasmuch as the program and position are *essentially* unchanged. In some matters, the verbiage contained in earlier editions of the *Handbook for Boys* and other *BSA* documents has been “moderated” or, quite frankly, “watered down” to make it more acceptable to theological accommodationists. Nevertheless, careful examination and comparison of the earlier statements with their later counterparts show that what we found objectionable BACK THEN on the basis of Scripture is still “very much alive” in the 21st Century scouting movement. A glaring example is to be found on the current website of the *Boy Scouts of America*, on its page entitled, “Scouting for Lutheran Youth.” The page presents the collusion achieved between the larger Lutheran bodies and the *Boy Scouts of America* in making so-called “religious growth programs provided for Lutheran youth in Scouting” part of the church’s “ministry” to children and adolescents and in “encouraging Lutheran congregations to use the program and resources of the Boy Scouts of America as a means of extending their ministry..., to promote the use of unit and camp chaplains and chaplain aides,” etc.

Scouting **continues** to be a **religious organization** with religious requirements, tenets, and even forms of worship (hymns, prayers, benedictions, etc.) which **continues** to teach, foster, and promote universalism, syncretism, anti-Trinitarianism, justification through sanctification, character building apart from Christian faith, spiritual life disassociated from the rule of Scripture and without the Gospel as the motivating and enabling power to lead a Godpleasing life, perfectionism in sanctification, and blatant religious unionism, among other false and pernicious ideas and teachings.

The following brief BIBLIOGRAPHY of current materials, chiefly from the official handbooks and manuals of the Scouting organizations themselves, provides ample evidence to support our description and characterization of their program and to demonstrate that the objections we voiced in the fifties are still valid today.

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There you have it, brethren! The position which was held by our Conference when we were still known as the Orthodox Lutheran Conference in the early 50's and which Scriptural position, by God's grace, we still hold. May our dear heavenly Father grant us the necessary courage to hold aloft His Word of Life in the midst of a crooked and perverse world for Jesus' sake!
