

# Quotations from LCMS Conventions Regarding Scouting

1944

1944 Proceedings (p. 257):

The Bureau of Information was given authority jointly with the Board for Young People's Work to devote further study to the matter of Boy Scouts, with the object in view of removing "dissimilar practice in our midst concerning Boy Scout troops under a Lutheran scoutmaster." Under these instructions your 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. Moreover, a Lutheran Committee on Scouting has issued a manual entitled *Scouting in the Lutheran Church*, which definitely claims for the pastors and congregations the sole and unrestricted right of the Lutheran church committee (of which the local pastor is understood to be a member) to control everything of a religious nature that is to be superimposed upon the official scout program. In a letter to the Committee, Chief Scout Executive Elbert K. Fretwell writes from Scout headquarters:

"We recognize that there is no Boy Scout authority which supersedes the authority of the local Pastor and the Congregation in any phase of the program affecting the spiritual welfare of Lutheran men and boys in Scouting, and the purpose of this Lutheran Manual is to guide the local Pastor and Congregation in their efforts to supplement the Scout Program with the spiritual program of the Church."

Accordingly, your Committee believes that the matter of scouting should be left to the individual congregation to decide and that under the circumstances Synod may consider her interests sufficiently protected.

The Bureau of Information

Paul G. Bretscher, O. F. Engelbrecht, Theodore Graebner

1944 Proceedings (p. 258):

## ACTION

Concerning lodges and the Boy Scout question, Committee 7 submitted the following recommendations, which were adopted:

1. We heartily commend the members of Synod's Bureau of Information on Secret Societies, composed of Dr. Paul G. Bretscher, Rev. O. F. Engelbrecht, and Dr. Theo. Graebner, for the valuable services rendered to our Church and encourage them to continue in their splendid work.
2. We recommend that Synod authorize the Board of Directors to supply the necessary clerical help to carry on this work.

3. Since a concerted effort is made to stimulate declining lodge membership, and since new lodges are in the process of organization and undoubtedly will in the postwar period, such as secret societies for servicemen's mothers, etc., we urge all pastors and officials to be vigilant and to carry out Synod's resolutions of 1929 and 1932.

4. We recommend Synod's approval of the joint action of your Bureau of Information on Secret Societies and Board for Young People's Work with regard to Scouting.

5. We recommend that the Bureau of Information on Secret Societies issue a loose-leaf folder containing pertinent information on lodges and issue supplements whenever new information is available and supply all pastors with this material.

6. We also ask all pastors and laymen to gather information on lodges and transmit such information to our Bureau of Information on Secret Societies.

1947

1947 Proceedings (pp. 538-540):

## A Committee to Restudy Question re Boy Scouts

(Memorial 617)

WHEREAS, Our Synod's Bureau of Information and its Board for Young People's Work reported to Synod in 1944 that it was "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"; and

WHEREAS, Our Synod's Bureau of Information and its Board for Young People's Work state in their report to Synod: "A Lutheran Committee on Scouting (of the American Lutheran Church, the Augustana Synod, the Lutheran Free Church, the Missouri Synod [the Rev. Theo. Graebner, Rev. E. L. Roschke, Prof. O. H. Theiss, and Mr. W. F. Weiherman], the Norwegian Lutheran Church, the United Lutheran Church, and the American Federation of Lutheran Brotherhoods) has issued a manual entitled *Scouting in the Lutheran Church*, which definitely claims for the pastors and congregations the sole and unrestricted right of the Lutheran Church Committee (of which the local pastor is understood to be a member) to control everything of a religious nature that is to be superimposed upon the official Scout program"; and

WHEREAS Our Synod in 1944 in its Convention at Saginaw, Mich., adopted this report of our Bureau of Information and our Board for Young People's Work, thereby approving their statements and also the Manual *Scouting in the Lutheran Church* for use in the congregations of our Synod; and

Whereas, The Boy Scouts are not a purely secular organization, but must be regarded as one having also a moral, even a religious program, in view of the following statements: "The Scout Movement firmly insists that every man (and every boy) to come

into his largest self and largest usefulness must have an active part in things religious and spiritual. Belief in God? Of course. Obedience to His basic Ten Commandments and His larger command to brotherhood? Of course — But more than these. The real man keeps himself in conscious harmony with God and with God's other creatures, his fellowmen, and in active participation with the Church" (*Handbook for Boys*, page 108), and,

"Every educational system implies a philosophy; every institution has its own spirit, or better, its soul, by which it lives and expresses itself. The soul of Scouting, its vital principle and its living expression is the Scout Promise and the Scout Law" (*Scouting in the Lutheran Church*, page 6); and

WHEREAS, The Boy Scouts through their Scout oath ("I will do my duty to God") demand recognition of a God without specifying whether it is the only true God, Father, Son and Holy Ghost, and thereby encourage reverence of any God, and religious indifference; and

WHEREAS, The motivation for doing one's duty to God ("on my honor") is not Scriptural ("the life which I now live I live by the faith of the Son of God," Gal. 2:20); and

WHEREAS, According to the Scout program the means for development of character is not the Gospel (Rom. 8:7; Rom. 1:16), but the Law (the Scout oath and Law); and

WHEREAS, The Scout Law ("a Scout is trustworthy, a Scout is obedient, etc.") is not the language of a Christian, but is un-Scriptural and tends to self-righteousness; and

WHEREAS, The statement of Scoutism: "The Church is the divinely appointed agency through which men are helped to keep close to God," is a perversion of the Biblical doctrine of the Church, recognizing any and all churches, regardless of what they may teach; and

WHEREAS, Every Lutheran boy who is a member of the Boy Scouts identifies himself with the erroneous views set forth in their official publication and helps to propagate them; and

WHEREAS, The statement in the manual Scouting in the Lutheran Church: "Scouting activities must be carried on in such a way that Scouting shall not be placed in the position of competing with any other agency for the boys' loyalty, but, on the contrary, Scouting should supplement the Church school and other organizations in aiding the Church in her efforts to help the boy lead a true, Christian life," cannot remain unchallenged since it declares the program provided by the educational agencies of our Church as inadequate and deficient;

Therefore the undersigned petition Synod to appoint a committee which shall restudy the report of our Bureau of Information and the Board for Young People's Work, made to our Synod in 1944, and to report their findings to our next convention.

H.J.Eggold,Sr. Fr.F.Seixe C.A.Hardt

### ACTION

Regarding this memorial and Unprinted Memorial 6 by the Committee on Church Union, Wisconsin Synod, Committee

7 brought in its report, which was adopted in the following, amended form:

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

Whereas The Synodical Conference has requested its constituent synods to restudy their respective position with regard to the Boy Scouts; therefore be it

**RESOLVED, That the President of Synod appoint three men who, in conjunction with the Bureau of Information and the Board for Young People's Work, shall restudy the matter and report to the next convention.**

## 1950

### 1950 Proceedings (p. 316):

#### Boy Scouts

Your Board [Board of Young People's Work], following the instruction of Synod, has also concerned itself with Scouting in the Lutheran Church, particularly in the Missouri Synod. However, since a special committee appointed by the President of Synod is reporting to Synod, no further mention need be made here of this work. It will perhaps be of interest to mention that the latest synodical figures reveal that there are in the Missouri Synod 265 Boy Scout Troops and 65 Cub Packs. Sixty-six Scouts have received the *Pro Deo et Patria* award.

### 1950 Proceedings (pp. 524-525):

#### Joint Report on Scouting

At its Saginaw Convention (1944) Synod adopted this policy with regard to Scouting, as recommended by Synod's Bureau of Information and Board for Young People's Work, "That the matter of Scouting should be left to the individual congregation to decide and that under the circumstances Synod may consider her interests sufficiently protected." (Proceedings of 39th Regular Convention, Saginaw, Mich., 1944, pp. 257 and 258.)

In its report to the Centennial Convention (Chicago, July, 1947), the Bureau of Information, after consultation with Synod's Board for Young People's Work, stated: "Nothing has developed that would cause our boards to modify our opinion, endorsed by the 1944 convention." (Proceedings of 40th Regular Convention, p. 646.)

Largely as a result of Memorial 617 (Proceedings, 1947, page 538f.) and an unprinted memorial by the standing Committee on Church Union, Wisconsin Synod, our Synod, in its Chicago Convention, authorized the President of Synod to appoint three men "who, in conjunction with the Bureau of Information and the Board for Young People's Work, shall restudy the matter [of Scouting] and report to the next convention." (Proceedings



of 40th Regular Convention, p. 538f.)

This special committee of three men (John F. Choitz, Felix Kretzschmar, George C. Stohlmann), authorized by Synod and subsequently appointed by the President of Synod, attempted honestly and objectively to perform the task assigned to it. It studied the official pronouncements of the Boy Scouts of America. It met on three separate occasions in all-day meetings with the Wisconsin Synod Committee on Scouting. It was in correspondence with the authors of Memorial 617 (Proceedings, 1947, p. 538) and others in an attempt to gather together all the factors in the Scout program which might be disturbing our brethren. It solicited other information from additional sources relative to Scouting. It mailed a questionnaire to brethren in whose congregations Scout troops exist, requesting their views and seeking to determine if the operation of the Scout program in their troops presented obstacles that violated Scripture and conscience. The special committee met in a two-day joint meeting with Synod's Bureau of Information and Board for Young People's Work. The Wisconsin Synod Committee on Scouting was invited to be present on one of the two days and attended.

As a result of their joint study of Scouting and on the basis of their findings, the Special Committee authorized by the 1947 convention of Synod, the Bureau of Information, and the Board INTERSYNODICAL AND DOCTRINAL MATTERS 525 for Young People's Work unanimously declare to Synod as their position that in their opinion the policy with regard to Scouting adopted by Synod in 1944 should be sustained.

Special Committee on Scouting

John F. Choitz, Chairman, Felix Kretzschmar, Geo. C. Stohlmann

Bureau of Information

Theodore Graebner, Paul M. Bretscher, J. W. Acker

Board for Young People's Work

Clarence Peters, Gilbert P. Muchow, L. W. Spitz, Homer C. Gruber, Paul W. Jabker

## 1953

1953 Proceedings (pp. 555-556):

### ACTION

Upon recommendation of Committee 7 Synod resolved:  
Resolution 6

WHEREAS, This memorial asks for a clarification of Synod's policy with regard to Scouting; and

WHEREAS, Your Committee is of the opinion that Synod's policy which has been restated in the last three conventions is clear, namely: "That the matter of Scouting should be left to the individual congregation to decide"; and

WHEREAS Synod thus neither encourages nor discourages

Scoutism in any congregation; and

WHEREAS, Synod thus leaves it to each congregation to establish its own policy as pastoral wisdom on the part of both the congregation and the ministry in its own particular situation dictates; therefore be it

RESOLVED, That for the peculiar problem which exists in the petitioning congregation we recommend to them the services of our official Commission on Fraternal Organizations; and be it further

RESOLVED, That Synod urge its congregation to avoid extremes in either direction in the matter of Scoutism lest consciences be burdened.

## 1959

1959 Proceedings (pp. 269-270):

### Synod's Position with Reference to Certain Statements in the Official Scout Regulations

RESOLUTION 4, COMMITTEE 7

Memorial 607, pages 500—502, Reports and Memorials

WHEREAS, and unqualified yes or no; and

Whereas, Synod has for several decades made extensive and careful studies of the problems underlying these questions and has definitely formulated its findings in the resolution adopted by the 1944 convention; and

Whereas, The Commission on Fraternal Organizations, the Board for Young People's Work, and the Committee on Doctrinal Unity have since 1944 repeatedly dealt with the issues raised in said memorial and have always come to the conclusion that the policy adopted by Synod in 1944 is sound and realistic; therefore be it

Resolved, That we reaffirm the position taken by Synod in 1944 and restated in subsequent conventions "that the matter of scouting should be left to the individual congregation to decide, and that under the circumstances Synod may consider her interests sufficiently protected" (Proceedings, 1944, page 257); and be it further

Resolved, That if the signers of said memorial wish to pursue the matter any further, we respectfully refer them to Synod's Committee on Doctrinal Unity.

### ACTION

This resolution was adopted.

