The Scout Law in Practice



Chapter XVIII A Scout is Reverent

"A scout is reverent. He is reverent toward God. He is faithful to his religious duties and respects the convictions of others in matters of custom and religion."

It is better to go through life looking up to things that we love and respect, because they are better than ourselves, than to go through life looking down upon ideas and people as inferior to ourselves.

This is a statement of two extremes, and almost every one's outlook lies somewhere between them. When we go through life with the habit of respect for wise ideas and good people, we do it because we feel the value of the wise ideas that make good people strong and reliable. It is not that we want to curry favor with these people, or that we want them to think well of us, so much as it is that we lov the effect of strength and happiness that an upright spirit brings with it, and we long to get possession of their secret for ourselves. If we are earnest and persistent in this matter, we shall find out that such strong people are much the same as we are, except for the fact that they have done more work in conquering their selfish tendencies, and so have acquired a greater power in the service of what is good.

Men of all religions believe that God is good and the source of all good in human life, an that we are all free to receive goodness from Him just in proportion as we conquer evil and obey His laws. When, therefore, we reverence the good in other people and try our best to live up to it ourselves, we are reverencing God, for obedience is the first point of reverence.

In the same way, although it may be expressed somewhat differently, men of all religions believe that God is the All-true and wise, as well as the All-good, and that all the pure truth in human minds comes from Him. When, therefore, we have respect for the truth and a love for seeing things just as they are in His sight, we are respecting and revering His own Spirit. And when, seeing the truth, and giving up our own prejudices for the sake of it, we work with all our might to carry it out in obedience to His laws, we are living what is called a *spiritual* life, because "God is a *spirit*, and they that worship Him must worship Him in *spirit* and in Truth."

Men who love what is the right can always work together in useful ways and do good work, without regard to the particular and detailed opinions which they associate with their own religion; and it seems unreasonable to expect every one to have the same ideas or opinions about such matters. Men of all the different Christian sects and churches, and of all the other forms of religious belief, may differ from one another honestly in matters of opinion, and yet work together in a common spirit of obedience to God and His law. In the old days, it was considered right to try and force your beliefs on other people by threats and persecutions; but, as people have learned, through their own mistakes, to respect the sincere and honest convictions of those who differ from them, this mutual respect has become more and more an essential part of most religions, and the old ideas of domineering intolerance have very much diminished. It has been found out that religion flourishes most where intolerance does not exist at all.

Loyalty to that form of religion from which we receive the most help to keep us straight is an important duty under the scout law, and it is a violation of that law to try and proselytize, or draw off any one from his own church or peculiar form of religious observance. There is room for all honest and sincere religious beliefs in the Boy Scout Organization, and it is recommended that troops be formed in

connection with churches, as well as other organizations, under the direction of the parish priest or minister, with such spiritual advisers and under such conditions as they may provide.

There is no room in the Boy Scout Organization, however, for the spirit of intolerance which does not recognize the right of every man to his own convictions in matters of religion, and therefore we should exercise the greatest care and consideration in not doing or saying anything which might hurt the feelings of other people in matters which to them are sacred.

When we go through life looking out for things that are better than we are, and act from their influence as fast as we recognize and appreciate their goodness and beauty, we ourselves are constantly growing toward that good, as we bravely put away the weak and evil things that become more clear to us by contrast; when, on the other hand, we are absorbed by a sense of our own superiority, or, in other words, "suffer the swelled head," we shut out from our minds the possibility of reverence and form the habit of contempt in its place. As has been said before, there is nothing more belittling and destructive in the world than the habit of contempt; when much indulged in, it ends by acting like a boomerang, and the scoffer finds himself ultimately discouraged and forlorn. For contempt, like other and more obvious vices, ends by losing all its attractions and finally turning on itself.

Reverence toward God and everything that is good corresponds, in a way, to courtesy toward all people whom God has placed within our reach. It was said in the chapter on "A Scout is Courteous" that true courtesy brings with it a cheerful happiness that combines with the dignity of service. We may say in the same way that reverence brings with it a deep and lasting joy associated with appreciation and gratitude for all the great and lovely things of life.



