

## Christian Love in Scouting

Christ laid down for us in the simplest possible terms what our religion should be, namely:

1. To love God.
2. To love our neighbour.

These are above the “law and the prophets”, above rituals and denominations.

*How to inculcate the Spirit.* The point for us Scouters is to see how this basic spirit can be infused into the young people.

Identical methods are not applicable to both old and young alike. To a considerable extent a boy gains the right spirit through right action, whereas with the man action is inspired by the spirit.

So we encourage in the Cub, and continue in the Scout, the practice of doing good turns, and thus through *Action* the *Spirit* of helpfulness becomes developed in him; ultimately as a Rover and a man he is inspired by the *Spirit* to undertake sacrifice and *Service*.

A boy learns by practice, not by precept. To love is to him merely a state of mind, whereas its expression, namely, to render service, is something he can *do*.

So for the young we have to translate the spirit of religion into practical acts. For this reason in the Scout Law and promise we give in place of the abstract idea “*Love God*” the positive equivalent, “*Do your duty to God*”. And for the abstract “*Love your neighbour*” the positive equivalent, “*Help other people at all times*”.

*Conception of God.* To know his duty to God some appreciation of God is needed

by the boy. As a step to this we turn to nature lore. For this, among other reasons, we make Woodcraft the special feature of the Scout training.

Through observation of the wonders, the daily miracles, the order and the beauties of nature around them, young people gain more readily a conception of God as a beneficent Creator, and they get to realise their own position and part in the universal scheme of things.

The sex questions thus become easy of explanation and are given a sanctified position in the adolescent mind.

*Duty of Kindness.* In recognising their position as comrades with God’s other creatures, young people can realise that it is their duty to

extend their protection and goodwill to animals. A gentle spirit of kindness is thus developed which, once established, readily expands itself into his attitude towards his fellow-men. The spark of Love is kindled.

If one omits the Law “a friend to animals” one drops not only the basic training for human goodwill, but also the very important link which in the youthful mind would unite God the Creator with God who is Love.

*The Soul.* There is in every human individual the germ of Love, the “bit of God”, as the soul has been termed, which, if its expression is encouraged, will develop till it permeates the character of the boy. Love, once started in the boy, is never likely to die down in the man; its tendency is to go on increasing, until it permeates its whole being

*Robert Baden-Powell*  
(1857-1941)

*Founder of the Scout*

*Mouvement*

*from “Jamboree”*

*July 1928.*

and its every action: till, in fact, it gives him the higher happiness of finding heaven here on earth, and brings his being on to the plane of association with God and immortality.

In the Scout training we develop the element of this Love through expression by friendship with animals and good turns to other people.

*Active Love and Christianity.* For the true spirit of Love, good nature is not enough. A man may be selfishness itself and yet be good-natured. We want to make our boys active Christians rather than passive church-goers or, what is even worse, dullards without a spark of spiritual thought or guidance.

*Our aim should be to develop Love through service for others, to the extent of out-balancing the service of self.*

For its development the boy would be encouraged to practise honesty and honour in business, chivalry to women and large-

minded Brotherhood with mankind. He could be led ultimately to practice habitually some form of social service side by side with his daily work or profession. Beginning in small items, this would lead as he grew up in power and experience to his helping to raise the standard of living for the poorer masses round him.

Almost any boy, including the boy in the slums, can be brought to regard Christ as his hero provided that Christ is presented to him in a way that appeals to boy nature: not so much a pathetic figure as one of manliness, courage, chivalry, humour, humility, and even of very human indignation (with the money changers).

With Christ as his hero, the boy can be encouraged, in what he says and does, especially when in a difficulty, to think to himself: "What would Christ have done?", and do the same as nearly as he can.