



# BULLETIN of THE NORTH TEXAS CHURCH OF FREETHOUGHT

The Fellowship Of Unbelievers

25 YEARS OLD !

Beginning Religion Over Again Since 1994

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## GOD: THE PLANK IN THE SCOUTS' EYE

Robert Stephenson Smyth Baden-Powell (1857-1941) was a British army officer who served in India and Africa from 1876 to 1910. He wrote books about his experiences including Aids To Scouting in 1899 which unexpectedly gained a following with youth and educators. In 1908 it was rewritten as Scouting for Boys. It incorporated ideas of American artist and writer Ernest Thompson Seton (1860-1946) who had founded the Woodcraft Indians in 1902 in Connecticut, “woodcraft” meaning familiarity with the outdoors. Seton's efforts caught on and in 1906 he traveled to England where he met Baden-Powell and gave him a copy of his 1902 book Birch Bark Roll of the Woodcraft Indians which extolled and explained “the outdoor life” of “liv[ing] nearest to the ground.”

In August of 1907, Baden-Powell held a camping event at Brownsea Island in Poole Harbor on the southern coast of England. This is generally regarded as the beginning of the worldwide Scouting movement. Seton helped to found the Boy Scouts of America, was its Chief Scout and wrote the first edition of the Boy Scout Manual in 1910.

Scouting, as Baden-Powell wrote in Scouting for Boys:

“... is merely a suggestion thrown out at a venture for a jolly outdoor recreation, which has been found to form also a practical aid to education. It may be taken to be complementary to school training, and capable of filling up certain chinks unavoidable in the ordinary school curriculum. It is, in a word, a school of citizenship through woodcraft. The subjects of instruction with which it fills the chinks are individual efficiency through development of Character, Health, and Handicraft in the individual, and in Citizenship through this employment of this efficiency in Service.”

Nevertheless, Scouting – as with many elements of society and culture – has encountered controversy. These have involved God, Gays, Girls and Gender.

There were 26 mentions of “God” in the 1908 Scouting for Boys, none of which are serious theology. They refer to “loyalty” and “duty to God,” “God's air,” “the wonderful work of God” in nature and “the study of God in Nature,” thanking “God,” “prayer with God,” and advise exercise for health because (quoting a line from a poem by the 17<sup>th</sup> Century English poet John Dryden) “God never made his work for man to mend,” and so on. But in Chapter 22 on “Self Improvement” there is this:

“No man is much good unless he believes in God and obeys His laws. So every Scout should have a religion. Religion seems a very simple thing: First: Love and serve God. Second: Love and serve your neighbour.”

By the 7<sup>th</sup> edition, though, the third to fifth sentences are dropped and the following added:

“There are many kinds of religion, such as Roman Catholics, Protestants, Jews, Mohammedans, and so on, but the main point about them is that they all worship God, although in different ways. They are like an army which serves one king, though it is divided into different branches, such as cavalry, artillery, and infantry, and these wear different uniforms. So, when you meet a boy of a different religion from your own, you should not be hostile to him, but recognise that he is still serving the same king as you.”

Such ecumenism that goes so far as to include even Jews and Muslims may seem commendable. But anyone familiar with the religions of the world and their adherents will realize how absurd

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this is. If even Christian ecumenism were possible it would already have happened. Baden-Powell also extolled medieval knights while ignoring their slaughter of Muslims as well as Jesus' warning that "all they who take the sword shall perish with the sword." [Matthew 26:52]

The Boy Scouts of America did finally begin allowing gays, transsexuals, and, as of 2017, girls into its membership. It is even changing its name to Scouts BSA. Yet it continues to exclude atheists. At its annual meeting in 2018, the Scouts' National Executive Board even passed a resolution asserting:

"The recognition of God as the ruling and leading power in the universe and the grateful acknowledgement of His favors and blessings are necessary to the best type of citizenship ... faith-based tenets have been a part of the Boy Scouts of America since it was founded and, notwithstanding any changes to Scouting programs, the commitment of the movement to Duty to God is unwavering."

It does no credit to the Scouts to cite Baden-Powell's vision as being founded on his strong – though confused and fatuous "liberal" – ideas about "God" and religion. He asserted many other ridiculous things such as that color-blindness, a known genetic condition,

"can sometimes be overcome. A way of doing this ... is to get a collection of little bits of wool, or paper, of different colours, and pick out which you think is red, blue, yellow, green, and so on, and then get someone to tell you where you were right and where wrong. Then go at it again, and in time you will find yourself improving, until you have no difficulty in recognising the colours."

It is to be hoped that the Scouts' exclusion of atheists will eventually be abandoned. The Scouts' claimed devotion to high ethical standards demands it. The current policy is divisive and disrespectful, the exact opposite of the Scouts' claimed values. If "duty to God" can mean different things to different people then so can "God." Even the 16<sup>th</sup> Century Reformationist Martin Luther recognized that:

"Whatever your heart clings to and confides in, that is really your God."

It would not betray Scouting's principles to accept that atheists, too, serve something higher than themselves, namely the standards of reason and intellectual honesty in their belief that "God" is an imaginative fiction of human culture.

**All NTCOF events can be found through our website calendar, or our meetup page, from which you can RSVP, at: - [www.meetup.com/church-of-freethought](http://www.meetup.com/church-of-freethought) - JOIN THE NTCOF MEETUP GROUP !!!**

**Social Luncheon:** Today, immediately after our Service, join us for lunch and discussion at the Jason's Deli on MacArthur Blvd just south of I-635, at 7707 N MacArthur Blvd, phone (972) 432-0555.

**Freethought Salon:** Discuss today's service topic or other conundrums on most non-first Sundays of the month, over breakfast/coffee (or not)(and you can bring whatever you want to eat!), in the atrium – usually towards the back – of the Embassy Suites DFW Airport North – on Bass Pro Drive in Grapevine beginning at 10:00 AM.

**Game Night:** Most Friday nights at the IHOP on 2310 Stemmons Trail (I-35), near Northwest Highway (Loop 12). Plan to arrive at about 7:30 PM, and stay late playing Imperial 2030, Dominion, Terraforming Mars, Le Havre, Caverna, and other fun games!

**Have Another Idea?** Email or call! Read bulletins, articles and post on the FORUM under SERVICES at [www.churchoffreethought.org](http://www.churchoffreethought.org) LIKE US at [facebook.com/northtexaschurchoffreethought/](https://www.facebook.com/northtexaschurchoffreethought/) and sign up for our Twitter feed at [www.twitter.com/ntcof/](https://www.twitter.com/ntcof/) !

## **PLANNED FOR NEXT MONTH "GRATITUDE FOR FREETHINKERS"**

**> Sunday, November 3, 2019 <  
HERE at the Hawthorn Suites DFW  
Airport North 10:30 AM**

**THANK YOU !!  
FOR YOUR TIME and  
FINANCIAL SUPPORT  
of the NTCOF !!  
It is needed, appreciated  
and Tax-Deductible !**

### **The North Texas Church of Freethought The Fellowship of Unbelievers**

Pastor (It's a job description, not a title!)..Tim Gorski  
Presenters.....Guest RANDALL HOENIG & Tim Gorski  
Social Media Czar.....Aaron Kelton  
Welcome Coordinator.....Mark Barnick  
Videographer.....John Gauthier  
Webpage Management.....Saturn Consulting

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