



Scouting, and Spiritual Development

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SCOUTING AND SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT

This reference document shows how through its principles, method, activities, group life, etc., Scouting creates an atmosphere that is conducive to the search for inner peace and truth. In so doing, Scouting seeks to contribute to the development of young people who are strong in their convictions yet who are open and tolerant, firm in their faith while respectful of the faiths of others - far away from fanaticism. In view of the widespread indifference to religion and invasive materialism, the importance of this is obvious.

This reference document is the culmination of a long process which has involved volunteer Scout leaders in many countries, as well as key people in other youth organizations and religions.

We began our research with a number of questions:

- ▼What is the religious/spiritual ?world? of today?s youth? How do they perceive it? Is it an essential or a peripheral element in their lives?
- ▼What was the role of spiritual development in Baden-Powell?s thinking? What place did it have?

- What role has spiritual development played in the history of Scouting? What are the World Conference resolutions on the subject, the salient facts, the difficulties?
- What are the implications of these on institutional issues? How has the Movement been organized to meet its educational aims and obligations?
- What are the future trends, for religions as such and their impact on the world and for the Scout Movement?

The document endeavours to show the extraordinary strength of the Scout method in promoting and enriching the spiritual dimension in young people. It tries also to answer a pertinent question that has been asked many times: does WOSM have, in actual fact, ?a religious policy? as such?

The introduction defines the aim of the document and proposes some definitions: What is development? What is education? What is the difference? and What is the relationship between religion and spirituality?

Then the document comprises four main parts:

1. Young people today and the religious/spiritual dimension: a rapid survey around the continents; some fundamental questions on the major religions and streams of spiritual thought in the world today; some notes on the religious/spiritual world of young people today; spiritual perception versus superficiality; etc.
2. Spiritual/religious development in Baden-Powell's thinking: spiritual development is not an added dimension; importance of education versus instruction; the importance of nature in the edcational process and in spiritual development; the spiritual dimension should be a unifying factor in Scouting, not a divisive one; etc.
3. The spiritual dimension in Scouting, educational and legal consequences in the history of the Movement: pedagogy of the Scout Movement; the question of "Duty to God" and the alternative promise; declarations of the World Scout Committee and resolutions of the World Scout Conference; and the educational approach of Scouting in the field of spiritual development.
4. Some institutional aspects, such as the religious/spiritual question in the different types of Scout associations; complementary roles vis-à-vis other educational agents; the unity and the independence of the Scout Movement, etc.

In conclusion, the document proposes some pointers for the future: from the geopolitical and cultural points of view, from the

point of view of the Scout Movement, etc.