



Surrender Like a Boy Scout

There has been much written about the Boy Scouts of America's recent acceptance of openly homosexual scout masters. The organization has been raked over the coals by the right and accused of offering only a half-measure by the Left. But few appreciate what the BSA has actually done — and the BSA has no idea what it has done to itself.

Scouting has never been just about tying knots and learning survival skills, but about instilling virtue and building character. And part of having character means standing up for what you believe is right.

Insofar as this goes, no boy will find the “reformed” BSA organization a good role model.

Whether or not you agree with the BSA's recent policy change, this is indisputable. Note that when BSA president (and ex-defense secretary) Robert Gates defended the decision, he spoke of how the ban on homosexual adults was “unsustainable,” said that he had “fear” it would mean the BSA's demise, and spoke about how one couldn't ignore the changing legal landscape and culture (we can only imagine what kinds of policies he'd have felt compelled to adopt in 1936 Germany or the 1925 USSR). There wasn't even a pretense at a moral argument. “Instead, he argues from organizational self-interest — never mind if it is right or wrong.... Duty to God and country? To heck with that — management always has its own priorities,” as *National Review* [put it](#) in a scathing editorial.

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Of course, it isn't hard to figure out that, much like the leper character in *Braveheart*, Gates is a perhaps proud compromiser; he wants to mollify the sexual fascists while tacitly saying to traditionalists, “I don't want to do it, you see; we have to — to survive.” Well, there's a new scout survival skill for you. Perhaps now they'll have courses in political expediency and realpolitik and merit badges in waving white flags and lying prostrate.

It's not that Gates is wrong about the culture's trajectory, the legal challenges or what they portend for the BSA. But the organization was being sued six ways to Sunday 15 years ago and bravely held the line. What's different today? Sure, the wider culture has degraded further — but so has the BSA's internal culture.

Lost in this whole debate is that allowing openly homosexual BSA leaders is not movement toward equality — that notion is marketing — but away from it. After all, there have always been homosexual scout leaders, just as there have been those who were adulterers or fornicators. But they generally “kept up appearances,” which, while paling in comparison to actual virtue, is the next best thing. But while the last two groups are still presumably expected to keep it in the closet, the group that always feels compelled to wear its sexuality on its shirtsleeve will be out and “proud” in the bush.

And, really, it wouldn't even matter now if adulterers and fornicators followed suit. It is certainly true that being “morally straight” (part of the BSA oath) involves more than just sexuality; it is also true that





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sexuality is an integral part of it. And, obviously, the BSA's sexuality model was always Christendom's traditional one: sexuality is to be confined to a married couple (man and woman, by definition), period. Some will now protest, saying that the BSA never dealt with sexuality at all. No, not explicitly, but it isn't only what's mentioned explicitly that matters. There's no such thing as a value-neutral environment. "Values are caught more than they're taught," and it is what is assumed that is learned best. If an "out" adulterer, fornicator or homosexual is a scout leader, he's teaching the legitimacy of the behavior in question in the most powerful way possible: *by living it* — as someone who is a role model. Moreover, that the BSA allows him to "serve openly" relates a message of organizational acceptance.

So the issue here is the validating of homosexuality in young boys' minds? Actually, it's worse than that. Question, how effective is the following message: adultery is a sin, fornication is a sin, polygamy is a sin, but homosexuality? That's just a lifestyle choice, junior, sorta' like living on a houseboat.

It's a what's-wrong-with-this-picture scenario the dullest student could figure out in a second. Once Scout Master Ken can arrive in camp all joyous and gay talking about the new knot — the one he fancies he's tied with his "significant other" Lloyd — it's clear that basically anything goes sexually. Hey, if he can indulge his passions, why can't I indulge mine? In other words, the acceptance of homosexuality means the *complete collapse of the traditional sexual model*.

What does this mean for being "morally straight" in general? C.S. Lewis once noted (I'm paraphrasing), "Sex is not messed up because it was put in the closet; it was put in the closet because it was messed up." And opening that stuffed closet messes everything else up. Similar to how you can't compartmentalize accepted homosexuality and keep the traditionalist sexual model intact, it's essentially impossible to compartmentalize widespread sexual vice and keep general virtue intact. It's as how cancer metastasizing unfettered cannot be kept confined to one organ: vice corrupts the heart, weakens the mind, clouds judgment and creates desire for the justification of relativism (e.g., who's to say what right and wrong is, anyway? Don't impose your "values" on me!). This leads to more vice. This is not to say, lest I be misunderstood, that a sexually corrupt people can't have its virtues. It is to say they can't be virtuous.

And that is the issue. None of this would be happening if the BSA's leadership, reflecting moderns in general, weren't lacking in virtue themselves and hadn't descended into vice-enabling relativism. Even years ago I fully expected their surrender because I understood that, as Lewis also said, you cannot "make men without chests and expect from them virtue and enterprise." Robert Gates and most of the rest of the BSA leadership are men without chests; they have no heart for the fight because they have no principles, and they have no principles because they started believing not in principles but provisional values.

As far as the BSA's mandate of creating boys with chests, the organization long had to fight the corruptive wider culture. But now it has collapsed, completely and likely irrevocably, its own internal culture. And for what? A slight reprieve? A stay of execution? Gates has said he didn't foresee the rapid cultural changes (a tipping point, really) of the last several years. What he also doesn't see is that he has merely "traded the Sudetenland for peace in our time." And he will learn that this peace is fleeting with people whose "truth" changes with time, people who tolerate no dissent, honor no compromise and take no prisoners.

The BSA decided that it profited the organization to lose its soul so it could gain the world. Its punishment will be, I suspect, that it will end up with neither.



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[Contact Selwyn Duke](#), [follow him on Twitter](#) or log on to [SelwynDuke.com](#)



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