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READERS' FORUM



LIGHTEN UP

IF I GO on after mortality I'd prefer to go forward smiling. As much as possible. So, keep those delightful cartoons and any other light items flowing. All life is sacred, yet there are no "sacred cows." Lighten up a little, huh, Brother Rees (SUNSTONE 14:1).

HOWARD W. JOHNSON
Lyndonville, VT

INCLINING TO CARING ACTS

IT IS UNFORTUNATE that Orson Scott Card's otherwise excellent and thought-provoking essay contains a serious flaw that is, incidentally, a major cause for many of the problems facing homosexuals in and out of the Church—equating homosexuality with same sex intercourse. Phrases such as "tempted toward homosexuality," "homosexual tendencies," and "repenting of homosexuality" are fuzzy at best and downright misleading at worst. Being a fan of Card's science fiction, I know he has the ability to be very precise; I regret that he was not in this essay. When he speaks of repenting of homosexual behavior, I find his argument compelling. When he speaks of repenting of homosexuality, I find his argument ridiculous. Homosexuals can no more "repent" of their homosexuality than I can of my heterosexuality, but we can both refrain from sexual relations and other behaviors that have been proscribed by a faith we subscribe to.

If we can just separate the act from the inclination, the behavior from the person, we can make significant advances in loving, caring for, and ministering to the sizeable gay and lesbian population among the Saints. If I had a child born with a hearing deficit, I wouldn't counsel that child to "repent" of deafness. Rather, I would caution him about pitfalls, help him to esteem himself as a valuable human, and encourage him to treasure the gifts and share his life with others. I believe Card would also.

ARNOLD V. LOVERIDGE
Salt Lake City

SEXUAL DRIVING PERMITS

AFTER DIGESTING THE H. Wayne Schow and Stan Roberts articles on homosexuality, it was a much different experience to read Orson Scott Card's essay (all in SUNSTONE 14:1). Card errs in equating the regulation of sexual drives with denial of them. Asking unmarried heterosexual persons to curtail their sexual drives until they can be channeled in marriage is not the same as asking homosexual persons to curtail their sexual drives, period.

VAL HOLLEY
Washington, D.C.

ON WHAT AUTHORITY?

ORSON SCOTT CARD ("The Hypocrites of Homosexuality" SUNSTONE 14:1) anticipates that he will be accused of homophobia for what he wrote about gays. I think that his basic ignorance of the subject is a better judgment.

What is his expertise on homosexuality— that he once knew a handful of horny gay college students? People mature. They learn to integrate their sexual impulses with love and respect for others. Card's view of homosexuality has remained as puerile as the people he condemns; it has not developed beyond that shallow initial acquaintance. In all my dealings with gay men and women, I have never encountered a single one who appealed to "genetic predisposition" to excuse him/herself from a morally responsible use of sex. Why is Card pretending this is an issue? If the average fifteen-year-old boy "predisposed to copulate with anything that moves" can become a morally responsible adult, so can the not-particularly-pure-minded young homosexual.

For the gay as well as the straight Mormon, responsible use of sexuality within the context of sexual freedom is a source of spiritual empowerment. Repression is as spiritually disfiguring, incapacitating, and unnatural for homosexuals as it is for their counterparts. The scriptures condemn repression (1 Timothy 4:1,3). Only a perverse God would create deep, permanent desire in certain

human hearts and then deprive them of any real hope of fulfillment.

For Card and those who share his prejudice, the mercies of God toward homosexuals are a sealed book. As they see it, the Lord by means of his prophets has repeatedly condemned homosexuality. But has he? Where are these prophetic denunciations so often cited by the opponents of same-sexuality? They are not found in the Book of Mormon, the Doctrine and Covenants, or The Pearl of Great Price—an astonishing omission given the alleged gravity of the sin. They are not in the Bible either. The linkage of the story of Sodom (Genesis 19) with homosexuality is wholly unsupported by the text. Both Jesus and Ezekiel identified the sin of Sodom as “inhospitality” to divine messengers (Ezekiel 16:49,50; Matthew 11:24).

The prohibitions against male-male sex in Leviticus refer to sexual acts within the context of idolatrous worship. Also, if the intent were to outlaw homosexuality in general, it is odd that there is no symmetrical proscription of female-female sex, idolatrous or otherwise, in the Bible.

In Romans 1:26-27 the Apostle Paul is not describing homosexuality but sexual inversion. He is talking about men and women

who, as a consequence of their idol worship, have turned from their natural heterosexual inclination to a lustful gratification with the same sex (somewhat like the situational homosexuality in prisons today). These are people who deliberately *chose* a kind of eroticism that is unnatural for *them*.

Modern prophets and apostles have not condemned homosexuality on the strength of prophetic authority, despite their generally negative opinions of it. Though most undoubtedly feel that it is already condemned in scripture, not one has published an original revelation stating that homosexuality or homosexual relations are a sin. Not even statements from the First Presidency which have appeared in various editions of the bishop's handbook can make the claim of definitive, prophetic revelation since they represent an arbitration of policy, not doctrine. They, too, depend upon the traditional (albeit erroneous) appeals to biblical scripture for their authority.

Ultimately, the Church's policies are a matter of tradition. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints can move forward under the guidance of new revelation on this issue, or it can lapse into the moral sloth that has marked the decline of God's people at the

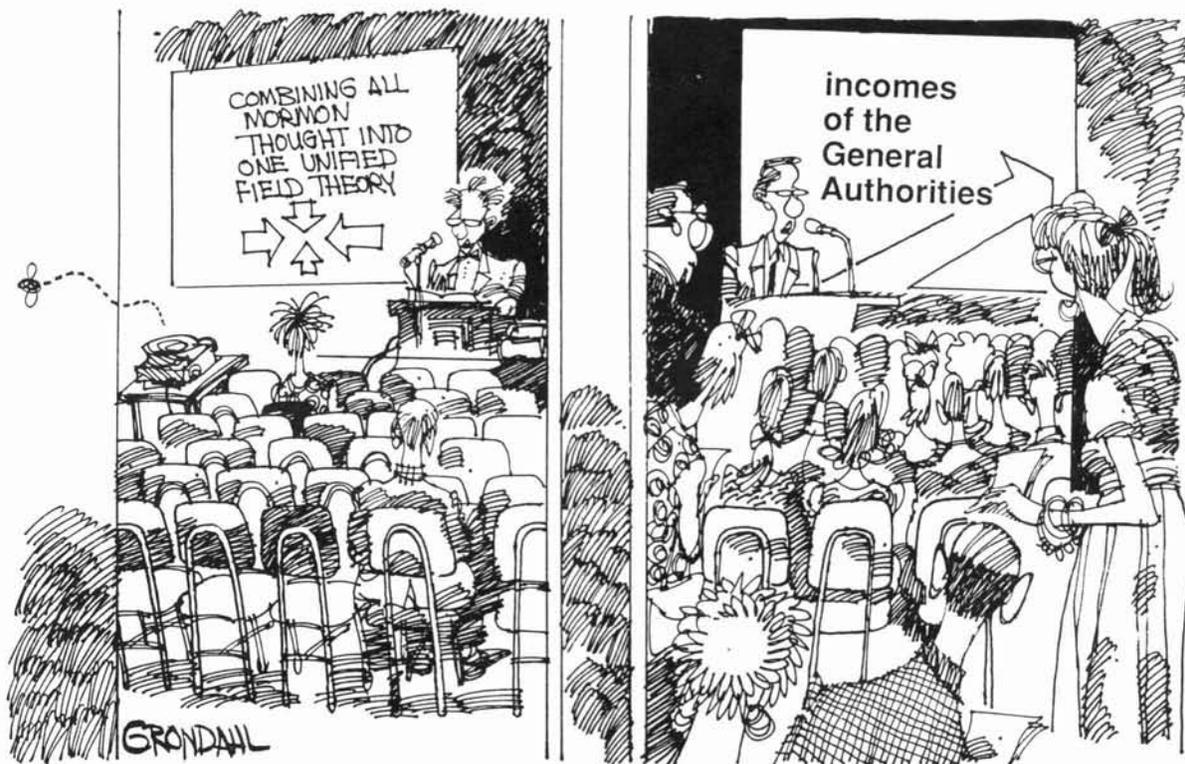
close of every dispensation. We think that it cannot happen to us, even as we cling, Pharisee-like, to the old insufficiencies. This is the hypocrisy with which we, the Church, should be more concerned. Let us hope that when Christ comes a second time, we are not surprised to find gays and lesbians entering the Kingdom before we do.

ALAN DAVID LACH
Los Angeles

HOMOPHOBIC RAMEUMPTOMS

ORSON SCOTT CARD's argument that “when one's life is given over to one community it cannot be given to another” simplistically suggests that Church membership precludes membership in any other community. As Christians and good citizens we often need to learn to be exemplary members of various communities. Membership and allegiance to our friends in that community does not imply a *de facto* acceptance of all its standards. For instance, my status as a Republican does not signal my agreement with every party platform, yet I am not

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ashamed to declare my membership. Usually it is the outrageous behavior of some individuals that draws attention and fuels stereotypes.

Card also makes the erroneous assumption that homosexuality is determined by one's sexual behavior. In truth, one may be heterosexual or homosexual whether or not he or she is, or ever has been, sexually active. People can no more repent of *being* homosexual than they can of being heterosexual. Nor should they. It is one's behavior, not orientation, that demonstrates their degree of commitment to Gospel principles—"by their fruits shall ye know them." And if, perhaps, that commitment is deemed to be flagging, who can cast the first stone? Only God knows the heart.

As a gay Latter-day Saint I accept the responsibility to represent both of my communities honorably (as do many others). My temple recommend is valid. While it is no magic qualifier, it means to me that I can answer with an unqualified "yes" to the question, "Are you morally clean?" And only my priesthood leader can ask that question.

Card also supposes that tolerance of homosexuals "would be, in the long run, the destruction of the Church." How noble of him to rescue the Church from the sin of tolerance! The Kingdom of God will prevail in spite of man if necessary. We cannot presume that its success depends on our vigilance of one another. The practice of tolerance will

strengthen those who learn it, as well as the kingdom—more so than will Card's condescending attitude.

All humans have sinned. All are dependent upon Christ's atonement for forgiveness. The Book of Mormon cautions us not to say, "the man has brought upon himself his misery; therefore I will stay my hand and not . . . impart unto him of my substance [love, fellowship, etc.] . . . for his punishments are just . . . whoever doeth this, the same hath great need to repent" (Mosiah 4:17-18).

As for the laws against homosexuality, which Card advocates, we cannot afford to allow such abuse of the Constitution. God will not justify a theocracy at the expense of free agency. Such was Satan's premortal plan. The Book of Mormon clearly explains that the laws of this land, as well as the Gospel, exist to ensure the rights of the individual to self-determination, insofar as the exercise thereof does not deprive any other of his or her rights.

Finally, the assertion that homosexuality is somehow a threat to "safe, stable, dependable marriage and family relationships" is ludicrous. Homosexuality is not contagious. There is no conspiracy to "recruit" heterosexuals (as if such were possible). Most homosexuals are the product of a heterosexual society that vigorously attempts to "convert" them, to no avail. An increased tolerance of homosexuality does not lead to more homosexuals, only to more honesty and less hidden suffering. Homosexuals do not

advocate the abolishment of marriage and family, nor are we an inherent threat to children. Statistics clearly show that, per capita, there is a higher incidence of child molestation by heterosexuals. Card's exaggerated fears can only be seen as homophobia.

Homosexuals are no better or worse than heterosexuals—both have their hypocrites. Neither can afford to stand atop the Rameumptom and cast stones. Brother Card should stick to his forte: writing award-winning fantasy.

MARTY BEAUDET
San Francisco

CENSORING CARD

IT IS, PERHAPS, presumptuous for a non-Mormon to respond to an article clearly oriented toward Mormons. But Orson Scott Card's article was brought to my attention by a customer. Since we carry a large number of science fiction works I read what he had to say.

Card has the right to believe anything he wants regardless of how much pure twaddle is involved. Private organizations such as the LDS church have the right to establish any rules they so choose to define membership. Those members of the LDS church who don't like the position are free to try to change that position or leave the Church. But neither Card nor the Church (nor any church) has the right to take those private rules and impose them through laws on the rest of us. Card does not realize the difference between a private organization such as the LDS church and the larger secular society based on the rights of the individual, not on the collectivism of the group. A free society recognizes that some people will engage in actions that other people dislike, but it tolerates those activities. So-called societal "regulations of sexual behavior" were viciously used to persecute the early Mormons. Such actions were reprehensible then and are reprehensible now. Private interactions, sexual or religious, should not be the business of the government. If that rule is applied equally to all people, the Church can do as it pleases in the confines of the temple and the homosexual can do as he or she pleases in the confines of his or her bedroom. Such is the principle of equal liberty for all.

And in keeping with this right to freedom of association, my bookstore will no longer stock the works of Orson Scott Card. We advocate individual liberty and Card doesn't,



so we will no longer voluntarily contribute to his economic well-being.

JIM PERON
San Francisco

LETTING FREE AGENCY WORK

I EXPRESS MY deepest gratitude for the articles on homosexuality by H. Wayne Schow, Stan Roberts, and Orson Scott Card. In all my searching and studying, at last, something has been written that brings understanding and sensitivity to a subject that many have been trying to ignore. Although each author approached the subject from a very different viewpoint, when I read each of them I said: Yes! I know just what you mean and how you feel.

We have a homosexual son. (That has been the most difficult sentence for me to say.) My husband first found out when Joe (not his real name) came to his father because he needed financial assistance for counseling. Joe was twenty-one years old, had just come home from a mission, and was in a desperate emotional battle. He had contemplated suicide and was now at his wits' end. I was told a year later. They had delayed telling me because they knew how much it would hurt me. They were right. The rest of the story is similar to Schow's. However, Joe is still living in Salt Lake City, graduated from the University of Utah, Summa Cum Laude, and has an excellent career. He is involved with the gay community and does not have AIDS—yet.

Joe lives with one foot in the closet and one foot out. We have a good relationship with him and see him often. He wants his family to accept him, his lifestyle and friends, but knows we can only be involved in a superficial manner. We have a large family, and they all know about Joe; some accept him better than others. Brothers-in-law have a particularly difficult time, and I have seen Joe hurt by their remoteness or outright rejection.

The day he brought his temple clothing to me and said he could no longer be active was a devastating day in all of our lives. "There is no place in the Church for me," he wept. Since then we have seen his not-so-gradual descent from believing the gospel but not accepting the "man-made" organization to now saying he thinks there is *probably* a God.

I can't help but feel angry about the two bishops and a stake president who told him that if he lived the commandments, stayed morally clean, and went on a mission he would get over his feelings. He did all of the above but did not get over his feelings. Perhaps ten years ago the counseling he would have received might not have helped, but I know that those Church leaders should have told his parents, with or without Joe's consent, so that we could have gotten help for him when he was fourteen.

I have grown through this experience—our whole family has. But I think a mother carries the greater guilt, more of a sense of responsibility, more feelings for having failed her child. She was the care-giver, the teacher, the nurturer, wasn't she? I've learned that I cannot allow my child's behavior to determine my happiness or well-being. I have turned to other things, a mid-life career, new associations, new talents. What has happened has allowed me to let go of my child in a way that has been positive for him and for me. I have developed a more mature kind of love for my son, one that allows me to admire his accomplishments, enjoy our time together, and let free agency work.

Here is a poem I wrote.

CHANGE IN AUTUMN

The leaves are turning autumn hues,
The air feels crisp and clean.
I walk, and see the evidence
Of nature's changing scene.

In dread I watch you changing too,
Before my very eyes,
From teachable, to actions that
I never could surmise.

Outstripping all medieval tools:
This rack I'm stretched upon.
I'm torn between my love for you
And judging what you've done.

Knowing that you've lived a life
That others never knew,
I find myself racked once again
Defending what is you.

And there are things I only sense
From deep within your soul:
Your zest for life, a brilliant brain,
A hunger to be whole.

I've sought for solace; now I see
What they will never see.
And find in me uncommon strength
To let us both just be.

ANONYMOUS
Ogden, UT

A COMMUNITY OF DOUBTERS

I WAS SET back by Charles Sellers' letter (SUNSTONE 13:4) on Scott Kenney's personal essay "At Home at Sea" (SUNSTONE 13:3). I realize that there are those who still believe as simply as they have always believed. Nevertheless, I personally was so moved by Brother Kenney's essay that I sat down myself and wrote an essay outlining my own beliefs.

Sellers says, "I am convinced that the Church has what most honest seekers are looking for." If it does, I and all the others who are no longer enthralled by the Church are dishonest seekers, a judgment I am not prepared to accept.

I disagree with Sellers that the Church is doing a pretty good job with both the living and the dead. I am not saying that the Church is not involved. It is. But the mission of the Church is too narrow, self-serving, and exclusive. The Church has taught me how to pay my tithing, do home teaching, genealogy, etc., but it never did teach me how to develop a personal relationship with God or how to serve the poor other than do my duty at the welfare farm.

Any person in the Church should have the right to voice his feelings and concerns about the effect the Church has had or continues to have on our lives without the fear that doing so will destroy someone's testimony. Sellers's statement that "doubts are inevitable, but people should be careful about broadcasting them" is a perfect example of why the Church has yet to establish true community. A true community is one in which all feel safe in their hopes, fears, joys, faith, and doubt.

CLAYTON W. COOK
Woodland, CA

WOMEN'S BEST FRIEND

I AM NOT sure whether or not I should laugh at Hal Pierce's attempt to convince misguided feminists that male control is really to women's advantage (SUNSTONE 14:1). Does he really expect to convince us that the best way to create equality between the sexes is through men's control of women? He implies that if feminists really wanted to help women, they would champion patriarchy so that men wouldn't feel threatened and retaliate against

women. Who would have guessed that patriarchy is women's best friend? How could we feminists have been so blind?

Pierce vaguely refers to women's "distinct and definite advantages in sexual and familial things that men can never obtain." Yet he is unclear about what advantages women would have to give up to gain equal footing with men in economics and decision-making. Would women be unable to have multiple orgasms or bear and nurse children if they stopped submitting to male domination?

The truth is, there are no advantages for women under patriarchy. However, I can think of plenty of disadvantages for both sexes under patriarchy—primarily, stressed and unbalanced lives.

REBECCA ENGLAND
Salt Lake City

DELUDED INTELLECTUALS

I WAS APPALLED at the criticisms of the forthcoming BYU-produced LDS Encyclopedia (SUNSTONE 12:6). It is not the place of SUNSTONE to criticize those assigned to oversee this project. Any authority that you feel you have to do this is a delusion in your own eyes. I wonder what God thinks when he sees you self-appointed, so-called intellectuals kick against the pricks and criticize everything you see his servants do. Have a little humility and try to agree with God, or go join another church that accepts the opinion of the world and blows with every wind of doctrine.

DENNIS B. HORNE

CONSPIRACY THEORISTS

I THOROUGHLY ENJOYED Martha S. Bradley's well-researched article, "Changed Faces: The Official LDS Position on Polygamy, 1890-1990" (SUNSTONE 14:1). Her history of the official Church position, however, only told half the story. The Woodruff Manifesto of 1890 actually meant that the Church in truth and in all sincerity ceased the practice of plural marriage, while the priesthood took it underground. This separation of Church and priesthood was nothing new. The identical situation existed in Kirtland, in Missouri, in Nauvoo, and in Utah until 1852.

The apparatus for the final underground practice was set up by Church President John

Taylor. In 1882 he issued an "Epistle" authorizing marriages outside the Endowment House and temple. In 1884 at Rudger Clawson's trial Taylor testified under oath that he had set apart "hundreds of men" who were authorized to perform marriages, with endowments, at any place convenient.

This was called the "Grand Conspiracy," and my father, John W. Taylor, was active in it. The Manifesto said that the practice was discontinued because it was against the law of the land. My father subsequently had one wife in the United States, one in Canada, and three (including my mother) in Mexico.

In addition to the 1890 Manifesto, and another in 1904, there actually were about a dozen, each pinching off a loophole, until the 1933 final-final-final one—no exceptions, we mean it this time.

While the practice has been discontinued, the doctrine still stands. If you are well enough connected today you can be married to a dead spouse in the Principle to attain your glory in the hereafter. I personally am acquainted with two people who have had this done. This situation explains why the fundamentalists are alive and well and thriving in Zion. A short time before Rulon Allred, who was head of the largest fundamentalist group, was assassinated by Ervil LeBaron's goons in a power struggle over who had the "keys," I asked one of his daughters to find out how many belonged to his organization. She reported that he claimed a membership of 70,000. While this no doubt was an exaggeration, certainly the practice is a far cry from the official Church figure.

SAMUEL W. TAYLOR
Redwood City, CA

THE SUCCESSFUL MISSIONARY

AS ONE WHO served under Elder Russell M. Ballard when he was president of the Canada Toronto Mission, I feel compelled to respond to John Armstrong's article ("Encounter with An Apostle," SUNSTONE 14:1) and set the record straight. My experiences with President Ballard were very much like those described in the article, but I came away with a different view of things.

President Ballard taught us the principles of successful missionary work. Among the most important were that missionaries should always be looking for opportunities to teach the gospel and that they should not be timid

when telling others about it and inviting them to be baptized. When he took over the mission, the baptismal rate was very low. As he instilled these principles in us, our faith in the gospel and our ability to teach increased and our baptismal rate dramatically rose. These were the same lessons that he gave to Armstrong and his mission. Apparently Armstrong's expectations got in the way.

One of the most refreshing aspects of Elder Ballard's life is that he takes his calling seriously; it's his life's work. It is a virtue that he practices what he preaches. For this reason I object to the characterization of him as rude and insensitive. Elder Ballard was in Armstrong's mission to teach the gospel and oversee the work. He was not there to be entertaining over dinner. We should admire his zeal and devotion.

In publishing the article, SUNSTONE has done a disservice to Elder Ballard and its readers. You have only reinforced the suspicions of many that SUNSTONE would rather be a *Mormon Enquirer* than a forum for our highest thoughts about Mormon culture. I hope you will live up to the goals you have set for the magazine.

TED VAGGALIS
Lawrence, KN

SUNSTONE ENCOURAGES CORRESPONDENCE. LETTERS FOR PUBLICATION SHOULD BE ADDRESSED TO "READERS FORUM." WE EDIT FOR SPACE, CLARITY, AND TONE.



SO MY DAD SAYS,
"LISTEN, I'LL BUY YOU
A HARLEY AND YOU CAN
DO TWO YEARS WITH
THE HELL'S ANGELS
INSTEAD!"