

LETTERS

Was He or Wasn't He?

The winter 1996 issue set the old blood racing, well, for an old sailor as best it can race. George L. Mitton made a good case in his letter to the editor against D. Michael Quinn in defense of Evan Stephens, or, more correctly, in defense of Mitton's own family's honor, prestige, standing in the church, and sexual "normality."

Mitton's long letter was almost word perfect for a recent heart-rending public defence of a New South Wales (Australia) Supreme Court judge who had been named in the NSW parliament by Mrs. Franka Arena MLC in relation to the ongoing royal commission into the NSW police.

Arena was publicly vilified across Australia for asking, under parliamentary privilege, if the judge had been interviewed *in private* by his fellow NSW Supreme Court judge heading the royal commission. No suggestion was made by Arena that the judge was homosexual or was involved in pedophilia.

The judge denied all, said that the justice system would "look after" him, and a plethora of Mitton-like articles and letters to the media flooded our colony.

The judge was photographed, front page, in color, holding his beautiful, beatific grandchildren, and we all sucked in our breath at Arena's, like Quinn's, audacity. But some weeks later, as we prepared the stake for Arena's public burning, the royal commission *finally* served a subpoena on the judge.

He was interviewed (radio and print) shortly thereafter and sounded confident and not at all stressed, saying he would be vindicated. But four hours later he killed himself by car ex-

haust in his carport, leaving a letter for his wife and family.

Whatever the judge thought his beloved justice system was going to do, it didn't save him, and one is reminded of the imposed suicide of Field Marshall Erwin Rommel in 1944—i.e., take your own life, go quietly, and your wife and kids will be looked after, otherwise ...

Weeks later we were regaled with the truth about this pillar of the establishment. He was the subject of a long-standing police file, had been arrested twice for homosexual acts in public lavatories on major Sydney railway stations, but as soon as his judicial standing was made known, the charges were dropped. His secret lifestyle came unstuck a few years back when he put the hard word on a male barrister in the public lavatory of one of Sydney's busiest railway stations. The lawyer recognized the judge and, understandably, complained to the NSW attorney general. The judge was quietly retired, living on his full salary without having to work. That enabled him to frequent public lavatories more frequently.

Thus was Mrs. Arena vindicated, and all the laudatory, self-righteous panegyrics in behalf of the judge shown to be nonsense. The judge was quickly cremated and the matter closed up tighter than a clam.

I was present in a high priest's group in 1984 when a general authority told those assembled, only a handful of men, that homosexuality was the second worst problem in the church ... gossip being the worst ... and that two general authorities were permanently assigned to the task of trying to do something about it in the church.

In the August-September 1995 is-

sue of *Sunstone* we were given a tearful 12-page article by "Oliver Alden," a thirty-three-year-old priesthood holder who was, we were told, highly regarded, was "spiritual," and had received personal revelation twice, including in the Salt Lake temple, that it was okay for him to marry a man. "Oliver's" "marvelous" young (married) bishop, *Sunstone*, and all those associated with this young man, waiting for "Mr. Right" to come along so the two of them can get into bed together, obviously approve of this young man's inspiration. No one, but no one, suggested that it might just be evil spirits (Belial) whispering to this man.

The Apocryphal New Testament tells us that practicing homosexuals will be condemned to a massive pool full of sewage, and it's not difficult to see why, when Correy and Holmes found from their 1980 study, where homosexual men kept a diary, that on average an active homosexual had per year fellated 106 different men; swallowed 50 seminal discharges; experienced 72 penile penetrations of the rectum; and ingested the fecal matter of 23 different men (L. Correy and K. K. Holmes, "Sexual Transmission of Hepatitis A in Homosexual Men," *New England Journal of Medicine*, 1980, 435-38).

As an old (aging) sailor, not exactly bereft of experience with men in the world, I would, on the balance of probabilities, accept the thrust of Quinn's essay on Mr. Music.

By the way, since the Mormon church loves tradition and folklore, pray let me close by telling you that in the good old days, when men were men and women were glad of it, any sailor suspected of being homosexual would, in the morning on arising, find

a patch of canvass containing a little heap of sand on the mess table where he usually ate his meals. That was the warning. If homosexual activity continued, then the miscreant was thrown overboard to feed the sharks. In the Mormon church they get long articles of praise published about them and personal revelation in the Salt Lake temple.

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A Tantalizing but Unproven Conjecture

I feel remiss in not writing sooner concerning Dr. Lance S. Owens's "Joseph Smith and Kabbalah" in the fall 1994 issue. Among other things, Dr. Owens suggested that Joseph learned Kabbalah from Alexander Neibaur, that Neibaur probably possessed a Hebrew library with Kabbalistic manuscripts, and that his Kabbalah is reflected in the King Follett discourse. While these are interesting suppositions, I do not believe that Dr. Owens's data and analysis prove them.

Much of Dr. Owens's argument rests on an article on Jewish doctrines of resurrection written by Neibaur for the *Times and Seasons* (June 1843). Dr. Owens claims that Neibaur "discusses for the most part ... the Kabbalistic concept of *gilgul*, the transmigration and rebirth of souls." While the article cites the *Zohar* and mentions some rabbis identifiable as Kabbalists, it is in no way Kabbalistic. *Zohar* (*sohar*) is cited for the non-Kabbalistic doctrine that those who die and are buried in Israel will be resurrected forty years

before those who die outside of the land. The *gilgul* mentioned by Neibaur is the Talmudic *gilgul* (*Kethuboth* 111a) where the dead roll underground to be resurrected in Israel *not* the Kabbalistic transmigration of souls. If anything, the article avoids Kabbalistic doctrines. Certainly, no knowledge of Kabbalah can be imputed to Neibaur on the basis of the article.

The question of Neibaur's library and Hebrew skills and the above-mentioned *gilgul* issue were dealt with in my response to Dr. Owens's paper at a recent Sunstone Symposium. They have also been discussed in detail by William J. Hamblin in *FARMS Review of Books* 8/2 (1996). Suffice it to say, little evidence exists on Neibaur's Hebrew education before his matriculation at the University of Berlin at age seventeen. I know of no data supporting a Hebrew library in Nauvoo. Such a library would have been an oddity which someone should have mentioned. I do not believe either that great Hebrew skills or a library can be inferred from an English article which seems to be drawn from some encyclopedic source.

With regard to Neibaur's influence on Joseph Smith, Neibaur arrived in Nauvoo in 1841. This allowed little time to influence the *Book of Abraham*, published in 1842. This comports with the *Book of Abraham's* reliance on the *Seixas Grammar* from which Joseph learned Hebrew in 1835-36. (See my "Professor Seixas, the Hebrew Bible, and the Book of Abraham," *Sunstone*, Mar.-Apr. 1981, 141-43.)

An indisputable influence of Neibaur on Joseph Smith is seen in Joseph's use of German, learned from Neibaur, in the King Follett discourse.

As to Joseph's Kabbalistic interpretation of the first words of Genesis in that discourse, matters are much less clear. Joseph's reading of Elokim as the object of the verb create is not exactly *Zoharic*. It was, however, common among Christian Kabbalists (see Yehuda Liebes, *Studies in the Zohar* [Albany, NY: SUNY, 1993], 139-61). Neibaur's article contains no information on such a reading. It could arise from any number of sources or may have been developed by Joseph Smith himself. He was certainly knowledgeable enough to so do. The sources for Joseph's readings of Genesis and for Neibaur's article remain to be discovered. I suggested to Dr. Owens that an English translation of Manassah ben Israel's *Nishmath Chaim* might have been a source for Neibaur (see Hamblin, 322-25). That, however, was mere speculation. Dr. Owens raised many questions, but his research, in my view, failed to answer them. It is my hope that scholars will do the research and produce the *facts* that will answer Dr. Owens's questions. Until this happens, "Joseph Smith and Kabbalah" should be viewed as a tantalizing but unproven conjecture.

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Questions Can Be Answered

I enjoyed reading the winter 1996 issue. I am grateful for Levi S. Peterson's biography of Lavina Fielding Anderson. I think she is a wonderful example!

"W. H. Chamberlin and the Quest for a Mormon Theology," by James M. McLachlan, was very interesting to

me. I am grateful to find another testimony of Adam and Eve being the parents of the human family on earth and in heaven. Today we are accused of apostasy if we say we believe this theology.

In the roundtable discussion on "Scripture, History, and Faith," I was grateful to find a stimulating set of questions and answers. "The statement that Mormonism is committed to a fairly fundamentalist vision, and yet it strongly urges education, honesty, and freedom of inquiry. These two poles are in conflict. Add to this a few fundamentalists at the top of a rigidly authoritarian ecclesiastical pyramid, and we have a modern Mormon bomb waiting to go off. The recent ex-communications and the firings at BYU may be only the first rumblings of a major disruption in Mormonism." We do need a change!

Henry Grady Weaver in *The Mainspring of Human Progress* tells us: "The collectivists, ancient and modern, contend that human society should be set up like the beehive. The plain fact of the matter is that human beings, with their hopes and aspirations and the faculty for reasoning, are

very different from bees" (38). "War is caused by a false notion of human energy, based on the ancient superstition that men and women should be reduced to the status of the beehive" (262).

I love freedom of conscience and freedom of speech. I believe that Elohim is the divine spirit, the governing power in the Kingdom of God. I believe that Jehovah is the Only Begotten Son, by choice and ordination, now in the flesh (not the only one sired by God). I believe that Adam, who was Michael and is now the Ancient of Days, with Eve as his companion, is our Father and Mother God. In the Godhead we have a representative of the government in Elohim, a representative of the church in Jehovah as our Redeemer, and a representative of the Home in Adam and Eve.

I have gained this testimony through study of the scriptures and by faith in prayer that questions can be answered.

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