

Divine Rite of Kings

Other Books by the Author (in order of appearance)

All the King's Horses and All the King's Men: Love, Alienation, and "Reconciliation" in a Big, BIG Mormon Family (Bloomington: Xlibris, 2001). http://www.amazon.com/All-Kings-Horses-Men/dp/0738841056/ref=sr_1_4?ie=UTF8&qid=1392536554&sr=84&keywords=Clyde+R.+Forsberg+Jr.

Equal Rites: The Book of Mormon, Masonry, Gender, and American Culture (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004). <https://cup.columbia.edu/book/978-0-231-12640-3/equal-rites>

Playing It By Ear: The Jazz-Theatre of Clyde R. Forsberg Jr. (Bloomington: Xlibris, 2010). <http://www.amazon.com/Playing-It-Ear-Clyde-Forsberg/dp/1453582088>

The Life and Legacy of George Leslie Mackay: An Interdisciplinary Study of Canada's First Presbyterian Missionary to Northern Taiwan, 1872-1901 (Newcastle upon Tyne, United Kingdom: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2012). <http://www.c-s-p.org/flyers/The-Life-and-Legacy-of-George-Leslie-Mackay--An-Interdisciplinary-Study-of-Canada-s-First-Presbyteril-4438-3454-8.htm>

Savageries of the Academy Abroad: My Life among the "Headhunters" of Presbyterian Taiwan & Narrow Escape from a Saudi Arabian Prison Thereafter (Utopia Group, Amazon.com, 2014). http://www.amazon.com/Savageries-Academy-Abroad-Headhunters-Presbyterian/dp/1495450309/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1392534826&sr=8-1&keywords=Savageries+of+the+Academy+Abroad

No Murder in Paradise: Grimoire for a Viking Goddess (Createspace, Amazon.com, 2015). <http://www.amazon.co.uk/No-Murder-Paradise-Grimoire-Goddess/dp/1516986946>

Divine Rite of Kings:

*Land, Race, Same Sex, and
Empire in Mormonism and
the Esoteric Tradition*

By

Clyde R. Forsberg Jr.

Divine Rite of Kings: Land, Race, Same Sex, and Empire in Mormonism
and the Esoteric Tradition

By Clyde R. Forsberg Jr.

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*Royal Arch Masons in Full Dress, Dedication of Solomon's Temple, Life Magazine
(October 8, 1956)*

I am a child of God
And he has sent me here;
Has given me an earthly home
With parents kind and dear.
I am a child of God
And so my needs are great;
Help me to understand his words
Before it grows too late.
I am a child of God
Rich blessings are in store;
If I but learn to do his will
I'll live with him once more.
Lead me, guide me, walk beside me
Help me find the way.
Teach me all that I must *know*
To live with him someday.
Naomi Ward Randall, LDS Primary Board (1957, emphasis mine)

“Knowledge save[s] a man.”
Joseph Smith

“The real object of Freemasonry, in a philosophical and religious sense, is
the search for truth.”
Albert C. Mackey

“If you can find a truth in heaven, earth or hell, it belongs to our doctrine.
We believe it; it is ours; we claim it.”
Brigham Young

“We have the true Masonry. The Masonry of today is received from the
apostasy which took place in the days of Solomon, and David. They have
now and then a thing that is correct, but we have the real thing.”
Heber C. Kimball

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In my search for self and vain hope of an academic life, I made two tragic decisions that would locate me on the periphery. I chose to study and write about something that mattered to me and, by doing so, I really believed it might make a difference. I presumed, falsely, that a university was the best place to accomplish both adolescent fantasies. To my shock and horror, I would discover that the academy, where I thought I would make the necessary friends and receive the training needed to accomplish my goals, was not quite what I thought or hoped. Yet, had I not entered the hallowed halls of academe, I surely would not have encountered those sweet souls, albeit few and far between, who would help me to travel what has been a very difficult road, both personally and professionally. I am beginning to feel a little like Cain, the Mormon one, doomed to walk the earth. I have managed to see quite a lot of the planet at this point, learning a second language (Russian) in the process, and making a host of friends and colleagues I might never have otherwise. My academic and artistic friends have all contributed immensely to this work in more ways than they know, suffice it to say.

While I do not mean to bring any more shame to the poor man, PhD supervisor, and former colleague, it must be said that Illinois University Press has somewhere in its records a contract bearing the signatures of Klaus J. Hansen and me vis-à-vis a book on Mormonism and race (it was long ago). I naively believed Klaus was serious when he brought the idea to me, until he later put any thoughts of a Hansen-Forsberg hardback firmly to rest with, “Why don’t you just write one?” or words to that effect. Almost twenty years later, I have, finally, managed to take him up on his kind offer, it would seem, although I suspect he would not be amused.

I want to thank, especially, Alfred Bush at Princeton University (Emeritus) who actually helped me get started. Alfred had written a very insightful and generous review for Columbia University Press, which resulted in my first academic book contract. I thought I would pay him a visit. I also hoped to see with my own eyes the best collection of Mormon books and articles east of the Mississippi, largely the fruit of his labour as curator of the Western Americana section of the Firestone Library. I wanted to test my theory for Mormonism as Masonic rather than anti-Masonic, but from the point of view of race not gender. Alfred kindly

opened the Firestone to me, where I photocopied everything I could in the time I had. It was marvellous and I felt very much like a kid in a candy store. This gentle and contemplative soul also had this to say about my working thesis that the old “Negro Doctrine,” as it used to be called, had been adapted to a new campaign by LDS authorities to scapegoat the LGBTQ community: “that sounds like an interesting paper.” As I researched the question more deeply, what began as a paper became a book.

This is also my second book published by Cambridge Scholars Publishing, the first a collection of essays by various leading Canadian and American historians of religion on the Canadian Presbyterian missionary to Taiwan, George Leslie Mackay, which I led. Again, I want to thank everyone at CSP—Sarah Lloyd, Sam Baker, Amanda Millar, Victoria Carruthers, Elfreda Crehan, Sophie Edminson and Graham Clarke—for doing a superb job in getting another manuscript ready for publication, but most of all for treating authors as they ought to be treated. Prior to this, the manuscript sat in a desk drawer for some time as I attempted to collect my wits and decide whether I should attempt to publish anything more about my native Mormonism after being raked over the coals. Two articles would be published during that deliberation: one for the *John Whitmer Historical Association Journal*, allowing me to meet the then editor Vickie Cleverley Speek (to my great delight and honour), and another for the *International Society for the Study of New Religions* journal, where I also benefited greatly from the same level of expert editorial assistance. These two publishing successes gave me the courage to turn the present manuscript around one last time and “go for broke,” so to speak. They also appear here, albeit with minor revisions.

Several of my dear friends and respected scholars who I am fortunate to call on from time to time kindly read the manuscript (in part and in whole) at different points in its evolution, and as usual offered the necessary encouragement and sage advice: Susan Curtis (Purdue University), Danny Jorgensen (University of South Florida), Michael Homer (Independent Historian), Massimo Introvigne (CESNUR), Gordon Melton (Baylor Institute for Studies of Religion Distinguished Scholar), George Chryssides (University of Birmingham), Shari Clough (Oregon State University), Phil and Jeannie Mackintosh (Brock University), and Gordon and Dorothy Pollock (Queens University). Former colleagues at Fatih University in Istanbul, Turkey, and the American University of Central Asia in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, read portions of the manuscript at critical points, too—Allen Scarboro and Lance Tillman, sociologists of religion, in particular. I count myself fortunate to have shared an office

briefly with the esteemed historian of the social and intellectual development of early Christianity, Islamic civilization, and pretty much anything he sets his magnificent intellect to do. I am referring to Professor R. Joseph Hoffmann (University of Oxford), with whom I also shared my research, both of us washing down the interchange with copious amounts of beer and laughing late into the night, until, that is, the employees at Stari Edgar's in Bishkek (Kyrgyzstan) could take it no more and threw us out. No evening of such scholarly cogitations was ever complete without the "new school" philosopher and general rabble-rouser Duane Lacey, who always ordered another round after we had all promised ourselves it was time to call it a night. Now that I am in Turkey, at Karabuk University, I miss them terribly. As complete outsiders, their impressions were the sort that I have come to value most. But let me add one more name to this list of remarkable human beings who might be said to constitute my scholarly inner circle—new colleague and dear, dear friend Hatice Mescioglu, whose keen mind, knowledge, literary sense, and humanity, above all, have made the move to Turkey the best decision of my academic life thus far, adding one or two final, necessary flourishes to a manuscript ten years in the making.

I am the oldest of fourteen. Many of my siblings are very talented and successful artists. Dad is a very fine sketch artist and Mum a gifted, albeit unschooled, painter. My oldest son, Kohl, who graduated from Queen's University with a BA in Women's Studies, has followed in their footsteps in a sense as a "writer" for the Toronto advertising giant John St., and is now the artistic director of million-dollar ad campaigns for Nike Shoes, but also social-justice campaigns such as "Kids Read Mean Tweets." I am proud to say that my firstborn has a job that does not require him to wear a hat; the dress code at John St. allows him to don a misaligned baseball cap and headphones, notwithstanding. He also makes more money, already, than I ever have or will. His younger brother Kynan is a gifted rock guitarist and composer, certain to contribute to the Canadian music scene after not too many years. The cover for my Columbia book *Equal Rites* is the brainchild and handiwork of my brother Bohne Forsberg, a professional graphic artist with his own company. The cover of *Divine Rite of Kings*, I am also proud to say, is the labour of another loving and talented sibling, Matthew Forsberg, aka "Scab Scabby," and affiliated with Visual Persuading Artist. I think it speaks volumes that he took the time to consult the manuscript before devising a cover design. Reconnecting with him after several years, I did not realize that he had any interest in his Mormon heritage, a long-time member of the punk underground in Ottawa, outspoken defender of the legalization of marijuana, gay rights, and other

causes associated with the Far Left in Canada. Still, I had the sense that he would be perfect for the job. The cover he designed surely speaks for itself.

Let me say, too, that although I was not fortunate enough to receive research monies to complete this work, I was privileged to have an academic position in a very competitive profession, during an economic downturn. For this reason, I wish to thank two dear colleagues, Dr Bermet Tursunkulova (Vice President Academic, American University of Central Asia) and Dr Irfan Tosuncuoğlu (Western Languages and Literatures Department, Karabuk University), for helping me secure a position, a full professorship, when I needed it most, following a very difficult and trying four years in Taiwan, about which I have written in a second memoir, entitled *Savageries of the Academy Abroad: My Life Among the "Headhunters" of Presbyterian Taiwan & Narrow Escape from a Saudi Arabian Prison Thereafter* (2014).

Finally, I want to thank my wife of almost ten years, Cholpon Alieva (*ogromnoe spasibo Vam!*) and our two younger children, Acacia and Attila, for their love and, most of all, for their patience. They have put up with the soul-destroying effects of living with an academic, wondering aloud on occasion why I put myself through this, but without thinking of themselves and what I have put them through. They bear the larger burden and have made the biggest sacrifice. I am not the best of fathers because, alas, I am too much the academician, off in my little world when I need to be firmly planted in this one. I do not understand what it is they all seem to know instinctively—how to run and play often. I wish that I could. In my case, it has been sufficient to watch them do it for me, taking comfort in the fact that my work and the life decisions it prompted may well have given them what I could never have—a carefree sense of the world and no desire or need to slay dragons, as it were. I cannot explain it to them, either, for they know nothing of Mormonism and the hold that a conservative religion can have on a person, or the debilitating effects of being raised from birth to think in terms of “Us” and “Them,” rather than what Martin Buber calls “I and Thou.” But should those under my care, ever dear to me, need to know, I prefer they hear it from me. It is, at bottom, how I live with myself and make whatever peace I can with my Mormon “Makers.”

It is customary, after thanking friends and family, to take full responsibility for any errors or faults as mine and mine alone, which I am happy, again, to do—except, of course, any that can, or may, be laid at the feet of my mother by my enemies.

Ever tried.

Ever failed.

No matter.

Try again.

Fail again.

Fail better.

—Samuel Beckett



FOREWORD

METHOD, MASONRY, MORMONISM, AND HISTORY POST POSTMODERNISM; OR CLYDE FORSBERG RESPONDS TO HIS CRITICS ON THE EVE OF ANOTHER PUBLIC SCOURGING

The rather large divide in thinking that separates my work from that of others in the twin fields of Masonry and Mormonism may well be a matter of irreconcilable methodological differences. It does not help that my academic training has been highly interdisciplinary and, as such, I am most assuredly a “generalist” with philosophical leanings who happened to be a Mormon, but most assuredly not a church historian, regardless. My critics cannot say the same for themselves in most cases, not one of them, that I know of, holding advanced degrees in religious studies and history, for example, or a specialty in the analysis of classical religious texts and literary theory. I am also a scholar of American studies, which might well be described as “transdisciplinary,” crossing the divide of history and literature and having a decidedly cultural studies angle. In general, scholars who praise my work, such as Susan Curtis, Chair of American Studies at Purdue University, have a similar “interdisciplinary-transdisciplinary-cultural studies” outlook. LDS historian Kathleen Flake says in her review of my Columbia book, *Equal Rites: The Book of Mormon, Masonry, Gender, and American Culture* (2004), that it is not “history” but “culture [sic] studies,” and she is right; although it is meant to be a slight. She also thinks it perhaps unfair to judge my work on its historical merits or lack thereof (Flake 2005). Right again. In short, all I ask is that my critics take the time to know what it is they are attacking—if they have any sense of decency and fair play, that is. And so, let me state categorically for the record and from the start that *Divine Rite of Kings: Land, Race, Same Sex, and Empire in Mormonism and the Esoteric Tradition* is not a work of Mormon history—old, new, borrowed, or blue. God forbid.

Let me say this, too, about the author's connection to Mormonism, since it has some bearing on how I approach the subject as an "insider-outsider," among other things. I left the Mormon Church long ago (in the mid-1980s), making a religious home for myself among Unitarians and Muslims, and so I have forgotten what it means to be Mormon because of too much time away. Priesthood Meeting, Sunday School (and the Gospel Doctrine Class, in particular), Sacrament Meeting (and when it was held in the evening and lasted two hours, sometimes even longer). The Elders Quorum (I never graduated), the Quorum of Seventy (my father not progressing beyond this next rung on the priesthood ladder, which was later disbanded, the "old man" excommunicated a couple of years ago and subsequently recalled), the High Priests Quorum, the Patriarch, the Relief Society, the Primary, and the Nursery. President David O. Mackay, who we all thought would live forever, then President Spencer W. Kimball who seemed certain to usher in the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. Towering "intellectual anti-intellectuals," such as Bruce R. McConkie, Mark E. Peterson, and Joseph Fielding Smith, who were racist, homophobic, and dogmatic, respectively, and the gold standard. The field marshals lower down, the Stake President, the Bishop, and the Ward Clerk. The organist, always an older woman who never seemed to utter a word, a position I was offered but declined since I presumed the idea was to shut me up. The janitor, another "sacred calling" in the church, which tended to attract, at least in the case of the tiny congregation where I worshipped, closet paedophiles. The Sunday grind and getting ready for church in the morning, the acrimony, recalling that my mother and father liked to yell at the top of their lungs for all of us to hurry up and get ready (or else). The church building itself on Prince of Wales Drive in Ottawa where I grew up and its very functional, factory-like layout, painted cinderblock interior, and indoor-outdoor brown carpeting. The "chapel" and its three rows of oak benches; as a teenager, I never wanted to sit with my parents, my father always giving me the evil eye from the "family pew" where he sat, which meant I had better "sit my ass down with the rest of the family," as he liked to say, or reap the whirlwind. The long bench at the back, which ran the entire width of the chapel, "reserved for women with children" and, of course, the disabled. The "electric podium" at the front, switched on and off by the Ward Clerk who took down the minutes of the meeting, but especially the sound it made going up and down as the Bishop or High Councilman delivered some thundering indictment against the "evils of the world," going on and on for at least forty-five minutes, and how time seemed to grind to a halt. The gym behind the chapel, which came with a regulation basketball court, but a stage for the performing arts, too. The

classrooms, which ran the full length of both sides of the building and, of course, the accordion dividers that separated the rooms at the back. The kitchen, where I sometimes scrounged for food as a teenager on “Fast Sundays” to feed myself, as well as a mainstay of the Women’s Relief Society, whose job was to cater, free of charge, at every church event, including weddings. The crying babies and cacophony that was Sacrament Meeting. The dutiful husbands who could be seen rocking infants back to sleep at one of two exits, although we all knew they merely used their children as an excuse, which I did, to escape the monotony. The liturgy or the preparation and distribution of the bread and water known as the “sacrament” in Mormon parlance, but most of all the race to break the bread by the two sixteen-year-old boys who officiated at the Lord’s Table, engaging in what seemed a test of manual dexterity and manhood. Reading the blessing on the bread and water into the microphone without stumbling over the words. Related to this, the practice of looking at the Bishop for a quick nod of approval, and then, God forbid, if a hint of disapproval was detectable, having to repeat it all over to the great shame of the young man and his family. The raising of hands, instinctively, every time the Bishop or one of his counsellors uttered the words, “all those in favor,” usually in connection to, “sustaining our leaders” and rubberstamping decisions, which the “brethren” had come to after much prayer and fasting and thus not to be questioned. “Partaking of the Sacrament” and the only time it ever got quiet, for even infants knew better than to make a peep. The spectacle of a standing guard at the entrance to the chapel during the “passing” or “administering” of the sacrament, lest any latecomers interrupt the “service,” although “performance” might be a better word since, looking back, the chapel became a kind of playhouse theatre, suddenly. The prepubescent boy who might deliver on occasion some secret dispatch to the Bishop who sat/slept at the front of the congregation, the “stand” in Mormon parlance, the neatly-dressed young man often running it up to him with such a sense of urgency that it would seem Jesus had suddenly appeared at the steps of the temple and the Saints were to gather to Zion that instant. The “passing of the microphone” by that same young man at the “Fast and Testimony Meeting,” which in our congregation, at least, was never more than an impromptu expiation of culpability, which explored the depths of human despair, bringing out the “crazies,” by which I mean people of both genders who seemed unable to utter a single word without breaking into tears. And speaking of crazies, the “Special Interests,” those unmarried or divorced Mormon males and female adult converts, neither of these “unfortunate mendicants” considered likely to find a “companion” without much coaxing, who were

objects of pity and censure, bunched together to rectify the situation in the interest of their eternal souls. Singing “Israel, Israel God is Calling” (found on page 81 in the old, blue hardback hymnal that I knew) *ad nauseam* at every meeting, the only hymn Ottawa Mormons, at least, seemed to know. The church choir, seated behind the Bishop and his two counsellors, which always sang in unison, kicking me out for adding my own harmony, something I had done to annoy the conductor. The requirement to memorise the Thirteen Articles of Faith, our catechism and confirmation in a sense. Primary and donning a blue velvet sash handed out at graduation, covered in pink, plastic numbers and attached using white glue, still wet. My subsequent ordination and entrance into the ranks of the Aaronic Priesthood, becoming president of all three quorums (Deacons, Teachers, and Priests). The Sunday School and older women, most of them either widowed or unmarried, who left an indelible impression on me, Esther Osborne and Hilda Crawshaw most of all, sharing a flat in life and now together in Heaven, I would assume. The Home Seminary Program, a mandatory weekend study, universally hated, and, connected to it, something known as “Super Saturday,” meant to bring together young Mormon seminarians from the surrounding countryside, adding significantly to the pool of possible “eternal companions” in the not too distant future. The Mutual Improvement Association (MIA), church dances, and the Gold and Green Ball, which I hated. Confession, but reserved for sexual peccadilloes like teenage masturbation, which, when I was growing up at least, was tantamount to a mortal sin, for I did not understand that Spencer W. Kimball considered it a gateway drug to “homosexuality,” hence the seriousness attached to it. The moral equivalent to war in the Mormon faith or missionary service, and the undo pressure put on young men at age eighteen to turn their lives around (or else). The year of missionary preparation (I would take two years to complete) and the remarkable, if not sudden, metamorphosis from boy to man that followed. The fund drive, otherwise known as a “missionary farewell,” which closed with the Mormon hymn, “God Be with You till We Meet Again,” and all the young women, prospective soul mates, crying their eyes out upon the young man’s return. Some older male friend of the father slipping the missionary in question a c-note on the way out. The time-honoured tradition of not bothering to read the Book of Mormon, at least not with any care, until after entering the mission field and, for some, never managing to finish it. The incessant, indeed slightly neurotic, shaking of hands at church and calling everyone brother or sister. The commands to keep a journal and tend a garden, which no one had any time to follow. The abject failure of most to pray

three times a day as instructed, perhaps for the same reason. The consigning of genealogical research, or “the work for the dead,” to those in the church with one foot in the grave themselves, at least it seemed so to me. The perfectly sensible/hospitable practice of visiting the Saints once a month, everyone divided equally among the Priesthood and Relief Society, these emissaries of goodwill referred to as “home teachers” and “visiting teachers,” respectively, and who appeared on the doorstep late in the evening of the last day of every month. The custom of marrying far too young and to someone at church you barely knew, having children right away, and then hoping for a miracle. The capital-T Temple and capital-E Endowment ritual or initiation into the high ceremony of Mormonism, which included the Masonic penalties and other ritual remnants of a bygone era. Driving to Washington DC (I grew up in Ottawa, as I have said, before the construction of the temple in Toronto) to marry in the temple as commanded, then holding a wedding reception at the church, in the gym, a week later, which seemed oddly inappropriate. Onerous financial obligations, such as tithing or ten percent of one’s income, and the fast offering meant to help the poor, but which no one seemed to take seriously. The building fund, which I refused to pay the first and last time the Bishop asked. The proscription against tea and coffee, although my paternal grandmother, Opal, a devout Utah Mormon and fanatical temple worker no less, drank buckets of coffee, claiming it helped her stay awake during the ceremony. The idea that people who drank and/or smoked could never know true happiness or enjoy any meaningful success in life.

My paternal grandfather, Revere, a devout Utah Mormon, built several LDS churches, schools, and hospitals in Cache Valley (Logan, Utah), then drank himself to death. He also married more than once and died penniless. “Aunt Dee,” my father’s only sister, drank tea with impunity, married an Iranian man who never abandoned his Baha’ism and, most important of all, she and Agah lived very well, indeed. “Uncle Agah,” an architect under the Shah of Iran I should add, despised the Mormon Church and made no bones about it. My great-aunts on my father’s side of the family were nearly all “Jack Mormons” who bore witness to various hypocrisies that seemed to characterize “Utah Mormonism” as they understood it—all the Bishops and Stake Presidents who cheated on their wives, for example, and much worse. Mostly, they loved to bait the missionaries who tried in vain to reactivate them. My grandmother, Opal, regaled me with tales of other “aunts” who I would never meet, another side of the family, which only later I discerned were the progeny of a polygamous great, great-grandfather.

On my mother's side of the family such illogicalities, exceptions that *disproved* the rule, were also in abundance, many of these lovable characters more oxymoron than orthodox Mormon, proud descendants of Parley P. Pratt via his sixth wife, Belinda Marden, but the scion of Lucius Nelson Scovil too, advisor to the Mormon prophet in Nauvoo. My grandfather, Sherman, a dairy farmer from Boneta, Duchesne County, was a High Priest and, of course, smoked. He liked to snipe at the Church, trotting out the names of corrupt Bishops he had known. Birdie, his poor wife, held down the fort, having enough faith for both of them, playing the organ, working her entire life as a school librarian, and giving Sherman nine children to help him work the family farm. For years, Birdie sent the Forsbergs living in Canada their/our "family group sheets," begging them/us to fill them out, which they/we never did and, no doubt, to her great disappointment.

My father, Clyde Sr, graduated from Utah State University in landscape architecture, working briefly at Brigham Young University in the late 1950s on the design of its campus. A devout, albeit no less conflicted Latter-day Saint, he did not serve a mission. He also left Utah, possibly in disgust, for California, then California for Canada to work in what was then called the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development under Jean Chrétien—the same Jean Chrétien who became one of Canada's most successful Prime Ministers in the tradition of Lester Pearson and Pierre Eliot Trudeau. It is remarkable to think that my dad, a Latter-day Saint of all things, played a pivotal role—I suspect a positive one—in Canada's treatment of its Northern Aboriginal Peoples. The year 1969, when we all arrived in Canada, marks a significant change in aboriginal policy and the gradual transfer of responsibility and authority to indigenous leaders (Grant 1984, 202–14). In this respect, I am proud to bear my father's name.

I chose to leave the Mormon Church rather than love her, however, when my children were born. This is why I left, in fact, for I did not want them to grow up in a religious tradition that is still very troubled and troubling. I divorced, and later in life married Cholpon Alieva, a Central Asian Muslim; our two children, Acacia and Attila, are likely to become Muslims of some nominal type when they grow up. Their parents are both secular humanists, but with strong ties to their religious pasts of the indelible cultural type.

The aforementioned is intended, moreover, to clarify where I stand in relation to Mormonism, the degree to which I ought to know what I am talking about, and whether I deserve to be labelled as an "anti-Mormon." Suffice it to say that I prefer the company of persons of faith who possess

a degree of “healthy scepticism” on matters of church history and doctrine, but most of all those with a love of the enigmatic, a sense of humour, and, above all, an ability to laugh at themselves. Importantly, at the end of the day the serious nature of the problem leaves this writer in particular with few options but to laugh to keep from crying. To be clear, Mormonism, for me at least, has been a bittersweet and paradoxical experience, which may explain why I have been so misunderstood and maligned. I am guilty of not toeing the party line and thus being a traitor to the cause, a Mormon Benedict Arnold in the eyes of some who believe firmly in a kind of “noble lie”—that being the true church, right or wrong.

The religion of my birth, and generation, has changed rather dramatically in the last thirty years—and for the better, admitting into its priesthood ranks any males so inclined and despite the colour of their skin, finally (I was a Mormon missionary in Scotland at the time and recall breathing a sigh of relief). But it has also managed to preserve enough of the “original” parochialism, male chauvinism, and xenophobia that I have no regrets about leaving it. Passionately anti-feminist and homophobic to a fault, the excommunication of Kate Kelly (founder of OrdainWomen.org) is a sad reminder that Mormonism has a long way yet to go, especially in its treatment—indeed, persecution—of the LGBTQ community, adding the children of same-sex couples to the list.

As far as Masonry is concerned, I really could not care less. The contention that I am simply an anti-Mason, moreover, has nothing to do with my mother. I sympathize completely with the idea of brotherly love and fraternalism in principle, in finding some comfort among men of learning and virtue. But, truth be told, I prefer the company of women. That said, everyone needs a community of some kind. I was a very precocious Boy Scout, for example, earning the highest degree of Queen Scout (the equivalent of Eagle Scout in the American order) at just thirteen. I was a member of a juvenile Masonic order without knowing it. I loved it, too—“roughing it” in the woods, dressing like an “Indian” for most of my childhood, shooting a bow and arrow, wearing a knife on my belt, and slaying imaginary grizzly bears and mountain lions as I played in the greenbelt nearby. I lived in a treehouse my father built for me when I was just eight or nine, and for three years, despite the weather. I appreciated it when it rained. In Canada, I became an expert winter camper. I welcomed with open arms the real threat of freezing to death. My favourite novelist growing up was Farley Mowat, my only real reading consisting of classic adventure stories such as *People of the Deer* (1951), *Lost in the Barrens* (1956), *Owls in the Family* (1962), and *Never Cry Wolf* (1963). Jack London’s “To Build a Fire,” and, of course, William Golding’s *Lord of the*

Flies (1954), were but fictional representations of my dreams for the future, rather than mere adolescent, bedtime reading. Anything Edgar Allan Poe wrote, but his “The Premature Burial,” well ... this was simply too good to be true. How I longed for an adventure like the Masonic one in Mark Twain’s *Huckleberry Finn*; to be Huck and sail down some long and winding river with a friend on the run like Jim and seek our fortunes. Did I mention that I ran away a lot as a kid? And so, as far as Masonry goes, in the very general, anthropological, and primordial sense, suffice it to say that I get it!

But here’s the thing. I would find a sense of camaraderie and community among Canadian and American jazz musicians, as well as members of the Central Asian artistic community, and with whom I have worked now for many years. Of course, I would be reticent not to concede that many of my heroes in jazz were also Masons: Louis Armstrong, Duke Ellington, Al Jolson, Sun Ra, Nat King Cole, W. C. Handy, Dizzy Gillespie, Count Basie, Lionel Hampton, and Paul Robeson, to name only a few. Ironically, I began my musical career with renowned Canadian jazz saxophonist and composer Robert Frayne, playing for the Knights of Columbus on Gladstone Avenue in Ottawa. My jazz musical, *Not Black and White*, dedicated to Armstrong in gratitude, employs a Masonic trope as its chief theatrical device. I recall with great fondness the many smaller, start-up LDS “branches” in towns like Smith Falls, Cornwall, and Brockville, where my father sometimes took me to worship with the Saints on the outskirts, these meetings in either an Orangemen Hall, Elks Club, Odd Fellows Arms, or Lion’s Club. I can still remember the dusty and knightly décor of these somewhat ghoulish edifices to Upper Canadian manhood. What I did not know or understand at the time was that local churches had refused to rent office space to Mormons, but that Masons had not allowed religious prejudice to decide the matter. So again, I get it.

As a missionary, serving in the Scotland-Edinburgh Mission from 1977–9 under Dereck A. Cuthberth, then LaMar W. Poulton (I did not care much for Poulton, or him for me), eight of my twenty-four months were spent as “branch president” (pastor) of a small congregation in Aberdeen, where one recent convert was also a Master Mason. On the wall in his living room his Master Mason Certificate proudly hung, although I suspect that he had fallen out of favour with the brotherhood, behind on his dues because of falling on bad times, and so his conversion to Mormonism a respite from the Masonic cold. He was what Mormon missionaries call “golden,” a shining example of the ideal convert, and meant for greatness in his newfound religious and fraternal home; he was destined to become the next branch president of the Aberdeen congregation under my watch,

but not before receiving the highest order of priesthood in Mormonism (the order of Melchizedec) and, importantly, going through the temple (in London) with his wife and children. It was my job to prepare him for this liturgical and administrative eventuality, which I tried to do. His apprenticeship, and mine, included major renovations to his home on my day off, but these quickly turned into long and sometimes heated discussions on the relationship of Mormonism and Masonry. A modern-day example of a Mason, seeing in Mormonism something Masonic, John was not entirely sure which of these he ought to call home. I would later learn that he left the church (taking his family with him) after attending the temple, concluding that it was simply a pastiche of his erstwhile Masonic vows and thus a ritual counterfeit. I had always maintained that he need not choose between the two, for both, I believed, simply had the proverbial elephant by different ends, adding that, as branch president, John might not find the time or money to pay his proper respects to both. To mix metaphors, being a Mason and Mormon, I thought, was a case of belt and suspenders. In hindsight, my former parishioner may simply have taken my advice, choosing Masonry over Mormonism. For the last time, my Masonic half-brothers, I get it.

The above is the sum of my early exposure to Masonry before the postdoctoral phase of my studies when I embarked on an intellectual adventure and journeyed down a meandering river of the scholarly, bizarre, and at times farfetched, which seemed destined to upset everyone. But being labelled—indeed, dismissed—as anti-Masonic is not only unfair but without foundation, since my critique simply accords with that of secular scholarship; no more, no less. I would have thought Masons would grasp and perhaps even appreciate the more important fact that I consider the movement of vast historical importance, not simply to the Mormon story, but to American history writ large.

So what is the problem then?

For Masons and Mormons, their “gatekeepers” (as Terry Eagleton might well see them) are the problem, committed to a rather conservative and inward-looking version of their history and circumscribed by “high walls spiked with shards of glass, forbidding enough to repel voyeurs, religious obsessives, nun-stalkers, sex offenders, militant Protestants, enraged atheists” (Eagleton 2003, 1). Their undying devotion to insulated ways of knowing and being and the walls they tend to construct, to quote Eagleton once more, are meant “to keep the occupants in” (Ibid.). And who are they? Believers and the faithful grassroots, trusting in this select and self-righteous few to decide what is best for all and sundry by hook or

by crook. My complaint is not with Masons or Mormons per se, but with these sentinels who claim to speak for them.

To accuse this haughty corps of the Rankean heresy, that species of intellectual hubris that gave us “scientific historicism” and such epistemological questionables as “objectivity” and “neutrality,” does not quite go far enough. But it is a start, certainly, for they stand guilty of the charge. One may consider what historian Donald Harmon Akenson says concerning “history in the modern sense”—that it is, in his words, “bogus.” Having written a pioneering “historical” analysis of the Bible and the Talmuds, Akenson merely reiterates what postmodernists have been saying for some time now—that history is fiction, a construction that is unnatural and not to be equated with the past, as such. Except Akenson turns postmodernism on its head, claiming that, in the case of the sacred writings of Judaism and Christianity, these grand “inventions” are history. Be that as it may, his summary of the historical enterprise, or what it ought to be, is not only instructive, but at odds with much that my detractors claim to do. “The word ‘scientific’ still appears in historical discussions,” he writes, “it is a term that has not been used without embarrassment in secular departments of history since, roughly, the end of World War II. *No one, save perhaps the odd eccentric, believes that there is such a thing as objective historical truth*” (Akenson 1998, 11, emphasis mine). And lest we misunderstand, Akenson argues that even the most conscientious historical undertaking operates “all the while recognizing that all historical writing is merely a series of heuristic fictions and that both complete adequacy of description and complete accuracy of ‘fact’ is beyond the bounds of the possible” (Ibid.).

In some respects, I do not have the luxury of taking Akenson’s sage advice and ignoring what he calls “a nest of wasps” that invariably swarm the minute “sources” are mentioned, and that “one has to ignore part of this swarm, the group with which there is no negotiation whatsoever” (30). In the case of the Bible, these are the biblical literalists and head-bangers, essentially. In the case of Masons and Mormons, particularly Mormon Masons, there is really no negotiating with any of them, and herein lies the problem. They have framed the narrative according to a particular dogma and a theology that service the intellectual needs of themselves and their communities. High on the list of needs is a sense of legitimacy accompanied by a faint air of professionalism. Returning to Akenson’s original point about ignoring that part of the swarm where negotiation (and fair play, I might add) is anathema, save for one or two notable exceptions, there is but one, indivisible swarm in this case. Its constituents have no shame, fudging the books and stonewalling, as the Scottish Rite Mason

and erstwhile Mormon Arturo de Hoyos did, holding up the release of my Columbia book, *Equal Rites*, a full year as my editor, Wendy Lochner, waited in vain for a promised review, which he clearly had no intention of drafting. Another luminary in the field, Paul Bessel, subsequently agreed to review the manuscript in his stead, but Bessel proved no less undependable and evasive (it is worth noting that his initial impressions of my work were very positive, but then he seemed to disappear from the face of the earth). De Hoyos did manage to write a damning review, but after the book finally came out and, it would seem, as the ink was still drying, which he posted on Amazon.com, Barnes and Noble and elsewhere. This “attack ad,” which he entitled “Two Wrongs Don’t Make A Rite” (de Hoyos 2004), seemed unable to make its point without misquoting my book, completely misrepresenting my arguments, playing fast and loose with Masonic history and lore, and inventing a conversation in which I allegedly admit historical wrongdoing vis-à-vis early versions of the ritual I am said not to have consulted. He also claimed that the name of Hiram Abif, the chief architect of King Solomon in Masonic folklore and ritual, appears in the Bible to contradict another argument that I do not make. This is what passes for the best in Masonic hermeneutics, it would seem.¹

¹ The text and transliteration in question, “2 Chronicles 4:16, ganash **huras abiv** la-melech shlomoh” (emphasis mine), is purposely misleading. The Hebrew text, (הַנֶּחֱסֵם אֲבִיב) reads “huras **‘aviyw**,” the “b” or beth (ב) in Hebrew a “v,” the final waw (ו) a “w,” as in the Arabic (و). This, of course, is the classical Hebrew understanding. De Hoyos is attempting to use the Sephardic or modern Hebrew transliteration schema when it suits him to squeeze from the text something approximating “Abif” in this case. But even if we accept his transliteration of the final waw (vav) as “v,” there is no way around the problem of the soft “b,” and about this in the Sephardic is a “v” and not a “b” as well. Moreover, Hebrew, like Arabic, has the equivalent of the letter f, a soft p (פ), the same sound in both classical and Sephardic Hebrew. And so, “Abif” in Hebrew would be spelled like so, אַבִּיפּ, nothing like the spelling in 2 Chronicles 4:16, אֲבִיבּוֹ. Or consider the simple case of the online, interlinear Hebrew Bible, where the same passage reads “*churm~abiu*” or “Huras~Abi,” which comes close, but no cigar, as it were (<http://www.scripture4all.org/OnlineInterlinear/OTpdf/2ch4.pdf>). While there are Masons who, like de Hoyos, trot out the same flawed transliteration of 2 Chronicles 4:16 as a biblical proof-text for the existence of Masonry’s titular head, Hiram Abif, Paul Bessel has shown that the connection is tenuous to say the least. There are three “Hirams” in the Hebrew Bible. This one, as it turns out, is a brass worker, not a stone mason, certainly not Solomon’s chief architect, for the simple reason that Hiram Abi arrives upon the scene at the completion of the Temple to fashion items that are to decorate it (see Paul Bessel’s website, “The Hiram Abif Legend in Masonry,” <http://bessel.org/hiramab.htm>). Besides, what I actually

But de Hoyos's unconscionable behaviour (rather unbecoming of the tradition he claims to represent) is worthy of mention here because of another argument he makes, although he is not the first to make it—a Mason and a Mormon, he knows best, whereas the rest of us, the unwashed so to speak, cannot ever really know. Other Mormon Masons to review my work, Nick Literski, for example, have been no less duplicitous and condescending; and although Literski left the faith shortly after reviewing my book for the ultraconservative LDS think tank known as FARMS (Foundation of Ancient Research and Mormon Studies), subsequently electing not to publish his own long-awaited tome on Mormonism and Masonry, “negotiation” even now seems impossible (Literski 2005). The best scholar in the sub-discipline of Mormonism and Masonry, Michael Homer, is a Mormon by birth, like me, but not beholden to Church or Lodge in any sense that I can detect (see Homer 2014). Indeed, Homer and a young scholar named Michael Reed (making his way up the ranks and likely to publish on Masonry at some point) are exceptions that *prove* the rule.

The Masonic and Mormon swarm will, no doubt, resort to the same smear tactics as before. Alas, there is no avoiding it, or them. *Equal Rites* enjoyed some very good reviews, to be sure, but these came from outsiders, mostly. Insiders did not understand the book—those who took the time to read it, that is. In fact, what Thomas O’Dea, the Roman Catholic sociologist of religion, said about the Book of Mormon—that it “has not been universally considered by its critics as one of those books that must be read in order to have an opinion of it” (O’Dea 1957, 26)—might ironically also be said of *Equal Rites*. Samuel Brown, a talented LDS writer and researcher, published an unflattering review in which he managed to get the book’s publisher wrong (the review was subsequently

wrote was only that “there is no mention of Hiram Abif *per se* and a scuffle involving a chief architect and an impatient pack of vengeful apprentice masons in the Bible. Nothing about a search party of loyal followers apprehending the murderers (tearing out their tongues, slitting their throats, and spilling their guts as punishment) and finding the body of their mentor so badly decomposed that they had to lift it from its shallow grave using an intimate male embrace known in Masonic circles as the five points of fellowship. Nor is it said that afterward, Solomon, king of Israel, revealed to this faithful few a grand omnific word, instructing them in the niceties of a ritual in honor of their fallen general” (Forsberg 2004, 2). Suffice it to say that everything de Hoyos wrote in his review concerning *Equal Rites* necessitates the same detailed, indeed somewhat pedantic refutation, largely because this self-styled “Grand Archivist of the Universe” is a bald-faced prevaricator bar none; and if he had any integrity, or a shred of decency, he would publish a retraction and apology.

amended, then seemed to disappear; cf. Brown 2011). In a conference paper by Newell G. Bringhurst, this otherwise conscientious and very decent-minded historian of Mormonism, while not LDS himself, could not manage to get the title of the book right (see Newell G. Bringhurst papers, <http://nwda.orbiscascade.org/ark:/80444/xv41436>), marching in goose step with so-called “believing historians” and simply going on the offensive. A subsequent review he wrote for the *John Whitmer Historical Association Journal* suggests that he may not have read more than my chapter on race, where I challenge some of what he has written on the subject (Bringhurst 2004). A more recent review essay by M. Gerald Bradford for the *FARMS Review* merely regurgitates such negative reporting (Bradford 2014). Kathleen Flake’s review for *Church History* was payback, for I had reviewed her book manuscript for Columbia University Press and recommended against publication (Flake 2005). D. Michael Quinn’s review was simply preposterous, accusing me of misogyny (Quinn 2005). However, it may have been politically motivated since Klaus J. Hansen, my PhD supervisor, had published a damning review and somewhat personal attack of Quinn’s *Same-Sex Dynamics among Nineteenth-Century Americans: a Mormon Example*, which *FARMS* had picked up and used to embarrass (Hansen 1998, 132–40).

By comparison, Michael Homer’s review of *Equal Rites* for the *Journal of Mormon History* was hardly glowing, but fair, giving praise where praise was due (Homer 2006). The same might be said of Steven Bullock’s review for the *Journal of Religion*, except that I had been critical of his *Revolutionary Brotherhood* for not including a discussion of Mormons as among the Masonic multitudes (Bullock 2005, 314–16). The little that Hansen had to say (at least in print), and more of a footnote than anything else, had been designed to distance himself from the book, taking none of the credit, then, essentially, damning it with faint praise (Hansen 2004, 26). Vintage Hansen.

Equal Rites would be the recipient of several very good reviews by leading scholars in the field, qualified to comment, and without an axe to grind: Purdue University American Studies scholar Susan Curtis (2005), University of South Florida sociologist of religion Danny Jorgensen (2005), Reinhold Hill (2005), D. E. Mills Jr (2005), Durham University scholar of Religious Studies, Douglas Davies (2007), and Hungarian American Studies scholar Irén Annus (2006). Finally, a word or two concerning Grant Underwood, the Brigham Young University historian of religion and a devout Latter-day Saint, who managed to put personal differences aside. His review of *Equal Rites* for the *Journal of American History* showed real courage, in fact calling it “an imaginative and

ambitious book,” and to the dismay of his colleagues, one suspects (Underwood 2005, 983).

However, a more reasoned and balanced discussion of my unique reading and revolutionary theory of early Mormonism as a brand of Christian Masonry that included women—more European than American in nature—would be hijacked by an extremely vicious broadside published in *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, entitled “Clyde Forsberg’s Equal Rites and the Exoticizing of Mormonism,” written by LDS apologist of no mean talent John-Charles Duffy (Duffy 2006). In attempting to pin a charge of “Orientalism” on my lapel and thus of casting Mormonism in the role of “Other,” the author in question seemed not to understand, or rather take the time to appreciate, that my reading of American history until then had focused on “outsiders,” but not as Edward Said and postcolonial scholars understood the term, having a positive rather than a negative implication. The pioneering and somewhat postmodernist efforts of historians of religion like R. Laurence Moore and Nathan O. Hatch, employing organising principles such as the “centrality of the periphery” and, indeed, underscoring the significant role that religious outsiders played in the so-called “making of America,” this was the interpretive lens through which I had discussed the Book of Mormon vis-à-vis American social and cultural history (see Moore 1987; Hatch 1991). Duffy seemed not to know this, which can be credited to ignorance, having no training in American religious history per se (at least at that time), coming at the subject, and at me, from such a skewed and erroneous point of view that some blame for the publication of his highly defamatory article should be laid at the feet of the journal and its editor. Generally false and meant to damage my professional reputation, Duffy’s award-winning publication was hate speech, ironically. Moreover, the argumentation was truly fantastic and even conspiratorial, contending that Columbia University Press had lent its name and considerable reputation to such a “bad book” because of the anti-Mormon bias of the academy writ large. For an “anti-Mormon book” like mine, so the argument goes, a contract with a distinguished university press had been a *fait accompli*. Of course, nothing could be further from the truth. It had taken me ten long years and a string of rejections that beggar belief and belie Duffy’s thesis—the secular academy is not a bastion of anti-Mormon censure, but quite the reverse.

Importantly, *Equal Rites* is not anti-Mormon. It maintains that founder Joseph Smith used the Book of Mormon as a flagship for the creation of a new religious and fraternal tradition, a synthesis that brought together under one sacred canopy the Masonic world of true manhood and the evangelical world of true womanhood. In fact, anyone who bothered to

read what I had written might well criticise me for having authored an apology for early Mormonism, since I had characterised Smith as somewhat progressive in his views concerning women and, even, but to a lesser degree, women of colour. But this was not enough; Duffy's calumny knew no bounds, the author contending that I had admitted to being mentally ill, taking out of context a chapter from my memoir, *All the King's Horses and All the King's Men: Love, Alienation, and "Reconciliation" in a big, BIG Mormon Family*, as his proof. Relegated to an endnote, Duffy writes, "Forsberg wonders aloud if he is mentally ill and describes himself as 'living on the edge of madness'" (Duffy 2006, 29 n. 41; cf. Forsberg 2000, 182–4). Of the four categories of slander, Duffy might well be guilty of the third—"adversely reflecting on a person's fitness to conduct their business or trade," and "verbal injury," the "intentional infliction of emotional distress," and thus a clear case of "outrageousness" and/or "convicium." Rather than take Duffy to task here, a good lawyer might advise me to take him to court.

Nick Literski, a Mormon Mason of distinction who subsequently left the faith, thought it appropriate to use a glowing review of my jazz musical *Not Black and White*, which deals with my parents' abuse of my siblings and me (fourteen of us all told), adding insult to injury. He and Duffy demonstrate a complete lack of sensitivity, compassion and, dare I say, humanity, apropos my suffering, but, more importantly, that of my siblings and other victims of child abuse (Literski 2005), making a mockery of everything that I had written, suggesting that I had either lied or embellished.

Perry Miller, in his landmark study of Puritanism *Errand into the Wilderness* (1956), makes a point about a particular school of thought with which he differed. I have always liked it. What he says, in effect, and if memory serves, is that the chief difference between his work and that of his enemies does not come down to a matter of interpretation, but a simple case of ignorance—theirs, not his. In tackling religious texts like the Book of Mormon, considering the fact that my critics all seem to make the same interpretive assumptions—indeed, errors—it is fair to say that they might benefit from a little remediation; a quick lesson in textual criticism, in this case. I do not mean to descend to their level, assuming that such is even possible. But to be frank, I am a little tired of their frightening lack of understanding, whether it is a drone for the cause of Masonry like Arturo de Hoyos's or an accomplished Mormon historian of religion like Kathleen Flake's.

I single out de Hoyos and Flake, in this case, because both made the same mistake; indeed, both might be surprised to learn that I selected my

texts with far more care than either imagined. For de Hoyos, my deference to Albert Pike's *Morals and Dogma of the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite of Freemasonry* seemed to stick in his craw, this seminal Masonic tome published in the 1850s. Since the Book of Mormon was published in 1830 only Masonic sources and texts published before this date ought to be referenced, assuming my argument was a genetic one. It was not. Had I limited myself to pre-1830 Masonic works, I would have been found guilty of the dreaded *post hoc ergo propter hoc* fallacy (after this, therefore, because of this). The fact that I was not making a genetic argument, but a homologous one, was lost on De Hoyos, as was so much that I had written and attempted to do. Flake simply fell into a trap that I had set, intended to expose the witlessness in which she and her ilk often traffic. After referring to Joseph Smith's reworking and, by rote, one of the "best-known Masonic publications of the day, Thomas Smith Webb's *The Freemason's Monitor; or Illustrations of Freemasonry*," I write: "The volume was certainly available to Smith, but the remarkable fact is that he undoubtedly never read it." Moreover, I made a point to credit any similarities to "a remarkable coincidence" (Forsberg 2004, xx–xxi). My reasons for using the 1860 edition of Webb, moreover, edited by Kentucky Grand Master Rob Morris, and not an earlier edition, were lost on Flake who assumed that I had simply made a faux pas. I will explain why I chose the 1860 edition in due course. But first, it seems necessary to rehearse the essentials of prior academic training and methodological orientation(s), which are meant to lay out a decidedly ahistorical approach and reading of Masonic texts vis-à-vis Mormonism that has guided my work.

With training in Biblical studies and the "Higher Criticism," changing directions and disciplines midstream and finishing with a PhD in American, Canadian, and European social and cultural history, I should add that my teaching since then has been largely in American Studies, where my unique blend of the literary and historical has been put to good use. These days, I find myself in a Western Languages and Literatures Department where I teach a fourth-year course in Postmodern English Fiction. When I left religious studies and Ancient Near Eastern Studies to pursue a PhD in American history at Queen's University under Hansen, I hoped to build upon what I had done in Biblical studies, especially my work with Hebrew Bible scholars Peter C. Craigie and Lyle Eslinger (University of Calgary), then Paul Dion (University of Toronto). Even my Honors Thesis on the Judaeo-Arabic translation of the Hebrew Bible by Sa'adia Gaon, supervised by Andrew Rippin, had a Mormon subtext, for the medieval Jewish scholastic seemed, at least, to translate with a measure of elasticity that might be compared to that of Joseph Smith. My