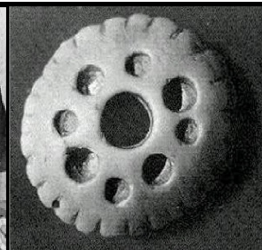
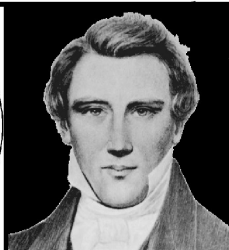


# THE NEW EXPOSITOR



## HOW MANY EX-MORMONS ARE THERE?

JANUARY 2008 EDITION

BY RICHARD PACKHAM

Of course no one can know exactly how many people have left the Mormon church. Surely the church will not divulge how many requests for "name removal" it processes. But it should be possible to get some rough idea, by looking at the numbers that are available.

The church claims approximately thirteen million members world-wide, and about 5.5 million members in the United States. Their membership rolls include everyone who is born or baptized into the church and who has not died or officially resigned or been excommunicated. That is, names are not removed from the rolls for simple inactivity, but only when a member resigns or is excommunicated. If the church loses contact with a member, that member's name is still kept on the rolls until the member's 110th birthday, when the name is removed on the assumption that the member has died.

In 2001, the American Religious Identification Survey (ARIS) did a survey of adult Americans to determine how they identified themselves in regard to religion. The results were published by the U.S. Census Bureau as Table 79 in its Statistical Abstract, available online at <http://www.census.gov/prod>

/2004pubs/03statab/pop.pdf

Not quite 2.8 million Americans identified themselves as "Mormon/Latter-day Saint." That is quite different from the 5.5 million members claimed by the church. Yes, part of the difference may be that ARIS surveyed only adults, and did not survey Hawaii and Alaska. But are there an additional 2.7 million (5.5 - 2.8 = 2.7) Hawaiian, Alaskan and minor Mormons? Hardly!

Who, then, are these 2.7 million people whose names are on the membership rolls of the church, but who do not consider themselves "Mormon"? Obviously, they were once Mormon - that is how their names got onto the membership rolls. But they are no longer Mormon, at least in their own mind. They are former Mormons. Ex-Mormons.

But they are not the only ex-Mormons. Many people officially resign their membership and get their names removed from the church records when they stop believing, and in recent years that number has been estimated to be presently at about 100,000 per year. Between 1995 and 2002 approximately 595,000 names were removed by the church, according to an anonymous inside source (until the mid-90s it was about 30,000 per

year). A fair estimate of how many people requested name removal (or were excommunicated) between 1990 and 2001 would be 640,000.

Adding those who left officially since 1990 (about 640,000; and assuming that most of them are still alive) to those who simply no longer consider themselves Mormons (2.7 million) gives the approximate number of American Ex-Mormons as over 3.3 million. That means that there are more Ex-Mormons in the U.S. (3.3 million) than there are self-acknowledged Mormons (2.8 million).

Ex-Mormons in other countries outnumber the Mormons even more dramatically. In some countries such as Mexico and Chile the governments ask for religious affiliation as part of the official census. The number of members on church rolls in those countries far exceeds the number identified by the census takers. The difference represents Ex-Mormons, people whose names are on the membership rolls, but who no longer consider themselves Mormon..

The church claims over 800,000 members in Mexico (1999), but the 2000 census shows only a little over 200,000. The discrepancy of more than 600,000 must represent former members, that is

Ex-Mormons. Three times as many Mexican Ex-Mormons as Mexican Mormons. The situation is similar in Chile, where the church claimed over half a million members in 2001. But the 2002 Chilean census showed only a little over a hundred thousand. So there are over 400,000 Ex-Mormons in Chile - four times as many Ex-Mormons as Mormons!

These numbers are probably typical for many other third-world countries. Armand Mauss (Mormon sociologist) has estimated that in third-world countries only 25% of Mormon converts are still active one year after baptism. That is, 75% have become Ex-Mormon within a year.

So when the Brethren announce the membership figures in General Conference, they really should say something like: "The church now has over thirteen million names on the membership rolls, the great majority of whom no longer have anything to do with the church."

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## THE EXMORMON FOUNDATION

### WHO WE ARE

We are a diverse community of former Mormons or questioning Mormons. Many of us have been church leaders, teachers, missionaries and faithful members, and we are here to support those who, like ourselves, are creating a life after Mormonism.

For many, the transition out of Mormonism is difficult and traumatic. It involves carefully examining the teachings of the church and evaluating them objectively. And it may involve the risk of disapproval or sometimes outright ostracism from friends and family. But it also involves a sincere search for truth.

Whether you join our group or not, we invite you to explore our website, visit links we have established to other organizations, and ask questions. We warmly welcome you to join us in the search for real answers, real friends and the joy of an examined life. You are not alone!

### WHAT WE DO

- We sponsor conferences and speakers about Mormonism, primarily for those who are leaving Mormonism, but also for all who wish to know more about its teachings and its practices;
- We offer emotional support to those who are leaving, or who have left the Mormon church;
- We serve the media and the general public as a reliable source of information about Mormonism;
- We provide support to individuals and groups who are working to present a more accurate view of Mormonism;
- We maintain a website and publish a newsletter to provide current information about the church and its activities;

## A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

You may have noticed that the theme for our most recent conference was “Transitions – Unlocking the secrets to a Post-Mormon Life.” Some people may ask, “Is the transition out of the church really that tough, and is there a secret to it?” I don’t know that we learned any great secrets at this year’s conference, especially compared to the secrets we had to keep as members of the church, but I believe that our speakers left everyone with a greater sense of hope in discovering that we’re not alone.

Those of us who have been out of the church for a while will tell you there is a period of transition when you leave, and it’s not always easy. Some Mormons say that by leaving the church we have taken the easy way out, but we all know that is not the case. As many of us have discovered, leaving the church can be very difficult. When people leave they often lose a community, a culture, and a way of life. And

they often lose friends, family, and sometimes spouses and children too. In some ways it is like leaving home for the first time or going off to college. When someone leaves the church, just as when they leave home for the first time, they have to grow up and think for themselves. Sometimes the hard part is that we’re doing this when we’re much older than the average college student.

So this has become my goal as President of the Exmormon Foundation – to let people know that they’re not alone in their journey out of the church. There are so many people out there just like us; they need to know that there is life beyond Mormonism. They need to know that healing can occur with their families, but that it takes time, patience, and

mutual respect. The Foundation wants to be that shoulder to cry on, that friend who understands the difficulties of moving beyond the culture of Mormonism. There’s so much out there, and so much to live for!

-Sandy Crain

### RFM CELEBRATES 12TH ANNIVERSARY

Recovery From Mormonism has just completed its 12<sup>th</sup> year as the pre-eminent ex-Mormon website. The site, at [www.exmormon.org](http://www.exmormon.org), is visited by between 20,000 and 40,000 visitors every day, according to Eric Kettunen, who started it in 1995 as a way of thanking those who had helped him on his

journey out of Mormonism. Having spent many hours on the telephone during his transition period, he felt it would be helpful to establish a site where questioning Mormons could access information and share experiences. His original intent was to maintain the site for only a year. Today it contains more than 600 individual stories of former members of the church and more than 400 articles on various aspects of Mormonism.

As might be expected, the site draws considerable mail – much of it supportive, but some of it vicious. “I occasionally get threats,” he says, “and I am sometimes warned that I am going to outer darkness, or that I am in league with Satan (often spelled Satin).” He says, “I basically stopped answering mail a few years ago. It was too time consuming. I am taking the approach that the majority of questions can be answered by simply searching the site, as we have a tremendous resource. Or people can use Google. My feeling is that if someone is serious about learning he or she will make the effort to find it out for themselves. We just provide the resource.” He does, however, have a number of volunteers who help with mail that needs to be answered. Kettunen himself averages one to two hours a day working on the website. He and the volunteers rarely post on the site, but monitor it to avoid including anything that is offensive, incorrect, or political. “We aren’t promoting any particular viewpoint,” he says. “We are just trying to make information about the church available. It is up to the readers to reach their own conclusions.

A 51-year-old metallurgical engineer, Kettunen served a mission to Finland. He says his background in metallurgy first aroused his doubts about the Book of Mormon, since it contains many unbelievable references to metals, which are explained in detail on his site at [www.hismin.com/metallurgy.htm](http://www.hismin.com/metallurgy.htm).

Kettunen points out that the metals described in Chapter 5 of 2 Nephi would have involved expertise in such activities as steel making (mixing iron with carbon), iron mining, coal mining (to make coke), limestone mining, gold mining, silver mining, copper mining, tin or zinc mining, smelting, fluxing, grinding, complex furnaces, and prospecting — all of which would have been accomplished by a group of about 8 men, 15 children, and 10 women.

## LDS WOMEN RESPOND TO CONFERENCE SPEECH

A speech by Relief Society president Julie Beck entitled “Mothers Who Know” sparked a heated discussion on the internet following the last LDS general conference. A rebuttal to her speech, entitled “What Women Know,” was signed by more than 500 women, and was circulated on at least 20 internet sites. The rebuttal noted that “several ideas within the body of President Beck’s talk conflict with our inspiration and experience.” Most of the objections to the speech concerned “healthy and equitable” relationships between men and women. Typical excerpts from the document: “The choice to have children does not rule out other avenues of influence and power...”

“Men are our fathers, sons brothers partners, lovers, and friends. Many of them also struggle within a system that equates leadership with hierarchy and domination... Partnership is illusory without equal decision-making power.”

“We reverence the responsibility to choose how, when, and whether we become parents...” “We work because want to; because we need to; and because we have no other choice...Some of us have been thrust into a position of the sole economic support of our children through desertion, divorce, domestic violence, or death. Indeed, too many of us have learned that we are just one fully-employed male away from poverty.”

The women who prepared the document describe themselves as “women who differ in age, income, race/ethnicity, and marital status. Many of us are mothers, some with exceptionally large families. Some of us are grandmothers and great-grandmothers many times over. Some are young mothers, with infants and elementary-age children. Others of us—for reasons of biology, opportunity, or choice—do not have children. Some of us have never married. Some of us are single because of divorce or widowhood. A few of us have been with the same partner more than 50 years. We all work—paid or unpaid, both inside and outside our homes. We share many decades of church service among us. In fact, our LDS background is our common denominator.” In addition to the women, a number of men also signed the rebuttal. Pres. Beck’s speech can be read at: <http://www.lds.org/conference/talk/display/0,5232,49-1-775-27,00.html> The response may be found at: <http://whatwomenknow.org/>

### THE “A” WORD

By Ed Bliss

“Apostate.” It’s an ugly word, isn’t it? It carries all sorts of negative connotations, indicating that the person involved is disloyal, weak, unreliable, and unworthy.

Not only that, but more importantly, he or she is a *sinner*. According to Mormon belief, nobody would reject the truth of the Gospel unless they were guilty of some serious sin, or had failed to read the Book of Mormon faithfully, or had refused to pray for guidance. That being the case, it is easy to see why faithful Latter-day Saints, who are generally gracious and friendly in dealing with non-Mormons, find it difficult to treat “apostates” that way. After all, they figure these folks have doomed themselves to outer darkness — or at best to an ignominious spot in the telestial kingdom.

It’s too bad that Mormons can’t find a less pejorative term. Baptists refer to backsliders, Catholics speak of lapsed Catho-

lics, and other churches speak of mant, he or she is branded an apostate, and further contact with such a person is discouraged. Again and again church leaders have warned about the dangers of associating with anyone who raises difficult questions about church doctrines or practices.

The only acceptable word is “apostate.”

Actually, in many cases the term should be considered a compliment. If a person has carefully studied Mormonism, and has decided that it isn’t true, or if he has been excommunicated because he insisted on publishing truths that the church preferred to keep hidden, then he should be congratulated on his integrity and his courage. And it does take courage to do something that will almost certainly result in one’s being spurned by friends and family. There are tens of thousands who can testify that leaving the church has severed family ties and long-standing friendships. Shunning, such as is practiced by the Amish, is not part of the Mormon tradition, but sometimes it gets pretty close.

As long as there appears to be a possibility of getting the person to “repent” and rejoin the faithful, an effort is made; but once it becomes apparent that the individual is ada-

In discussing the reason for an apostasy, the usual phrase is “he lost his testimony,” the implication being that something of great value has been forfeited. Ironically, most ex-Mormons feel exactly the opposite; they feel something has been gained, not lost. They feel emancipated, freed from the nagging feeling that they aren’t worthy, that nothing they do is quite enough, and that they are constantly being judged and found wanting. As one exmo put it, “I can now be honest with myself, and can say that I know with every fiber of my being that the Book of Mormon is not true, and that Joseph Smith was not a prophet of God.” Or, as another former member said upon leaving the fold, “I think I can say with Martin Luther King, ‘Free at last! Free at last! Thank God almighty I am free at last!’”

Maybe being an apostate isn’t such a bad thing after all!

### “LINE UPON LINE” EXMORMON DVD NOW AVAILABLE

The highly acclaimed DVD “Line Upon Line: Mormonism Transcended” is now available through the Exmormon Foundation.

More than a year in the making, the production features brief interviews with a number of former Mormons, discussing their reasons for leaving the LDS Church.

Among those interviewed for the production are Dennis Farley, author and attorney; Bill Gardiner, clinical social worker; Tal Bachman, professional musician; Tracy Bachman, English convert; Arza Evans, retired professor; Ken Clark, former employee of the Church Educational System; Simon Southerton, DNA researcher; Bob McCue, attorney; Richard Packham, retired teacher and attorney; and Sandy Crain, president of the Exmormon Foundation.

The DVD can be purchased by sending a check or money order to Brian Madsen, 4332 Coldwater Canyon #1, Studio City CA 91604. The price is \$10 plus \$3 shipping and handling. It is also available through the Exmormon Website, [www.exmormonfoundation.org/](http://www.exmormonfoundation.org/)

## A BRITISH EXMO

BY JOHN STANTON

Perhaps the LDS missionaries get the best results when they hit a house that is going through a trauma. That was true in the case of my wife and myself. We were both in our forties, had been badly let down by the local Anglican minister, and as a result were “easy meat.” I had some trouble with the missionary discussions but we were duly baptized.

Five weeks later I was called to be MIA Superintendent. Five weeks! But I was a qualified schoolteacher and hence presumably seen as ideal. The fact that I had never read any of the Book of Mormon, leave alone all of it, and that I had to be told what MIA stood for, didn't seem to matter.

It is only since joining the Exmo group on Yahoo that I realized how very different the British Mormons are from the American – and especially Utah – ones. There is no pressure here, no hard sell, no nastiness towards those who have left. We did get visits from the home teachers, but as soon as we were officially excommunicated those ceased. And if we bump into any of our old friends from our LDS days they are genuinely pleased to see us and to hear our news – as we are them.

One thing that struck me very forcibly when we were members was the tone of the manuals I was given. For two years I was the adult Sunday School teacher, and I was obliged to follow the manual. But I couldn't, because so much of it was too American. I used the basics and followed the curriculum, but that was all. I recall one week when I was given a particular piece of dodgy doctrine to teach and decided to adopt the role of “devil's advocate.” I told the class that I was going to propound the exact opposite doctrine and it was up to them to prove me wrong. It led to a very lively discussion! In fact, one member of the class nipped out, shot down the corridor to the bishop and told him that Brother Stanton had a riot on his hands.

I don't regret our Mormon period. It was, in many ways, fun. But I was constantly asking awkward questions, which probably explains why it was four years before we were deemed worthy to go through the temple. And that one visit to the London Temple, plus all the wild doctrine, finally had me saying, “I can't go on with this, it is so patently rubbish.” My wife found leaving hard, though, because the other members of

the ward were so loving.

I think that whatever experiences we live through, be they good or bad, go towards shaping the way we are. Our years as Mormons taught us a lot about how folk can help each other in practical ways, unselfishly and generously. As a result the church I now lead echoes that aspect of Mormonism in a very real way.



*John Stanton, a convert who left the LDS church in 1973, is now pastor of a non-denominational church in Essex, England. He is shown here wearing an 1890 costume for a church play.*

## COPING WITH GRIDLOCK

BY ROBERT BAUMGARDNER

One of the painful issues that Mormons and ex-Mormons have in common is that we wonder, often in exasperation, why the other doesn't change or see our point of view. Often we attribute unflattering motivations to each other as to why we hold our respective positions and become entrenched in our respective beliefs.

When the person we are talking to is a relative stranger such an impasse may not matter; but when we are discussing religion with a friend or family member, or if it is a dialogue between an ex-Mormon and a believing LDS spouse, such an impasse may become very painful. Instead of dialogue, we become involved in what might be described as “gridlock,” in which both parties are so entrenched that there's no give-and-take, and no progress is being made.

Putting up with a grid locked conflict is a bad idea because the resulting frustration, resentment, and anger can be harmful to a marriage or any other close relationship.

When gridlock has blocked communication, and it is obvious that the other party isn't listening, it is important to shift the discussion to areas that are more likely to be productive. Sometimes it is best to acknowledge the gridlock and say, “Let's set this difference aside for the moment, and explore some of the other aspects of our relationship.” This can lead to an empathetic analysis of each partner's hopes, values, aspirations, and sense of identity, and can bring deeper intimacy and uncover areas for providing mutual support.

This does not mean that either partner must give up deeply held values. The ex-Mormon doesn't have to be re-baptized, nor does the believing partner have to send in a resignation letter. Maintaining their individual values and aspirations they can often establish an accommodation that will sustain love and respect. It doesn't always work out that way, of course, and obviously the ideal is for both partners to share all of their core beliefs, but many couples have found that shifting the focus to underlying shared values and hopes can end the gridlock, so that the things that hold them together are stronger than the things that are pushing them apart.

*Robert Baumgardner is a former convert to Mormonism. He resigned from the church in 1989 after nearly 14 years of membership, which included missionary service, temple marriage and graduation from BYU. He is a marriage and family therapist.*

## HOW TO JOIN OR DONATE TO THE FOUNDATION

Membership in the Exmormon Foundation is open to everyone interested in Mormonism.

Annual dues are \$20 per person, or \$35 for two persons at the same address.

The Foundation is an IRS Tax-Exempt Organization, and all donations made to the Foundation are fully deductible as charitable gifts. We welcome contributions of any size, and commit to using the funds carefully and efficiently in advertising our presence and supporting people in their journey out of Mormonism. Donations or dues can be sent to Exmormon Foundation, c/o Brian Madsen, 4332 Coldwater Canyon #1, Studio City CA 91604.

Movie Review**LATEST DUTCHER FILM  
TAKES NEW TACK**

By Rick Randle

Richard Dutcher's latest movie, "Falling," recently opened in Salt Lake City. It undoubtedly will prove as controversial as his earlier films, which have been enthusiastically praised – and criticized.

Dutcher doesn't expect "Falling" to appeal to quite the same audience as his previous missionary films, "God's Army" and "States of Grace." After a screening at the most recent Sunstone Symposium he remarked, "I made this movie for me."

The movie is riveting but disturbing. The subject is more in line with Dutcher's murder mystery "Brigham City" than his better-known missionary films. The screenplay is well written and Dutcher shows improvement in his acting ability as he once again takes on the leading role.

A young couple try to make their way to success in the competitive and seedy side of Los Angeles culture, while struggling to cling to their Mormon faith. Dutcher masterfully weaves segments of his Mormon background throughout the film with flashes of missionaries, baptisms, and longer segments of the Christus on the grounds of the L.A. Temple. These iconic Mormon symbols, contrasted with scenes of graphic violence, will shock and may disgust some viewers.

The lead characters' struggle with their Mormon faith runs through the film, but there are no definitive statements for or against the LDS Church. The film is also interesting because of its strongly autobiographical nature. Dutcher's career arc mimics closely the character he portrays in the film. The character's struggle with and ultimate rejection of his Mormon faith may offer insight into Dutcher's own public repudiation of Mormonism.

Dutcher was rated 15<sup>th</sup> among influential Utahans according to a year-end report in the Salt Lake Tribune, which said, "Once the pioneer of Mormon Cinema, Dutcher set off a firestorm in the LDS blogosphere this year when he called out fellow filmmakers and announced he had left the LDS Church, in an op-ed in Provo's Daily Herald. While other

**INTRODUCING THE FOUNDATION BOARD MEMBERS**

**Sandy Crain**, President of the Exmormon Foundation, lives in Seattle, and has been involved with the organization since she left the church in 1997. She grew up very active in the church in Oklahoma City, had a temple marriage, and is a mother of six children. Sandy was a featured speaker at the 2006 conference, and became president in 2007. The story of her exit from Mormonism is found on the Recovery From Mormonism website, and is titled "Mormon Women and Depression."

**Sue Emmett**, who is vice president of the Foundation, was a faithful member of the church for 50 years. After receiving her Bachelor's degree from BYU, she followed the traditional LDS path of marriage in the temple, and stay-at-home mom to seven children. Divorced after 34 years, she left the church the following year and became active in the ex-Mormon community, serving as president of the Foundation for one year, and as chair of the annual Exmormon Foundation conference for the past six years.

**Brian Madsen**, who has served as treasurer of the Foundation for the past several years, He began to question Mormonism while teaching Seminary classes, where he discovered there were many things in church history he had never learned about in Sunday School. He says, "That was the first step down a road that, several years later, led me to where I am now, a place filled with more wonder, more personal growth, and more happiness than I ever could have imagined in those days."

**Dianne Ormond**, the newest member of the board, served a mission to England. She obtained her bachelor's and master's degrees from BYU, and was married in the temple. She was cofounder of CALM (Community After Leaving Mormonism), which has activities along the Wasatch front in Utah. She also contributes to [www.Mormonthink.com](http://www.Mormonthink.com), where her story, "It Started with Science," can be found.

**Ken Roach**, who serves as membership secretary of the Foundation, is a Jew by birth, who converted to Mormonism as a teenager in California. He served a mission to France, and married in the temple. The father of four children, he was a member of a bishopric for two years, and served in three Elders Quorum presidencies. He played the piano for Primary for about 15 years — which he says, "was the only thing in church I could stand!"

**Jarom Smith** was born into a faithful LDS family. He served in the Chile Osorno mission but was excommunicated in 1995 for "conduct unbecoming a church member." He rejoined the church in 1999, but formally resigned his membership in 2005. He lives in Escondido, California with his wife Cindy and three children, and is a "glorified programmer" for a company in the health care industry.

**Chad Spjut**, Foundation Secretary, is the eldest of six children. He was born and raised in the church and served a mission to Germany, temple marriage and actively served in many teaching and leadership callings. He was cofounder of the CALM support group. The father of five children, he finally officially resigned from the church after ten years of "tortured" study of LDS history and doctrines.

**IN BRIEF**

**MMM Movie on DVD...**September Dawn, the fictional film about the Mountain Meadows Massacre, released to movie theaters last summer, is now available on DVD. Starring Jon Voight as a local Mormon leader and Terence Stamp as Brigham Young, the film has had mixed reviews.

**Indian Ancestry Claim Modified...**Joseph Smith's contention that the Lamanites were the ancestors of the American Indians was modified a few years ago in the Introduction to the Book of Mormon, stating that they were the *principle* ancestors. The most recent printing, however, now states that they were *among* the ancestors of the Indians. The change presumably was made to account for lack of any DNA evidence linking the American Indians to Israelites.

**Conference Audio...**Recordings of the most recent conference of the Exmormon Foundation are now available on the Foundation website: [www.exmormonfoundation.org](http://www.exmormonfoundation.org)

filmmakers have sought box-office glory through green-jello humor, Dutcher continues to challenge viewers with sincere examinations of faith."

I would recommend seeing this film for those who do not mind graphic violence. The film is another example of Richard Dutcher's expertise in writing and acting.

**"If a faith will not bear to be investigated; if its preachers and professors are afraid to have it examined, their foundation must be very weak."**

-Apostle George A. Smith



## “LYING FOR THE LORD” BY KEN CLARK

During my years (1975-2002) as a full time employee of the LDS Church Education System, and an LDS Seminary and Institute teacher and director, I was dismayed that critics accused Church leaders, past and present, of dishonesty. I “knew” the criticisms could not be true, and I started a list in an effort to defend the church from its detractors.

I discovered that those accusing the church leaders of dishonesty were telling the truth. It turned out that the church leaders who accused “anti-Mormons” of lying were less honest than their critics.

D. Michael Quinn called the use of deception by LDS church leaders, “theocratic ethics.” Dan Vogel in his excellent work, *Joseph Smith: The Making of a Prophet*, noted that Joseph Smith justified using deception whenever it resulted in good (in his mind). He had Moroni, declare that “whatsoever thing persuadeth men to do good is of me; for good cometh of none save it be of me.” Translation: If deception is necessary in order to do good, or bring a soul to Christ, then it is worth it, as long as God approves.

Before becoming a prophet, Joseph Smith's chosen profession relied on deception to earn a living. He assured clients that he could see underground treasure using a magic stone in the bottom of his hat and clients paid him to locate hidden gold using this method. He never did, of course. His arrest, trial and conviction in Bainbridge, NY for fraud in 1826 documented his activity, and he was found guilty of glass looking.

Joseph Smith was comfortable using deception when it suited him. He wove it into the fabric of Mormonism as a way of dealing with those who questioned his authority or who reported his deception or tasteless behavior. Loyalty was more important than honesty in the early church. The prophet's instruction to the Twelve in 1839 was that above all else, “do not betray your friend.” He frequently reminded members that they should honor friendships above all else, even to death.

In his book *Solemn Covenant*, B. Carmon Hardy lists a number of instances where Joseph Smith counseled deception. For example, he confided

that he deceived the saints by keeping secrets from them because they were “little children” unable to “bear all things now.” He counseled the Relief Society sisters not to be overzealous in their search for wrongdoing and to be charitable toward the accused, after counseling them to seek out evil-doers months earlier.

Today those who read objective histories of the LDS church understand that the sanitized versions of history taught to potential converts and members have re-



moved and suppressed all information that is not faith promoting. Members learn from objective histories that early members of the church, including Smith's own family, were unaware of the official version of the First Vision used in the missionary discussions and official church curriculum today. The official version of the First Vision, written in 1838 and found in the Pearl of Great Price is a retroactive revision written long after the original event (1820) and it embellishes, expands and adds details conflicting with earlier accounts.

The practice of polygamy, however, was one of the most blatant examples of the “lying for the Lord” principle. Because Joseph Smith introduced polygamy in states that prohibited it, he lied to protect himself when accusers tried to expose the practice. An article from the 1886 *Deseret News* listed the code words and the rationale for their use. When accused of practicing “polygamy” Joseph and Hyrum denied it because it was different than “celestial marriage” and “a plurality of wives.” Polygamy was after all, a doctrine of men and the devil. “Celestial marriage” was different, they reasoned, because it was a holy doctrine revealed by God. Joseph wanted followers to believe that the two terms were completely dissimilar. Other code words were, “eternal marriage,” “the divine order of marriage,” “the holy order of marriage,” “living up to your privileges,” “the new and everlasting covenant,” and “a different view of things.” If accusers did not frame their allegations using precisely the right terms, the

leaders felt justified in prevaricating. Even if the accusers framed their words perfectly, the leaders lied anyway. Their view was that it was more important to live the higher law -- loyalty to the Prophet -- than to expose the truth to Gentiles. Orson Pratt, for example, admitted that when called upon to defend the practice of polygamy, he deliberately misled his listeners regarding the practice. He did not consider this to be lying. It was done to protect a law higher than man's misguided laws. Leaders who followed Joseph Smith were content to continue the tradition of lying when they felt it necessary to protect the church.

Charles W. Penrose, Apostle and Counselor to two Presidents of the Church, admitted that after Joseph's death, certain facts about him were purposely withheld from church publications “for prudential reasons.” Expediency became more important than honesty; deception was accepted as a necessary tool, while grass roots members were commanded to be honest and were disciplined for dishonesty.

Mormon parents today are conscientious about teaching their children to be honest and to obey the LDS prophets. But as Hardy notes in *Solemn Covenant*, “children in theocratic, territorial and polygamous Utah were taught to lie about family relationships, their parents' whereabouts, and even their own last names.”

Some early leaders of the church were troubled by the practice of deception. In a letter to President John Taylor in 1887, Charles W. Penrose expressed concern that “the endless subterfuges and which our present condition impose . . . threaten to make our rising generation a race of deceivers.” (*Solemn Covenant*, p. 368)

It is true that other institutions regard deception as a valuable tool. However, when Mormons point to other institutions and political leaders to indicate that “everybody does it,” the excuse rings hollow. Other human institutions and political leaders don't claim to be the “only true church” with living prophets who stand as the moral authority for the whole earth.

*A man is accepted into church  
for what he believes--and  
turned out for what he knows.*

*-Mark Twain*

Book Review

## A Friendly Discussion: Mormonism Pro and Con

By Ed Bliss

Publisher: Amazon.com \$13.99

*Reviewed by Jarom Smith*

This is a fabulous book! It presents a conversation between a recently returning missionary and a knowledgeable "investigator" of the church, and examines many of the problematic issues of Mormonism in a non-confrontational and conversational style, that literally flows from one page to the next. It is the kind of book that can be read in one sitting (over the course of just a few hours) or it can be digested on a chapter-by-chapter basis. All of the book's claims are extensively documented, but the documentation is done unobtrusively so as not to get in the way of the discussion.

The book was written so that a member of the LDS church reading it would feel that what the missionary says is more or less in line with what he or she would have said in the same situation — thus giving the "missionary" an articulate, realistic voice which does justice to the LDS church's claims and positions.

This book is the product of several years' worth of writing, re-writing, editing, and revision. It is respectful of the beliefs of Latter-Day Saints, and demonstrates that it is possible to disagree without being disagreeable. There are some revelations in the book (such as the almost total absence of women in the Book of Mormon, and the surprising Swedenborg connection), which I haven't seen discussed much elsewhere.

I gave copies of this book to all my family members. I highly recommend it.

Book Review

## Hooligan: A Mormon Boyhood

By Douglas Thayer

Publisher: Zarahemla Books \$14.95

*Reviewed by Chad Spjut*

The old saying, "the more things change, the more they remain the same," would be the best description of my journey through the boyhood of Douglas Thayer in his recent book, *Hooligan: A Mormon Boyhood*. Thayer's memories of his youth conjure up a

time of innocence and of simpler times when a boy was allowed to explore and live in the world that surrounded him. The stories are charming and evoked many memories from my own childhood involving Mormonism, games, exploration and just feeling the exuberance of youth coursing through one's veins.

The stories and experiences of Thayer's youth reflect on a time when children were allowed to grow and develop through experiences and routine, from daily chores to trips to the hills in search of lost Aztec gold.

Thayer shows through his recollections the deep imprint which Mormonism played in his developmental years, from desiring to be a moral boy to advancing through the ranks of Scouting and holding his Scout oaths in a place of honor. The threat of an evil Babylon lurked just over the Wasatch Mountains, and only being valiant in the gospel of Mormonism would preserve him from a life of certain moral doom. He recalls the boredom of Mormon meetings, known to many a young and old Mormon alike, the positive outreach to those in need within the Mormon community, and the simple sweetness found in belonging.

The only sadness for me came in reliving similar experiences that had at one time convinced me of the validity of Mormonism. My own youth was filled with these same positive affirmations of the Mormon Church, only later to have those hopes broken in the glaring light of reality.

The experiences of Thayer's boyhood will resonate with many who have trod that well worn path of youth, and it may even rekindle a memory or two lost to the pages of time's passing.

Book Review

## The Sacrament of Doubt

By Paul Toscano

Publisher: Signature Books \$21.95

*Reviewed by Daniel P. Andrus*

As one of the so-called "September Six," who were excommunicated by the LDS church in 1993, Paul Toscano has contin-

ued to be critical of the leadership of the church, while at the same time maintaining an attitude of both belief and doubt concerning some of the underlying principles of Mormonism.

Toscano's newest book, *The Sacrament of Doubt*, published by Signature Books, is basically a compilation of talks he has given to various organizations. I found it difficult to read, and hard to summarize.

"Doubt and faith are twin offspring of genuine spirituality," he writes. "True spirituality is a free mind that practices irony and compassion. Without doubt, faith hardens into arrogance. Without doubt, we cannot doubt ourselves, our assumptions, aspirations, expectations, and predispositions."

The book seemed cold and impersonal to me. I didn't get enough of a glimpse of Paul Toscano the person. I wanted to feel his struggles, relate to his humanity, commiserate with his tragedies, and celebrate his successes.

Some of the chapters are diatribes against certain church leaders, whom he describes as guilty of "spiritual abuse," defined as the exercise of power by ecclesiastical leaders in a way that serves the demands of the leaders to the detriment of the members. I don't disagree with his opinions about these leaders. I just find this type of counterpoint ineffective for bringing about change. Maybe change is not the goal of this book; maybe his purpose was merely to vent his anger, in which case he succeeded.

I'm not sure what Paul meant to accomplish with this book or what the underlying motive was for writing it. Maybe there was none, except to publish some of his talks together in one volume.

***"Charismatic movements, such as Mormonism, maximize events by coloring them with an indelible strain of folklore. Myth is frequently more powerful than the historical reality that engenders it."***

-LDS Historian Richard S. Van Wagoner

THE NEW EXPOSITOR  
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## Regional and Local Exmormon Groups

*In the past several years a number of local and regional groups of former Mormons have been established. Some of them meet weekly, some monthly, and some sporadically. Some of the ones listed below are just getting started. For information about a specific group, including the e-mail address of the contact person, visit: [www.postmormon.org](http://www.postmormon.org) and click on Our Community.*

Alaska	France
Arizona	Hampton Roads, VA
Australia	Houston, Texas
Cache Valley, Utah	Idaho Falls, Idaho
Calgary Canada	Las Vegas, Nevada
Charlotte, NC	Mt. Carmel, Utah
Chesapeake, VA	North Idaho
Colorado Springs/Denver	Ogden, Utah
Davis County, Utah	Pocatello, Idaho
Ecuador	Portland, Oregon
Edmonton, Canada	Sacramento, California
	Salem, Oregon
	San Diego, California
	Sanpete County, Utah
	Seattle, Washington
	South Davis County, Utah
	Southern Utah
	Sweden

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January 2008 Issue No. 4 Published quarterly by:



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