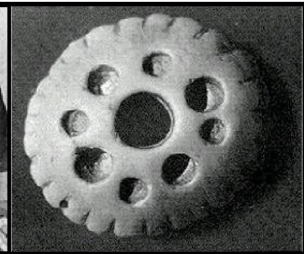
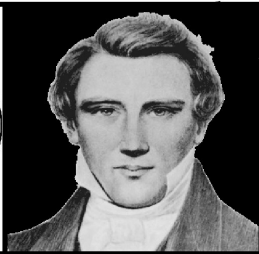
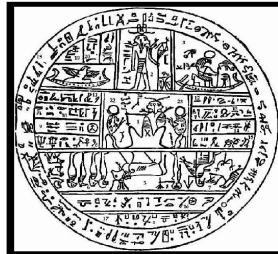


THE NEW EXPOSITOR



JULY 2008 NO. 6

HELPING OTHERS “SEE THE LIGHT”

By Richard Packham

When we finally realize that the Mormon Church is not what it claims to be, and we decide that we are leaving, it is quite natural that our next thought is how to help our Mormon friends and family members to that same knowledge. When you've found a startling and life-changing truth, you want to share it.

As any former missionary knows, proselytizing is not easy, and usually is very frustrating. That is true no matter what you are selling. Most people resist being accosted and forced to listen to a sales pitch. Mormons are no different.

There is also another factor at work: The old saying, You can lead a horse to water, but you can't make him drink! Applies also to Mormons: You can lead a Saint to facts, but you can't make him think! In other words, unless you can get a person to examine facts about Mormonism with a truly open mind, there is little hope of changing his thinking. Of course, the church leaders specifically warn Mormons against doing that: it puts them into Satan's clutches.

You might find out how open-minded a person is by asking him to answer very frankly the question: "How important is it to you that the Mormon claims are really true?" The answer will likely be that they *are* true! But the question is not whether they are true or not, but whether it matters to him. Anything but an affirmative answer would show a callous (and sinful, in the Mormon view) disregard for "truth" -he should look up "truth" in the index to the Doctrine and Covenants, especially 50:17-18;93:36, 39; 107:84. Make him spell out the logical conclusion: "Then, since it *is* important to you whether Mormonism is really true, I assume that *if* there were conclusive evidence showing that it is *not* true, you would want to know about it?" At this point he will undoubtedly deny the existence of any such

evidence. But you must insist that you are posing a hypothetical, a "what if?" Perhaps an analogy would be appropriate, like the following:

Supposing you are about to enter into a business partnership with a dynamic and enthusiastic friend. You will be investing your entire life's savings into this venture, as well as working with this man. Then someone tells you that they know that this man well, that he has a criminal record for fraud, tax evasion, theft, and has started several companies where he has absconded with his partners' investments, and that they can show you his criminal record. *Would you want to see it?* Would you want to check it out? Would you want to hear what his former partners had to say about him? The question is not whether you would have to *believe* all of the terrible things being said about him, but would you want to see

Inside this issue:

The Tipping Point: A Thirst for Truth	3
Membership Information	3
"Where I Stand"	4
Affirmation Meeting	4
2008 Exmormon Conference Speakers	5
Memoir of a Hong Kong Elder	6
Favorite Websites & Letters to Editor	7



Who we are

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

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Tom Donofrio

Donations to the Foundation

Should be sent to:

The Exmormon Foundation

c/o Dianne Ormond 957 North 910 East

Orem, UT 84097

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Editor: Ed Bliss

Associate Editor: Chad Spjut

Please send News & Letters to:

The New Expositor

P.O. Box 384, Lompoc CA 93436

or email: ed529c@verizon.net

it, and judge for yourself? Mormon missionaries encourage investigators to read the Book of Mormon, and then to pray to God to find out whether it is true. Notice that one is supposed to read the book *before* deciding whether it is true. That makes sense — you can't know whether something is true or false before you read it. It's the same with any book or article, including those that deal with Mormonism. You must read the material *before* you can honestly decide whether it is true or not.

Many Mormon believe that the only source of damaging information about Mormonism is the “lies and distortions” of “anti-Mormons.” In fact, however, many members begin to have doubts by reading materials which are completely *pro*-Mormon. I know people who have left the church after reading the Doctrine & Covenants completely through. Others have had their eyes opened by reading the sermons of early Mormon leaders in the 26 volumes of the Journal of Discourses. I know some who began to doubt by reading early revelations in the Book of Commandments, and then seeing that they had been drastically altered when published later in the Doctrine & Covenants. And if you examine “anti-Mormon” literature you will find that it consists primarily of quotes from Mormon sources!

Another approach which has been successful is to get the Mormon to try and explain it to you, as an open-minded person. As one ex-mormon put it, he had had great success in de-converting Mormons by begging them, “Please, help me to understand! I would like to believe it, but it just doesn't make sense to me! Help me!” The life-long Mormon who just goes along but hasn't really thought much about it will probably very quickly suggest a meeting with missionaries or the bishop. That accomplishes nothing, of course, unless you can insist that the person you are trying to influence is present to hear your concerns and your questions, and can see how the missionaries or the bishop can't quite give satisfactory answers.

Whether you believe Mormonism is a cult or not, the techniques of helping people out of Mormonism are similar to the techniques for getting someone out of a cult. In fact, examining organizations that the Mormon would enthusiastically label as “cults” is another effective technique. Steven Hassan, a former Moonie and now an expert on cults, recommends this method as well as others in his book *Breaking the Bonds: Empowering People To Think For Themselves*. (Hassan will be a featured speaker at the upcoming Exmormon Foundation conference in Salt Lake City; see the Foundations website for details.)

There is no magic bullet, of course. What will make one Mormon question the truth of his religion, another will find to be no problem at all. No one issue, no one book, no one technique will work for everyone. Try them all. But remember, too, that some Mormons will always be Mormon, no matter what.

THE TIPPING POINT: A THIRST FOR TRUTH

By Chad Spjut

Why is it so difficult to reason with a devout Mormon concerning the logical implications of various church doctrines? Most of us have experienced the frustration of trying to get a True Believer to examine, calmly and objectively, the implications of his beliefs.

I believe the problem we face is one which lurks below the subconscious surface. When we challenge another's faith, we fill that person with a subconscious fear of annihilation after this life. At the subconscious level of every human being is the desire to continue to live or exist in some manner following death. Our hope is that our consciousness is something that endures and will continue forever. When we challenge a Mormon (or any other person of "faith") regarding the validity of their belief system, I believe we are actually telling them subconsciously that they may cease to exist following this life. This causes immense subconscious fear and pain and often results in anger and even possible retaliation against the individual confronting them for inducing this pain within them.

I believe this may be why it is so difficult to deal with Mormons in a logical manner regarding the reality of their faith. It is an emotional construct which supports and sustains them, not logic. And because Mormonism is a belief dependent upon fear -- not just the fear of being incorrect, but the ultimate fear that they may cease to be -- they cling to the edifice of Mormonism with the tenacity of a threatened animal.

Often I have heard from former believers as they try to comprehend just what this life is all about, and I believe at the essence to their question is, "What next? Will I continue to go on in some way or another after this life?" It is not comforting to leave the innocent embrace of ignorance and then be forced to face the cold reality of truth. The uncertainty of purpose leaves one to one's own devices and thoughts as to what their existence means and what purpose they should pursue. It isn't easy; struggling for post-Mormon purpose is a challenge, but it is a challenge we all must face head on.

In my personal discoveries, I have found that many wish to remain safely behind in the confines of the tribe, by embracing the concepts of character and adherence to the code of the given tribe, while staying far away from the edge of discovery.

Sam Keen, the author of *Fire in the Belly* brings further insights to this challenge in his forward to *The Denial of Death* by Ernest Becker. He notes as follows:

"As long as we stay obediently within the defense mechanisms of our personality, what Wilhelm Reich called "character armor" we feel safe and are able to pretend that the world is manageable. But the price we pay is high. We repress our bodies to purchase a soul that time cannot destroy; we sacrifice pleasure to buy immortality; we encapsulate ourselves to avoid death. And life escapes us while we huddle within the defended fortress of character."

Those words show what the price of certainty can bring: the sacrifice is high, and the price is ultimately to wither away without receiving that which we have paid the most to receive: certainty. No one wants to follow an uncertain leader or adhere to an uncertain creed, but only by embracing uncertainty can we actually move forward in realizing greater truths and knowledge. Only by releasing ourselves from our certainties of belief are we truly able to discover more, not only about ourselves but about the glories of this life and all that surrounds us.

I believe that those of us who have left the Mormon Church have something at our core, which has allowed us to think objectively, to question, to search to seek and find the way out of the Mormon maze. I don't believe all Mormons possess this, but I do believe many can find their way out once they have granted to themselves permission to confront reality. Some will say, "They will never leave! They are entrenched!" And I would argue that many of us thought the very same thing about ourselves, we would never leave it all behind. But then there comes a tipping point where a thirst for truth begins to outweigh the subconscious fear of annihilation, propelling us forward toward confronting and resolving our inner conflicts.

There are those who struggle for years with this mental anguish, seeking answers which mask the symptoms while ignoring the source. All it takes for the first step of this challenging journey to begin is to ask the simple yet profound question, "What if?" And then we freely proclaim to ourselves, "Annihilation be damned, I want to know the truth!"

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:

The Exmormon Foundation

c/o Dianne Ormond, 957 North 910 East

Orem, Utah 84097-3448

“WHERE I STAND”

By Ed Bliss

Whenever I am asked my opinion about Mormonism I am reminded of the response of Circuit Judge N.S. Sweat, Jr., of Corinth, Mississippi, when during a prohibition campaign he was asked where he stood on the whiskey question. He said:

“If when you say whiskey you mean the devil’s brew, the poison scourge, the bloody monster that defiles innocence, dethrones reason, destroys the home, creates misery and poverty, yea, literally takes the bread from the mouths of little children, if you mean the evil drink that topples the Christian man and woman from the pinnacle of righteous, gracious living into the bottomless pit of degradation and despair, and shame and helplessness, and hopelessness, then certainly I am against it.

“But if when you say whiskey you mean the oil of conversation, the philosophic wine, the ale that puts a song in their hearts and laughter on their lips, and the warm glow of contentment in their eyes; if you mean Christmas cheer; if you mean the stimulating drink that puts the spring into the old gentleman’s step on a frosty, crispy morning; if you mean the drink that enables a man to magnify his joy, and his happiness, and to forget, if only for a little while, life’s great tragedies, and heartaches, and sorrows; if you mean that drink, the sale of which pours into our treasuries untold millions of dollars, which are used to provide tender care for our little crippled children, our blind, our deaf, our dumb, our pitiful aged and infirm, to build highways and hospitals and schools, then certainly I am for it. This is my stand. I will not retreat from it. I will not compromise.”

AFFIRMATION LEADERS TO MEET WITH MORMON CHURCH OFFICIALS

A long-awaited meeting between LDS officials and representatives of the Church’s gay and lesbian community will be held in August, it was announced recently.

Affirmation, an organization of gay, lesbian and transgender Mormons, has requested such a meeting several times in the past, and the Church has finally agreed to the meeting, according to Dave Melson,

an official of the group. Leaders of Affirmation were invited to meet with Fred M. Riley, commissioner of Family Services for the Church, and Harold C. Brown, the agency’s past commissioner.

The discussion will focus on areas where Affirmation and the LDS church can work together to make life better for gay LDS church members and their families, according to Melson. He said, “Over the years, flawed policies and perceptions have resulted in great harm, including broken families, homeless teenagers, psychological scarring, and, in too many

That’s sort of how I feel about Mormonism. If when you say Mormonism you mean the religion that asks its members to be honest, true, chaste, benevolent, and to do good to all men; the church that frowns on the use of tobacco, and teaches boys to be trustworthy, loyal, helpful, friendly, courteous, kind, obedient, cheerful, thrifty, brave, clean, and reverent; if you mean the organization that maintains the world’s most famous choir, and teaches that man is that he might have joy; if you mean the religion that tells people to embrace everything that is virtuous, lovely, or of good report or praiseworthy, and claims the privilege of worshipping God according to the dictates of their own conscience, allowing all men the same privilege, let them worship how, where, or what they may, then certainly I am for it.

But if when you say Mormonism you mean the church that teaches that a dark skin is a sign of God’s displeasure; if you mean the church that bans the reading of any religious material not approved by church leaders; if you mean the church that has an estimated net worth of 50 billion dollars, but keeps its finances secret from its members and from the public; if you mean the idea that it is a sin to drink a cup of tea; if you mean the church that believes polygamy was once God’s plan, but is now a sin, but is God’s plan for the hereafter; if you mean the belief that an Egyptian funeral document was written by Abraham although he had been dead for 2,000 years when it was written; if you mean the church that cautions against associating with former members who have left the fold; if you mean the church that teaches its members to obey without question everything their leaders ask, instead of following the dictates of their own conscience, then certainly I am against it. This is my stand. I will not retreat from it. I will not compromise.

cases, suicide. We want to alleviate that. He said subjects for discussion include recommendations for more effective counseling methods; ways to avoid family break-ups; and a change in the honor code at church-owned Brigham Young University that can result in expulsion for sexually active gay students.

Founded in secret by gay students at BYU in 1977, Affirmation has previously been ignored by church leaders, according to Melson. The group now has a membership of approximately 2,000 members worldwide.

“INTO THE WOODS”
2008 EXMORMON FOUNDATION CONFERENCE
 OCTOBER 17-19, SALT LAKE CITY

Join us to listen to these speakers and meet new Exmo friends!



Steven Hassan

Author of “Releasing the Bonds: Empowering People to Think for Themselves,” and “Combating Cult Mind Control.” Licensed Mental Health Counselor who has established The Freedom of Mind Resource Center, www.freedomofmind.com. Steven’s work is with people struggling to process the trauma of leaving highly controlling religions, and helping their families understand how best to assist in that process.



Ken Clark

Former Bishop, former full-time employee of LDS Church Education System (27 years – CES Coordinator, Institute Director), licensed therapist. Ken’s presentation is entitled: “Lying for the Lord.”



Lyndon Lamborn

Cum Laude graduate of Utah State University, BS degree in Mechanical Engineering, MS in Aeronautical Engineering from Embry Riddle. Former missionary in the Belgium Brussels mission, Elders Quorum Pres., Stake Missionary Presidency, and Scoutmaster. Lyndon’s challenges to his local leadership in Mesa AZ garnered him quite a lot of publicity in the local news, and his story can be found on YouTube.



Rick Robison

Rick is an optometric physician in Salt Lake City. He has held many leadership positions in the church. After struggling with an injury, Rick found himself addicted to pain medication. He will share his struggles with addiction, and how that relates to the dynamics of leaving the Mormon Church.



Paul Trane

Former Social worker, past supervisor of social work services in Granite School District, and elementary school principal. Father of five, grandfather of 10, past Elder’s Quorum President, and Bishop. He and his partner Richard Teerlink will be making a joint presentation.

Richard Teerlink

Taught high school chemistry and A.P. Biology in the Granite School district for 31 years. Grew up in a devout Mormon family, and served a mission in the British Isles. Now attends the Unitarian Church. With his partner Paul, he was an advisor to the West High Gay Straight Alliance for 5 years.

For registration information, visit the Exmormon Foundation website www.exmormonfoundation.org/2008/Conference

Hotel Registration:

Embassy Suites Hotel, 110 West 600 South
Salt Lake City, Utah * Telephone: (801) 359-7800

MEMOIR OF A HONG KONG ELDER: TWO VIEWS

Opinions of the recently published book, The Mormon Cult: A Former Missionary Reveals The Secrets of Mormon Mind Control, (See Sharp Press, 2008) have been wildly divergent. To give readers a sample of the disagreement here are two views of the book.

By Terri Jo Lorz

In his book, *The Mormon Cult: A Former Missionary Reveals the Secrets of Mormon Mind Control*, Jack Worthy tells of his experiences as a missionary in Hong Kong, his disillusionment during and following his mission, and his opinion of how the church manipulates the minds of its members.

Although he was devout during much of his mission Jack later began breaking mission rules, which ultimately culminated in his being disfellowshipped and sent home in disgrace just a week before he was released. I felt that his sudden departure from the rules was never fully explored, and I did not feel any connection with him.

In the personal section of the book he often reaches conclusions that are profound, but does nothing to explore them. For example he writes, "If I paid my tithes, attended all my church meetings and activities, and abstained from clearly defined sins, then I believed I was fulfilling every one of my moral obligations as a human being. I didn't have to fret about my hungry contemporaries at home or abroad, or the economically and politically oppressed; they resided outside of my jurisdiction." That statement could have been an underpinning that illuminated the Mormon mind. Instead, it is like a rope lowered into a cave to save someone and then dropped.

In some ways the book feels more like a travelogue than an exploration of self-discovery. It is difficult to feel passion as the author moves us along through his mission with tales of companions who never materialize as real characters and fail to offer insight into what he is feeling.

Once home, Jack seems to move smoothly from disgraced missionary to excommunication and then to a world without any semblance of Mormonism. He ultimately returned to Hong Kong, where he now lives, married and fully integrated into a Chinese family with nothing indicating that Mormonism has either shaped or impacted his life much, although he claims that in many ways he will always be a Mormon.

I felt that the overall impact of this book was like a reading a journal, profound to the person writing it, but lacking in substance for those who try to gain understanding from reading it.

By Dwain A. Deets

This book presents a superb account by a former Mormon missionary of his experiences with the LDS church, beginning with his two-year mission in Hong Kong at the age of 19.

Everything Elder Jack Worthy had been taught caused him to believe his mission would be a wondrous experience. For how could it not be, when the Heavenly Father would be inspiring individuals to hear the Word he was about to bring?

But the mission itself turned out to be an ordeal, filled with frustrations, embarrassments, and feelings of inadequacy. Elder Worthy blamed all these shortcomings on himself. If only he were more diligent, more dedicated, he was sure the Heavenly Father would cause the mission to be the success he had been certain it would be. Many of these frustrations were the direct result of the highly restrictive rules to which missionaries are subjected.

As the months wore on, Elder Worthy became disillusioned about the whole mission setup. He began seeing problems other missionaries seemed to be having that seemed consistent with his own experience, and he realized that it might be the system itself that led to disappointing performance, not his unworthiness. The more he became disenchanted with the system, the more he began to press the limits. Ultimately, the combination of frustrated sexual desires and the rush that comes with testing the limits led him to the most serious infraction of the rules. This led to disciplinary action, the premature ending of his mission. He felt that he had disgraced his parents and himself when he was sent home early. He of course was never invited to give his testimony about the wonders of his missionary experience.

Whether or not a person is familiar with the inner workings of the Mormon Church, I think the reader will gain an excellent understanding of what actually happens on these two-year missions that nearly every 19-20 year old Mormon male experiences. Even more important in my mind is the account of one lonely person's struggle to make sense out of the many contradictions he saw on his mission, in contrast to the glowing reports he had heard from the missionaries who went before him.

Some Favorite Websites

We recently asked a number of ex-Mormons to name their favorite exmo websites. Those most often mentioned were:

Recovery from Mormonism

(400+ articles, 600+ stories)

www.exmormon.org

Exmormon Foundation

("Life after Mormonism")

www.exmormonfoundation.org

Richard Packhams's site

(Authoritative and scholarly)

www.geocities.com/packham33

Post-Mormon Community

("You are not alone")

www.postmormon.org

MormonThink

(Presenting both sides)

www.MormonThink.com

Utah Lighthouse Ministry

(The Tanner website)

www.utlm.org

Mormon Curtain

(Ex-Mormon blog)

www.MormonCurtain.com

The "Milk" and "Meat"

(Discussion with Missionary)

www.Mormonism-ProandCon

Rethinking Mormonism

(Includes "Holland letter")

www.i4m.com

Mormon Discussions

(Opinions, for and against)

www.MormonDiscussions.com

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

The Forgotten Apostle

I just recently discovered *The New Expositor* on the Exmormon Foundation internet site. Your most recent issue was very interesting, especially the article on William E. McLellan. I had never heard of him.

It is fascinating to realize how one can be in the church for so long and still know so little about the particulars. Can it be that the church historians, whom most members rely upon so completely, have conveniently omitted any mention of this former apostle?

-JB

Nampa, Idaho

Brother Brigham: A Response

Imagine my surprise when I opened the latest issue of *The New Expositor* and found a review of my LDS novel *Brother Brigham* by Dennis C. Farley. My pride was short-lived, however, when I read the first paragraph:

"With apologies to the author of *Brother Brigham*, I cannot with good conscience recommend this book to the readers of *The New Expositor*. The staccato rhythm of the prose, numerous sentence fragments, inane Mormon cliches, and insipid similes were so distracting that I would not have finished reading the book had I not committed to do so."

Now I've received almost universal accolades about my book from readers, both in public reviews and in private feedback, both professional and amateur reviewers, so I know I'm not the incompetent author Farley describes above. This made me wonder what was behind Farley's reaction to my writing.

I found my answer in the concluding paragraph: "'*Brother Brigham* is a story for gullible TBMs who have been taught to believe evil spirits really exist and will crawl inside of you if you don't follow all of the teachings of God's only true church. Be afraid--be very afraid--that there are people in the world who actually believe this."

A Mormon novel written to a Mormon audience actually takes Mormon theology seriously? Who'd have thought! And here I was laboring under the silly illusion that good writing meant knowing your audience and writing to it. The truth is, this was never intended as a serious book review. This was an anti-Mormon rant thinly disguised as a book review.

Now I don't have any problem with someone writing an (honest) negative review of my book. When you become a published author, that sort of thing comes with the territory. And I don't have any problem with someone writing an anti-Mormon rant. I'm a disaffected Mormon myself and have written plenty of scathing criticisms of Mormonism, enough to be labeled anti-Mormon on a number of occasions. I do have a big problem when someone mixes the two forms of writing together, thereby defiling the integrity of both. Especially when my book is the unwitting guinea pig in the process.

Mr. Farley, if you want to write an anti-Mormon article, then write an anti-Mormon article. Leave the book reviews to serious book reviewers.

-D. Michael Martindale

Sandy, Utah

THE NEW EXPOSITOR
P. O. Box 384
Lompoc, CA 93436

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 and click on Our Community.

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