

Hi, I'm Richard Packham

I'm a linguist, teacher, attorney, farmer, and father. I founded the exmormon foundation in 2001. I was a mormon.



- [other](#)

About me

I left the Mormon church in 1958, when I was 25 years old.

That was a long time ago: David O. McKay was the prophet, seer and revelator. There were only eight temples, and none of them owned a movie projector. Every ward had its own meeting house, Sunday school was at 10:30 a.m, and sacrament meeting was at 7:00 p.m. There were no black people in the church (at least none were visible). Garments were in a single piece. The temple endowment ceremony still had the death penalties, the minister, the five points of fellowship. The Book of Abraham papyrus scrolls were still missing. New missionaries learned the language of the country they were assigned to by arriving there two weeks early.

On my shelf

-
-
-
-
-
-
-

On the Mormon Spectrum

•
•

Why I left [More stories of 'Why I left' the Mormon church](#)

Why, after all these years, would I still be concerned, then, about Mormonism? Why have I not yet come to terms with that distant part of my past and left it behind?

There are several reasons:

First, I am descended from a long line of faithful Mormons. All of my ancestors in every branch of my family, for four, five and six generations, were Mormons. The Mormons and their history are my heritage. It is my only heritage. It is where I come from. None of my Mormon ancestors were great or famous, but I have read their stories, and they were good people. They were faithful, hard working, and deserving of my respect. The history of my family is inevitably intertwined with the history of the Mormons, their migration to Utah and the settlement of the mountain West. I cannot ignore Mormonism and Mormon history without forgetting my past.

Second, my family are still faithful Mormons, almost all, including my parents, my brothers and sisters, my older children, my grandchildren, my nieces and nephews. Their lives are permeated by their Mormon beliefs. Their day-to-day existence is intertwined with the activities of the busywork-making church, their friends are all Mormons, their hopes and fears are Mormon hopes and fears. I cannot ignore Mormonism without ignoring the lives of those I love.

Third, the Mormon church is becoming more prominent and more powerful in our society. In my state (which, unlike Utah, is not thought of as a "Mormon" state) it is now the second-largest religious denomination. Our present U.S. Senator is a devout Mormon. Mormons are occupying influential positions in our state and national governments far out of proportion to their population in the United States. The church has become a mega-wealthy financial enterprise, with billions of dollars worth of money-making businesses and property all over the country - a fact of which most non-Mormons are unaware - with wide-ranging (and usually unseen) influence on many aspects of American life. Its income has been reliably estimated to be millions of dollars per day, not only from its thousands of businesses but also from its faithful members, who are required to donate a minimum of ten percent of their entire income to the church.

The Mormon church boasts of its rapid growth. This growth, in addition to its stance in favor of large families, is because it maintains a large voluntary corps of full-time missionaries who are a well-trained and thoroughly indoctrinated sales force whose sole

purpose is to bring more people into the church. Their goal is not to convert, but to enroll, not to enrich lives, but to baptize, not to save sinners' souls, but to enlarge membership rolls. This missionary force is not directed by caring clergymen, but by successful businessmen, because the Mormon missionary effort is a business, and a very successful business, when judged by business standards.

But the ultimate goal of the church, as stated publicly by its early leaders Joseph Smith and Brigham Young (but not mentioned so publicly by more recent Mormon leaders), is to establish the Mormon Kingdom of God in America, and to govern the world as God's appointed representatives. The church is already influential in the making of secular policy, as was proven not so long ago when the Equal Rights Amendment was defeated with decisive help from the Mormon church.

To me, the possibility that the Mormon church might control America is a frightening prospect.

Those are some of the more important reasons why I am still vitally interested in Mormonism and the LDS church.

Mormons will tell you that Mormonism is a wonderful way of life, bringing happiness in this mortal existence and, if we earn it by our faith and obedience, ultimate joy (and "power and dominion") in the next. The promises and hopes it gives to its believers are very attractive and inspiring. Why, then, did I reject that? Here is the story of my own particular journey through (and, eventually, out of) Mormonism.

My Mormon childhood was very happy, with loving and nurturing parents and family. We were "special" because we had the "Gospel," meaning Mormonism. In my small town in southern Idaho we Mormons easily were the dominant social and political group. We felt sorry for those not so fortunate, for whatever reason, that they were not blessed with the gospel. Our lives centered around the church. We had perfect attendance records at all our meetings. We studied our lesson manuals. It was a wonderful life. Wonderful because we had the Gospel, for which we thanked God several times a day, in every prayer and every blessing pronounced over our food.

We Mormon teenagers participated in school activities, of course, with non-Mormons, but we also had our own church-sponsored events, which were just as good, or better. Really good Mormon teenagers did not date non-Mormons, because of the danger of "getting involved seriously" with a non-Mormon, which would lead to the tragedy of a "mixed marriage" which could not be solemnized in the temple, and which would thus ultimately mean the eternal loss of the possibility of entering the highest degree of heaven, the celestial kingdom. None of us dared to risk that.

So my high school sweetheart was a good and faithful Mormon girl. We fell deeply in love and were devoted to each other without risking any immoral physical activity beyond long kisses and hugs (no touching of body skin or of any area below the waist or around her breasts, etc.). When she graduated from high school and I was in my third year at Brigham Young University, we two virgins got married in a beautiful ceremony in the Idaho Falls temple, and started to have babies. We were the ideal young Mormon couple.

I enjoyed my four years at BYU, being surrounded by devout fellow- students and being taught by devout and educated teachers. One professor of geology was also a member of our ward. I was just learning about the age of the earth as most geologists taught it. I asked him one Sunday at church how he reconciled the teachings of his science with the teachings of the church (which said that the earth was created about 6000 years ago). He replied that he had two compartments in his brain: one for geology and one for the gospel. They were entirely separate, and he did not let the one influence the other. This bothered me, but I didn't think more about it.

After my graduation from Brigham Young University I was offered a scholarship at Northwestern University to work on a master's degree. So my young wife and I with our two (at that time) babies moved to Evanston, Illinois, and for the first time in my life I was surrounded by non-Mormons. I was the only Mormon in my university program. This did not intimidate me in the least. I felt that I was intelligent enough, knowledgeable enough about religion, and skillful enough in debating skills (I had been a champion debater in high school) to discuss, defend and promote my religion with anybody. I soon found takers. Since it was no secret that I had graduated from BYU, many of my fellow graduate students had questions about Mormonism. They were friendly questions, but challenging. For the first time in my life I had the opportunity to spread the gospel. It was exhilarating. We had some wonderful discussions. Even my professors were willing to listen, and so I educated my linguistics professor about the Deseret Alphabet and my German literature professor about the similarities between Goethe's worldview and Joseph Smith's.

Some of my fellow students, however, had tracts and other literature about the Mormons which they had obtained from their own churches. They asked me questions that I was unable to answer satisfactorily because they were based on facts I was unfamiliar with. I had never heard about the Danite enforcer gangs, about the Blood Atonement Doctrine or the Adam-God Doctrine. Where did these horrible allegations come from?

I realized that in order for me to defend Mormonism I would have to know what its enemies were saying about it, so that I could be prepared with the proper facts. I had never been an avid student of the history of the church, although I had earned the highest grades in the third year high-school seminary course in church history. I mean, what was

there important to know about church history, beyond the story of how Joseph had his visions, got the plates, translated them, and how Satan had persecuted the Saints until they got to Utah? I was more interested in doctrine: the Truth, as taught by the prophets. The Truth, eternal and unchanging.

But now I began to read church history, both the authentic histories published by the church and the awful lies and distortions published by its enemies. How different they were! It was almost as if the authors in each camp were writing about different events. And the university library, where I spent a good deal of time, seemed to have more of the latter than the former.

After one year I got my master's degree in German and accepted a teaching job in Ogden, Utah. We returned to Zion and had our third child.

In Ogden I encountered for the first time the writings of the Mormon fundamentalists, who believe that Joseph Smith and Brigham Young were true prophets, but that the church since then - especially since the abandonment of the practice of polygamy - is in apostasy. At the time I was studying the doctrines and history of the church extensively, and it seemed that the fundamentalists had a lot of historical information that was not otherwise available. For instance, they relied heavily on the Journal of Discourses, a multi-volume work containing practically all the sermons preached by the church leaders in the first thirty or forty years after coming to Utah. Many years ago, I learned, every Mormon home had a copy of this work. But then the church leaders decided that it wasn't necessary for the members to have it, and it was not reprinted. It became a rarity. Why? Every anti-Mormon work I had read relied heavily on quotations from the sermons in the Journal of Discourses. But the present-day church leaders almost never referred to it. Why? It bothered me, but I put the thought aside.

While I was living in Ogden, a fundamentalist publisher brought out a photographic reprint of the entire Journal of Discourses, in hard binding, for \$250. If I had not been a poor schoolteacher I would have bought it, because I yearned to be able to read the wise words of the early leaders. But the question of why this work was suppressed by the church still bothered me. I put the thought aside. (The church then very quietly did republish it, in a paperback edition.)

One of the accusations made by anti-Mormon works I had read was that Brigham Young had taught that God had revealed to him that Adam was, in fact, God the Father. To substantiate this, they quoted Brigham's sermons in the Journal of Discourses. If only I could check for myself! I was reminded of a strange comment made after class one day by Sidney B. Sperry, the BYU professor and authority on Book of Mormon and Bible studies. I had taken a Book of Mormon class from him, and admired him greatly. One day he said mysteriously to a small group of students who had stayed after class, "I think,

when you get to the Celestial Kingdom, you may be greatly surprised to find out who God really is!" Wow! That implied that Dr. Sperry knew some secret that not many people knew; that we students didn't really know all there was to be known about this; that the prophets had not told all. What could that secret be?

As I researched this more, and found again and again the same words quoted from Brigham Young's Journal of Discourses sermons, it began to fit together: Adam was really God!

After two years teaching high school in Zion, I was offered a scholarship to continue my graduate studies in Baltimore. We accepted. Again we were surrounded by Gentiles, and again I had a large research library available.

Certain events in church history really began to bother me. Why had Zion's Camp failed? Why had the Kirtland Bank failed? Both of these enterprises were organized for the benefit of the church by God's prophet, who promised that they would succeed. It was difficult to avoid the conclusion that God was not doing much to direct the affairs of his church. And, as I thought about it, the same could be said for the experiments in the United Order (holding all property in common), plural marriage, the Deseret Alphabet - all projects begun with great promise, directed by God's anointed leaders, and all of which failed and were soon abandoned. It bothered me, but I put the thought aside.

What began to bother me most was that the church did not seem to be telling the entire truth about many events in its past. The evidence I read seemed to leave no doubt that the church had encouraged, if not organized, the enforcer gangs called the Danites or the Avenging Angels. Too many independent and primary sources testified of their activities. At that time in my researches the true story of the Mountain Meadows massacre was becoming known, an atrocity which the official church history passed off as the work of Indians, whereas it was becoming clear that the primary blame was on the church. The massacre itself was bad enough, but to me the subsequent whitewash by the church was worse, so far as the divine nature of the church was concerned. It bothered me, but I put the thought aside.

Among the papers of my grandfather, who had served a mission to England in 1910, I found a number of tracts and pamphlets that he had used on his mission. One was the transcript of a debate in 1850 between John Taylor (then an apostle, and on a mission in England) and a Methodist minister. Among the topics discussed in the debate was the rumor, common at the time, that the Mormons were practicing plural marriage. Taylor vigorously denied the rumors as a vicious lie, and firmly asserted on his honor that Mormons were good monogamists. At that very time, however, Taylor himself was married to twelve living wives. All of the top men in the church also had multiple wives

at that time. How could a prophet of God lie so blatantly? It bothered me, but I tried to put the thought aside.

The Adam-God problem continued to occupy my mind. I finally decided to try to settle the matter. If the doctrine were true, I was willing, as a faithful member of the church, to accept it. If it were not true, I needed some explanation about the apparent fact that Brigham Young (and other church authorities of his time) vigorously taught it. So I composed a letter to Joseph Fielding Smith, whom I respected very much, and who at the time was the Church Historian and the president of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. If he would only answer my letter! I spelled out to President Smith my dilemma: the evidence seemed to be clear and uncontroverted that Brigham Young had taught that Adam is God the Father. But the present church does not teach this. What is the truth?

I secretly thought (and perhaps hoped) that President Smith would write back and say something like: "Dear Brother, your diligence and faith in searching for the truth has led you to a precious secret, not known to many; yes, you can be assured that President Young taught the truth: Adam is our Father and our God, and the only God with whom we have to deal. The church does not proclaim this precious truth because we do not wish to expose the mysteries of God to the mockery of the world. Preserve this secret truth as you do the secrets of your temple endowment."

I received a short and clear answer to my letter from President Smith. It was quite different from what I had expected. He wrote that such an idea was unscriptural and untrue, and completely false. He did not deal with the evidence that Brigham Young had taught it. He ignored the whole problem as if it didn't exist. It bothered me, but I tried to put it out of my mind.

At the time I was auditing a class at the university in the history of philosophy. It was fascinating. I had no idea that ordinary human beings had given such thought to some of these questions. It occurred to me that my religion had plenty of answers and explanations, but it provided those answers without even really realizing what the questions were. The answers my church gave seemed rather flimsy and superficial, not even dealing with the really basic problems. I was introduced to the study of ethics, and was surprised to find the same thing: my religion, which claimed to be the ultimate, final and complete answer, was not even an introductory primer to the great ethical problems with which great thinkers had been dealing for hundreds of years.

However, I remained a faithful member of the church, fulfilling all my church obligations, attending meetings, observing the Word of Wisdom, wearing my temple garments. But I was struggling mightily to reconcile the church's inconsistencies, lies, and dubious past with my faith in its divinity.

It was at a single moment one day in the university library when I was pondering this problem. I was suddenly struck with the thought, "All of these problems disappear as soon as you realize that the Mormon church is just another man-made institution. Everything then is easily explained." It was like a revelation. The weight suddenly lifted from me and I was filled with a feeling of joy and exhilaration. Of course! Why hadn't I seen it before?

I rushed home to share with my wife the great discovery I had made. I told her what I had learned: the church isn't true!

She turned away and stomped up the stairs. She refused to accept anything I said critical about the church. It was the beginning of the end of our marriage.

I tried to continue my church responsibilities, primarily as ward organist. But I found it more and more difficult to sound sincere in public speaking, public prayer, or participation in class discussions. During the next summer my wife took the children back to Utah for a visit, and I felt it was silly for me to continue to wear the temple garments. And why shouldn't I have a cup of coffee with the other students, or have a glass of wine at a party? I had never tasted coffee or alcohol in my life, but there was no reason now, I felt, to deprive myself of those pleasant things. The next year was an armed truce in my marriage.

My wife left me suddenly, with no warning, taking the children. Her friends at church helped her escape, and she returned to Zion and divorced me. A last-ditch attempt at reconciliation failed when she said that her return would be conditioned upon my returning to the faith. I realized that I could not do it, however much I wanted to keep my family. Of course she got custody of the children. She remarried four years later, her new husband a faithful priesthood holder whose wife had left the church. (How ironic, that a church which places such a high value on family ties actually destroys the very thing it claims to promote!)

In the years since leaving the church I have never regretted my decision for a moment (other than the fact that it caused me to lose my wife and children). Subsequent study has given me a hundred times as much damning information about the church and its history as I had at the time of my original decision to leave it. Many Mormon friends and family members have tried to convince me that I made a mistake, but when I insist that they also listen to what I have to say about my reasons for believing the church to be false, they soon abandon the attempt, even though I assure them that my mind is open to any evidence or reasoning I may have overlooked. They are convinced that I apostatized because of sin, lack of faith, stubbornness, pride, hurt feelings, lack of knowledge or understanding, depravity, desire to do evil or live a life of debauchery. None of those

reasons is correct. I left for one reason, and one reason only: the Mormon church is not led by God, and it never has been. It is a religion of 100% human origin.

My wife believed, I think, that since the church had taught me to be honest, loving, faithful, hard-working and a good husband, my leaving the church would mean I would soon become just the opposite. She was probably not alone in believing that I would soon be a shiftless, godless, miserable bum, dead at an early age of syphilis and alcoholism.

However, my life since leaving the church has been a rich and rewarding one. I have been successful in my profession. I married a lovely girl with beliefs similar to mine, and we now have two fine adult sons whom we raised with no religious training whatsoever, and who are as admirable human beings as one could ever want their children to be. We have prospered materially (probably more than most of my good Mormon relatives), and our life has been rich in many other ways as well, rich in good friends, in appreciation of the beauty to be found in our world. We have explored all the intellectual and spiritual riches of our human heritage and profited from it all.

And as I am getting older I also realize that I have no fear of death, even though I have no idea what to expect when it comes. In that regard I find I am unlike many Mormons, who are desperately worried that they have not been sufficiently "valiant" in their devotion to the church to qualify for the Celestial Kingdom. Again, how ironic it is that a church which begins by promising its members such joy and happiness actually causes them such worry and despair!

I am still proud of my Mormon heritage. I still enjoy doing genealogy work (I have more complete records than most of my Mormon family members). I still love to play and sing some of the stirring old Mormon hymns. I still keep a good supply of food on hand. And I still believe in eternal progression: things just keep getting better and better.

As a postscript: Apostle Bruce R. McConkie admitted that Brigham Young did teach that Adam was God, and that the church has indeed lied about its own history. (read his letter here [mrm.org/...](http://mrm.org/)) He says that Brigham Young was wrong, but he has gone to the Celestial Kingdom; but if you believe what Brigham Young taught about that, you will go to hell. The fact that the church can put a "positive spin" on these admissions is truly mind-boggling.

Questions about Mormons My Answers to Questions about Mormonism

#Link to this answer of 'What do you think now about your mormon testimony?' by Richard Packham What do you think now about your mormon testimony? [See more answers about 'What do you think now about your mormon testimony?'](#)

As I said at: exmormonscholarstestify.org/...

First, a clarification of my use of some terminology.

"Testimony" has a slightly different meaning in religion from what it means in a legal setting. In the law, a testimony is a statement of what the testifying witness has seen or heard personally. It cannot be what he learned from a third party, nor can it be mere opinion. The witness's feelings are generally irrelevant. That is, a testimony must be based on facts.

The testimony of an "expert witness" has different rules. First, the expert witness must be qualified as an expert in the field of learning about which he is testifying. The qualifications may be academic degrees, publications, professional experience in the field, or anything that makes the witness unusually knowledgeable about the field. The expert may be asked to express an opinion about a hypothetical situation similar to the situation at issue in the trial, and he may also testify as to his opinion of the facts before the court as they relate to his field of expertise.

In religion, a testimony is often something quite different. Sometimes it is the believer's statement of justification for his belief, often a "spiritual" experience such as a vision, an unusually strong feeling, a seeming miracle. In Mormonism, the term has come to be applied also to a mere statement of belief, stated strongly, without any justifying facts included: "I KNOW that Joseph Smith was a prophet of God!" The watering-down of testimonies in Mormonism is perhaps best illustrated by the common practice of teaching little children to "bear testimony" in public testimony meetings, often prompted by a parent whispering the words into the child's ear. The child dutifully repeats: "I know the church is twoo and Joseph Smiff was a pwoffet. Namajesuschristamen!"

Another indication of the distortion of Mormon testimonies is that every young Mormon missionary is expected to "have a testimony." Many young Mormons have simply grown up in the church and never thought about their testimony, or exactly why they believe what they believe, other than simply having been taught and trained to believe it, and when faced with a missionary call realize that they really don't have one. The advice they often receive from Mormon leaders is simply to say the words (like the little child) often enough, and pretty soon they will indeed have a testimony. Some have received the generous offer from an older Mormon: "You can borrow my testimony until you have one of your own."

In other words, many Mormon "testimonies" are not valid testimonies at all, since they do not represent at all what the testifier actually knows. They are based on feelings, "warm fuzzies," and supposed miracles or supernatural manifestations that are essentially no different from the feelings, miracles and manifestations that believers of all religions use to buttress their convictions that their religion and their god is true and correct. My testimony is based on facts - facts that everyone can check and verify to their own satisfaction.

In offering the following testimony, I use "testimony" in the legal sense.

What is a "scholar"? The definition used to discredit the statements of anyone reputed to be a "scholar" is very narrow: one who is a leading researcher in his field, an author of many books and articles, the latter appearing in peer-reviewed journals, read usually only by other scholars. It helps if he also is a tenured professor at a leading university. Anyone who does not fit this narrow definition is sometimes dismissed by opponents as a "pseudo-scholar," not much better than an imposter.

A more useful definition for the purposes of this website would be closer to the legal definition of "expert witness," that is, someone who has acquired a special knowledge about a field (in this case, Mormonism), even if only through self-study or long experience. Under that definition, I qualify as an expert witness, based on my experience and my long study of Mormonism and religion.

Now to my own "testimony":

I was born to Mormon parents in a largely Mormon town, descended from several generations of Mormons on both sides of my family. I was their first child. My parents were very devout and active in the church. My father served a number of years in the stake presidency when I was a boy. They raised their five children as good Mormons. We attended all meetings and the boys progressed in the priesthood. I graduated from seminary with top grades and went on to graduate from BYU with high honors. I did not serve a mission - in those days a mission was not considered the sine qua non for young men that it later became. Because of my musical abilities, my church callings were always as chorister or organist. I married my high school Mormon sweetheart in the temple, and we began immediately to start a family, ultimately having three children.

My graduate education took us for the first time in my life away from Zion, and I felt that being among intelligent non-Mormon classmates would give me the opportunity to "serve a mission" by spreading the gospel among them. I had never doubted or questioned for a

moment that the church was indeed the true church. My studies at BYU, with religion classes from men such as Hugh Nibley and Sidney B. Sperry, had strengthened that conviction.

In the small graduate studies department I quickly became known as "the Mormon." The classmates with whom I discussed religion were not nearly so accepting of the gospel message as I had assumed intelligent people would be. After all, the gospel was so rational and consistent, and the restoration story was so well documented (I had been taught) that any open-minded person would soon be convinced of its truth. That apparently was not the case.

In fact, some of the more religious-minded of my classmates (Catholic, Lutheran, Anglican) seemed already to have some knowledge about Mormonism, and brought up supposed facts about Mormonism that I had never heard of. That Brigham Young had taught that Adam was God, for example. That a secret band of Mormon enforcers called "Avenging Angels" or "Danites" had killed people who opposed the church. That Mormon temple rituals were copied from the Freemasons.

I had never been much interested in church history. It seemed irrelevant. The important thing was that the church was here, not how it came about. But these were issues that obviously must have an explanation, and I became determined to find those explanations and to show my friends that their knowledge of Mormonism was mistaken.

So, in addition to my regular studies, I began studying Mormonism. The university library had a large and excellent collection of Mormon materials, perhaps because it was located in Illinois, where Mormons had played a large role in the state in the 19th century. I began reading widely in the Mormon section of the stacks. I must emphasize that my purpose was to defend the church, not to criticize it. And I was convinced that I would indeed be able to vindicate my church from its critics.

Unfortunately, browsing among the materials in that university library exposed me to more and more problems. I came across a biography of James J. Strang, of whom I had never heard, but who, according to this biography, had been a contender in the succession after the death of Joseph Smith. He had drawn many devout Mormons after him, and had produced scripture, ancient writings on metal tablets, attested to by witnesses, just as Joseph Smith had done. I came across a strange scripture-like book which was produced by angelic means called "Oahspe." My startled reaction was, This is just like the Book of Mormon! I learned about many unpleasant episodes in Mormon history: the failure of the

Kirtland Bank, the debacle of Zion's Camp, the repeated failures of attempts to establish the United Order.

My testimony, although somewhat altered, was not weakened, and when we returned to Utah, where I had taken a job teaching high school in Ogden, I remained active in the church. In Ogden I came across pamphlets published by some of the fundamentalist sects of Mormonism. They argued that the church had fallen into apostasy by abandoning polygamy and other early doctrines, such as Brigham Young's teaching that Adam was God. Their arguments seemed convincing and based on accurate history. They frequently referred to materials in the Journal of Discourses. I had never heard of it before, but if it truly contained sermons from early leaders, it would be a valuable resource. Why did the church not continue to use it, or even to promote it?

Among the papers of my grandfather, who had served a mission to England in 1910, I found a number of tracts and pamphlets that he had used on his mission. One was the transcript of a debate in 1850 between John Taylor (then an apostle, and on a mission in England) and a Methodist minister. Among the topics discussed in the debate was the rumor, common at the time, that the Mormons were practicing plural marriage. Taylor vigorously denied the rumors as a vicious lie, and firmly asserted on his honor that Mormons were good monogamists. At that very time, however, Taylor himself was married to twelve living wives. All of the top men in the church also had multiple wives at that time. How could a prophet of God lie so blatantly? It bothered me, but I tried to put the thought aside.

The Adam-God problem continued to occupy my mind. I finally decided to try to settle the matter. If the doctrine were true, I was willing, as a faithful member of the church, to accept it. If it were not true, I needed some explanation about the apparent fact that Brigham Young (and other church authorities of his time) vigorously taught it. So I composed a letter to Joseph Fielding Smith, whom I respected very much, and who at the time was the Church Historian and the president of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. If he would only answer my letter! I spelled out to President Smith my dilemma: the evidence seemed to be clear and uncontroverted that Brigham Young had taught that Adam is God the Father. But the present church does not teach this. What is the truth?

I secretly thought (and perhaps hoped) that President Smith would write back and say something like: "Dear Brother, your diligence and faith in searching for the truth has led you to a precious secret, not known to many; yes, you can be assured that President Young taught the truth: Adam is our Father and our God, and the only God with whom we have to deal. The church does not proclaim this precious truth because we do not wish

to expose the mysteries of God to the mockery of the world. Preserve this secret truth as you do the secrets of your temple endowment."

I received a short and clear answer to my letter from President Smith. It was quite different from what I had expected. He wrote that such an idea was unscriptural and untrue, and completely false. He did not deal with the evidence that Brigham Young had taught it. He ignored the whole problem as if it didn't exist. It bothered me, but I tried to put it out of my mind.

Another period of graduate study on the east coast away from Zion surrounded me again with people who challenged my religion, and again I used the excellent university library to further my attempts to explain everything to my own and my critics' satisfaction. I was still hoping that I could prove the critics wrong, but the result was the same as before: the more I searched, the more problems came to light.

It was one day as I was sitting in a library carrel, thinking about how to find a way out of my puzzlement, that the thought occurred to me: the problems all disappeared as soon as one viewed the Mormon church as just another man-made and human-directed religion, just like all the others. It was almost like a revelation. However, this revelation was based not on some supernatural inspiration, but on three years of intensive study and thought, on hundreds of facts that cast doubt on Mormonism's claims.

Like many believers who have had a moment of enlightenment - an epiphany - that brings them peace and joy, so did I feel a sense of light and happiness. And that realization, that the church was just man-made, has grown stronger over the many years since then (over 50, as of this writing). I have continued to study Mormonism, to check new information about Mormon claims, and all the new information that has come to light since that "revelation" in the university library has confirmed my original conclusion.

Only a few examples (unavailable to me at the time):

- the multiple versions of the "first vision";
- the scientific evidence about pre-Columbian America;
- the discovery of the papyri from which the Book of Abraham was produced;
- the many changes in the temple endowment ceremony;
- the court record of Joseph Smith's Bainbridge trial for "glass looking";
- the importance of folk magic in the Smith family's world view;

the inability of church leaders to identify Mark Hofmann as a forger;
(the list could go on for many more items)

So, in the spirit of truth and knowledge, I bear my personal testimony to all. I know, as well as anyone can know anything, that the Mormon church is not what it claims to be; that it was not established by divine guidance; that it is not directed by divinely inspired leaders; that Joseph Smith was not a prophet, but rather a swindler, a liar, a megalomaniac, and a lecher, who abused the power he had for his own selfish ends; and the church that he established has caused an untold amount of human suffering and sorrow, far outweighing any good that its followers claim it may have done. And I bear this testimony fully aware of the consequences to me and to others if my testimony is not accurate.

And, in the custom of religious testimonies, I will say that this knowledge has brought me peace and happiness, and has enriched my life in ways too many to count.

#Link to this answer of 'What advice would you give to someone interested in joining the Mormon Church? Or for that matter, someone interested in leaving the Mormon Church?' by Richard Packham **What advice would you give to someone interested in joining the Mormon Church? Or for that matter, someone interested in leaving the Mormon Church? [See more answers about 'What advice would you give to someone interested in joining the Mormon Church? Or for that matter, someone interested in leaving the Mormon Church?'](#)**

packham.n4m.org/...

#Link to this answer of 'You're not Mormon anymore. Why? What's your relationship with faith now?' by Richard Packham **You're not Mormon anymore. Why? What's your relationship with faith now?**