

# Spiritual Transformation

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The idea of how spirituality changes has recently become of great interest to me. Less than a year ago I was an active, full participating member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (the "Church", the "LDS Church", the "Mormon Church"). About six months ago I resigned my membership in that organization, and my beliefs have changed radically as for the first time in my life I have drunk deep and long from the marvellous sources of spiritual water outside of the faith of my youth.

In the hope of encouraging those who will come behind me on this path, whether starting within the LDS Church or any other conservative religious organization, I have decided to make public a series of documents that illustrate how this process has transpired, and the speed with which events overtook me. Those related to my "Mormon" life are found under the "Mormon" button on this website. Those that resulted from my movement outside of Mormonism are under the "Post-Mormon" button.

A particularly interesting contrast is contained in a series of four pieces, the first being titled "Barefoot to Zion" which I wrote about two years ago while serving as the Stake Mission President in the Calgary, Alberta Stake of the Mormon Church. It can be accessed under the "Mormon" button, and was used as a missionary tool in connection with a dramatic production the Stake in which I lived was putting on by the same name. It shows my state of mind respecting the LDS Church and its foundational principles at that time.

The second is a seventy-five page letter to my family, written in November of last year, that outlines some of my concerns respecting the Church's position on various topics. It can be accessed under the "Post-Mormon" button, and is called "Coming Out Letter". I wrote this letter after starting to talk to my children on what I thought was a discrete basis about my beliefs, and then finding that the rumour mill was working overtime with respect to my apostasy and the reasons for it. All kinds of exotic sin were thought to be potential causes – but to the disappointment of many, it was nothing that interesting; just good old fashioned reading and thinking. I wrote the letter to my family to ensure that they knew I was not proceeding without due consideration, and to assure them that I had not gone crazy or become a terrible sinner.

The next is the letter I sent to my Bishop and close friend Bill Tilleman, resigning my membership in the Church. It is titled "Resignation Letter", and was sent in mid-December of last year. Use the "Post-Mormon" button to find it.

The last, called "Out of My Faith", is the result of my effort to figure out what happened to me, and to establish a new foundation for my life. It gives a rough picture of what my worldview looks like a few months after leaving the LDS Church. For those of you who are tired of reading the same of cranky ex-mormon stuff, "Out of My Faith" is likely where to start. It is the "constructive" as opposed to "deconstructive end of the process. For those who feel that they still need help "deconstructing" the negative parts of their Mormon belief system, the earlier documents (as well as parts of "Our of My Faith") may

be helpful, as will the letters of Jeffrey Holland, and perhaps particularly the essay respecting the role of LDS temple worship.

I have decided to publish these things for several reasons. First, a number of people who are members of the LDS Church have read parts or all of these documents, and in particular earlier drafts of "Out of My Faith", and tell me that it has helped them expand their view of religious faith, and to use it in a more healthy fashion in their lives. I note that some of these people have been on their way out of LDS membership or activity, while others have remained active but have not allowed the Church to dominate their lives in the fashion it previously had. Second, I think it may be encouraging (while perhaps initially frightening) for people who worry about their ability to change respecting something so fundamental as a life long religious belief to see what has happened to me at age forty-five, after not just being a member but also being a leader within the LDS communities to which I have belonged over the years. If we allow ourselves to be exposed to new sources of information, we can grow in surprising ways at amazing rates.

These documents have not been carefully proofed. I am confident that they are riddled with typos. And in particular, the last one, "Out of My Faith", is a work in progress. I would say that 90% of the ideas in that essay had been formulated by mid-March of 2003, but have taken some time to record. Many sections are inelegantly put together, as is the essay as a whole. It is not something I am particularly proud of from a literary point of view and it is certainly not finished. It was written mostly for personal therapy, since I process ideas best if I record my thoughts as they come to me, and it is valuable to me as a spiritual road map. As I continue to read and think, it will no doubt change. It is not presented as "the truth", but rather a snap shot of one regular guy's attempt to figure things out about six months into the project.

I would say much the same with respect to the long letter to my family and the other documents on the site. But since I have been told these things are useful to some people, I am prepared to share them as they are. If I waited until they were finished, or even polished, they would never have been made accessible to others.

I try to live the Golden Rule. I greatly appreciated some elements of personal experience of this sort that others shared with me as I groped along my way last summer and fall, and so I am reciprocating with the best I have, which I again emphasize is not that great.

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