

History Led Me Out - History Led Me In

I stood on the edge of America, sand under my feet and the warm water from the Atlantic Ocean washing over my toes. On the horizon I could see them - standing like sentinels ready to fight an unseen enemy - early morning thunderheads, all lined up and towering into the sky; some closer, some farther away, but all beautiful, majestic, and seemingly ready to protect.

As I watched, some of these thunderheads developed into giants, with the tell-tell anvil head shape; while others, shaded from the sun by the larger clouds, simply died off, giving no rain to the earth. This made me think of the parable Jesus tells about the seeds scattered along the roadside. Some of these storms had taken root, but in shallow ground. After starting out quite hopeful and impressive, they died out in the shadows of those who were fulfilling their cyclic duties of sea to rain, rain to sea - their roots were not deep enough. I could certainly relate.

As an only child of a widowed mother, I was raised on my grandparents' farm in Northwest Georgia. My mother and I attended the Methodist church, while my grandparents attended the Baptist church, so I was exposed to both religions. I loved the Methodist church because of the structure of the service. There were certain things that were said and sung each Sunday, and these standard items were a comfort to me. Little did I know then that these were actually sayings and songs left over from their Catholic past.

When I was 12, my mother married again and we moved far away from what I considered to be my home. It was there that I met one of my dearest friends, who happened to be a Catholic. In fact, she was the first Catholic I had ever met. She and I became like sisters, yet she never tried to teach me about her faith; I don't think she even knew much about it herself. Since my step-father was transferred every few years with his job, I had to say goodbye to her, and our family moved to another small town. By this time, I had my driver's license and began attending the Baptist church with a friend I had met at high school. I enjoyed the services and I knew Christ was my savior, so I was quite satisfied with my spiritual life. However, my roots weren't deep.

Upon graduation from high school, I married my high school sweetheart, who was then attending college. His religious background was Nazarene, so we

set out on a quest to find a faith we could both agree on. His mother had just joined the Mormon Church, and in an effort to respect her, we agreed to allow the Mormon missionaries to visit us. I was immediately drawn to their sense of family, high moral standards, the claim of “authority”, and the fact that they assured me that I could have my family with me in heaven.

What a wonderful concept it seemed to be – eternal families – the “Families are Forever” quote that they use to hook you with. The Mormons missionaries constantly challenge you to be baptized, pressing very hard and wording their questions and reasons so cleverly, and not giving you much time to think it over. It was a constant question from the third time we met with them – will you be baptized. So we joined the Mormon Church within a few weeks of the missionaries’ first visit, and I remained a faithful member for 40 years. My marriage, however, ended after 4.

After my divorce, I continued with my college studies with plans to eventually become a guidance counselor. Life, instead, had new twists and turns in store for me. I ended up not being able to complete my junior year of college and had to move to Florida where I met my future husband. He had no religious ties to any church and agreed that our children could be raised as Mormons. (Not that I was attending the Mormon Church, or even living their standards at that time.) A few years later, I decided it was time to go back to church so I began attending again, taking our children with me.

The Mormons have a very high moral standard that they teach the youth, even having those in high school attend what is known as early morning seminary, where they study the Mormon faith each morning before school. This meant getting up at 5:30 a.m. each school day to attend a 6:00 a.m. class of religious instruction. I have to say that the Mormon Church has an excellent program in place for teaching the faith to the youth, and as a result, none of our children drank alcohol, smoked, cursed, or rebelled in any real way. The Mormons also have a very driven fellowshipping program in place for bringing converts into the church. My husband was invited to participate in their softball, basketball, and volleyball games, which he thoroughly enjoyed.

Through this fellowshipping by the men of the church, and through the example of our children, he became a member. One year later we were “sealed” as an eternal

family in the temple. I was over the moon with happiness because I believed our family was now going to be together forever. I thought I now had deep roots.

I was very active in the church, teaching Primary (Sunday school for children ages 3-12), and Young Women (Sunday school for girls ages 12-18). Yet even while teaching the religion to the youth, I had begun to have doubts. When my first husband and I met with the missionaries, I had asked about their belief in polygamy. I was assured that this was only practiced as a means of providing for the women and children who had lost their husbands and fathers on the “trek west”.

It was explained to me that the men who kindly and generously took these women and children under their wing, did it only to provide for the temporal needs of said women and children. I later found out that polygamy was to be reinstated upon our arrival in the celestial kingdom (the highest level of heaven to the Mormons), and I would be forced to allow my husband to have multiple wives if I wanted to remain in this highest heavenly kingdom.

This teaching, however, depended on whom you asked. Some of the leaders said this was true, while others denied it. The whole concept made me sick, and the fact that the leaders were not in agreement did not inspire confidence. I realized at some point that I did not believe the Book of Mormon was really an inspired book, and that I did not even believe that Joseph Smith was a prophet. It became clear that I was only a member of this church because of the “eternal family plan”, which I clung to with all my might.

Being an only child of a single mom for 12 years, I wanted my family with me more than anything I could imagine so I did not dare question the church. Also, having been sealed in the temple, if I left the church I would not only lose my family, but would be sent to a place called Outer Darkness to suffer for eternity with Satan and his followers. With that threat being held over me, I kept quiet and appeared to be a well indoctrinated member, but my roots were no longer deep.

And, 13 or so years later, I had a satellite dish installed so that I could watch the Brigham Young University (BYU) channel, as where I live it is not available any other way. I thought that I could learn more about the church from the BYU scholars. Then one night a miracle happened. I had gotten bored with the BYU

show I was watching, so I started channel surfing. As I got to the Catholic channel, EWTN, a program called The Journey Home was just starting. I heard Marcus Grodi say that his guest was an ex-mormon that had come home to the Catholic Church. *Herein lays the miracle.*

Mr. Grodi has had hundreds of guests on his show, but very very few ex-mormons. The odds of my landing on that channel for that particular show on the very night he had an ex-mormon, AND my landing there just at the perfect time for Marcus Grodi say “our guest tonight is an ex-mormon”, which caused me to stop channel surfing and listen, are astronomical. Well, of course I watched the program and heard the guest speak of the non-virgin birth of Jesus (the Mormon belief that Jesus was conceived in the same manner as you and I were conceived), and the Adam/god theory by Brigham Young.

I was appalled and determined to find out for myself. Part of me hoped that I could prove this guest wrong (after all, who wants to find out that they have been hoodwinked for the last 40 years), while part of me hoped my doubts would be confirmed. As I listened, I heard about things I had never known – things that are not taught to the church members. The guest spoke of a history of the Mormon Church that I did not know existed. I realized that he was using church documents as his references, not anti-Mormon literature.

The more I searched the actual history of Joseph Smith and the Mormon Church, the more upset I became. History proved that the Mormon Church was false. I knew that very night that I could never go back – and I also knew that God loved and knew me – that He had led me to watch that particular episode of The Journey Home in order to bring me home. I was now without a church and I was scared. My husband, my children, and my grandchildren are Mormon, as well as all my friends. I had to embark on my new faith journey alone; feeling like I was in a dinghy trying to stay afloat in the middle of a hurricane, with no idea where to go. Now I had no roots at all.

I continued to watch The Journey Home, and went online to the Journey Home website to listen to the stories of other Mormons who had become Catholic. I began watching Mother Angelica’s show, as well as other programs on EWTN, soaking up as much as I could, as fast as I could. I seemed to be drawn to this channel whenever I turned on the television, but I did not want to be “duped” again

so this time I did lots of research. I attended an Orthodox church in order to learn their beliefs, but there was no central authority there and I knew in my heart this had to be present in the church I joined. Without this, the doctrine could shift and change according to any politically correct climate, as I had seen so many Protestant churches' stand on abortion change.

The more I studied, the more it came back to the Catholic Church. I read of the many priests and nuns who had been martyred over the centuries just because of their Catholic faith; of those who had journeyed across Europe to spread the news of Christ; of those who had been rich yet gave it all up for their faith. I saw how the Catholic Church had carefully and lovingly guarded the faith, fought heresies throughout the ages, and kept Christ's teachings safe for all the world.

History was on the side of the Catholic Church – it had survived and thrived against all odds. How naïve, how utterly clueless I had been about the beauty of the Catholic Church. How had I not known about the Eucharist? How had I not seen and understood the scriptures wherein Christ chose Simon as the rock on which to build His church, and even changed Simon's name to "rock"? Of course Christ would set up His church and its leadership before He left us. How had I not understood the verse where Christ promised that the gates of hell will not prevail against His church?

After reading and studying for about a year, I entered the RCIA program at Sacred Heart Catholic Church in Fleming Island, Florida. I was surprised to find that you could not just join the Catholic Church without first having studied the faith for quite some time. This was such a refreshing concept, since the Protestant religions I had studied, as well as the Mormons, encourage you to join almost immediately, with little or no actual knowledge of their belief system other than a belief in Christ.

The Catholic Church wants you to know the faith, love the faith, and cherish the faith before you enter into communion with it. In RCIA, I received correction about misconceptions I had, such as the fact that Catholics do not worship Mary, contrary to what I had believed. At the end of the RCIA class year, I and was baptized and confirmed a member of the Catholic Church at the Easter Vigil of April 2011. I still have so much to learn - more than I ever imagined, but with each new pearl of knowledge, the majesty of the Catholic Church becomes more

evident. She is my home, a mansion with many rooms which I have yet to explore, each room furnished with more incredible, beautiful teachings. I cannot thank God and Marcus Grodi enough for having an ex-Mormon guest on that November evening in 2009, because it was through that particular show that I was jolted out of my comfortable spiritual easy chair and made to face the truth about Mormon history; which, in turn, eventually led me into the waiting and welcoming arms of the Catholic Church. I am finally starting to grow some roots – this time roots planted in truth.

Epilogue: For those who want to know more about what I learned that led me out of the Mormon Church, I have written about the major reasons below:

Doubts and Findings:

I had doubts off and on through the years, I think most everyone does, but we all seem to put them in the back of our minds and go on trusting – mainly I think because of the promise that we can be married to our spouse and have our family with us in heaven. I never thought about the teachings that we could become gods and goddesses of our own planets some eons in the future – that was just too much, but I did think I could still be married to my husband (Mormons base this belief on Jesus’ promise that whatever Peter sealed on earth would be sealed in heaven – so you are sealed for time and all eternity in the temple). Think about it, if you have even the slightest belief or hope that you can have this wonderful blessing, wouldn’t you hang on with all you had?

So, we place our doubts in a box because we are assured by the leaders that all our doubts and questions will be understood and answered in heaven - we will have all knowledge. Around 1996, a friend was moving away and she gave me old copies of a church magazine. One of them contained an article about a young girl who had been married to Joseph Smith. It must have been writings from her diary, because it was in her own words. She stated that Joseph had come to stay with her parents during one of his trips and that he had gotten her to marry him, but he told her it had to be in secret – that no one could ever know.

When I read those words, I literally threw the magazine across the room as if it were a live rattlesnake. This threatened my testimony of the church, and, therefore, scared the life out of me. He was already married! Why did it have to be secret? Yet, here he was sneaking around marrying an innocent girl and making her keep it a secret forever, even from her own family, and we were just supposed to accept this as being from God? I was appalled that a supposed prophet would do something so underhanded.

For weeks I suffered from anguish over this, but somehow I put that into the back of my mind, telling myself that even Abraham lied when he said Sarah was his sister in order to preserve his life. Again, hanging on to the “Families are Forever” promise, I was too scared to really look at the article for the wake-up call that it was. If I only had done so, I would have left then. Despite the fact that I ignored this sign from God, He did not let it rest. He waited and tried again years later.

The non-virgin birth is everywhere once you know to look for it. When I realized that they believed in a non-virgin birth I was disgusted. If you question a church leader about this, they will claim it is not official church doctrine – however, it was taught for years by many church leaders and is still believed by many church members. That is the main sign/prophecy about Jesus - that He would be born of a virgin. But according to leaders of the mormon church, God is a glorified man living on the planet Kolob, who came down and actually “begot” Jesus in the “normal way parents beget their children”.

A man and a woman creating a child does not a virgin birth make. What happened to the Holy Spirit overshadowing Mary? The mormons excuse is that the Bible cannot be trusted as it was translated by evil (Catholic) men so that this passage was not translated correctly. However, since the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls, along with other ancient documents, even their own BYU scholars have to admit that the Bible is totally trustworthy and that the only errors are ones of spelling and grammar.

I found the Adam/god theory in the Journal of Discourses online at the BYU site. Brigham Young, the second prophet of the Mormon church, taught that Adam was the god of this earth. How could that be you may ask? Well, according to Brigham Young, Adam once lived on another planet, died, went to heaven and achieved godhood. Sometime after arriving in heaven, a higher god sent Adam

down here (again as a mortal man) to populate this earth. Well, hold on just a moment - isn't that reincarnation? Man, to god, to man? Yep, I'm pretty sure that qualifies as reincarnation.

Yet no Mormon believes in reincarnation. Mormons will tell you that this was just an "idea" that Brigham Young had, but he consistently preached it in his sermons for many years, while also stating that any sermon he gave could be counted as doctrine. If you believe Brigham was a prophet, then you have to believe his teachings.

You cannot write them off as the ramblings of a crazy old man, as someone in the church told me to do when I asked about them. That is how mormons deal with stuff they cannot come to grips with – "it is not doctrine, just his opinion". However, if Brigham said that any sermon he gave could be counted as doctrine (which he did), and his sermons included the Adam/god teaching (which they did), then that would mean that this teaching would be church doctrine. By denying this teaching, you are effectively denying his authority as a prophet, yet no Mormon would ever deny Brigham was a prophet – after all, their hallmark for higher Mormon learning is BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY.

I guess a prophet's teaching are only good until another prophet comes along and disagrees with the former doctrine and changes it - like they did with polygamy, which was only rescinded when the United States refused Utah's request for statehood because of polygamy, and the "curse on the blacks" wherein the mormon church taught that the black race were descendants of Cain and, therefore, would NEVER be entitled to receive the priesthood. Notice that word 'never'. Well, once the civil rights movement had given the blacks all the same rights as whites, the church made an about face, saying that God had now given a new revelation (changed His mind?) that blacks could now receive the priesthood and enjoy the blessings of the temple.

AND as for the polygamy being only for those poor unfortunate women who lost their husbands on the trek west as I had been told by the missionaries – what a joke. Joseph Smith (who died before the infamous "trek west") was marrying women behind his wife's back left and right. In addition to the girl whose story I had read earlier, I discovered that Joseph Smith offered the promise of the celestial

kingdom (the highest kingdom of heaven to mormons) to the family of a 14 year old if they would let her marry him (he was in his 30's at this time).

Mormons will argue that “back then” many young girls married older men, that it was customary. Well customary or not, offering the guarantee of the celestial kingdom, a heavenly kingdom, is not something that was within Joseph Smith's ability to do, prophet or not. He was using the very thing that all mormons strive for, the celestial kingdom, to bribe at least one family into allowing him to marry their 14 year old daughter. He also married many other women, some were even sisters who did not know he had married the other one as well as them.

Upon reading this, and seeing all the wives he had married (many already married to other men), I was so angry. To make matters even more insane, while he was busy marrying all these women in secret, he was publicly denying the practice and condemning it from the pulpit! The church today hides these facts, even going so far as to claim him a martyr, when in actuality, he died in a gunfight after being jailed for having a newspaper office that was going to expose his polygamy destroyed. His many wives are actually listed on the church's genealogy website if you can get access to it.

So much for their denials that he practiced polygamy. I was done – through! I had been taught by the missionaries during those first discussions that polygamy was only for those women whose husband's had died on the trek west - I had been outright lied to. Yet the missionaries and church leaders would give the excuse that since I was not a “temple worthy” member at the time of the discussions, that I could not be given the “meat” of the doctrine.

Let me assure you, there is a huge difference between not being given the “meat” and being outright lied to. If one uses the excuse that the missionaries were just doing what they were taught, then, how about all the priesthood leaders who assured me with the very same lie? Someone somewhere had to know the truth, but no one would tell me about this part of Joseph Smith's history.