

Bible – Christianity

1. **Heaven and Hell – A History of the Afterlife** – by Bart Ehrman (*Ehrman is a theologian and Bible scholar. Read his books if you are ready to let go of the Bible as literal stories, and the actual word of God.*)
2. **Forged – Writing in the Name of God – Why the Bible’s Authors are not Who We Think They Are** – by Bart Ehrman (See notes above.)
3. **Misquoting Jesus – The Story Behind Who Changed the Bible** – by Bart Ehrman (See notes above.)
4. **The Demon-Haunted World – Science As a Candle in the Dark** – by Carl Sagan (*People my age will remember Carl Sagan as a world-renown scientist who hosted the TV series “Cosmos”. To study Sagan and read his philosophies is to love him. He dismantles the superstitions and the fears that religion infuses into our lives, but he offsets that information with ways to find joy and purpose in our lives, and to immerse ourselves in the beauty of this amazing world.*)

RECONSTRUCTION

Leaving the Church and/or a Cult

1. **Leaving the Saints – How I Lost the Mormons and Found Faith** – by Martha Beck (*Beck is Hugh Nibley’s daughter & she reveals shocking abuse from her father in this book. She was a professor at BYU, & has written other excellent books. She has left the church & has a positive social media channel that teaches beautiful practices in life – like meditation, etc.*)
2. **Truth Seeking** – by Hans Mattsson (*He was the Area Authority for Sweden & had received his 2nd anointing. He left the church, along with many in Sweden known as “the Swedish Rescue Mission”.*)
3. **Recovering Agency – Lifting the Veil of Mormon Mind Control** – by Luna Lindsey Corbden (*Every member on this faith journey needs to read this book for answers and support.*)
4. **Combating Cult Mind Control** – by Steven Hassan (*I have read one of his books, and I have heard him speak. He was recruited into the Moonies as a young man, & was able to leave years later. He now counsels others on recognizing & leaving cults. He knew little about the Mormon church, but has now worked with ex-Mormons, and recognizes cult practices. In fact, this book uses a TBM as an example in one of his chapters.*)

Reconstruction Books

1. **If Women Rose Rooted** – by Sharon Blackie (*This is definitely a woman’s book. It is a beautiful book that gives women connection to the earth, and lovely mythologies that have been lost to most of us.*)
2. **For Small Creatures Such As We** – Sasha Sagan (*She is Carl Sagan’s daughter, and she grew up in a loving atheist home. There are just a lot of positive reconstructive ideas in her book.*)

General – Serious Reading – not for the light of heart

1. **The God Virus – How Religion Infects Our Lives and Culture** – by Darrel W. Ray, Ed. D. (*This is a short book. He compares viruses to religion. Fascinating.*)
2. **The Swerve – How The World Became Modern** – by Stephen Greenblatt (*I purchased this book about ten years ago, when I was still a TBM from Powell’s City of Books in Portland. I began to read the introduction, & was afraid it could make me an atheist. My Mormon “Spidey senses” went off, and I threw it in the garbage. After my faith journey, I ordered the book. It is now one of my favorite books. It is based on the writings of Lucretius, a Roman philosopher from 50 BCE. His writings were referred to often in Mediaeval times, but his works were lost, until a book hunter [manuscript hunter] found a copied manuscript in a German monastery in the early 1400’s. Poggio, the book hunter, then made copies, & Lucretius was brought back into the world. His philosophies on life, death, & religion have some intriguing thoughts.*)
3. **Determined – Life Without Free Will** – Robert Sapolsky (*Don’t read this book unless you are ready to change the way you look at agency & everything you have ever learned in church. Sapolsky is a world-renowned doctor who has studied the brain extensively. It is a lot of science, but causes you to look at things differently. He is also hilarious.*)

SUGGESTED READING LIST – DECONSTRUCTION/RECONSTRUCTION (By Yvonne Christensen)

DECONSTRUCTION

Joseph Smith Jr. & Early Church History

1. **Burned over District** – by Whitney R. Cross *(This book had a major influence in helping me to understand the circumstances of Joseph's time & location. It explained the common visions, people falling down, speaking in tongues, etc. during this unique time in this unique place. It is straight history, with only one chapter on Mormons)*
2. **Joseph Smith – The Making of a Prophet** – by Dan Vogel. *(A comprehensive account of Joseph and how he became a prophet.)*
3. **Early Mormonism and the Magic World View** – by D. Michael Quinn *(All of Quinn's books are great. He is a meticulous historian. This book explains a lot of the church's beginnings & explains the magic beliefs by the Smith family. These beliefs played a huge part in the church's history.)*
4. **No Man Knows My History** – by Fawn Brodie *(Brodie is known outside the church as a serious historian. I read her biography on Richard F. Burton, an explorer, "The Devil Drives." She also wrote a biography on Thomas Jefferson. Church blacklisted her for this biography of Smith. She was excommunicated for it, although she was David O. McKay's niece. This is a must read.)*
5. **Charisma Under Pressure – 1831-1839** – by Dan Vogel *(Vogel is another exceptional historian, & this book gives fascinating details of Joseph's interactions with members of his community & details of "how the sausage was made".)*

Polygamy

1. **In Sacred Loneliness** – by Todd Compton *(Polygamy in all of its ugliness! This book has to be read to truly understand the foundations of the church, & the men who ran it, & the victimization & neglect of the women who believed in it at all costs.)*
2. **Tell It All – A Woman's Life in Polygamy** – by Fanny Stenhouse *(She & her husband were British converts during Brigham Young's life. They were prominent members who served missions. Her husband held high church callings, practiced polygamy, and eventually Fanny & her husband left the church. This book is incredibly enlightening to what the church & its leaders really looked like.)*
3. **The Ghost of Eternal Polygamy** – Carol Lynn Pearson *(If you think polygamy is no longer a part of the church's doctrine, read this book. I had personal experiences myself as a sealed widow.)*

Book of Mormon

1. **How the Book of Mormon Came to Pass – The Second Greatest Show on Earth** – by Lars Nielsen *(Fascinating new possible sources of the Book of Mormon. He presents some new and intriguing theories. It begins with a scam artist who was a Catholic priest born in 1601. Theories – except for one interesting fact – Hugh Nibley purchased his manuscripts in the 1960's. BYU has the largest collection of his works. They are locked up & kept secret.)*

Recent Church History

1. **Devil's Gate** – by David Roberts *(Another amazing historian, who had little knowledge of Mormons before he wrote this book. You will never look at the handcart treks the same. Shocking!)*
2. **Stretching the Heavens** – by Terryl L. Givens *(A biography of Eugene England, who was a professor at BYU. Givens is a church apologist, but this book still shares a lot of insights into the church's inner workings on the top level. It shines a light on the failings, the control, and the censorship from the authorities, & shows how easily someone can be cast aside when no longer of use.)*
3. **Confessions of a Mormon Historian – The Diaries of Leonard J. Arrington 1971-1997** – edited by James Berger [three volumes] *(I was an adult during these years, and I remember these stories, and I revered these leaders. What a disappointment it was for me to see the ambition, dishonesty, hubris of the leaders & of the church.)*