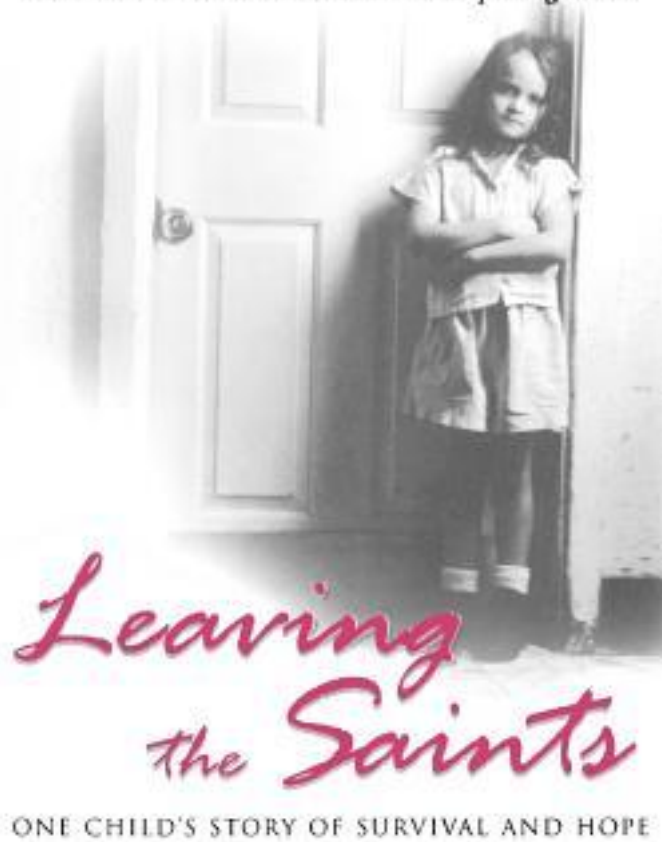

Martha N. Beck

Leaving the Saints: One Child's Story of Survival and Hope.
Martha Beck

MARTHA BECK
AUTHOR OF THE BESTSELLING *Expecting Adam*



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Description

In a thoughtful, moving and ultimately inspiring memoir, Martha Beck chronicles her difficult decision to leave behind her Mormon childhood and upbringing, and reveals her lifetime struggle to overcome a dark secret buried in her childhood.

Insightful reviews

Rebecca: I understand the personal struggle any person can have when wrestling with the challenges of leaving their religion of origin. However, I take issue with calling out the legitimacy of any religion based on the behavior of one or two clergy men.

Additionally, Beck exaggerates the extent in which the L.D.S. church will go to "protect itself" to such an extreme that it is hard to believe any of the other accounts in her story.

This story felt irresponsible and sensational. This is highly problematic for me as a former member of the L.D.S. church. It was painful for me to make a choice to leave the religion. It was not based on leaders raping their children or secret Mormon police following around feminists. Instead, the struggle was born from my lack of spiritual connection with the religion but my deep connection with the culture and community. It was like turning my back on family that I loved and where I drew much of my identity.

It has taken a lot of hard work to reconcile the loss I have felt and still feel from time to time. This book does a disservice to that challenge.

Abby: I'm a little miffed at this author. This is Hugh Nibley's daughter (the famous Mormon scholar and apologist) who accused him of sexual abuse, left the LDS church and now is a lesbian somewhere. I'm mad, because the first half of the book she really had me going. I couldn't imagine that she would make something so bizarre and awful up as what she was telling, and as she told her story of going from a faithful Mormon BYU professor to apostate spiritual guru I even found that I identified with her in some ways. I thought she was being pretty honest, from the descriptions of how nice Mormons are to explanations of how boring our meetings can be. (Which is an example of one of the unflattering things that I had to agree with her on – I've been to other churches with paid clergy and they are way, WAY more interesting and fun than listening to the new family from down the street with an inherited fear of public speaking read stories from the New Era for 45 minutes.)

She talked about her wedding day in the Provo Temple, and I had to be honest with myself and agree with her about a lot of her feelings on that day. And truthfully, the Mormon community does have really high standards that everyone shoots for and falls short of, like she said. And she's right that the average Mormon can't tell you a lot of basic things, like where the Pearl of Great Price came from or the story behind it. She was right on a lot of things, and I could empathize and even go along with her story. And her dad, Hugh Nibley – honestly, I was introduced to his writings as a freshman at BYU by two guys in my ward who worshipped him. One of these guys was arrested a year or so ago (he was married, still active LDS and going to

law school in Illinois) for coming out to Utah to meet a 14 (15?) year old girl for sex. He was 28. The other served a mission in Korea, married a Korean girl from his mission, had a rocky five year marriage to her with at least a couple visits from police at his home, ending in a divorce. He was dating a 19 year old boy the last I heard of him. So yeah, I could even buy into Hugh Nibley being a closet weirdo because the two guys I most closely associated him with were also closet weirdoes.

BUT DANG IT. She is full of crud. Her story sounded fishy here and there, and then by the final ¼ of the book she turned into a lunatic. I don't believe 90% of what she said, which makes me way, WAY more reluctant to believe any of her 'recovered memories' of child abuse. I kept thinking, "Wow, BYU was sure different when she was there than when I went." But then I realized that she left BYU in 1993. I started there the fall of 1999. There's no way it changed so much in 6 years. She's just full of it.

I will give you a few examples of her crazy, unbelievable stories. There are so many of them. Perhaps one or two was true, maybe some are partially true – but anyone who is Mormon, has lived in Utah or gone to BYU will raise their eyebrows in a most dramatic and annoyed manner because these are just not real.

- She went to get her hair cut short. The hair dresser saw her wedding ring and got the manager, who came and demanded she call her husband to get his permission for the cut.
- A female friend complained to her Bishop that the way the church was set up made her feel like a second class citizen as a woman. The Bishop shook his head and said, "But you see, you ARE a second class citizen."
- The LDS church started tapping her home phone calls, and the phone repairman came out and told her that her phone wires had been crossed with the local chapel so that they could listen in to their private conversations.
- A colleague of hers was in a panic because he was counseling a young woman who had been molested by someone high up in the church and he was told to diagnose her as (schizophrenic? - something like that) and drug her up and institutionalize her, when he thought she was telling the truth and wanted to help her. They threatened his job if he didn't do it.
- She moderated a panel on sexual abuse at a Women's Conference at BYU (that was true, everything else was false – including the identities of the panelists and what they said – which is easily verified and confuses me as to why she would have included it) where she claimed a doctor agreed to speak because he was concerned that 1/3 of the women in his Utah clinic were showing up having been sexually abused. A "midlevel church leader" (who didn't actually exist) said to the large crowd that in every molestation case there are two parties participating and both must accept responsibility for their part of the behavior. Of course, no one actually said that on the panel, and if they had there would have been a riot and he would have been booed off the stage. That goes against everything and anything the church has ever taught about abuse. I'm not so dumb I believe that was said.
- After she and her husband left the church a woman showed up at their door and said to her almost 8 year old daughter, "We're having a party at the church. There will be balloons, and cake, and friends. Lots of friends. It's called a Baptism Party, and you can get baptized. Do you want to come to our party? It will be so fun!"
- A returned missionary in her BYU class stood up and said to her, "I hold the priesthood, so I

will ALWAYS know better than you.” The entire class “nodded sagely in agreement”. I can’t imagine people not throwing their shoes at that guy, let alone agreeing with him.

- She went to the BYU library and found that every reference to an outspoken Mormon feminist had been completely erased from the microfilms. (I read another detailed review of this book where the author went and looked up this woman and found tons of material in the BYU library, all there since the day it happened and none of it mysteriously vanished.

(<http://maxwellinstitute.byu.edu/publi...>)

- She claims to have gotten threatening notes and letters saying things like “You’ve gone too far. You are the antichrist”. She was terrified for her life. Seriously?

- She would make statements like “Mormon women are reprimanded for working out of the home or consuming caffeine.” Hello? She was working at BYU, employed by the church! And I have never in my life seen someone reprimanded for drinking caffeine, even at a church event. She’s being ridiculous.

- She had a therapist whose giant dog would climb on her lap during sessions, and who would interrupt her sentences to make or take phone calls, like when the author said “I’m having a really rough time. I’m doing worse than ever” and the therapist would say, “Don’t worry about it, you’re much better already. Hang on, I have to call these idiots at Paramount.” And then would make a phone call about a movie right in front of her. Really? She was that bad and yet you kept going to her over and over again for more help, and brought your siblings to see her with you as well?

- When her stake president visits and she says she has questions about why the church is shutting down anyone with questions he puts his fingers in his ears and sings “I can’t hear you! I can’t hear you! I can’t hear you!” What?

- When she called any close personal Mormon friends and told them that she was starting to have flashbacks of abuse from her father, her friends all said instantly “You can’t tell anyone this. It would hurt their testimonies. It’s your calling in this life to be completely silent about this so that it won’t hurt the church.” One ex-Mormon friend said, “They (the Mormon church) are going to kill you.” The Mormon church became the secret police in her mind, with colleagues afraid to talk to each other at BYU for fear of being told on, excommunicated and careers ruined.

- She said that “The Brethren” were pulling in tighter and tighter reins on the BYU professors and would not allow them to research anything that would put the church in a bad light, true or not. That didn’t jive with an article I came across recently about a BYU professor who did a study on homosexuality and concluded from his research it is biologically based. That goes completely against what President Packer said in General Conference. I should check. Did the Mormon hit men get him yet? (Here’s that article: (*<http://newsnet.byu.edu/story.cfm/49488>*)

- Not only does BYU censor everything, but she says that Mormons are discouraged from reading anything about the church that isn’t approved by their official panel (The Correlation Committee). Well, having never actually received an approved reading list from my Bishop I can’t be certain, but I don’t THINK this book would have been on the list. Nobody said I wasn’t allowed to read it. I am a pro gay marriage Mormon, which puts me pretty far out there in a lot in that regard, and I have had leanings towards that for several years. I have yet to be called in and reprimanded. So weird.

- Oh yeah – she also talks about the “Danites”, the guys who the Mormon church still has around to go do their dirty work – like how Porter Rockwell would protect and defend Joseph Smith to the death. It’s as if the LDS church is the Mafia, and they aren’t about to let you out of

their scary cult if you are a threat to them in any way.

- When she was a child in Provo, Utah her teachers pulled her aside and told her specifically not to play with the non-Mormon children. She got away with having a best friend who was Catholic only because of her lineage.

There were just so many of these things – I know I've missed some crazy ones. She also talked about trying so hard to be the perfect Mormon. She baked her own bread from scratch, she canned food, she mended clothes, ironed, cleaned, cooked, etc... Problematically, none of these things have anything at all to do with being Mormon. She then let it drop casually that while she was trying so hard to live her religion perfectly she had never really been great at attending all three hours of church on Sunday. Anyone familiar with Mormonism at all would know that the basis of someone's activity in the church has way more to do with going to your Mormon church meetings on Sundays than baking your own bread from scratch. No one knows who bakes their bread. Everyone knows who does or doesn't come to church on Sundays. Oh, hell. It's so dumb.

Finally, she is riddled with mental illness. She was depressed, anorexic, suicidal, cut her arms, was an insomniac, suffered from nightmares, and did crazy things – like go outside in the middle of the night during winter to climb a tree in her backyard and hack it with an axe for a few hours until she felt better. At first her craziness made me more likely to believe that she had been abused as a child – few people are as nuts as her without some cause, right? But by the time I realized she was making up pretty much everything in her entire book, I thought of it in reverse- she's saying these crazy weird things happened to her because she is crazy and weird.

So Martha Beck, yeesh. Be Mormon. Don't be Mormon. I don't care. It was interesting learning about how you made the decision to no longer be part of the church you were raised in, and if it hadn't been so full of made up crap I would have enjoyed it much more. My final opinion is that she's made up the abuse. Even if she believes it in her head, I think she made it up. I will never know. I just don't care anymore, though. I'm mad at her for lying to me and dragging me through a whole book before I realized she was nuts.

PS. Nobody likes her! Affirmation – a group for gay Mormons had an article about her and her then husband John that says "In their book *Breaking the Cycle of Compulsive Behavior*, LDS authors Martha and John C. Beck lumped homosexuality together with alcoholism and drug abuse as "addictions" or misguided compulsive behavior that must be overcome. Since then, the couple have divorced, left the LDS Church, and come out as gay." She's just full of inconsistencies. Her ex-husband also says he never saw the threats that she says she received, and all of her seven siblings (some who are also no longer members of the LDS church) say she's full of it. They lived in a teeny house with ten people, and even the ability of her father to find the private time and space to perform these elaborate abuse rituals on her would be nearly impossible. No one close to her supports her story. Everyone knows she is wacked out. Now I'm in that group too, finally.

Cynthia Sillitoe: It's fascinating reading reviews of this book. (It astonishes me that someone feels entitled to refer to someone's memoir as "a novel." Um, were you there at the time?) I can't

help wondering how many of the people dissing it and attacking Beck would react the same way if it were about someone else with an unknown father in a different religion or even the same religion, but maybe a father who was not a "good" Mormon. I've spent enough time near Mormonism to know who Hugh Nibley was and have some idea of his influence on Mormon intellectualism, but personally have no connection/loyalty/whatever to him. Maybe that's why it didn't freak me out to think there might have been sexual abuse in the Nibley home. I found the book believable, haunting, and incredibly brave. I saw it as one woman telling her story, not trying to destroy her father/family/church, though I'm not at all surprised it's been interpreted as such. It must have been both terrifying and liberating to write and publish.

Jan: We ran throughout this booklet within the bowels of a used ebook shop in long island (Strands) and have been stunned to discover it was once simply released in 2005. Not to be learned by way of the faint of heart or one that has a shaky testimony. She desires to relate that she was once abused through her well-known father on the age of 5. The family members fireworks that her accusations have been horrendous, with accusations opposed to her also. She claims that her father's footnotes are ordinarily fake (Hugh Nibley). She left the church, her family, and got here out of the closet. frequently we adore to proportion our book finds, yet this one is going within the trash. there have been many sophisticated tricks that the 'found' stories weren't factual, and that she may, in fact, be the drama queen her kinfolk accuses her of.

Lena: Martha Beck was once an atheist-inclined grad scholar whilst magnificent happenings in the course of her moment being pregnant reawakened her curiosity in spirituality. After relocating again to her place of birth of Provo, she embraced her early life faith in attempt to deepen this newfound faith. She writes with lucidity and humor approximately how she as an alternative came across the darkish aspect of the Mormon church, together with primary ideals that contradict recognized fact, a tradition that stifled highbrow exploration, and a suspected dating among the inferior place of girls within the church and incidents of sexual abuse. a wide part of Beck's trip comprises confronting her personal background of sexual abuse, and the e-book occasionally feels disjointed because it shifts from side to side among the narrative and a scene within which she faced her abuser. That factor aside, Beck's try to unfasten herself from the bad features of her faith whereas nonetheless conserving her seed of religion alive serves as a desirable instance of the way very important it really is to continually ask serious questions in all issues of faith.

Jill: I picked this booklet up at my library for 2 reasons, one being, that I do not be aware of much approximately Mormonism, and two, it gave the look of an engaging memoir of a person's serious examine their faith. the writer copes together with her personal sexual abuse, and different abusive elements of fundamentalism, and the ache that they cause. She additionally thoughtfully reviews the scholarship in the back of many Mormon claims and springs to think that the basis is especially shaky. She ultimately chooses to reject Mormonism. I relate, due to my very own painful studies with fundamentalism, and located this an enticing read.

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