

Malcom Gladwell, Elder Holland and the Legitimacy of Authority

by James Patterson | Apr 30, 2016 | Apostasy, faith crisis, Featured, General authorities | 38 comments



I had the unique opportunity of hearing Malcolm Gladwell speak in person a few weeks ago. I expected him to speak about outliers or perhaps tipping points, but instead he chose a topic that surprised me: rebellion.

Why do people rebel? Many sociologists believe, as Gladwell explained in his talk, that people rebel when the cost of not doing something becomes greater than the cost of rebellion.

It's called deterrence theory, and it's been used to influence such trivial things as, oh, our criminal justice system. Gladwell cited California's infamous "3 strikes" rule as an example of how deterrence theory has influenced public policy. Lawmakers though by making the cost of committing crime greater and greater with every offense, it would create a natural deterrent for repeat offenders.

But does deterrence theory really explain why people rebel? Gladwell doesn't think so. He rattled off a handful of examples – many from the Civil Rights era – of people or groups who rebelled even when the cost of doing so was painfully high.

So why do people rebel?

For Gladwell, the answer is simple. People rebel when they lose trust in authority. Better put, when authority loses its legitimacy.

He described three reasons why people obey authority:

1. People will obey authority when they feel they are respected by said authority
2. People will obey authority when they feel the authority or system is fair
3. People will obey authority when they feel the authority is trustworthy

If you stand in a position of authority and you lose one of those, you're on shaky ground. Lose two, and you're asking for trouble.

Lose all three? You're staring in the face of rebellion.

Which brings us to some emotional remarks by Jeffrey Holland from a stake fireside in Arizona from a few days ago. Like you, I'm well-versed in Holland's fiery delivery style and his ability to emote in order to emphasize a point.

But even for Holland, these comments were pointed:

“Don't you dare bail. I am so furious with people who leave this church. I don't know whether 'furious' is a good apostolic word. But I am. What on earth kind of conviction is that? What kind of patty-cake, taffy-pull experience is that? As if none of this ever mattered, as if nothing in our contemporary life mattered, as if this is all just supposed to be “just exactly the way I want it and answer every one of my questions and pursue this and occupy that and defy this – and then maybe I'll be a Latter-Day Saint”?! Well, there's too much Irish in me for that.”

I was struck by that quote. Struck because of the bellicose nature of it, which seems unusual for Holland (well, kind of unusual), but also because it immediately and strikingly brought to mind Malcolm Gladwell's talk from a few weeks ago.

See, I get the impression, not just from Holland's remarks there, but from a lot of talks and remarks by the brethren lately, that they think people are leaving the church (a.k.a., rebelling) because the cost just becomes too great. They can't handle all the questions. They can't deal with the struggle. Their testimonies aren't strong enough.

The brethren buy into deterrence theory. Or at least that's the message they send from the pulpit.

But I'm not convinced that's really what's going on at all.

People are leaving the church (a.k.a., rebelling) because its leaders have lost legitimacy in their eyes. People are leaving the church because they don't feel respected. People are leaving the

church because they don't feel the system is fair. People are leaving the church because they don't feel the leadership is trustworthy.

I understand the pain in Holland's voice. It's the pain of a leader who knows he is losing people. But I suspect it's also the pain and frustration of a leader who knows he's slowly but surely losing his legitimacy.

And for the leader of a church that hangs its hat on authority, that must be a tough pill to swallow.

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James Patterson

James Patterson lives with his wife and two children in North Carolina. He makes no apologies for being an avid fan of both Duke basketball and Taylor Swift.

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38 Comments



A Happy Hubby on April 30, 2016 at 6:20 am

B I N G O !!!!

For me this is the most susinct post this year that relates to how I feel about the church. I have worked past Joseph Smith's behavior, the tragic experiment with polygamy, blacks and the temple and priesthood ban and much else (but not treatment of gays and women).

I may not be "in good standing" with the church much longer, not from breaking any commandments but being unable to answer the recommend question of sustaining the top leaders. I no longer feel they have anything to do with my relationship to Christ. In fact I fear to continue to even show outward signs of filling them is something I will not feel good about when I stand before Christ.

Reply



CityChicken on April 30, 2016 at 7:02 am

Respect. Fairness. Trust. You nailed it.

Respect. I have it at church, but it is respect for walking my own path and it is lonely. I have to look elsewhere for spiritual and emotional support. God is there for me. The church is not.

Fairness is gone. The focus is rarely on needs or service. Image has become too large of a focus at church. Our stake and ward positions look like a high school popularity contest. A culture of being inspired to call your BFF has taken hold. Cliques rule. The cool kids are in charge and they are not interested in getting their hands dirty doing God's work. Want a calling? Be tall, athletic, with a postcard family and they can sign you up.

Trust is gone. I do not trust the local authorities nor the greater ruling bodies of the church to put kindness, compassion, and love as priorities within our congregations.

My resignation isn't submitted yet .. But I've downloaded the paperwork and I keep asking myself how I could get to this point. Leaving isn't about finding an easy path. Leaving is about trying to stop the pain.

[Reply](#)

90210 on April 30, 2016 at 10:10 pm

I've been saying this exact thing for years. I gave up on the idea of callings being inspired long ago.

[Reply](#)

LYSA FILCEK on April 30, 2016 at 9:03 am

The post has moved me in so many ways. It has helped me understand my confusion, my pain, my reluctance to keep going despite a strong love for Christ. Thank you.

[Reply](#)

Dennis Kelsch on April 30, 2016 at 4:38 pm

Amen! I left the church exactly for those reasons ...because its leaders have lost legitimacy. I was certainly not respected. I didn't feel the system is fair. I discovered the leadership isn't trustworthy. A temper tantrum such as this by an apostle does nothing to restore any of that.

[Reply](#)

Martin Kokol on April 30, 2016 at 5:13 pm



This is hugely important. As I am a student and teacher of the civil rights movement of the 50/60s, I find a wonderful parallel here to the "turn the other cheek" philosophy of Martin Luther King contrasted with the "it's time to stand for something (couldn't resist!) demands of Malcolm X. What I mean to say here is that we are exiting a period of LGBT LDS trying to live peacefully, properly, within the bounds of the white (hierarchical) establishment that would be in line with MLK and now begin to enter the more volatile, perhaps verbally violent (think shouting out at a sacrament meeting if need be) style more in line with Malcolm X.

Why must this be? Because Mormonism has almost no experience these last 4-5 generations with rebellion. Indeed, this is the flip side of democracy (rather than the Norman Rockwell version of a man standing up to speak peacefully). In the end, when in the course of human events, it comes time for some of us to "speak our truth", then we must thank Tyler Glenn for leading here. Because we have arrived at our 1965 moment. And if the Brethren are wise, they will see that 1968 is no place they really want to go.

If the Genesis Project (begun in 1972 and culminating with the 1978 revelation) did its share to "widen the tent", then it has come time for us to begin what I call the "Leviticus Project" – that we might begin, expecting a culminating revelation to complete our chapter of growing religious rights – not bounded by those men 4000 years ago, but rather expanded by our very generation. Perhaps, it has come time for the minds and hearts formed by the desert to yield to those whose minds and hearts have been formed by the mountains.

[Reply](#)

Meg Hansen on April 30, 2016 at 6:02 pm

Thank you for your thoughtful article. It is helping me process this very difficult message.

[Reply](#)

Susan Sorenson on April 30, 2016 at 6:15 pm

Most of what is said here I translate as just "details". I left the church, because I finally understood it was not true. Joseph Smith was a liar and a womanizing, small time con artist with a seriously sick god complex. None of "it" ever happened. Of course the "brethren" are pissed. Their whole way of life including their millions in kick backs is being threatened. Members are discovering the truth and jumping ship. I'm sure the next ten years will see much more anger, threats and aggression coming out of Salt Lake.

[Reply](#)

JohnandKay Webster on April 30, 2016 at 11:53 pm

James I quite like your post. I think when you say — "People are leaving the church (a.k.a., rebelling) because its leaders have lost legitimacy in their eyes. People are leaving the church because they don't feel respected. People are leaving the church because they don't feel the system is fair. People are leaving the church because they don't feel the leadership is trustworthy." — you are suggesting a group that was once committed to a company of leaders vs. saving doctrines. Leaving the church, in my never to be humble opinion, should be a doctrinal matter not an opinion or emotional based, "I'm not feeling it" leaders issue. To the extent that leaders have lost "legitimacy" it should be, and is in my view, a matter of failure to expound doctrine based in founding parchments and qualifying experiences to make them (apostles of Jesus Christ) that they claim to be. Joseph Smith taught — We all form opinions on spiritual matters. Every man has a right to believe whatever his conscience will bear; but, we must seek that straight and narrow path which leads into the kingdom of God and offers the opportunity to be resurrected in the celestial glory. 'Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.' (Matthew 7) Opinions, where we have the word of the Lord, are worth nothing.... All men have a right to their opinions, but to adopt them for rules of faith and worship, is wrong, and may finally leave the souls of them that receive them for spiritual guides, in the telestial kingdom. (Evening and Morning Star, Vol. 1, p. 69.) The word of the Lord would keep people in the church. Those who continue in their "testimony" of the brethren are required, by internal culture, to digest every word they speak as "scripture" and to be beyond reproach because "we cannot, and will not, lead you astray". Anyway, despite my view of the leaders, my departure is due to lack of correct doctrine. Warm stories are nice but will not produce the faith required for exaltation.

[Reply](#)

KJC on April 30, 2016 at 4:55 pm

I guess what I don't understand is, with the knowledge available regarding the church's history and the questionable decisions made by the brethren over the last 186 years, why don't these men get it? Don't they see the inconsistencies and errors? Why do they choose to turn a blind eye to the information that's out there from valid church sources, etc.? I can only conclude that they either haven't studied the history of the church, which is ludicrous to me or they are so tied into the hero worship in our culture that they don't want to let go of that. My only intention in this faith crisis of mine, is to garner the "whole truth and

nothing but the truth" of the origin and growth of the Church. I know that men are not perfect but I do expect more of the brethren, past and present, than it looks like they were willing to give, according to the history books. They expect so much from the membership (i.e. Honesty, integrity, obedience, to name a few) yet they seem to have some problems with those same values. Have you heard the brethren speak about the projects they have in the pipeline like, high rises in Pennsylvania and a 500,000 person community in Florida, not to mention a high end shopping center in SLC? I haven't. I had to dig for that info. But that's just the tip of the iceberg, I think. So....

[Reply](#)

JDR on April 30, 2016 at 5:52 pm

Perhaps it's worth pointing out that this is happening at a time when there is a global crises of authority, i.e. Arab spring, insurgent presidential campaigns etc. That said, even though it is the character of the current age, it's effects can certainly be exacerbated. I would speculate that optimal tension theory has a lot of sway at HQ and they expect there will be a lot of payoff if they stick to their guns. I think the usefulness of that approach depends on which guns your sticking to, and how much said gun-sticking forecloses the formation of a positive Mormon identity in our youth. Positive attachment to the LDS church and positive Mormon identity could cover a multitude of sins.

[Reply](#)

Nancy E Smith on May 1, 2016 at 1:13 am

I think people should leave the church for any reason they please. Why? Because it's not true!

[Reply](#)

JohnandKay Webster on May 1, 2016 at 1:21 am

Nancy E Smith — That's the beauty of agency.

[Reply](#)

Tammy Sheen Capone on May 1, 2016 at 2:00 am

Why should I believe it is really a direct quote from elder holland? My critical thinking brain makes me question this. It seems convent that to make your point

you claim he said this at a stake conference where nothing is recorded so there is no way to confirm this really happened. I don't believe something just because it is on the internet. Do you have witnessesm

Reply



John Moore on May 1, 2016 at 2:07 am

Well, there is an audio recording of the whole thing in a link above. But that's probably not enough to satisfy you.

Reply



Jean on April 30, 2016 at 7:07 pm

Regarding the great and spacious building, Nephi recorded, "And great was the multitude that did enter into that strange building. And after they did enter into that building they did point the finger of scorn at me and those that were partaking of the fruit ..." 1 Nephi 8:33. Ironically, this is the picture that came to mind when I read the words of Elder Holland. As someone who is considering leaving the LDS church to follow Christ only (His authority seems to be the only authority that fits all of the Gladwell criteria without limit), Elder Holland's message offers no path or even invitation for an "apostate" to come back His rhetoric only serves to invite mocking and scorn of those who are weary of the "arm of their (leaders) flesh". Out of the church, I have no great and spacious building (no chapel, stake center, temple) to stand in and scorn those leaving. I only have Christ to guide me.

Reply

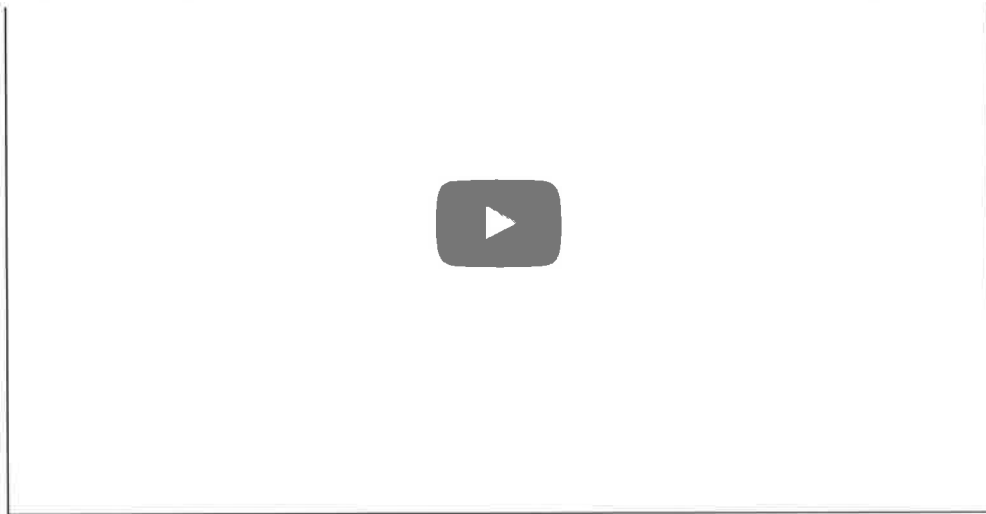


Dreama on December 15, 2016 at 8:32 pm

DKL-This is actually quite laughable that you think I am writing under two different names. There are several adults living in my house who share multiple computers on the same home network. It really isn't that complicated. You are more than welcome to think what you want though, I could really care less. Thanks for the laugh though.

Reply

Emma Renee Ward on May 1, 2016 at 4:30 am

[Reply](#)

Emma Renee Ward on May 1, 2016 at 4:32 am

This is beautiful. I've got a list of 7-8 reasons I left, but they can all be distilled into the 3 reasons laid out by M. Gladwell. I'm bookmarking this page for later, and adding the whole site to my newsfeed.

[Reply](#)

Wesley Smith on May 1, 2016 at 1:47 pm

This is a very interesting article, and is probably the first one I've seen that articulates my position so clearly (I reposted it on Facebook so all my family and friends could understand too). The common response from them has been that I just couldn't stay the course, or I am too filled with pride, or fell to "murmurings". It is rarely that I had a crisis of conscience about the fundamental legitimacy of the Church — both in terms of its doctrine and also how those within authority were running it — and how serious I took my decision to leave.

[Reply](#)

Kevin Rose on May 1, 2016 at 3:49 pm

In strictly following the truth of letters on the parchments, you lose the goodness in the human heart. And the beauty of your own soul.

Wisdom is found in the totality, and the larger unfolding consciousness of the universe.

I believe we all need a bigger map to have our conversations.

I suggest a look at the meta map of Ken Wilber and Integral practice.

Reply



Justin Warkentin on May 1, 2016 at 5:53 pm

They lose their legitimacy and authority when people research history and realize the foundational claims are false. They lose trust when people realize the leaders they trusted have been intentionally lying to them their whole lives to cover up history.

Reply



Tim Bone on May 1, 2016 at 11:59 am

Blaming church leaders for membership loss is risky business. Elder Holland may, in fact, be delivering the message that God wants delivered. Likewise his fellow prophets, seers and revelators, who have been called by God to administer his Church. People have been joining and subsequently leaving the Church since the days of Joseph Smith; indeed, since the time of Adam and Eve. They have all had many complaints and reasons to abandon the Old Ship Zion – none of which have any bearing on legitimacy.

Tell me, when a significant number of our brothers and sisters abandoned the Father and his plan in the premortal world, did they do so because they felt disrespected by his authority? Did they feel that his authority and his system were unfair? Did they feel our Father wasn't trustworthy? If so, they were wrong on all counts, and they have paid a heavy price for so exercising their agency.

John 6 records a sermon Jesus gave, after which "many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him." Lose legitimacy, did he? Hardly, since 100% of his legitimacy came from the Father, and zero percent from mortals. So what did Jesus do wrong? Poor speaking skills? Ineffective, out-of-touch, out-of-date leadership? He seems not to have delivered the message that those who left him wanted to hear. Who was wrong?

God is deficient in nothing – and yet rebellion takes place. God's legitimacy is independent of who chooses to come to his Kingdom or leave from it. His legitimacy is wholly unaffected by either. So too with Elder Holland, who did not call himself to be an Apostle. The notion that Elder Holland "knows he's slowly but surely losing his legitimacy" is nonsense. Elder Holland knows, most members do, and all members should, that his legitimacy comes from above, from God, not from below, from us.

When Brigham Young spoke to the Saints after the death of Joseph Smith, he told them, basically, that they could follow the Twelve, or not; but if not the Twelve would leave them and find a people who would follow them. Their legitimacy would follow them.

This is where Gladwell's analysis is insufficient. It may describe why some rebel from mortal organizations and polities, but cannot determine where legitimacy comes from when it comes to heavenly structures.

As for deterrence theory, God buys into it as well; in fact, is its originator. "Therefore I command you to repent – repent, lest I smite you by the rod of my mouth..." (DC 19:15. It goes on from there in what may safely be described as "pointed" language. The scriptural record is replete with pointed language directed, at God's behest, to church members questioning the Church's, and its leaders', legitimacy.) And from the same section: "Again, it is written eternal damnation; wherefore it is more express than other scriptures, that it might work upon the hearts of the children of men..."

Finally, a short word about another missing element in Gladwell's study of rebellion. Actually, it is a living being that is missing – Satan. This is not his fault, of course, but if we are trying to carry his thinking over to the Church, the loss is critical. I realize that the Adversary is largely irrelevant, if not an outright embarrassment, to sophisticated moderns and, it appears, to some modern, sophisticated LDS thinkers as well. He simply goes missing from history. Nevertheless, Satan is active and the wake of his destruction is terrible. It has been so since the generation born to Eve: "And Satan came among them, saying: I am also a son of God; and he commanded them, saying, Believe it not; and they believed it not..." (Moses 5:13). He continues to inspire everyone, everywhere, at all times, to "believe it not." The Adversary is ever trying to tear us away from Christ and the Church that Christ, not men, established.

I say, stay on the Old Ship Zion. Unlike the Titanic, it will never sink. It will find safe harbor. The Church is not in a state of institutional apostasy, neither have the Priesthood keys been taken away. It has lost no legitimacy. We made covenants to defend and advance the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. I think we should do just that.

Reply



KJC on May 1, 2016 at 12:28 pm

So, are you saying that to study the history of the church and its leaders is to be led away by Satan? All I want is truth! That's it. I'm not one of the many liberals that post on this blog but I'm liberal enough to know that "truth is king". The Lord gave us brains to think and reason for ourselves. If we do that with his support, as I have done, you still come up with many inconsistencies and disgusting behavior within our history, all the

way to this modern day. Satan doesn't want us to know the truth of things. It seems to me, as a newbie on my journey of faith in the lds church, that Satan would in fact, like us to follow blindly just as the frog who starts out in a cold water pot only to be cooked as the water heats to boiling!

Reply



Tim Bone on May 2, 2016 at 9:35 am

You should continue to read history KJC -- it's what my major was in and I still read lots of it, including much LDS history. With the latter, there are (at least) three challenges: How to articulate and incorporate spiritual realities into mortal, historical realities, what to do about the frequent and inevitable gaps in documentary evidence, and determining the biases of authors.

History isn't just a collection of neutral facts, like a stack of Legos. It's always an interpretation. Authors who think the Church is a scam are not going to write history like those who think the Church was established by heaven. The former have an agenda, and that's to get you, KJC, to reject the Church. Some apostates are clearly driven by the need to depict the Church in the worst possible light all the time; they can't leave the Church alone. And yes, I think Satan is behind that. The Church provides its own history and narrative, consciously intended to increase faith in the Savior and the Restoration. Some will say that for that reason alone it is untrustworthy. Many honest scholars are between these two poles, but they too must make assumptions about evidence and choose how they will interpret and present it. Humans are simply limited in their quest for truth, and especially in trying to discern spiritual truths under their own steam. What counts as evidence?

So, what to do? Well, why are we members in the first place? Because of what we feel. When I read the Book of Mormon, something inside me tells me clearly, "It is true." It's more than a casual feeling. I can differentiate between it and other feelings. I have had undeniable answers to prayers. In other words, I have had repeated spiritual witnesses that are real to me. How to articulate them? How to give persuasive testimony? How do I get someone else to "get it"? I likely can't, on my own.

What I know is that unless God sends down the angels of heaven to run this planet, we imperfect mortals are left with the task, and that a spiritual witness comes by keeping the

commandments which God has given us, that we may have His Spirit to be with us. In other words, a study of history is not the ground of my conviction. For me, history (and science) augment my faith; for others, either or both seems to destroy it. What I have found is that there are faithful answers to most concerns.

Would you like to make a determination of the Savior based on historical scholarship? Good luck with that. What you are likely to find is that the virgin birth, the physical Resurrection, walking on water and the reliability of the Gospels are given the heave-ho. Anything that is "irrational." Some of the depictions are of someone you wouldn't follow across the street.

I say that Elder Holland has the same legitimacy as the Apostle John. As you can see, others say the opposite (or chuck them both out altogether as pretenders). The just live by faith, which is to know enough, to know what you need to know, based on your personal spiritual witnesses, and then to remain true to those witnesses as the light grows brighter until the perfect day.

In my Patriarchal Blessing, the only part I share, it says that with an ability to think deeply would come challenges to my faith, and doubts, but that as I cultivated spiritual knowledge alongside temporal knowledge, I would be able to remain steady in the faith. (I suppose others have received something similar.) And so it has proved, so far. There are many things I just don't get. But I know enough, and am not torn. I am neither brainwashed nor unreflective. And one thing I believe is that Jesus Christ, who forgave my sins, did not wait 6,000 years to establish a church before his return that was going to fail.

So it's going to come down to you, KJC, in the solitude of your soul. That's where your battle will be fought. What does God want for you? What of this other influence, the one that wants you to chuck the whole thing and live a simpler, LDS-free life? And you will need to make the decision largely, I am sorry to tell you, based on what you feel more than on what you think. What counts for you as spiritual reality? Where is peace? What's your gut tell you? You want the Truth, and yet Jesus is said to be The Truth - what does that mean?

It is not a neutral choice; it will have consequences. I have known many a smart person who has thought herself or himself right out of the Church. Humility is difficult for intellectuals.

So I say, secure a berth on the Old Ship Zion. The Savior really is at the helm. In the waves coming ahead to sweep this world, you don't want to be out there in a canoe.

[Reply](#)**KJC** on May 2, 2016 at 11:50 am

Thank you so much for your great response to me. I feel your testimony and admire you for being able to read and discern the truth of what you study. Sounds like you've been doing it for a long time. As I'm sure you've detected, I'm new at this search of knowledge regarding lds history. I've spent my adult years raising kids and taking care of my family.

In fairness to myself, I try to stay away from what I feel is anti-Mormon literature. I'm not interested in listening to someone who has a bone (no pun intended) to pick with the church. I just want to know the truth, as far as can be known, of things. I ask the Lord every night when I pray to "lead me, guide me, walk beside me" in this quest for knowledge.

Unfortunately for me, as I become more aware of what goes on in this church of imperfect people, myself included, I become more discouraged with what I see. (I live most of the year in a predominantly lds community.). I've always held myself and others in our church to a higher standard than what I now see being lived. 'Where much is given, much is expected.' I have lived by that for most of my life and to see local leaders as well as the upper echelon of the church caught in lies and subterfuge, etc. is so very sad and worrisome to me. I will continue to read, pray and meditate on where I stand in our church with its history and present day problems. That's all I can do. I continue to live the gospel principles because I feel good when I do the right thing. I'm not interested in sinning. Still, I'm pretty discouraged with what I'm seeing coming out of headquarters and my local community. I guess that's my problem, huh. Thanks again.

[Reply](#)**Tim Bone** on May 2, 2016 at 9:37 am

Yikes! Michael Barker: I hate these margins.

[Reply](#)



James Patterson on May 3, 2016 at 7:04 am

Hmm..where to start with this. I guess I'll start at the beginning.

You say: "Elder Holland may, in fact, be delivering the message that God wants delivered."

While this is true, it's my responsibility as an intelligence with agency to determine if Holland is delivering a message God wants for me. And I tasted the fruit of that message in this particular instance, and it tastes bitter to me. If his message resonates with you, I have no problem with that. The fact still remains that much harm has come in the church from prophets supposedly delivering messages from God that turned out just to be their own flawed understanding. So I'm going to hold tight to personal revelation, TYVM.

You say: "Tell me, when a significant number of our brothers and sisters abandoned the Father and his plan in the premortal world, did they do so because they felt disrespected by his authority?"

I think if there was a council in heaven and 1/3 of the hosts of heaven did rebel, I imagine it was because they couldn't stomach the idea that we would be sent to earth with full agency, which would mean countless atrocities at the hands of their fellow brothers and sisters. Atrocities that we witness every single day on this earth. My guess is they couldn't bear the tremendous suffering that full agency would require. So I doubt you and I are going to see eye-to-eye on this whole pre-mortal aspect.

You say: "As for deterrence theory, God buys into it as well; in fact, is its originator. "Therefore I command you to repent - repent, lest I smite you by the rod of my mouth...""

Yeah, well I pretty much reject the notion of a God who is an all-mighty smiter, so here's another area where we're not going to see eye-to-eye. I don't believe in an all-powerful God, in fact I believe in a God who is full of love and grace and truth, but largely powerless when it comes to sending blessings or punishments. My God is a hands-off God out of necessity to the plan.

You say: "Finally, a short word about another missing element in Gladwell's study of rebellion. Actually, it is a living being that is missing - Satan."

Okay, well, I actually do believe in the concept of evil, especially as an eternal opposite of goodness and love and compassion and mercy. But I don't believe in an actual guy called Satan who sits in an alternate dimension we can't see and whispers temptations into our ears. I mean,

that just doesn't work for me anymore. Does it really matter whether he is an incarnate being or not?

Look you're a literalist. I get that. I'm just not, and that's okay.

Reply



Tim Bone on May 3, 2016 at 8:30 am

Thanks for your reply. I am not a literalist. I am orthodox. I do not believe Satan stands next to me and whispers in my ear. I believe he and his crew have influence. I don't believe the Holy Ghost stands next to me and whispers in my ear, but clearly the Holy Ghost has influence.

I appreciate that you clearly delineate your position. You're right – we aren't going to see eye-to-eye on many things, and you're right that that's okay. I will say that the idea that God is "largely powerless when it comes to sending blessings or punishments" is incredible.

Reply



James Patterson on May 3, 2016 at 9:39 am

It is incredible, but seems to me to be the only logical approach considering the crushing weight that is theodicy. I cannot believe in a God who would intentionally save a missionary in Belgium purely because he is a Mormon, yet allow millions of children around the world to starve every single day. The God I worship does not dole out blessings based on good behavior. The God I worship is powerless against the reality of human agency and weeps for the uncontrollable suffering that agency creates.

Reply



Ryan Orrock on May 2, 2016 at 2:00 am

It's interesting what he did his dissertation on.

Reply



John J. on May 2, 2016 at 2:11 am

You need to do your homework, Tim Bone. The legitimacy of Joseph Smith and the Church he founded SHOULD be examined from both sides. You obviously don't know all of the facts, or you are in denial of them.

If you can justify Joseph Smith's illegal plots, activities and immoral conduct once you know his REAL story, then you have a very poor moral compass yourself.

Reply



Tim Bone on May 3, 2016 at 7:18 am

As I said, read, read, read. But at the end of the day it will take more than reading.

"And there was much complaining among the people concerning Him. Some said, "He is good"; others said, "No, on the contrary, He deceives the people." (John 7:12 NKJV)

If people can be 180 degrees off on Jesus Christ, they can be 180 degrees off on Joseph Smith.

Reply



Michael Ballou on May 6, 2016 at 1:52 am

That 2009 conference talk comes to mind for me as well, and I was not impressed by it in the least. Pulpit pounding is another way of over-stepping boundaries. Bad form. Maybe he has too much Irish in him to come clean and say the church has made some awful mistakes and keeps making them as well. Pity this.

Nope, we don't respond to pulpit thumping and verbal dressing down. Not now. Not ever.

Reply



Roy on May 5, 2016 at 8:32 pm

I joined the church as an 18 year old Catholic because the LDS missionaries and members convinced me that their narrative about JS and the foundation of the Church was true, and at the same time "corrected" my narrative about the history of the Catholics.

I left the LDS church 25 years later because I realised the LDS narrative was

likely quite different to the reality of what happened. In its more correct form, it was no longer a convincing story.

Reply



Catherine S on May 6, 2016 at 7:30 pm

Another superb post.

Reply



Rakaipaka Olsen Puriri-Ahmu on May 9, 2016 at 7:15 am

When I asked church leaders to clarify issues in New Zealand related to tithing funds being used for a real estate development project they said no. They agreed that there is confusion but excused it by saying ... "its imprecise yet still accurate". This is why people are leaving. <http://www.saveccnz.wordpress.com>

Reply



Camillia Olson on March 23, 2017 at 10:40 am

Because we have been conditioned to always search for and find answers and truth, more in others , that in ourselves, we might reexamine our faith and belief as Jesus the Christ, that he lives and loves Us .. that men and women are in the process of discovery and agency , and each has pieces of the puzzle of TRUTH and Light. NO One has it all but that we might rely more on Prayer as source of hope , light and truth , and seek with all our hearts that we may know and know where to find it . I have received a witness of both the Love of God and of His only begotten son in the flesh Our Savior Jesus Christ . I always wanted to believe our leaders were holy men who did no harm or wrong but the more I wanted to believe that , the more the Lord has shown me just the opposite . (Trust not in the arm of flesh) Our light must be direct from Love and Light of God , the eternal father (and Mother) the Son, Jesus Christ and HOLY Ghost .The GA brethern speak on political matters which is to me inappropriate and it is my belief it will prove to be harmful as it is their opinion but may be mistaken as " thus sayeth the Lord " which it generally is not .. Their use of podium on political matters is an undue influence and unequal bargaining power and may be the cause of many leaving the church but I hope they will realize it is just one more reason to stay . We need those who can see truth and add salt to the flock . In addition , remember there is the corporate " church " which is of man , and there is the actual Church of Jesus Christ of Lds (unincorporated membership) for ordinances etc. I am not a member or shareholder of the corporate church but of the unincorporated membership . camille .