

"Why Don't You Leave The Church Alone!?" – A Response

Bob McCue

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<http://www3.telus.net/public/rcmccue/bob/spirituality.htm>

Introduction

I have been asked a number of times by well-intentioned members of the Mormon Church, including one General Authority, "Why Don't You Leave The Church Alone!?" The following is my response.

I Gave a Lot to the Church, and Need to Understand My Experience

I devoted thirty adult years to the Church under what I am now confident were well intentioned but false pretences, and am still trying to figure out how that happened to a pretty bright, well educated guy like me. And more importantly, I am trying to understand the mechanisms that make the Church work well enough to protect my family from wasting the kind of time and energy I did.

Many Mormons Use a Double Standard and Dark Ages Reasoning

When I hear this question it reminds me of something I have heard so often to be sick of it. Many Mormons are so blind to the reality of their situation that they feel it is not "fair" for even an adult Mormon to be told anything, no matter how accurate, that contradicts the current orthodoxy of Mormon faith, but it is just fine for them to surround young people (including my kids) with information that has a high probability of being false about the origins and functioning of their faith. Does this not seem like a double standard? I can't tell an adult Mormon (let alone his kids) anything that contradicts his worldview, but he feels not only morally justified but that he is doing god's work when he fill my kids heads full of things that are likely false.

The only people for whom this nonsense makes sense are those who are certain that they are right. Such certainty justifies the use of almost any means to support the "truths" that are assumed to be immutable despite the wealth of evidence against them. This is precisely the attitude that created the Dark Ages. The Renaissance was the result of the rejection of that attitude, and employed the kind of thought processes I now try to use. I hope others will point out to me the occasions on which I fail to meet the Renaissance standard. That is, I want to be shown when I am wrong so that I can learn. I want to learn, so I admit that I am often likely to be wrong. Without the admission of uncertainty, learning is impossible.

It is unimaginably liberating for the faithful Mormon when she finally realizes that she does not have to twist every bit of evidence to meet a pre-determined conclusion - that she can, and should, go with the evidence. Welcome to the

Renaissance! The Mormon faithful and I are only a few centuries late. Ironically, Joseph Smith (JS) had a Renaissance attitude in most respects. It was only late in his career that power really got to him, and Brigham Young finished the return-to-the-Dark-Ages job that JS started. Then Boyd Packer et al shored up the leaking information dyke with "faithful history" policy (See <http://www3.telus.net/public/rcmccue/bob/documents/come%20clean.pdf>) in the early 1980s, and it appears to me that the pendulum has not finished swinging in the wrong direction.

Mormon Training is a Two-Edge Sword

Who trained me to form strong opinions, and then seek to persuade others to my point of view? I was a Bishop and served in many other leadership callings, the last of which was Stake Mission President. That is, I learned well the lessons I was taught by the Mormon Church. Having concluded that I have been grotesquely misled, why would the members of the Church think that all of the conditioning to which I was subjected and tools I developed for use in Mormonism's version of mental guerrilla warfare (called member missionary work, and perfecting the Saints, two thirds of the "three-fold mission" of the Church) would simply be forgotten? What is good for the goose is good for the gander; if you live by the sword, you die by the sword; etc.

The Mormon Control Over Information is Unhealthy

The essays on my website that offend those who ask the "why don't you leave the Church alone" question seem to be helpful to many. I am no genius or even a good writer, but it seems that the simple fact that I have walked a painful path on which many others find themselves, and have taken the time to record my feelings and the insight that came to me as I "woke up", helps others to understand their own experience. This is particularly refreshing because the Church goes to great lengths to make those who are disinclined to obey believe that their feelings are unique, and hence that they are defective. The Church clearly uses a divide and conquer approach in this regard. The writing I do, although not of high quality, helps to validate the conflicted feelings many people have respecting their relationship with the Church.

I did not write most of what I have thinking that I would become an author or even that what I had to say would be of much use to anyone other than me and perhaps a few close friends and family members. But, I have now received hundreds of emails from all over the world (I get between five and thirty a day) thanking me for my modest contribution to the understanding of human nature as it is affected by Mormonism. Most faithful Mormons are not sufficiently awake or self aware to understand this phenomenon, but they are most unwise to dismiss the kind of things I write as the inane, irrelevant rantings of a bitter former Mormon. What my essays describe is the tip of an iceberg, and as such my writing is indicative of something much more significant than that is apparent to the uninformed.

Perspective

This brings to mind Dave Barry's story of the ant on the top of a car tire as it starts in motion, which he told as I recall it in a humorous attempt to illustrate the feeble male effort to understand the female mind. It is appropriate that I remember this on Valentines Day, and at this moment I am reminded that I still have some shopping to do ... In any event, the ant is dimly aware that something of significance is happening when the tire starts to move, but has no idea of its importance to him personally until he abruptly and unexpectedly encounters the hard place between the tire and the road. So it is with all of us in many aspects of life. We are aware of so little of the reality that houses us that we regularly have experiences of the type that awaits our friend the ant when he senses the tire's motion.

The Mormon Church was a tire in my ant-like life. I do not wish to repeat that type of experience or subject my kids to it, either with religion or in any of the many other aspects of our existence to which the same principles apply. Hence, I have become a student of human nature, and am trying to gain enough perspective to understand the nature of both ants, and the many tires on which we stand. As time passes my reading circle broadens and religion becomes of less interest to me. But I still have a ways to go in that regard. And, the particular horse I am beating while writing the things about Mormonism that offend some people is far from dead in my life.

Conclusion

I understand the position of those who chide me for my "attacks" on an institution they love, because not long ago that position was mine. But as this essay indicates, I have pretty much run out of patience with that point of view, and will not change my actions an iota in deference to it.

As Joseph Smith said, "The truth will cut its own way." Indeed it will.