

Motivation to resign from the LDS Church

After having carefully and near-comprehensively analyzed the source data and both apologetic and antagonistic explanations of the foundational truth claims of the Church, I am convinced that the foundational truth claims of the Church do not stand up to scrutiny.

Ultimately, I believe that the more closely our internal understanding aligns with reality the greater our capacity to help others and to find happiness. Hence, even though the Church does much good in many people's lives, because I believe it is based on false pretense, and because that pretense is used as the prime justification for the activities and direction of the Church, then I feel that I cannot in good conscience continue as an official member (see the below Appendix–All or Nothing).

With all due humility, I am resigning so that:

- I can better promote an accurate (i.e., scientifically based) understanding of the world, unfettered by that portion of religious tradition that is ignorant or misguided.
- I am on record as withholding my approval to being led by men who lack knowledge and understanding in many areas but promote a culture where members infer that they are generally being led by special revelation.
- All women and girls know, without question, that I value them as fully equal persons.
- All LGBT people know that I accept them without reservation.
- All black people and people of color know that I accept them as equals, without reservation.
- I can follow the highest ideals of morality, regardless of current LDS policy or doctrine.
- I can pursue life in all its abundance according to the dictates of my own conscience.
- I can direct my financial resources to what I view are better causes than perpetuation of the Church.
- I can direct my time towards activities that I see as having greater value.
- I can help free people from the ill-effects of that portion of guilt and shame which is excessive, unnecessary, and unhealthy.
- I can freely support and affiliate with all groups and individuals who are striving to do good and be good, regardless of whether their teachings or practices contradict or oppose those currently accepted by the Church.
- I might be a true brother and equal to all of humanity (neither above nor below) regardless of religious affiliation. To mourn with all those that mourn. And celebrate the good with all who rejoice.

Appendix—All or Nothing

One of the mistakes we often make as humans is to grossly simplify complex issues. Whether or not to stay in the Church after a person disbelieves in its truth claims can be a complex issue because there are often interpersonal relationships in place that should mitigate a person's response (e.g., mixed faith marriage). Similarly, I think that a member can continue believing in facets of the Church even while disagreeing with other substantial portions of it (e.g., believing in human evolution or that there wasn't a global flood 4000 years ago can be made to be compatible with the Church on some level as long as a person is willing to tolerate the ensuing tension that such a reconciliation still must suffer from).

However, once a person is convinced that the foundational truth-claims do not stand up, then at least in terms of building an epistemological foundation, the following thoughts seem generally accurate to me (even if these thoughts oversimplify alternative theories about how or why Joseph Smith and his followers did what they did, the value such works might still have, and exaggerate the antagonistic motivation of those seeking alternative explanations):

He was either a prophet of God, divinely called, properly appointed and commissioned, or he was one of the biggest frauds this world has ever seen. There is no middle ground. —Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, vol. 1, Pages 188-189

Our whole strength rests on the validity of that [first] vision. It either occurred or it did not occur. If it did not, then this work is a fraud. If it did, then it is the most important and wonderful work under the heavens. —President Gordon B. Hinckley

Well, it's either true or false. If it's false, we're engaged in a great fraud. If it's true, it's the most important thing in the world. Now, that's the whole picture. It is either right or wrong, true or false, fraudulent or true. —President Gordon B. Hinckley

If we have the truth, it cannot be harmed by investigation. If we have not the truth, it ought to be harmed. —President J. Reuben Clark

Let me quote a very powerful comment from President Ezra Taft Benson, who said, "The Book of Mormon is the keystone of [our] testimony. Just as the arch crumbles if the keystone is removed, so does all the Church stand or fall with the truthfulness of the Book of Mormon. The enemies of the Church understand this clearly. This is why they go to such great lengths to try to disprove the Book of Mormon, for if it can be discredited, the Prophet Joseph Smith goes with it. So does our claim to priesthood keys, and revelation, and the restored Church..."

...It sounds like a "sudden death" proposition to me. Either the Book of Mormon is what the Prophet Joseph said it is or this Church and its founder are false, fraudulent, a deception from the first instance onward.

Either Joseph Smith was the prophet he said he was, who, after seeing the Father and the Son, later beheld the angel Moroni, repeatedly heard counsel from his lips, eventually receiving at his hands a set of ancient gold plates which he then translated according to the gift and power of God—or else he did not. And if he did not, in the spirit of President Benson’s comment, he is not entitled to retain even the reputation of New England folk hero or well-meaning young man or writer of remarkable fiction. No, and he is not entitled to be considered a great teacher or a quintessential American prophet or the creator of great wisdom literature. If he lied about the coming forth of the Book of Mormon, he is certainly none of those.

I am suggesting that we make exactly that same kind of do-or-die, bold assertion about the restoration of the gospel of Jesus Christ and the divine origins of the Book of Mormon. We have to. Reason and rightness require it. Accept Joseph Smith as a prophet and the book as the miraculously revealed and revered word of the Lord it is or else consign both man and book to Hades for the devastating deception of it all, but let’s not have any bizarre middle ground about the wonderful contours of a young boy’s imagination or his remarkable facility for turning a literary phrase. That is an unacceptable position to take—morally, literarily, historically, or theologically. —Jeffrey R. Holland, “True or False,” *Liahona*, June 1996