The Truth, the Partial Truth, and Something Like the Truth, So Help Me God

Clay Chandler

> *"Pretty much all the honest truth-telling there is in the world is done by children." Oliver Wendell Holmes*

IN OCTOBER OF 1993 DALLIN H. OAKS, an apostle for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, and Steve Benson, editorial cartoonist for the *Arizona Republic* and eldest grandson of former LDS president Ezra Taft Benson, had an argument in a public place. Their dispute centered on the role played by Apostle Boyd K. Packer in the September excommunication of Paul James Toscano. According to both men, this had been a subject of discussion between them during two "confidential" meetings. Their disagreement was witnessed by hundreds of thousands of people across the nation as they opened their newspapers and saw headlines like: "Cartoonist Says Oaks Lied to Protect Fellow Apostle,"[1] "Oaks: 'I've Been Victim of Double-Decker Deceit',"[2] and "Benson Replies, Charges Oaks with Dissembling."[3]

These two men obviously had very different interpretations of their shared experiences. For outside observers, it is not possible to determine exactly what transpired between them. One or both of them may have lied. One or both of them may have been intentionally deceptive. One or both of them may have been deceptive while fully believing that they

1. Vern Anderson, "Cartoonist Says Oaks Lied to Protect Fellow Apostle," *The Salt Lake Tribune*, 12 October 1993, B-1.

2. Dallin H. Oaks, "Oaks: 'I've Been Victim of Double-Decker Deceit,'" *The Salt Lake Tribune*, 21 October 1993, Commentary page.

3. Steve Benson, "Benson Replies, Charges Oaks with Dissembling," *The Salt Lake Tribune*, 25 October 1993, Commentary page.

were being completely truthful. The veracity of their statements, while important, is less intriguing than the fact that an apostle of the Church of Jesus Christ was accused of lying to protect another apostle.

Many, if not most, members of the Mormon church find it difficult to believe that one of their apostles would lie. It doesn't fit their image of a man called to be "a special witness for Christ."[4] Yet could there be times when a prophet or an apostle might be justified in lying? If so, under what circumstances? What effect does lying have on followers? The intent of this article is not to place blame, but to deal in a straightforward way with the touchy subject of truth and deception.

Webster's Third New International Dictionary defines truth as "relationship, conformity, or agreement with fact or reality," and defines a lie as: "1) to make an untrue statement with intent to deceive; and 2) to create a false or misleading impression." Lying is just one form of the much larger category known as deception. One can deceive without lying, but the intent of lying is always to deceive. For example, there is a difference between telling a story I know to be false, and telling a true story but selectively omitting details to alter the listener's perception of the truth. The first is lying, the second deception.

> *"Yesterday we obeyed kings and bent our necks before emperors. But today we kneel only to truth, follow only beauty, and obey only love."—Kahlil Gibran*

The logical place to begin this examination is the scriptures, which invariably take an absolutist position with regard to lying. In Leviticus 19:11 we read, "Ye shall not steal, neither deal falsely, neither lie one to another." In the New Testament, Paul wrote to the Ephesians, "Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another" (Eph. 4:25). From the Book of Mormon: "Woe unto the liar for he shall be thrust down to hell" (2 Ne. 9:34). Later Christ speaks of the time when Israel shall be gathered and the lost tribes return: "And it shall come to pass that all lyings and deceivings, and envyings, and strifes, and priestcrafts, and whoredoms, shall be done away" (3 Ne. 21:19). Finally, in the Doctrine and Covenants we are told who will inherit the Telestial Kingdom, the lowest of the three heavenly degrees of glory: "These are they who are liars, and sorcerers, and adulterers, and whoremongers and whosoever loves and makes a lie" (D&C 76:103).

The absolute prohibition against lying found in the scriptures seems simple and clear until one begins asking questions such as: Is truthful-

4. Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, comp. by Bruce R. McConkie, 3 vols. (Salt Lake City, Utah: Bookcraft, 1954-56), 146. See also D&C 27:12, 107:23.

ness a unique moral value? How does it compare with other moral values like compassion, charity, discretion, or friendship? Do we have a right to the truth from others? What would a world be like wherein everyone told all the truth all the time? In light of the scriptural pronouncements above, consider the following statement from Oscar Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest*: "The pure and simple truth is rarely pure and never simple. Modern life would be very tedious if it were either and modern literature a complete impossibility!"[5]

David Nyberg, in his book, *The Varnished Truth*, examines the moral complexity of truth-telling and deception. He begins by dividing the predominant theories into two camps, which he calls "top down" and "bottom up," and he assigns absolutist theories to the former.[6] An example of an absolutist, or top-down, advocate would be Immanuel Kant, who said:

> Truthfulness in statements which cannot be avoided is the formal duty of an individual to everyone, however great may be the disadvantage accruing to himself or to another. Thus the definition of a lie as merely an intentional untruthful declaration to another person does not require the additional condition that it must harm another. . . .For a lie always harms another; if not some other particular man, still it harms mankind generally, for it vitiates the source of law itself.[7]

Another absolutist, Socrates, wanted all poets and storytellers banned from Athens because he believed their fictions and myths would confuse children about the truth; if they were ever to learn to distinguish truth from fiction, they would have to first unlearn what they had learned.[8]

On the other hand, in her influential book, *Lying: Moral Choice in Public and Private Life*, Sissela Bok outlines a top-down theory which is absolutist in nature yet recognizes there must be occasional exceptions to the rule. She, like Kant, believes that lies are intrinsically harmful not only to the deceived, but also to the liars themselves and to society in general. In the following passage, she explains how lies can harm society in the same way a virus can infect and destroy a body:

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5. Oscar Wilde, act 1 of *The Importance of Being Earnest*, in *The Columbia Dictionary of Quotations* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993).

6. David Nyberg, *The Varnished Truth: Truth Telling and Deceiving in Ordinary Life* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1992), 18.

7. Immanuel Kant, "On a Supposed Right to Lie from Altruistic Motives," in *Critique of Practical Reason and Other Writings in Moral Philosophy*, ed. and trans. by Lewis White Beck, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1950), 346-47.

8. Nyberg, 64-65.

> [E]ven if [liars] make the effort to estimate the consequences to *individuals*—themselves and others—of their lies, they often fail to consider the many ways in which deception can spread and give rise to practices very damaging to human communities. These practices clearly do not affect only isolated individuals. The veneer of social trust is often thin. As lies spread—by imitation, or in retaliation, or to forestall suspected deception—trust is damaged. Yet trust is a social good to be protected just as much as the air we breathe or the water we drink. When it is damaged, the community as a whole suffers: and when it is destroyed, societies falter and collapse."[9]

Bok nevertheless acknowledges occasional exceptions to the absolutist prohibition:

> I have to agree that there are at least some circumstances which warrant a lie. And foremost among them are those where innocent lives are at stake, and where only a lie can deflect the danger. But, in taking such a position, it would be wrong to lose the profound concern which the absolutist theologians and philosophers express—the concern for the harm to trust and to oneself from lying, quite apart from any immediate effects from any one lie.[10]

In addition to "avoiding harm," other excuses for dissembling include the derivation of benefits, fairness, or veracity. However, Bok cautions, none of these excuses are acceptable "if the liar knew of a truthful alternative to secure the benefit, avoid the harm, or protect fairness. Even if a lie saves a life, it is unwarranted if the liar was aware that a truthful statement could have done the same."[11]

Finally, Bok distinguishes between "excusable" lies and "justifiable" lies. Justifiable lies must not only avoid harm and produce benefits, fairness, or veracity, they must also be defensible as "just, right, or proper, by providing adequate reasons. It means to hold up to some standard, such as a religious or legal or moral standard. Such justification requires an audience: it may be directed to God, or a court of law, or one's peers, or one's own conscience; but in ethics it is most appropriately aimed, not all at one individual or audience, but rather at 'reasonable persons' in general."[12] In other words, for a lie to be justifiable it must 1) have been used as a last resort where no truthful alternative was possible, 2) be morally excusable, and 3) be justifiable by some standard, whether in the eyes of God, in the eyes of a judge or jury, or in the eyes of a public of reasonable persons.

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9. Sissela Bok, *Lying: Moral Choice in Public and Private Life* (New York: Pantheon, 1978), 26-27.

10. Ibid., 45.

11. Ibid., 88.

12. Ibid., 91

"I was provided with additional input that was radically different from the truth. I assisted in furthering that version."—Oliver North

Nyberg provides a simple framework for understanding the various types of deception. The first four types involve active participation on the part of the deceiver. (The examples are mine.) The lie must contribute toward the following:

1) Causing someone to acquire a false belief (straightforward lying is typically in this group): "That silver object you saw in the sky was an air force weather balloon" (and not a U2 spy plane on a spy mission).
2) Causing someone to continue in a false belief: "Of course it's a low-mileage car. You saw the speedometer didn't you?" (Our mechanic made a slight adjustment to the speedometer, however.)
3) Causing someone to stop believing something true: "Hop up on the seat of this bicycle and I'll teach you how to ride it. Don't worry, you can't get hurt."
4) Causing someone to be unable to believe something that is true (i.e., hiding the truth): "We're not at all disappointed with the domestic ticket sales. This movie was aimed at the foreign market."

The next four types of deception are passive, error-of-omission lies. The lie must:

5) Allow someone to acquire a false belief: "People would be shocked to find out that my ring is a cubic zirconia. When they ask me if it's real I just wink and smile."
6) Allow someone to continue in a false belief (continuing with the cubic zirconia example) "When they ask me how much it cost, I say 'you don't want to know.'"
7) Allow someone to stop believing something true: "I was a witness to the crime but I was afraid to testify and as a result the defendant was acquitted."
8) Allow someone to continue without a true belief: "When they come to look at the house, don't tell them that the basement floods unless they ask."[13]

There is one other form of deception which needs consideration: self-deception. This has been described as "skillful maneuvering to achieve ignorance when clear, conscious understanding threatens to break through."[14] When we do and say things incongruent with our values,

13. Nyberg, 74-75.
14. Ibid., 91.

cognitive dissonance results, which sometimes leads to guilt but can also lead to the upholding of one value while repressing the other. Through self-deception it is possible to be deceptive and yet be completely convinced that one is totally honest.

After outlining the various forms of deception, a case study may prove helpful. Shortly after the news broke of President Clinton's possible sexual liaison with Monica Lewinsky, Clinton said during a PBS interview with Jim Lehrer that he did not have "a sexual relationship, an improper sexual relationship, or any other kind of improper relationship" with Monica Lewinsky.[15] The president's now famous words may or may not have been a lie when considered in the narrow and legalistic way that "improper relationship" was defined during the Paula Jones deposition, but there can be little doubt that the intent of his statement was to deceive. For those who had not yet formed an opinion as to whether the president had been involved in an extramarital sexual relationship, Clinton's intent was to make them unable to believe something that was true (deception type 4). For those who already had a false belief regarding the relationship, i.e. they believed there had not been a sexual relationship, Clinton's statement reinforced that belief (deception type 2). Likewise, for those who believed there had been an affair, Clinton's statement, to the extent that it was believed, helped them acquire a false belief (deception type 3).

> *"It is hard to believe that a man is telling the truth when you know that you would lie if you were in his place."—H. L. Mencken*
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> *There are a few times when it is almost universally agreed that one should engage in deceit. One example would be war. The following is from Sun Tzu's "The Art of War:" All warfare is based on deception. Hence, when able to attack, we must seem unable; when using our forces, we must seem inactive; when we are near, we must make the enemy believe we are far away; when far away, we must make him believe we are near.*[16]

During Desert Storm, General Norman Schwarzkopf used deception to trick the Iraqi army into believing the U.N. ground forces would make a frontal assault from the south. The actual ground assault came from the west. The Iraqi army, which was without air reconnaissance, was fooled by cardboard replicas of tanks with heat-emitting devices which mimicked an actual tank's heat signature on the Iraqi infrared scanners. Similar deception was used during World War II to disguise the actual landing location for D-Day. Such deception can save lives and ensure victory. The

15. "Clinton: 'There Is No Improper Relationship,'" *Federal News Service*, 22 January 1998, A13.

16. Sun Tzu, *The Art of War* (New York: Delacorte, 1983).

object in war, to paraphrase General George Patton, is not to die for your country, but to get your enemies to die for their country.[17]

Another place where deception is generally considered acceptable is national security. Many governments have spies. The CIA is a government-run spy organization and many of its employees are Mormons who accept the necessity of spying to protect our national interests. Other examples of socially acceptable deceit include the police, who are allowed to lie to suspects when persuading them to confess their crimes, and doctors, who give placebos to patients with incurable or non-existent illnesses. Furthermore, the Fifth Amendment guarantees a defendant the right to withhold truth when self incrimination could result, and the Supreme Court's "Miranda" decision guarantees us the right to "remain silent," or to hide the truth under certain circumstances. In courtrooms, defense attorneys are under no moral obligation to help the prosecution with its case: If the prosecutor doesn't ask the right questions, the truth may remain hidden. Deception is also an essential part of most sports. In football, quarterbacks try to hide the ball, while coaches devise trick plays intended to give their team an advantage. On the other side, however, is an enormously long list of unjustifiable deceptions, which includes things like "consumer fraud, insider trading, the misuse of public office and public trust for personal self-interest, kids hiding their dope and alcohol and pregnancies from their parents, husbands and wives cheating on each other, used car dealers painting over rust and turning back odometers, the false and vicious reasoning of racism and sexism, televangelists preying on vulnerable, semiliterate audiences, cigarette advertising, and so on."[18]

> Nyberg's bottom-up theory rejects much of the absolutist's truth-telling imperative as "deceptively simple":
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> It sounds not merely possible but positively easy: Give plain and frank expression to what is in your mind; don't misrepresent your thoughts or feelings. But should we really refrain from lying to a violent criminal simply because there may be a truthful alternative? Should we answer a child's every question about sex, divorce, death, and disease regardless of any probably disturbing, even destructive consequences of doing so? Should we give frank expression to every strong feeling of contempt, envy, lust, and self-pity? Should we tell our friends the truth when we believe it will shatter their self confidence? The list of exceptions is endless. . . .[19]

As an alternative, Nyberg suggests we "evaluate the inclination to

17. "The World We Live in and Life in General," 21 May 2000, available at http://members.aol.com/Joberacker/QuoteArchive.html.

18. Nyberg, 10-11.

19. Ibid., 25-26.

deceive in each instance and determine its moral status in the particular circumstances given."[20] Bottom-up theory says each of us carries within us a set of moral values which sometimes conflict with one another and demand exceptions. Truth-telling is a value, but so are kindness, compassion, self-regard, privacy, survival, etc. Which values become victims or victors depends on the circumstances.

This relativist system is often referred to as "situational ethics." *Webster's Dictionary* tells us that the term first appeared in 1955 and defines it as "a system of ethics by which acts are judged within their contexts instead of by categorical principles."[21] Moral and religious leaders including Mormon general authorities have often denounced situational ethics in favor of more absolute codes of conduct. In an October 1997 General Conference address, Elder Richard B. Wirthlin decried the "absence of moral clarity and purpose" which is the "biggest threat to our world's societies," providing as evidence the statistic "that a full 79 percent of Americans believe that 'there are few moral absolutes—what is right or wrong [they believe] usually varies from situation to situation'. . . .Societies structured by situational ethics—the belief that all truths are relative—created a moral environment defined by undistinguished shades of gray."[22] Apostle Neal A. Maxwell also addressed this topic, saying that such beliefs are held by people who "selfish[ly] believe that there is no divine law anyway, so there is no sin. Situational ethics are thus made to order for the selfish."[23] On another occasion he said, "[O]urs, too, is a day of every-man-for-himself situational ethics, as if the Ten Commandments came from a focus group!"[24]

Most of us would be shocked to find a modern religious leader publicly espousing situational ethics. Ours is, after all, a culture which teaches the overarching importance of honesty, where stories like "George Washington and the Cherry Tree" (a complete fabrication, ironically written by a parson) help children learn to tell the truth.[25] Yet

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20. Ibid., 18.

21. *Merriam-Webster Collegiate Dictionary* [on-line], *America Online*, 21 May 2000, keyword: Collegiate.

22. Richard B. Wirthlin, "Four Absolute Truths Provide an Unfailing Moral Compass," from the *167th Semi-annual General Conference, October 1997*, 21 May 2000, available at http://www.lds.org. Elder Wirthlin lists the source of his statistics as: "1990 Wirthlin Worldwide Study."

23. Neal A. Maxwell, "Repent of [Our] Selfishness," from the *169th Annual General Conference, April 1999*, 21 May 2000, available at http://www.lds.org.

24. Neal A. Maxwell, "Lessons from Laman and Lemuel," from the *169th Semi-annual General Conference, October 1999*, 21 May 2000, available at http://www.lds.org.

25. Nyberg, 154-55. Parson Mason Locke Weems first recorded the story of George Washington and the cherry tree in his 1806 book, *The Life of George Washington*. The story was, according to Nyberg, plagiarized from a story by Dr. James Beattie called "The Minstrel," pub-

Joseph Smith's teachings on several occasions seem directly opposed to those of Elder Maxwell and Elder Wirthlin. For example, in the Doctrine and Covenants: "All truth is independent in that sphere in which God has placed it, to act for itself"(D&C 93:30). More explicit is the following quote where Joseph Smith sounds very much like a bottom-up theory practitioner:

> That which is wrong under one circumstance, may be and often is right under another. God said, 'Thou shalt not kill'; at another time He said, 'Thou shalt utterly destroy.' This is the principal on which the government of heaven is conducted—by revelation adapted to the circumstances in which the children of the kingdom are placed. Whatever God requires is right, no matter what it is although we may not see the reason thereof 'til long after the events transpire. . . . But in obedience there is joy and peace unspotted.[26]

To this can be added the example of Nephi in the Book of Mormon who was commanded to kill Laban and take his brass plates in order to save future generations from disbelief. Given the right confluence of circumstances and revelation, even the Ten Commandments were not considered inviolable by the Book of Mormon prophets or, presumably, by Mormons who consider the Book of Mormon to be the "Word of God."

An example of relativistic ethics by a high-ranking Mormon leader comes from Matthias F. Cowley during his hearing before the Quorum of Twelve Apostles in 1911, where he was charged with performing post-Manifesto plural marriages. On that occasion he said, "I am not dishonest and not a liar and have always been true to the work and to the brethren. . . . We have always been taught that when the brethren were in a tight place that it would not be amiss to lie to help them out." Cowley further said he had heard a member of the First Presidency say "he would lie like hell to help the brethren."[27]

The prevarications surrounding the Dallin Oaks/Steve Benson affair provide dramatic proof that, in spite of their denunciations from the

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lished seven years prior. See also Curtis D. MacDougal, *Hoaxes* (New York: Dover, 1958), 106-7.

26. Joseph Smith, Jr., et. al., *History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.*, ed. by B. H. Roberts, 7 vols. (Salt Lake City, Utah: *The Deseret News*, 1902-1912), 5:134-5; *New Mormon Studies CD-ROM* (Smith Research Associates, 1998). The statement was originally part of a letter written to Nancy Rigdon after she refused to become one of Joseph's plural wives. See Richard S. Van Wagoner, *Mormon Polygamy: A History* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1989), 32-33.

27. "The Trials for the Membership of John W. Taylor and Matthias F. Cowley," excerpts from the official minutes of meetings held by the Quorum of Twelve Apostles in February, March, and May 1911, found in B. Carmon Hardy, *Solemn Covenant: The Mormon Polygamous Passage* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1992), 373.

pulpit, modern LDS general authorities may also weigh the consequences of their actions contextually, and that loyalty to their fellow apostles might still be considered a value higher than truth-telling. However, these are largely private realities not meant for the public.

"A man who tells the truth should keep his horse saddled."—Caucasus Proverb

Occasionally there is much to lose by telling the truth, and something to be gained by not telling the truth. As Nyberg says, "We all value the truth and yet we are all ordinary human deceivers; we neither want to know all the truth nor tell it all. Deception is not so much a plague as it is part of the atmosphere that sustains life."[28] While accusing us all of being deceivers, Nyberg also dismisses Bok's gloomy domino theory, asserting instead that most people will tell the truth most of the time as a sort of voluntary contribution to society.

Hollywood screenwriters were probably pondering the question of what it would be like to live in a world where everyone told the truth all the time when they wrote the script for the comedy hit, *Liar, Liar*. In this film, Jim Carey plays a sleazy attorney with questionable ethics who will do anything to make partner in his law firm, up to and including suborning perjury. When he misses his son's birthday party, he lies about the reason for his absence and—repeating something that must have happened numerous times in this young boy's life—causes his son a lot of pain. Before blowing out the candles of his birthday cake, the son wishes that his father will be unable to lie for a full twenty-four hours; the wish miraculously comes true. Not only can the father not lie, he also can't keep from telling the complete truth to everyone he meets. His sudden bout with truthfulness gets him slapped, humiliated, and almost fired from his job. When he realizes it's his son's wish which has caused the problem, he pleads for the curse to be lifted. He tells his son, "Adults can't live in a world where they can't lie," and "everyone lies." His son is a bit sympathetic, yet realizes his father's moral hierarchy is out of balance. "But it doesn't hurt when other people lie," the boy tells his father. "It just hurts when you do." The film's predictably happy ending has the father regaining his ability to lie, but within a new and improved moral framework.

"I like to know what the truth is so I can decide whether to believe it or not."—Queen Elizabeth I

28. Nyberg, 24-25.

If Nyberg is correct that we are all ordinary deceivers, it becomes important for us to discern the truthfulness of others. Unfortunately, we aren't particularly good at it. Paul Ekman, a psychology professor at the University of California at San Francisco, has studied the human ability to detect lies since 1977. Secret Service agents do quite well in his clinical tests, but judges and cops—people whose occupation involves discerning truth from lies—are fooled one-third of the time. "You can't catch everybody," Ekman says. "Five to ten percent of people are what I call natural performers. Some become actors, others salespeople, politicians. They are people who can control their demeanor beautifully. They're inventive, charismatic. They become the role they're playing." A key factor, according to Ekman, is how motivated the listener is to believe what they are hearing. Occasionally, tacit collusion between the deceiver and listener helps a lie succeed.[29]

Nyberg also gives a particular warning to those who believe everything they are told. He calls it a "sort of brain bypass."[30] Trust, warmth, openness, and lack of cynicism are delightful and refreshing traits in people, but these exact traits lead many to fall victim to high-pressure sales pitches and con artists. Further, Nyberg establishes a checklist for evaluating whether a deception is justifiable, listing six categories of concern:

1) The situation or context, the time, and place: Public and private places are each governed by different rules; different situations may call for different levels of truthfulness.
2) The actors: There is a difference between people who helped hide Jewish refugees during World War II and lied about it to the Nazis, and a spouse who lies to his or her mate about an extramarital affair. The relationship between the parties involved is important in determining how much truth should be divulged.
3) The purpose: Why is this happening? Does the deceiver have a clear and fully conscious purpose? Does he or she have a good reason for the deception?
4) The manner: How is the lying done? Is the deceiver doing things in the most appropriate manner? What is the cost of doing things this way?
5) The consequences: How interested should I be? Is the situation trivial or important, joking or serious?
6) There are a few limits to the obligation to tell the truth, including:

29. Debi Howell, "Detecting the Dirty Lie," *This World*, 8 August 1993, 5.
30. Nyberg, 44.

> People should avoid harming others, people should help others when they can, and when there is a choice, put people before material things.[31]

Whether you prefer the top-down or the bottom-up approach to the truth, it should be clear that in spite of the absolute denunciation of lying found in the scriptures, there are occasions where lying might not only be excusable but also justifiable. While on vacation in Japan a few years ago, I was confronted with a situation where I was required to decide between telling a lie and offending the hosts who had so graciously invited us into their home. Night after night, our hosts placed unrecognizable food in front of us which had been prepared with care and was mostly delicious. Wanting nothing more than to please us, they also offered things which for religious reasons we wouldn't drink. We politely turned down their offers of sake, beer, and tea, trying to convey through the language barrier that water was "just fine." However, they clearly wanted to do more, and asked us what we drank at home. We listed a few beverages, mostly sodas they had never heard of, and eventually I mentioned root beer. The husband's eyes brightened, thinking he had discovered something he could provide. The next night he proudly presented us with cans of non-alcoholic Japanese beer which he had obviously gone to great trouble to purchase. We smiled and drank what was, at least for me, as unpleasant a drink as I have ever encountered. When he asked me how I liked it, I lied and told him it was wonderful, thanking him ever so much. Hospitality to strangers is extremely important in Japanese culture, and I chose courtesy over truthfulness.

Was my lie justifiable? Using Bok's top-down method we can ask, Was there a truthful alternative? The answer is no, at least not without insulting our hosts. Was it excusable? Yes, given the circumstances, the miscommunication, the attempt by our host to be courteous, and our desire to be gracious guests. Would a group of reasonable people agree we acted properly in deceiving? I believe the answer would be yes. I also believe the lie would be justifiable using Nyberg's less stringent bottom-up analysis. Given the people involved, the situation, the consequences of being completely truthful, and the harm possibly caused by telling the truth, my small deception was warranted.

"It is always the best policy to speak the truth, unless of course, you are an exceptionally good liar."—Jerome K. Jerome

31. Ibid., 76-78.

"It is good to always tell the truth, but not always to tell the whole of what we know."—Apostle Abraham H. Cannon[32]

Now that we have built a philosophical basis for justifiable deception, let us return to questions of religion and deception: Is it ever justifiable for a prophet or an apostle to lie? Are there special ramifications to be considered which are exclusive to religious leaders? Would God lie or would he ever sanction a lie? A case study from the scriptures as well as one from Mormon history should be helpful in answering these questions.

One story about a prophet and deception is told in the Book of Genesis, involving Abraham (Abram) and his wife Sarah (Sarai). In chapter 12, Jehovah promises Abraham that he and his wife will become a great nation.[33] This is the Abrahamic Covenant, wherein Abraham is blessed, and told that all families of the earth will be blessed through him. At the time of the promise, Abraham and Sarah have no children. Soon after the promise is made, a famine comes upon the land, forcing Abraham and his family to travel to Egypt in order to survive. Abraham fears the Egyptians will take Sarah and kill him because of her beauty, so he tells Sarah to say she is his sister.[34] The ruse works but has unintended consequences: Pharaoh's sons see Sarah and decide she would be a wonderful addition to their father's harem. They take Sarah and give gifts to Abraham as compensation. In order to protect the sanctity and fidelity of Sarah and Abraham's marriage, and in order to preserve his covenant with them, the Lord intervenes, cursing Pharaoh and his house with a great plague. Somehow Pharaoh realizes the plagues are due to Sarah and discovers the deception. He scolds Abraham with accusing questions which go unanswered when Abraham offers no defense. Finally, Pharaoh orders his men to escort Abraham and Sarah out of Egypt, the ancient equivalent of being deported by the I.N.S.[35]

The importance of this story is evidenced by the fact that it occurs no less than three times in Genesis.[36] In Gen. 20, Gerar replaces Egypt and

32. Abraham H. Cannon Diary, 14 Dec. 1881, University of Utah. Quoted in D. Michael Quinn, "LDS Church Authority and New Plural Marriages, 1890-1904," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought 18* (Spring 1985): 18-19.

33. Gen. 12:2-3.

34. Gen. 12:10-13.

35. Gen. 12:14-20.

36. The story in Gen. 12, a "classical example of an early folk narrative," is repeated in Gen. 20 and 26. Scholars have debated the relationship between the three accounts; while some scholars maintain that Gen. 26 is the oldest variant, the question has generally been settled in favor of Gen. 12. See Claus Westermann, *Genesis 12-36* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1985), 161.

Abimelech replaces Pharaoh, but the other details remain basically the same. God's intervention this time comes in the form of a dream. Abimelech confronts Abraham, and this time Abraham defends his actions. He explains that Sarah is indeed his sister, actually his half sister. (This moves the deception from type 1, straightforward lying, to type 4, hiding of the truth through the telling of a half truth. After all, no one would have suspected she was both his sister and his wife.) Abraham also offers the defense that he thought "the fear of God was not in this place." This statement is ironic, considering it is Abimelech's respect for Abraham's God which eventually saves them.[37] The story is repeated yet a third time in Chapter 26, with Isaac and Rebecca replacing Abraham and Sarah, while the other story elements remain virtually untouched.[38]

In all three versions of the story, a foreign king unwittingly imperils the "blessed" lineage as a direct result of having been told a lie. Abraham is guilty not only of lying, but also of lacking the faith necessary to believe that God could preserve him and his wife and honor the covenant he had made with them. Was Abraham, a prophet of God, justified in lying to Pharaoh? One can argue he was, since his life and that of his wife were spared. He was in an impossible situation, facing death by starvation on the one side, and death at the hand of the Egyptians on the other. By applying Nyberg's checklist for evaluating a justifiable deception, we find that, given the situation (possible starvation), the actors (a prophet, his family, a rich and powerful king of a foreign land whom he feared), and their purpose (to survive long enough to see God's promise fulfilled), one can easily excuse the manner in which the deception was done. However, were it not for God's direct intervention, the consequences of their deceit would have been disastrous, and great harm would have been done not only to Sarah and Abraham, but also to God's plan for blessing all the nations of the Earth.[39]

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37. Gen. 20:1-17

38. Gen. 26:1-11

39. The story from Gen. 12 can also be found in Abr. 2 in the Pearl of Great Price. As "translated" by Joseph Smith, this version has the Lord specifically telling Abraham to lie to the Egyptians. Abraham is therefore justified in the deception since he is simply being obedient. This change to the story is problematic because it dramatically changes the nature of the story from one which teaches a moral lesson regarding the disastrous consequences of lack of faith to one of divinely directed "situational ethics." Dan Vogel has pointed out that this particular portion of the Book of Abraham is missing from all the existing manuscript copies and was probably added to the text shortly before it was published in the *Times and Seasons* on March 15, 1842. He references Susan Staker, who suggests that this change should be viewed in the context of Joseph Smith's involvement at the time with plural marriage and his possible desires to justify the deceptions which accompanied that practice. See Dan Vogel, "'The Prophet Puzzle' Revisited," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought 31* (Fall 1998): 133; Susan Staker, "'The Lord Said, Thy Wife Is a Very Fair Woman to Look Upon': The Book of Abraham,

"As scarce as truth is, the supply has always been in excess of the demand."—Josh Billings

The second case study involves the practice of polygamy which was introduced into the Mormon church by Joseph Smith sometime during the 1830s, or possibly as late as 1841.[40] From then until 1852, polygamy was practiced in secret by a limited number of church members.[41] Only after the Saints were securely established in the remote Rocky Mountains did the leaders of the church publicly declare Joseph's doctrine of "plurality of wives." Orson Pratt was chosen to make the announcement during a church conference on August 29, 1852, and he was followed by Brigham Young, who discussed the preservation of Joseph Smith's revelation which was later included in the Doctrine and Covenants as Section 132.[42] For ten years, polygamy was practiced both openly and without government sanctions, but commencing in 1862 with the passage of the Morrill Anti-Bigamy Act, and with ever-increasing attempts by the government to enforce its laws, the very existence of the church was threatened.[43] By 1890, Wilford Woodruff felt compelled to issue the "Manifesto," officially denying that plural marriages were still being performed and giving his "advice to the Latter-day Saints to refrain from contracting any marriage forbidden by the law of the land."[44] Officially sanctioned plural marriages did not cease, however, and continued to be

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Secrets, and Lying for the Lord," Sunstone Theological Symposium, Salt Lake City, Utah, 17 August 1996.

40. According to the *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, the first plural marriage was between Joseph Smith and Fanny Alger. A date is not given, but Todd Compton points to February or March 1833. See Danel Bachman and Ronald K. Esplin, "Plural Marriage," *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, ed. by Daniel H. Ludlow (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1992); also in *Infobases Collectors Library*, Infobases, Inc. 1998; Todd Compton, *In Sacred Loneliness* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1997), 26, 33. Readers of the article will need to decide for themselves whether Bachman's and Esplin's insistence that a marriage took place was either deceptively simple or simply uninformed, since what scant evidence there is comes very late (1896). Oliver Cowdery, in an 1838 letter to Joseph Smith, referred to his [Smith's] relationship with Fanny as "a dirty, nasty, filthy affair," because there were no known witnesses and no known record of a marriage, and because Joseph Smith didn't publicly claim to have the "sealing" power that was necessary for "celestial marriages" until two years later in the fall of 1835. (See Compton, 26-42, and Van Wagoner, 5-6, 9-11, 46.) Joseph Smith's next plural wife was probably Lucinda Pendelton Morgan Harris, and while there is no exact date for a marriage, evidence points to 1838. His first marriage for which there is solid evidence in the form of third-party witnesses was to Louisa Beaman on April 5, 1841. (See Compton, 49, 59.)

41. The practice of polygamy was initially limited to some of the Mormon leadership in whom Joseph Smith confided. More members became involved in Utah, and estimates range from 10 percent to 25 percent of the membership at its peak. (See Bachman and Esplin, 16-17.)

42. Van Wagoner, 85-86.

43. Ibid., 108, 128-29.

44. D&C, Official Declaration 1.

secretly performed until 1904, when President Joseph F. Smith issued his "second manifesto," which led to the eventual end of the practice.[45]

That polygamy was practiced in secret and that deceptive means were used to hide the practice have been well documented. An extended recounting of the evidence is beyond the scope of this discussion, but it has been detailed by authors and historians such as D. Michael Quinn, B. Carmon Hardy, and Richard Van Wagoner, to name a few.[46] The real question isn't whether lies were told but rather, were the lies and deception which accompanied polygamy justifiable? In order to answer this question, it is necessary to understand just how seriously the early Mormons considered their obligation to participate in and continue the practice.

Joseph Smith believed part of his mission as a prophet of God was to "restore all things,"and when he introduced the Old Testament practice of plural marriage, he claimed it was a necessary part of that restoration. One witness to his claim was Helen Mar Kimball Whitney, the daughter of Apostle Heber C. Kimball, who became one of Joseph Smith's plural wives at the age of 15. Joseph gave a speech on the restoration of all things in 1841, prior to the return of the apostles from Europe, where he said "that as it was anciently with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, so it would be again," and he spoke "so plainly that his wife, Emma, as well as others were quite excited over it."[47] According to Joseph Lee Robinson, who also heard the address, a number of the leading women of Nauvoo gathered later that day at the home of Joseph and Emma to accuse the prophet of blasphemy and demand, "[T]ake back what you have said today it is outrageous it would ruin us as a people." In the afternoon session, Joseph stood and retracted his comments, according to Robinson.[48] It has been speculated that this speech was meant to test the readiness of the Mormon community to accept polygamy. Joseph's quick retraction may help us understand why he later chose to share the polygamy doctrine only with Mormonism's elite. Although many Mormons in Nauvoo, Utah, and elsewhere never accepted or practiced polygamy, it was for some time the norm among LDS leadership.[49]

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45. Bachman and Esplin, "Plural Marriage"; Hardy, 259-61; Van Wagoner, 167-68.

46. Quinn, Hardy, Van Wagoner. See also Compton, *In Sacred Loneliness*, and Todd Compton, "A Trajectory of Plurality: An Overview of Joseph Smith's Thirty-Three Plural Wives," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 29 (Summer 1996): 1-38.

47. Helen Mar Kimball Whitney, *Why We Practice Plural Marriage* (Salt Lake City: Juvenile Instructor Office, 1884), 11, quoted in Van Wagoner, 51.

48. Van Wagoner, 51. The concept of the "restoration of all things," as understood in Nauvoo, developed gradually and may have postdated Joseph's interest in restoring plural marriage. See Clay Chandler, "The Restoration of Some Things," Sunstone Symposium, Washington DC, (audio tape), 15 April 2000.

49. Hardy, 16, 17, 19.

While some contradictory evidence exists, early Mormon history is full of statements indicating that the practice of polygamy was considered a prerequisite to attaining salvation in the highest glory of the Celestial Kingdom. Brigham Young affirmed his belief regarding this on August 19, 1866, when he said, "The only men who become Gods, even the Sons of God, are those who enter into polygamy. Others attain unto a glory and may even be permitted to come into the presence of the Father and the Son; but they cannot reign as kings in glory, because they had blessings offered unto them, and they refused to accept them."[50]

The early Mormons were a millennial society which believed the second coming of Christ was imminent but could not occur until after all things, including plural marriage, had been restored. Consider, for example, the following passage from Orson Pratt in *The Seer*:

> But "the times of the restitution of all things which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began" are at hand, preparatory to the coming of Jesus Christ, whom the heavens must receive until the restitution of all things is completed, when he will again be sent to take unto himself his great power and reign over all people. Among the "all things" which the prophets have predicted should be restored before the Messiah comes is Polygamy. [51]

Mormons at that time also believed the forces of the devil were at work to prevent the restoration from occurring. It is impossible to understand the deception surrounding polygamy unless one recognizes and accepts that the people involved believed they were simply obeying the commandments of God and fighting against the devil and his forces. As Brigham Young said:

> We are told that if we would give up polygamy—which we know to be a doctrine revealed from heaven and it is God and the world for it—but suppose this church should give up this holy order of marriage, then would the

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50. Brigham Young, "Delegate Hooper—Beneficial Effects of Polygamy—Final Redemption of Cain," in *Journal of Discourses*, by Brigham Young et al., reported by G. D. Watt, *New Mormon Studies*, 26 vols. (Liverpool and London: F. D. and S. W. Richards and Latter-Day Saints Book Depot, 1854), 11:268. See also D&C 131, 132:15-21; Hardy, *Solemn Covenant*, 54; Van Wagoner, *Mormon Polygamy*, 90; David John Buerger, *The Mysteries of Godliness* (San Francisco: Smith Research Associates, 1994), 58-59. Following the passage of the Edmunds Act in 1882, Mormon officials began equating "celestial marriage" with eternal marriage, one in which a man and a woman were "sealed" to a single partner for eternity. See Hardy, 54, 297-98; Buerger, 59n68; Heber J. Grant, *Millennial Star* 95:588, September 1933, in *Latter-day Prophets Speak: Selections from the Sermons and Writings of Church Presidents*, Daniel H. Ludlow, ed. (Salt Lake City, Utah: Bookcraft, 1948) in Infobases [CD-ROM], 1998.

51. Orson Pratt, ed., "Christian Polygamy in the Sixteenth Century," *The Seer*, December 1853, 1:12, 182-83.

devil, and all who are in league with him against the cause of God, rejoice that they had prevailed upon the Saints to refuse to obey one of the revelations and commandments of God to them.[52]

"A lie told often enough becomes truth."—Vladimir Ulyanov Lenin

In 1890 Wilford Woodruff issued the Manifesto on polygamy. Although it is included in the Doctrine and Covenants as Official Declaration 1, the Manifesto was not originally written as a declaration to the members of the Church, but was rather a communication sent to Washington to convince the U.S. government that the practice of polygamy was finally and completely being abandoned. Only after the Secretary of the Interior refused to accept it unless it was presented to a conference of the church was it submitted to the body of the church.[53] On many levels, the document was intended to be deceptive. For example, it falsely claimed that plural marriages listed by the Utah Commission had not occurred, when in fact they had. Woodruff also claimed in the Manifesto that he was neither teaching nor advocating polygamy, and while this may have been technically true, he knew his counselors and several apostles were. Woodruff also claimed that the Endowment House had been torn down at his instructions after a plural marriage was performed there without authorization; while the building was indeed torn down, the real reasons were, as the *Salt Lake Tribune* correctly noted, because it had been raided by U.S. Marshals and was considered contaminated, because it was liable to be seized by the receiver in the escheat cases, because it was too public a place to carry on clandestine plural marriages, and because the Logan Temple had been completed by that time.[54] Woodruff further declared his intention in the Manifesto to submit to the laws of the land and use his influence with the members, but he remained silent on the issue of co-habitation, even though the practice was illegal according to the "laws of the land." He later expressly denied that the Manifesto was meant to cover co-habitation.[55] We can also argue that since new church-sanctioned plural marriages continued to be performed between 1890 and 1904, the Manifesto was deceptive in that Woodruff and other leaders of the church never intended to be bound by their own declaration.[56]

Given the overwhelming evidence that the Manifesto was deceptive, we can now ask, was the deception justifiable? The question can be answered using the five categories of bottom-up theory:

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52. Brigham Young, "Opposition Essential to Happiness," 3 June 1866, *Journal of Discourses* 11:239, in *New Mormon Studies*.

53. Hardy, 134.

54. Van Wagoner, 152.

55. Ibid., 145.

56. Quinn, 9-105.

1) What was the situation? The church was under attack from its enemies, its properties were being escheated (and the temples would soon be confiscated as well), the United States Supreme Court had ruled against the church on all its appeals, Mormons—even non-polygamist Mormons—were facing the loss of their right to vote, and Mormons were starting to lose control of the local government for the first time. The church's treasury was nearly empty. Giving up polygamy wasn't possible without a commandment from God. Continuing the fight was now virtually impossible.
2) Who were the actors? First, the members of the church who were practicing polygamy and/or believed that the practice was a commandment of God; and, second, the United States government, which was considered an enemy and a servant of the devil by the Saints.
3) What was the purpose? To end the onslaught of anti-polygamy legislation, to protect and preserve the temples, and to keep the church from being destroyed. An official declaration encouraging church members to obey the laws of the land seemed the only possible way to stop the persecution. Most of the debilitating anti-polygamy laws passed by the government applied only to the territories, and Wilford Woodruff's intent was to pacify the government long enough for statehood to be granted. Some of the leadership hoped that when they took back control of the local government, they could quietly continue the practice through lax enforcement of the federal laws. George Q. Cannon, in particular, was a champion of this belief.[57]
4) What was the manner in which the deception occurred? There is a substantial amount of evidence that Wilford Woodruff was torn on this issue and that he approached it prayerfully and earnestly. While the Manifesto is considered by many to have been a revelation, Woodruff never claimed it as such until the following year. The idea that it was a revelation seems to have grown gradually.[58] There are even questions as to who wrote the document, with some claiming it was Woodruff and others saying it was written by a committee. George Reynolds, a secretary in the First Presidents' office, testified in 1904, "I assisted to write it. . .in collaboration with Charles W. Penrose and John R. Winder." Others claim George Q. Cannon wrote it.[59] The Manifesto was never presented

57. Van Wagoner, 126-27;
58. Hardy, 149-50; Van Wagoner,148, 152.
59. Quinn, 11, 44-45; Van Wagoner, 187n1.

to the entire Quorum of the Twelve until after it had been made public, and even then opinions were deeply divided.[60] The evidence suggests the Manifesto was written as a ploy to fool the government and then became a nightmare when Woodruff was forced to present it to the general membership of the church. The leaders, who had no intention of actually abandoning the practice of polygamy, were then forced to pursue an even more dangerous course of escalating deception.

5) What were the consequences? Similar statements had been made before, but the Manifesto was the first official repudiation of polygamy. It is difficult to say what those involved understood to be the consequences at the time. Officially and publicly ending the practice, while secretly continuing it by exploiting the Manifesto's loopholes, was as dangerous as Abraham's decision to pass off his wife as his sister. Apostle John Henry Smith said that the Manifesto was "but a trick to defeat the devil at his own game."[61] Although many were shocked and dismayed by the announcement, during the months that followed, more and more members of the church came to accept the Manifesto as a revelation and as the will of God. As President Woodruff and the apostles watched the government tighten its grip, and their own followers began to abandon the practice, they must have felt much like Abraham did when Sarah was in Pharaoh's harem and all he could do was pray for divine intervention.

Considering the existing situation, the participants, their purpose, the manner in which the Manifesto was issued, and the expected consequences, I would have to say that, at least in my opinion, the Woodruff Manifesto was a justifiable deception. In retrospect, however (and I recognize that I have a great time and distance from which to judge), the Manifesto was unjustifiable given the unexpected consequences. It's difficult to fault the Mormon leaders of the time for choosing such a difficult path in such a dire situation, but there are a few things they might have anticipated. Perhaps they should have guessed the government wouldn't accept the Manifesto as binding unless it was presented to a general conference and accepted by the members of the church. Perhaps they should have anticipated that most Mormons would believe the

60. Van Wagoner, 144.

61. John Henry Smith in *Proceedings Before the Committee on Privileges and Elections of the United States Senate in the Matter of the Protests Against the Right of Hon. Reed Smoot a Senator from the State of Utah, to Hold his Seat*, 4 vols. (Washington, D.C.; Government Printing Office, 1907), 4:13; cited in Van Wagoner, 177.

Manifesto to be a revelation from God to stop the practice of polygamy. Maybe they should have thought a little harder about how divisive it would be to secretly practice polygamy while publicly denouncing it, not only to the government, but also to their own members. Prior to the Manifesto, the Mormon community was united in its efforts to continue the practice, and while they were deceptive, they uniformly believed they had the backing and support of God and the church. That unity dissolved as the members of the church and even the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles split on the issue of continued plural marriage. If the primary test in deciding whether or not to deceive is to do no harm, then the Manifesto or, more precisely, the practice of post-Manifesto polygamy, failed miserably. All the children who were forced to lie to protect their polygamous parents were harmed. The members who moved to Mexico and Canada to enter into new plural marriages and who later, following the second Manifesto, became pariahs to the main body of the church, were certainly harmed. The Mormons, both leaders and rank-and-file members, who went to Washington, D.C., during the Reed Smoot hearings and lied to Congress, were harmed. Apostles John Taylor and Matthias Cowley, who were forced to resign from the Quorum of the Twelve, were harmed. Most importantly, the trust which the members had in each other and in their leaders was harmed.

"It's a rare person who wants to hear what he doesn't want to hear."—Dick Cavett

In a religious society such as Mormonism, the statements of religious leaders are given more weight than are those of an ordinary member. Almost all members strongly desire to believe what their leaders tell them. We expect a higher level of integrity from our leaders, integrity being a consistency between the actions, words, thoughts, and emotions of the public persona and the private persona. The current president of the LDS Church, Gordon B. Hinckley, recently said, "It all comes down to personal integrity. Integrity is the value we set on ourselves. Complete and constant integrity is a great law of human conduct. . . . Integrity is the light that shines from a disciplined conscience. It is the strength of duty within us."[62] When someone whom we trust lies to us, we are more likely to believe that lie. Even if it makes no sense to us, we may suspend our disbelief, engage in self-deception, and believe anyway. If we later discover that what we believed to be true is, in fact, a lie, then that trust

62. President Gordon B. Hinckley as quoted by President James E. Faust, "Strive for Integrity," *News From the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints Produced by Church Public Affairs Radio News an Feature Service for Radio Broadcast November 14, 1998 to November 20, 1998*, transcribed copy distributed by mormon-news@Mailing-List.net, November 15, 1998.

has been violated, and our faith in the integrity of that person is damaged, even when the lie was intended to do good.

For religious leaders, doing the right thing may not be enough. They must also *appear* to do the right thing. That's why we pay such close attention when Steve Benson accuses Dallin Oaks of lying. Elder Oaks may have been deceptive in order to protect his friend and colleague Boyd K. Packer, and given his situation, he may have been doing something he considered not only excusable but also justifiable. However, when the public discovers they have been deceived, the integrity of the deceiver is called into question. For example, when it was revealed in the press that former general authority and Seventy Paul Dunn had for years presented fictional tales as actual events and had deceptively inserted himself into other people's stories, many members felt betrayed. That Dunn was shortly thereafter made "emeritus," the ecclesiastical equivalent of retirement, was almost certainly the result of his image having been tarnished by his deceptions. We tend to forget that past and present prophets, apostles, general authorities, stake presidents, and bishops are not only men of God, but also very human and therefore subject to making mistakes.

One belief held in common by top-down theorists like Bok and by bottom-up theorists like Nyberg is that there are times when lying is morally justifiable. While they disagree on the details and on the method of determination, all recognize that given the right circumstances, deception may be necessary. For every Neal Maxwell denouncing situational ethics from the pulpit, there is also an Abraham, Joseph Smith, Wilford Woodruff, Abraham H. Cannon, Matthias F. Cowley, Joseph F. Smith, Paul H. Dunn, or Dallin Oaks engaging in or justifying the limited use of deception. If the absolutists are right, those who justify their lies by examining the situation are deceiving themselves and harming society. If, on the other hand, truth-telling must always be weighed against other moral values, then it is possible for our religious leaders to occasionally not tell the truth while still believing they are acting in our best interests.

In the final analysis, what we really should expect from our leaders is not that they will tell us the truth, but instead that they won't betray our trust. You trust a friend, for example, to look after your best interests. You trust a friend to tell you the truth when you need to hear it, even if the truth hurts. You also trust a friend to show discretion, to be tactful with regard to the truth. "Trust," says Bok, "is a social good to be protected just as much as the air we breathe or the water we drink. When it is damaged, the community as a whole suffers; and when it is destroyed,

63. Bok, 26-27.

societies falter and collapse."[63] To maintain that trust, we need to know that our leaders have our best interests in mind. We need to know that they value our individual needs, and not just the needs of the institution. We need to know that the people below them in the religious community are as important to them as those above them or to the side of them. When we know and believe that, we will place our trust in them the same way we place our trust in a loving and caring God.