Honesty: Duty of Candor — Negligence and Dereliction of Duty

The Indictment

The indictment is simple. Two of the highest leaders of the Church—Dallin H. Oaks and Todd Christofferson—are attorneys. Their professional training makes ignorance impossible, and their own actions reveal what they know. From the *Gospel Topics Essays* to their quiet revisions of the *Book of Mormon*, to President Russell M. Nelson's public demonstration of Joseph Smith's "seer stone in the hat," they have disclosed enough to recognize that Smith's foundational claims cannot be sustained. If the *Book of Mormon* is not historical, then the Church is founded on a lie.

Any honest Aaronic Priesthood teenager could connect those dots. Yet these men, armed with superior knowledge and authority, have chosen silence, half-truths, and cosmetic disclosure. That is not prudence; it is **negligence**—a knowing failure of duty. When silence maintains a falsehood, silence itself becomes deceit. This is the textbook definition of **dereliction of duty**.

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2. Honesty (for those still pretending not to know what it means)

Honesty is not a game of selective disclosure or a performance of moral rectitude while concealing inconvenient facts behind one's back. It is the full alignment of one's words with the whole truth of a matter, not merely the fraction that flatters one's cause.

An honest person does not conceal critical information and then congratulate himself for not having *technically* lied. That is the refuge of the lawyer who forgets that the law was meant to serve truth, not replace it. Silence, when it permits a falsehood to stand unchallenged, is a lie told with the mouth closed.

Honesty does not traffic in half-truths, euphemisms, or carefully staged omissions "in the interest of faith." Such performances are simply deceit dressed for Sunday. Nor does it resort to rhetorical distractions—attacking a source's loyalty rather than confronting the evidence. That maneuver, beloved of Mormon apologists, is called *argumentum ad hominem* everywhere else, and *gaslighting* in modern English.

Honesty is an act of **courage**, not convenience. It demands truth even when the truth makes one's institution look shabby or one's prophet seem human after all. It is not situational, not subject to correlation-committee review, and not voided by fear of what the faithful might think.

That a definition of honesty must be supplied to men who claim prophetic gifts, manage billion-dollar assets, and carry law degrees is astonishing. Yet in today's Church—where half-truths are canonized as "milk before meat"—the clarification is overdue.

Honesty is not the art of withholding facts until discovery becomes inconvenient. It is not the dignified silence of leaders who know more than they will say. To misdirect, to obscure context, or to deflect by questioning a messenger's loyalty—these are all dishonest acts. The moral weight of a statement lies not in whether it can pass legal scrutiny but in whether it gives the hearer an accurate understanding of reality. Those who trade in technicalities while posturing as servants of God reveal their allegiance to something smaller: the preservation of the enterprise.

A religion that cannot survive honesty is already dead; it merely hasn't been told.

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3. Responsibility and the Duty of Candor

As one ascends through the ranks of any organization, the definition of honesty expands with the reach of one's influence. What might be ignorance in a novice becomes negligence in a leader. Responsibility rises in direct proportion to authority.

The higher one's station, the greater the duty to inspect one's own beliefs for self-deception. To confuse emotional arousal with revelation is not spirituality but negligence. To codify that confusion into policy is dereliction of duty. When a man interprets his every physiological thrill as the whisperings of God, he makes his endocrine system a deity and his conscience a bystander. Such self-deception is not innocent; it is willful blindness weaponized by position.

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4. The Fraud of "Feeling the Spirit"

The Mormon teaching that emotions are divine messages is sentimentality masquerading as theology. It confuses psychological comfort with epistemic certainty. To equate a surge of warmth or a tearful tremor with revelation from the Almighty is to canonize one's own bias. It is an ethical abdication, a conversion of self-indulgence into piety.

An omniscient God, we are told, reveals eternal truth through the same chemical signals that accompany hunger, nostalgia, or caffeine. That is not revelation; it is biochemistry mistaken for authority. The result is a church hierarchy populated by men unable to distinguish conviction from evidence—leaders who interpret their own certainty as proof of inspiration.

This confusion breeds moral disaster. It allows the devout to claim divine endorsement for their prejudices while dismissing dissenters as faithless. It is how sincere men commit dishonest acts without ever feeling dishonest.

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5. The Temple Endowment and the Institution of Obedience[1]

Joseph Smith's temple endowment is the structural embodiment of authoritarian values. Within its dramatized allegory, questioning authority is portrayed as rebellion against God, while obedience—unquestioning and absolute—is elevated as the highest virtue. It replaces moral reasoning with ritual submission.

The ceremony's deeper lesson is not about covenant but control. It teaches that divine approval flows downward through a chain of command rather than upward through conscience. This inversion of ethics ensures that future leaders, even intelligent ones, will inherit obedience as holiness.

Oaks and his peers are its perfect product: brilliant, disciplined, and incapable of heresy. The temple forbids the self-examination that would expose its own moral flaw. Thus, the Brethren's silence is not merely tactical; it is the logical outcome of ritualized obedience. They have confused loyalty with integrity and self-deception with faith.

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6. Conclusion

Leadership multiplies responsibility. What the laity may call confusion, a prophet must call deceit if he persists in it. Those who demand obedience, collect tithes, and claim prophetic authority assume a duty of candor, competence, and care. They ask for and receive the trust of millions whose lives and identities depend upon their representations.

To know that Joseph Smith's foundational stories are false and not refute them—to profit from belief while concealing disproof—is complicity in a fraud. A man who claims revelation while suppressing fact commits both spiritual treason and professional malpractice.

The honest course is the harder one: to admit deception, to dismantle the myth, and to start again on the solid ground of truth. Until that happens, the organization remains what it has become—a monument to institutional self-deception, staffed by men too frightened of their own emotions to test whether God is truly the author of their certainty.

--- The End ---

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[1] The Temple cannot be of God because it destroys the very thing that makes morality possible — human freedom.