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My Many Selves

Wayne C. Booth

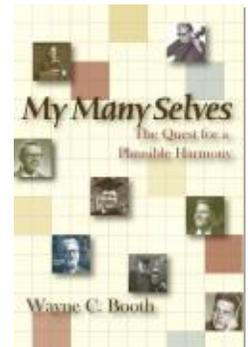
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Chapter One

A Devout Mormon Is Challenged by Rival Selves

So many of us begin strong and then flatten out. So many players in the game of life get to first base. Some reach second. A handful make third. But how few there are who reach home base safely. It requires continual striving to gain that mastery over self.

—Gordon B. Hinckley, President, Prophet, Seer, and Revelator
of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

*Long may the blood which was shed by the prophet
Stain Illinois . . .*

—Mormon hymn of my childhood,
a curse long since expunged from the hymnal

*I asked the personages who stood above me in the light [God and his Son Jesus],
which of all the sects was right—and which I should join. I was answered [by
Jesus] that I must join none of them, for they were all wrong . . . and all their
creeds were an abomination in His sight.*

—Joseph Smith's later account,
in his thirties, of his first vision, at age 14

*Yond Cassius has a lean and hungry look;
He thinks too much; such men are dangerous.*

—Shakespeare, *Julius Caesar*

The trouble with you, Grampa, is you're always thinking, thinking, thinking.

—Granddaughter Emily Izakowitz

Recently at a University reception, as I sipped my glass of wine, I spotted across the room the bishop of my LDS ward, who knows me quite well even though I hardly ever attend services.¹ The immediate impulse of the hypocrite in me, based on almost a lifetime of faked “observance,” was to hide the glass. “That’s absurdly dishonest,” the Moralist in me shouted (silently), “and besides, he’s probably already seen it.” So I walked toward the bishop, glass in hand. He smiled warmly, we shook hands, and he seemed simply to ignore my violation of the “Word of Wisdom.” We had a good brief conversation about “how’s it goin’?”—as he sipped his coke and I sipped my wine. (Cokes were for a while banned by the Church because of the caffeine, but then they decided that the Lord meant to include only “hot drinks” when he gave Joseph Smith his health commands.)

I’m pretty sure that many a bishop would have called me in for an excommunication interrogation after witnessing such open violation of the ban on alcohol. Not this one. He doesn’t want to kick me out, because he knows that I am still, in many important senses, a Mormon—one who goes on shocking some Mormons by listing himself in *Who’s Who* as “LDS.”

It is important now to have a look at the contrast between that eighty-four-year-old wine-sipper and the totally Devout Mormon Booth I was trained to be. To understand fully my diverse Split-Selves, the Mormon-Split is crucial. It may strike some readers here as irrelevant, but I still think of myself as a Mormon. (Of course, if you somehow detest Mormonism, you can just skip this whole chapter, in which I celebrate many of the true virtues of Mormonism.)

1. At this point non-Mormon readers may need a bit of dictionary work. LDS is the abbreviation of “The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.” “Ward” is the name for the local congregation. The lay leader, unpaid for his demanding labors, is the “bishop.” “Stake” is the name for a group of local congregations, and the unpaid lay leader is the “stake president.” (I don’t know how far up the hierarchy one must go to find a leader who is actually paid a full salary.) “The Word of Wisdom” was God’s health code, given to Joseph Smith, the founding prophet, as a Revelation: it bans alcohol, tobacco, tea and coffee, etc.

In one sense my story is not different from that of scores of friends raised in other denominations who have told me, “Getting an education destroyed my religion; I was raised in faith, but pursuing reason got me into trouble.”

But few of them were raised as I was: in a culture totally isolated from others. As their congregations met, they were surrounded by other denominations and probably by many secularists opposing all religion. In contrast, I was born and raised not just in a devout family belonging to a faithful congregation but in an isolated culture, with no non-Mormons surrounding us.

As I think about having lived for those twenty-one years encountering almost no one but Mormons (except for a wonderful chemistry teacher in high school, a Lutheran), I feel an especially strong kinship with all those in any isolated faith who met few or no rivals throughout childhood: any Muslim raised in a totally isolated Arab village and then sent to college in America, and any Jew raised in a settlement consisting entirely of Orthodox families just outside Jerusalem and then sent to the University of Chicago to get a doctor’s degree.

I still feel kinship, of course, with everyone who was raised in *the one true faith*, but it is especially strong toward those who encountered no doubters or rivals until moving up the education ladder. All religious “laspers” or “fringers” or “peripherals” encounter a quarrel between a loyal loving Self and a Self whom loved ones will consider to be a sad loss or even a traitor.²

There are many ways to label those conflicting Selves and the rival cultures that produce them: faith vs. reason; *mythos* vs. *logos*; closed vs. open; pure vs. corrupted; obedient vs. rebellious; loyal vs. evil. Sometimes the arrogant side of the thinker in me has labeled it, a bit stupidly, as “naïve vs. sophisticated.” Back then the split was often thought of as “Zion” vs. “back East.” For Erasmus, facing similar conflicts between full belief and unrestrained “reason,” it was sometimes Jerusalem vs. Athens.

For all of us Mormons, Utah was indeed the unique Zion, combining both absolute faith and total commitment to pursuit of truth: divine knowledge. Many of our hymns celebrated the unquestionable truth that God had brought our ancestors to our “mountain home,” leading Brigham Young to look down on the valley, back in 1847, and proclaim, “This is *the* place!” God

2. Whether you’re Mormon or not, if you would like to encounter some deeper speculation by other Mormons dealing with these conflicts, see *Dialogue* (vol. 34, 2002), especially the introductory essay by Neal Chandler on the battle between *mythos* and *logos*, and “What the Church Means to People Like Me” by Richard D. Poll. For a splendid probing of the conflict within the Church between those who want to engage in “Apologetics”—serious argument about issues—and those who reject it, see John-Charles Duffy’s “Defending the Kingdom, Rethinking the Faith: How Apologetics Is Reshaping Mormon Orthodoxy,” *Sunstone* (May 2004): 22–55.

had established the true center where all of the virtuous would ultimately settle—and soon be resurrected into heaven.

My subconscious mind still floods daily with the hymns that identify ultimate reward with the beauty of those mountains surrounding our town. At this moment, one suddenly intrudes:

O Zion! Dear Zion!
 Land of the free.
 Now my own mountain home,
 Unto thee I have come;
 All my fond hopes are centered—
 In thee.

We were all taught that when the apocalypse arrived—maybe next week, maybe next year—we faithful ones would all gather in Zion and then be taken to heaven, while the unfaithful would be destroyed or consigned to some eternal, lower status. (There was no need for a Hell: the lowest of the three eternal kingdoms, Celestial, Telesial, and Terrestrial, took care of that.)

The world outside Zion was where the unfaithful and sinful lived.³ For some the path to damnation was California, but for most of us it was “back East” (often thought of as Chicago). I only later encountered liberal professors at the “Y” (Brigham Young University), most of whom had earned their higher degrees in Midwest universities. They saw “back East” as a place where one could find much of what is good about Western civilization. Yet for the orthodox as for me (until far into my teens, studying under those professors), the world outside Zion was just plain dangerous, crying out to be saved by our missionary efforts. Stories about how our missionaries were mistreated by “outsiders,” even lynched, filled our Sunday services.

About the only “Eastern” idea I can remember being openly approved was the U.S. Constitution. As part of God’s careful preparation for the restoration of our one true version of Christianity, the Constitution was holy. (Oh, yes, the Puritan escape from England was also part of the necessary preparation; I didn’t learn until recently that some of my ancestors—on the side much neglected by me in my upbringing, the Chipmans, were on the *Mayflower*!)

Later, when studying and teaching “back East,” with all my relatives rightly fearing that I was becoming a fringer or worse, I often did feel that I had escaped to an almost divine Athens: the thinker in me had cast off

3. Actually there were far more non-Mormons in Utah than I realized at the time. They were just talked down or ignored—as is still too often the case.

dogmatic ignorance and could now pursue truth, obtain learning, even become genuinely wise. That drive, at least, could be defended by a couple of Mormon slogans still deeply embedded in my mind: “The glory of God is intelligence” and “Man cannot be saved in ignorance.”

Yet I was aware—during two years in Haverford, Pennsylvania, nine in Richmond, Indiana, and more than four decades in Chicago—that what I saw as the enviable side of “back East” was but a small and even threatened part of it. In many ways the culture I was entering, viewed according to my moralizing self’s convictions, was radically inferior to the Utah scene. Those who lived back home had standards, including genuine service to others. Many of the outsiders I was meeting were—as I had been taught to expect—corrupt. And the Mormons who had become not just fringers out there but “Jack Mormons”—open rejecters—were often even worse: they smoked cigarettes and cigars.

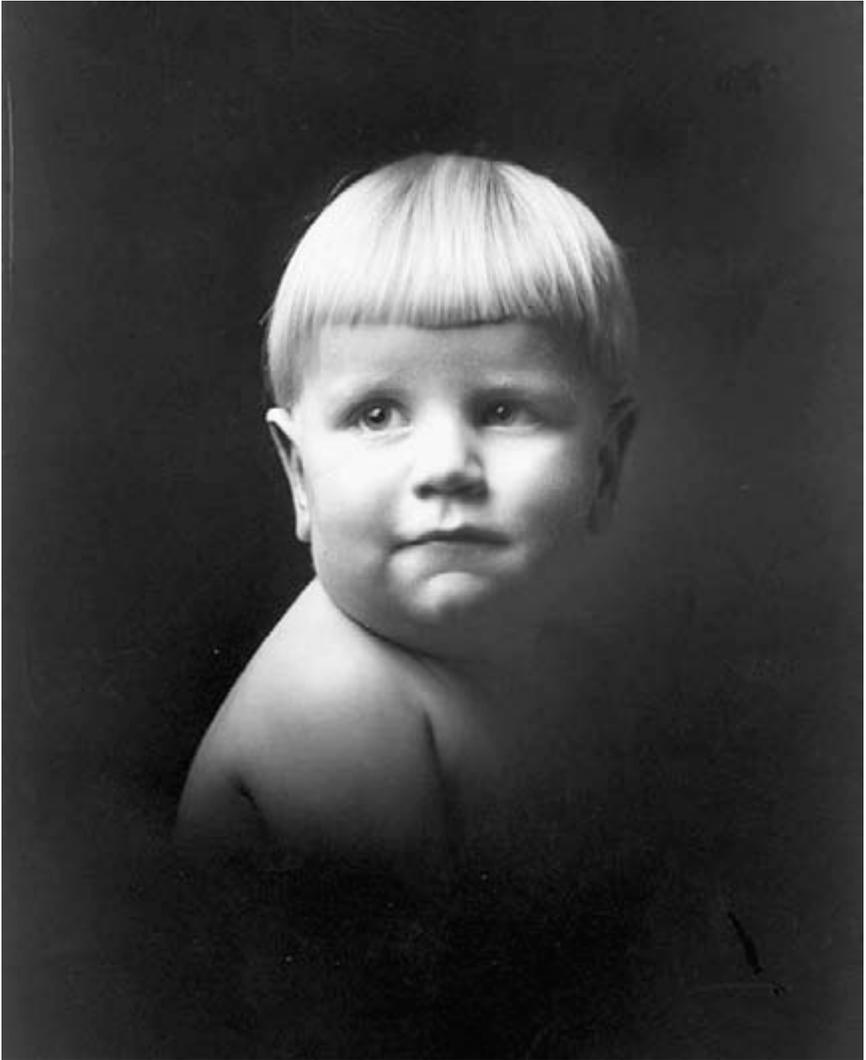
Even now the contrast between the lives lived by insiders and those of many lapsed shocks me and sometimes drives me back toward being fully active. A fully lapsed friend who has had nine children reports to me that the four who are active LDS members have had far more productive, happy lives than the ones who broke away. While I would never argue that Mormons are on average happier than Catholics or Protestants or Jews or Muslims or Hindus or Buddhists (and so on), I feel sure that to be “affiliated” with *some* “congregation” is a genuine blessing.

The experience of my daughter Alison’s conversion to Judaism is a prime example. When we attended our grandchildren’s bat mitzvah and bar mitzvah, the ceremonies moved me to ecstasy.

I feel utterly confident that for a family to belong to any one of the *good* churches, with a supporting congregation, is the best inoculation against the destructive forces of our culture. As I sometimes put it to friends, I am currently inactive in at least five true churches.⁴

Still, it’s not surprising that I sometimes came close to breaking away and becoming a “Jack Mormon.” The thinker in me would sometimes *think*—but almost never say out loud to anyone—“All of those dogmatic ‘faithful’ ones threaten the world with ignorance and intolerance.” Looking back now, I see this as a gross distortion. Those “dogmatic faithful ones” are on average among the most generous-spirited, most admirable of human creatures. Everyone there, from day one, is trained to believe in devoted, unpaid, pro bono service to others. No bishop gets paid a cent for his demanding service. No lecturer or singer or missionary gets any financial reward. Members of

4. I have a friend who believes that all of the worst atrocities throughout the world are committed by religions. He and I quarrel about that claim regularly.



Wayne Clayson Booth, circa 1923



My parents with my father's parents, on the farm, around 1919–1920, *left to right*, Lillian Clay-son Booth, Wayne Chipman Booth, Lovenia Jane Chipman Booth, Robert Ebenezer Booth



My father's family, *left to right, back row*, Ida, Irwin, Relva, Wayne (father); *front row*, Robert Ebenezer Booth, Irma, Lovenia Jane Chipman Booth, Manda



My mother's family, *left to right*, Zina, Lucy, Ann Elizabeth Hawkins Clayson, Lillian (mother), Ann, Merrill, Eli J. Clayson

the wonderful Salt Lake Tabernacle Choir are all “amateurs,” in the sense of doing it only for the love of it, often driving from afar several times a week to rehearse. Can you see why I can never decide to obey other Voices and make a full break from a church that encourages such lives?

WHAT WAS IT LIKE LIVING ON THE INSIDE?

If, as is highly probable, you were not raised in an enclosed culture like mine, it will not be easy to understand just how deeply it gets into your heart and soul—or as we sometimes would put it, into your bones. In American Fork, Utah,⁵ back in the 1920s and '30s, almost all of the three thousand citizens were openly Mormon; a majority were descendants of immigrants. There were six Mormon congregations, each with its own “Ward Chapel.” The few non-Mormons, a tiny minority I can't remember ever meeting,⁶ had the only other church building, called something like “Community Church” or “Congregational Church.” (Don't expect me to remember it, because it was something I totally avoided. Even as late as age fourteen, when I started delivering newspapers and had to ride my bike down the street passing that wicked church, I would carefully cross to the other side to avoid getting too close to the sinful.)

The family surrounding me even more tightly was huge by today's standards: four loving, authoritative grandparents; two loving (and slightly less bossy) great-grandparents; eleven living aunts and uncles; innumerable cousins and second cousins. Almost all were devout—or pretending to be. Surrounded by the pious, most of them exhorting me to do everything the *one right way*, for at least fifteen years I never met or talked with anyone I knew to be a non-Mormon. (A dim memory argues that there was a family of Jews who were tailors, but I can't remember encountering them.)

We did know a few families that seemed to be lapsing, like two aunts who had fled to California; they were always treated with explicit contempt behind their backs and with implicit anxiety and sometimes even open exhortation when they visited. When those two “lost souls” (my father's sisters) visited, we would face some paradoxes. My mother, more tolerant than most

5. Actually it was spoken as American Fark; most of our “or” words were pronounced “ar”: carn, harse, fariner. Many Mormons have claimed that my cleverest essay was one that sprang from my struggling to learn how to say corn, horse, foreigner: “Farkism and HyperYorkism” (reprinted in *Now Don't Try to Reason with Me* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970]). I still get overtaken occasionally by my young self and say something like “Cornegie Corporation” or “carnstorch.”

6. There must have been non-Mormon kids in my school classes, but I'm pretty sure they never “confessed” to it openly.

of the family, would forgivingly serve them coffee, bringing out our one can of coffee preserved year after year on the most remote shelf possible. I remember their complaining—jokingly? behind Mama’s back?—about how awful the coffee was.

The impact of dogmatic, monolithic truth was reinforced by the power of the stories my grandparents and two great-grandparents told. Five of the six (the Clayson, Booth, and Hawkins clans) filled my life with stories about how their parents, weavers and farmers in England, had been “saved” by being converted in the 1850s and then miraculously managed to cross the ocean and plains and become assigned by Brigham Young to found this or that tiny village. One grandfather was actually born on the thousand-mile trek across the plains; he and his mother were then carried the rest of the way in a shaky wagon. One great-grandparent had actually pushed a handcart most of the way. And all of them knew that the reason the families had made it alive and well, unlike many who died en route, was that God had rewarded them for their conversion and continuing devotion.

That closed-culture experience—what felt increasingly like imprisonment to the thinker, as he moved through his teens and was rebuked for asking dangerous questions—was reinforced by hourly, daily, weekly strict routines, the kind that most religions try to provide but which only a closed culture can fully realize. When *all* of your friends and relatives, not just weekly but every day, practice precisely the same rituals, which are also being practiced in every neighboring town—when *everyone who is anyone is a devout Mormon*—you become indelibly ritualized:

- Sunday mornings, from birth to age twenty-one: Sunday School (from age seven to twelve, it was always with anxious, bossy Gram-pa Clayson teaching us—sometimes angrily—that promptitude is next to Godliness; and we never missed any meeting unless we were seriously ill).
- Sunday afternoons: reading of scripture, with no athletic games, no movies, no swimming allowed (as you’d expect, we did some minor cheating on this one).
- Sunday evenings: “Sacrament Meeting,” with prolonged sermons.
- Once a month, “Fast Sunday”: no breakfast, as we honorably donated what the fasting saved to a Church charity, then attended a meeting something like a Quaker “silent meeting,” with anyone free to “bear testimony.” I stood up spontaneously at age ten and spoke nervously about how grateful I felt for living in the valley of the “mountains high, where the clear blue sky arches over the

vales of the free”—the thrill provided by the mountains that were visible through the east window of the chapel.

I'm sure that “bearing my testimony” was prompted almost entirely by the hypocritical desire to appear pious: no one my age had, to my knowledge, ever before borne his testimony voluntarily! I remember doing more than simply mouthing the clichés about divine Joseph Smith or the Book of Mormon.

- Tuesday afternoons, from early toddling to age twelve: “Primary” lessons in the chapel; all children required to attend, singing songs about Mormonism and various virtues: “Little purple pansies in the garden old . . . / We are very tiny but must try, try, try, / Just one spot to gladden, you and I.”
- Tuesday evenings, after becoming a “Deacon” and Boy Scout at age twelve: “MIA” (Mutual Improvement Association), a semi-social occasion but with lots of religious preaching; sometimes basketball, sometimes even dancing, but all absolutely centered on Mormon culture: mutual improvement for everyone from age twelve to death—and then onward! That stress on mutual improvement is still one of the main attractions to my being active in the Church.
- Daily, in high school: Required LDS “Seminary” class, in a building close to the city school. The dogmatic teacher vigorously stomped on the thinker in me—the young man who, under the influence of a wonderful chemistry teacher, Luther Giddings, was moving toward Darwinism.

Meanwhile, we kids were taught at home to kneel every day for prayer before breakfast, kneel for prayer together before supper, and say a blessing on the food at “dinner” (always at noon). At bedtime each of us said an individual prayer, kneeling at the bedside.

Ironically, we were taught that one of the blessings of Mormonism is that it got rid of “ritual,” especially Catholic ritual. I didn't discover until I was finally admitted into the Temple, just before leaving for my mission at age twenty-one, that the ritual inside that secret sacred spot was even more ritualistic than most of what the “wicked” Catholics practiced.

The major ritualized test of the difference between the virtuous and the sinful—because it was to some degree *empirically* testable—was the Word of Wisdom, Joseph Smith's message from God about the daily code: no smoking, no drinking of alcohol or stimulating hot drinks like tea or coffee, moderate consumption of meat. As I write about it, I suddenly am “hearing”

the hymn we sang regularly about ourselves, the wonderfully pious Mormon children:

That the children may live long
 And be beautiful and strong,
 Tea and coffee and tobacco they despise.
 Drink no liquor and they eat
 But a very little meat.
 They are seeking to be
 Great and good and wise.

That piety test was dramatized regularly by my family's attitude toward those who didn't quite pass it, even in minor matters like coffee or tea. When I was eight or nine, it was my daily job to lead our cow uphill about a mile to a (sometimes) lovely pasture. Often I was with a buddy who was walking another cow. He was the son of neighbors who attended services a bit irregularly, so I already suspected him of lapsing, but I enjoyed joking with him both in Sunday School and on our hikes.

One summer I learned that though their cow was almost ready to calve, they were still milking her. I reproached Tom about it: "Your family shouldn't be milking a cow that's gonna calve soon." "Oh, it's OK," he answered. "At least she's still givin' enough milk for papa's coffee."

My family told that story contemptuously again and again. Any man who drank coffee was clearly on his way "out"—not to hell, exactly, but to a different kind of damnation. He would be placed after death in the lowest of the three "heavenly" realms, the Terrestrial—still with a remote chance of redemption and ascent to the Testial but almost certainly never reaching the Celestial, which was where my family expected to be. We would progress on through eternity, as God Himself had done—and was still doing. (Nobody ever mentioned that to broadcast dismissive anecdotes about neighbors was an unchristian act that might get you into eternal trouble.)⁷

The non-Mormons were even further down the line. Catholicism was the "great whore and abomination" described (somewhere) in the New Testament. Catholics, even more decisively than other non-Mormons, would never make it all the way "up there"—unless, of course, we managed to convert them.

7. The notion that God is a creature of "body, parts, and passions," a still-progressing, not-omniscient creature with whom we existed from the beginning and whose progress we could emulate eternally—that notion has naturally offended most non-Mormon theologians, Christian or not.

We saw Native Americans only once a year when they came through town selling pine nuts and begging for gifts. (We didn't have the designation "Native American" then and called them Indians or Redskins or, following the Book of Mormon, Lamanites. They had been turned "red" because of their having sinfully killed off, back in about 300 A.D., the other American descendants of the Twelve Tribes (white, of course), who were—but to explain that, I would have to give you a full account of the stories told in the Book of Mormon.) We were taught that they might possibly, if they converted somewhere down the line, be blessed by a color change, become "white and delightsome," and join us up there.⁸

No Mormons I knew had come from any culture except the British or European. Mexicans, working on our railroads—I can't remember what we called them, certainly not "Latin Americans" or "Latinos" or "Hispanics"—were lost souls because they were almost certainly Catholics and therefore sinners. African Americans were seldom mentioned, except in careless widespread metaphors like "there's a nigger in the woodpile"—that is to say, somebody's hiding something. We never even saw any blacks except for "shoeshine boys" (actually men) working fifty miles away in Salt Lake City hotels. We knew that though "Negroes" could become LDS members if they behaved right, the men—just like white women—could never be granted the blessing of holding the priesthood. We were certain, as even some Mormons today stupidly continue to believe, that blacks are black because God cursed Cain. Or was it maybe Ham?⁹

And what about the Chinese, who also worked on the railroads? The "Chinks" were simply good material for comedy: if you were doing a skit and needed a clown, what could be more useful than a "stupid Chink"? Otherwise, they weren't even mentioned.

Fortunately my family, unlike many, often faced openly the conflict between such bigotry and Christ's exhortations about universal brotherhood. Though God would ultimately punish the wicked, that was not *our* assignment. When "bums" came to the door during the Depression, for example, Mama didn't grill them about beliefs or faiths: she just fed them. Grampa always gave the Indians at least enough to bring them back next year. Though I can't remember anyone ever speaking out against the Church's racist

8. The word "white" in "white and delightsome" in the original Book of Mormon has now been dropped—so far as I can discover. The Church is working hard to become "international" and nonracist.

9. The Church about twenty years ago finally granted the priesthood and full equality to blacks, but it has not yet issued any kind of official apology for the century and more of racist interpretation of scripture. Fortunately some leaders, as Apostle Bruce McConkie did, have offered personal apologies for their own early racism.

doctrines, we all did celebrate our few living Civil War heroes on Memorial Day, since destroying slavery had been a noble cause.

So as I observed it, the bigotry was not primarily racist but doctrinal. And it sometimes was more domineering than I ever realized. Not so long ago (June 2000) the phone rang in Chicago.

“Hello.”

“Are you Professor Wayne Booth?”

“Yes, I’m Wayne Booth.”

“Well, this is Bland Giddings, hoping to have a chat with you.”

“Giddings? The only Giddings I have known was Luther Giddings . . .”

“That’s my point. I’m Luther’s son, and I’ve read that you considered my dad one of the best and maybe *the best* of your high school teachers.”

“Oh, he was, he was wonderful. He changed my life. How good of you to call.”

We chatted for a bit, and then he said, “I’m a little uneasy about the next point. I’m publishing a kind of history of American Fork, concentrating of course on *my* family, but I’ve got one anecdote reflecting discredit on *your* Grandfather Clayson. I’m worried about how members of your family will react to it.”

I told him to go ahead.

“Well, my father was hired to teach chemistry—as you know—at the high school. Your grandfather was on the school board, and he was running for election to be president of the board. And in his campaigning he promised that if elected, he would kick my dad out, because it was just plain wrong to have a non-Mormon, a Lutheran, teaching Mormon kids. When Dad learned about that, he just up and left, rather than hoping to fight it out, and went to teach in Idaho.”

“Oh, man!” I interrupted. “That’s just plain awful. But your dad never told me any of that. And how come he came back?”

“Well, your grandfather got defeated in the election, so Dad was invited back and came. That’s how you got him.”

I then raved for a few moments about just how wonderful Luther Giddings had been as my chemistry teacher, converting me to become a “chemical engineer,” and about how generous it was of him never to have given me even a hint about Grampa Clayson’s bigotry.

“Your father treated me almost like a son, and I felt him to be a kind of replacement for my lost father.”

It took me several months after that conversation to realize that in one sense Grampa Clayson might be defended. Though Luther Giddings was

not passionately anti-Mormon and in our frequent private talks after class he never openly attacked the Church, what he did do was stimulate the emerging ThinkerB. As one of the first non-Mormons I had ever talked with and as the deepest thinker I had known, he was, perhaps quite consciously, introducing me to at least some aspects of “the Enlightenment”: faith in reason rather than superstition; belief in science as one absolute source of truth. I’m pretty sure he never labored deliberately to turn me into a Jack Mormon. I have journal evidence that he would sometimes lecture me a bit about not letting my problems with scriptural literalism lead to a break from what he considered a praiseworthy church. But I do remember his telling me one anecdote about the illegal real-estate dealings of my bishop; that was a real shocker. I wonder if he knew that such an anecdote might shake my faith.

It’s hardly surprising that in spite of troubled thoughts, that hundred-percent culture kept me believing for a long time that Mormonism is the only true religion. I remember, even at age nineteen after ThinkerB had made me full of doubts, grilling a favorite liberal professor, A. C. Lambert, about whether I had or ever would have a full testimony. I strongly desired the moment of certainty that other people had reported as so thrilling. He looked uncomfortable and even sweated a bit as we chatted, leading me to suspect that he had never had a full testimony either. He finally said, “There are many different forms of ‘testimony.’ Many true believers never have the actual sensation of being visited by Christ or Joseph Smith. Don’t worry about it.” (I recently discovered a manuscript of his attempted book on the “2,000 Unfulfilled Prophecies of Joseph Smith.” It’s not hard to figure out why he never published it.)

STRUGGLES WITH DOCTRINE AND HISTORICAL CLAIMS

What, then, produced the wine-drinking chatterer who still hears daily commandments from his Mormon Self? The answer would require more than a full book, since year by year, decade by decade, I kept moving from closer in to further out and then back in again. Some problems I could simply resolve by saying, “So what? All churches present similar problems. Show me a better church.” Others led me almost to the Jack Mormon request for excommunication: “I can never call myself a member of a church whose leaders can talk like THAT!”

The sharpest challenges to my faith were the conflicts between what I was taught in church and what I began to learn by reading non-Mormon books. They got me thinking more deeply about “free agency,” a much-stressed Mormon doctrine crucial to the idea of eternal progress. How was I to relate my full free agency to the command to obey the authorities even when I

disagreed with them?¹⁰ Thus my embrace of the notion that God created us primarily to *pursue* free agency—free choice, free will—increasingly clashed with routine authoritarianism.

As early as April 1937, just after turning sixteen, the budding doubter rehearsed his troubles secretly:

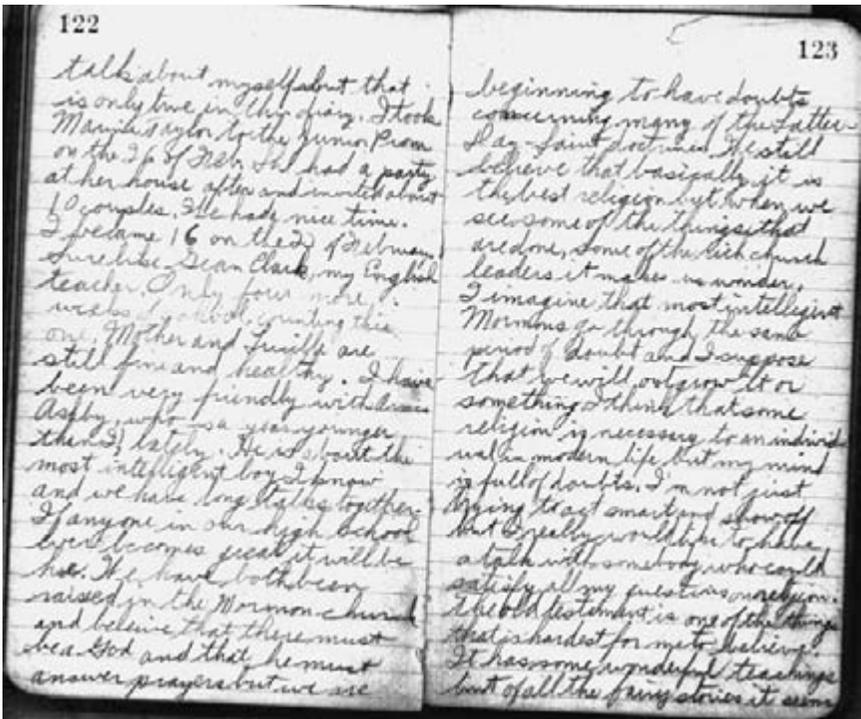
Journal

I have been very friendly with Armis Ashby, who is a year younger than I, lately. He is about the most intelligent boy I know and we have long talks together. If anyone in our high school ever becomes great it will be he. We have both been raised in the Mormon Church and believe that there must be a God and that he must answer prayers but we are beginning to have doubts concerning many of the Latter-Day-Saint doctrines. We still believe that basically it is the best religion but when we see some of the things that are done, some of the rich church leaders it makes us wonder. I imagine that most intelligent Mormons go through the same period of doubt and I suppose that we will outgrow it or something. I think that some religion is necessary to an individual in modern life but my mind is full of doubts. I'm not just trying to act smart and show off but I really would like to have a talk with somebody who could satisfy all my questions on religion. The old testament is one of the things that is hardest for me to believe. It has some wonderful teachings but of all the fairy stories it seems in many of its books to be one of the most fairylike and yet some of our straight lased Mormons hold to every word as the word of God where anyone can see that millions of errors could creep in through faulty translations, the insertions of the translators own ideas etc. I am going to continue going to church in the hope that someday I will be able to have everything cleared up. I know that many of my ideas contradict themselves but I intend studying until everything is straight.

I quote that at length because VainB feels a bit proud about how that kid goes on facing a range of philosophical questions. Had he ever heard the word “philosophy”? Probably, but for him the questions are all “religious.”

More than four years later, having gone back and forth again and again over many such issues and reading (superficially) a good deal of philosophy, the

10. These days free agency is mentioned even less often than it was then, while obedience has become even more prominent. The index to the hymnals now shows a great rise in “obedience” and a sad fall in “free agency.”



My handwritten journal, at age sixteen

troubled young man reported two interviews he was subjected to before being allowed to become a missionary. He wrote the following in his journal about both interviews:

I felt the web of insidious phraseology [that they insisted on my employing] tightening about my once freely-thinking (not free-thinking) mind.¹¹ Such phrases as “Thy servant,” “thy prophet,” “thy great work,” found a far too ready and unthinking way to my lips.—I hereby swear to not be fooled into religious blindness, into sentimental piety, into dogmatic belief. I will keep my perspective, if it is humanly possible.

And then the conflicting Self intrudes—the voice that would later produce many of my pro-religion arguments, especially in my book on the “rhetoric of assent”:¹²

11. Again, in all journal quotations, the parenthetical marks are “his,” not “mine.” The few I intrude are always in brackets.

12. *Modern Dogma and the Rhetoric of Assent* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974).

I will also try to keep from doubting where belief is justified. There is a possibility that J. Smith did see God: although it is in a way unimportant. I should admit it if I can see enough reason; there is a possibility that the “authority” of the priesthood is important: if it is, I should not deny the importance when it is shown to me.

From then on, as different objections and problems arise, the journals are full of similar Self-Splits—most of them kept secret by Hypocrite-Booth.¹³

THE INFLUENCE OF OUTSIDERS’ BEHAVIOR

Putting *belief* questions aside, how about *code* conflicts? As troublesome ideas kept poisoning the clear waters of faith, I had my first brief encounter with outside *behavior* as a Boy Scout traveling to Washington, D.C., in 1937, for the celebration of the organization’s founding in—was it 1912? I was excited by almost everything I saw: the huge buildings, the museums, the stockyards. I saw almost nothing offensive—except the nauseating stockyard slaughtering in Chicago—because our pious leaders kept us pretty close together as a gang of Mormon scouts. Our tour was carefully organized to feature monuments and buildings celebrating the glory of our founding fathers. (I was, however, deeply shocked—and ravished—by the many nude paintings in the art galleries.)

My only memory of shocking immorality on that trip was not “out there”; it was the behavior of a man I had thought devout. When our train stopped in Denver for reloading, we went to a snack shop, where our stout, bossy, “bishop-looking” scout leader ordered a cup of coffee. That was shattering. How could a decent scout leader ever drink a cup of coffee?

Five years later, as a missionary in the Midwest (you’ll meet him at length in chapter 6), I was for the first time surrounded daily by the Outside, good and bad, even as I defended, preached about, and often celebrated the Inside. Having decided that my “mission” was not to get people “under the baptismal water” but “to do good in the world,” I found myself fascinated by the beliefs and practices of other religions. When I performed funeral services and baptisms (I never tried to do any actual converting, but as I “made friends for

13. A word about these journal entries I rely on. Some friendly readers of drafts have praised them, agreeing that they strengthen my portrait of the lifetime Self-Splits. But others have insisted on a lot of cutting—and I have often obeyed, painfully. VainB comforts me with Hemingway’s claim that when you feel you’re cutting out good stuff, you know you’re writing really well.

the Church,” some conversions did occur), I remember actually wishing that we Mormons had some ceremonies as “spiritual” as what I found in Catholic services. As I read voraciously the works of philosophers and theologians, hoping to find some compromise between inside and outside, faith and reason, my devoted Self kept fighting back, wrestling with the conflict almost daily in my journals.

Meanwhile, surrounded every day by people violating what I’d been taught were divine commands, what happened to my own obedient behavior? Well, missionaries are ordered never even to touch a girl, and I touched none for two long years—though I came close to “touching” Jeanne Wacker when she visited me on her way to college even farther “back East.” Violating Church rules by meeting down in the Loop, we spent most of our time listening to music in record shops. But once in her hotel room, Luster-Booth thought a bit about the “possibilities” and then thought harder about what Jeanne would think about it—especially about his weird, official undergarments—while MoralB kept saying, “Absolutely not,” and won.

Surrounded by code violators, MoralB felt a lot of genuine condemnation of those sinners. But nevertheless, honestly I must report (remembering Jeanne Wacker) that LusterB was simultaneously often longing for some sex. I remember his driving the mission car along a dark Chicago street one night. He looked up at the lights in apartment buildings and suddenly was beating time on the steering wheel: “Forty copulations and I’ve got none!”

So, even while MoralB felt deep contempt for those outsiders, who obviously were sinning from morn to night, I had to struggle with a rebel-Self who wanted “out”—or wanted at least some version of “free agency.” Occasionally I felt driven to prove my independence.

Memory, 1943

After about fifteen months of fairly strict obedience, he (I can’t quite say “I”) decided it was time to have his first cup of coffee ever, to prove his independence—his Free Agency. He sneaked down from Logan Square Headquarters to the Loop, found an obscure coffee shop, looked carefully up and down the street to make sure no one saw him, slunk in, bought a cup, gulped it hurriedly, sneaked out, and hurried back to his job as pious Mission Secretary. Memory says that he felt himself a considerably freer spirit than he had been an hour before. He felt not a touch of guilt and a tiny bit of pride, because by then he thought that the anticoffee rule was silly.

I’m not so sure now that “silly” codes like that—“wear your yarmulke” or “kneel before entering your pew” or “pray every hour or so”—are mistakes. They can be important not only because they teach kids that there *are* genuine

standards but also because they provide a chance to feel independent by breaking a rule that really doesn't matter much. If I were a kid trying to demonstrate my individuality now, living in any American city, where could I turn? To drugs? To a metal ring in my penis? Perhaps a good self-help book for parents these days might read, "Provide your kids with at least a few silly—or at least trivial—rules, so that they can enjoy breaking them without disaster."

The code conflicts inevitably heightened after I was drafted in 1944, soon after being released as a missionary.

Memory

I'm having a physical examination at the army Placement Depot (is that the right name?). The sergeant hands me a bottle and says, "Just piss in that." I smile at him and say—of course, intending it as playful—"Do you mind if I just urinate?" He scowls as if he'd like to hit me, then stalks away angrily.

The point? I had never heard anyone say "piss" except "behind the barn." And behind my smile I had been a bit shocked by his language in violation of what I'd been taught.

After two days in that Draft Center (what *was* it called?) the fringer began what turns out to be hundreds of journal entries about what he never called the "shocking immorality of the outside."

April 15, 1944, Camp Douglas

It has been interesting to note the progressive relaxation of behaviour standards during the last two days. Yesterday morning there were many who were silent, seemingly refined. Tonight I know of no one, including myself, who has not used profanity, & Bill Gay and I are the only two who have avoided obscenity. Some of them have gone out of their way to let me know (it has almost seemed) that humanity at its worst is worse than I had thought it. One particular "joe" has not entered one conversational piece without at least two "f___"s and a "bastard" or so. This is not so bad in itself—if it meant no more than "God-damn" means when said by the average soldier, I wouldn't care. But the spirit of obscenity is in the obscene words. When joe says "f___" he means "f___," & not just as a convenient expletive. (The tough-minded reader, if there ever is one beside myself, must excuse these bowdlerish "f___"s. They are justified, if not by the probability of so-called tender readers, but by my own need of leaning over backwards to prevent barbarization.)¹⁴

14. As I copy that, I can't help thinking of the current policies that the *New York Times* and *Chicago Tribune* have on obscenities. When Gov. Bush, candidate for the presidency, got

The kind of *excessively* aggressive “lapsing” that HypocriteB has always avoided and condemned is dramatized by an episode in a little office in Shrivenham, England, in the summer of ’45, where the army had established a mock university for GIs waiting for shipment home. I had been “hired,” “promoted,” to instructor of English composition. Some American professors had been brought over to fill slots. I was taken to the major in charge to have my job explained, and with him there was a distinguished-looking man in civilian clothes. The major said,

“Oh, Private Booth, this is Professor Kimball Young, here to teach sociology. Professor Young, you may be interested to know that Private Booth is from Utah.” (I already knew that Kimball Young was Brigham Young’s grandson. I had actually read a good share of his book analyzing the sociology of polygamy.)

Young: “You a Mormon?”

Booth: “Yep.”

Young (pulling out a cigar from a pocket): “Jesus Christ! I just met another one two minutes ago. Let’s have a fuckin’ elders’ meeting!”

I laughed, not offended, just amused at the excessive need to express his independence. But I can imagine how awful that would have felt to me a few years earlier or to any Mormon who had experienced no lapsing: How could a grandson of Brigham Young act like that?!

And how could MoralB go on with this testing the boundaries of code breaking? Toward the end of my time in Germany, I had a buddy protect me for an evening while I got drunk for the first time in my life, both to see what it was like and to express my free agency. And a bit later, in graduate school I tried a cigarette—again to prove my independence. After lighting up, I said to my friend, “Into whose face do I blow the smoke?” Got a good laugh and never touched a cigarette again, except the one marijuana cigarette I sucked a bit years later in southern France, *without inhaling*. Shocking, right?

“No more of that silly stuff,” ThinkerB snarls. Let’s get back to some *thinking*.

caught calling a newspaperman an asshole, the papers’ policies did not allow reporters to use the word. Then in 2004, when Vice President Cheney used the f-word against a congressional opponent, the news coverage was amazing, with many deeply offended because Cheney said he felt better after his cursing. Having been in the army for two years, I no longer feel the slightest offense in such matters.

THE PURSUIT OF TRUTH VS. LOYALTY AND LOVE

In the thousands of discussions I've read regarding the conflict between religious faith and the pursuit of truth through reasoning, I can remember no full encounter with the anguish this conflict imposes on someone who genuinely cares for the welfare or feelings of those who are unquestioningly faithful. It's one thing to suffer internally from doubts about whether to believe this or that doctrine or literal historical claim. My journals are full of "secret" evidence that I took as hard proof that this or that historical claim made no sense. But as everyone trained in orthodoxy knows, discovery of such clashing truths can produce immense pain, especially when the doubter has to choose between silence and a form of "whistle-blowing." To report openly on this or that historical fact or flat contradiction of principles or shocking incoherency in scriptures could shake the faith of loved ones, wound them, or even lead them to withdraw their love.

To suppress the discovery and pretend to have no doubts may circumvent such pains. But is it defensible to let this suppression create a hypocritical Self? Just as Darwin worried about how his scientific theories would disturb his wife's faith, all of us who love our faithful friends and relatives worry when we discover a fact that flatly challenges dogmas.

That conflict became acute for me as my thinking led to rejection of belief after belief. It's not just that MoralB thought it wrong to hurt the devout; he not only feared being hated or punished but did not want to harm the Church. Those conflicts deepened as the years passed. These days I often find myself defending this or that dogma I consider absurd if taken literally but support because of its metaphorical or allegorical wisdom. The conflicts don't go away.

It's clear now that the intellectual conflicts began, if unconsciously, very early. When the six-year-old boy's Daddy died suddenly, after he and his Mama had prayed passionately for God to do the healing, the effect must have been deeply troubling to the boy's faith, though memory yields nothing about that until years had passed. Mama confessed to me a couple of decades later that her faith had been shattered by God's ignoring her prayers. Taught to believe that to pray with a sincere and contrite heart would produce direct answers from God, and knowing that her prayers had been absolutely sincere and contrite, the "answer" she got was no answer at all. But for decades she never gave any sign to anyone of her loss of faith; she righteously and defensibly practiced what I will later call "*hypocrisy-upward*."

I'm sure that this experience made her much more tolerant of my later lapsing than Phyllis's parents were of hers. The Barneses had had no sharp moment of rejected prayers, no death of a child or spouse. They believed

that every good in life depended on obeying God's commands. And when Mother Barnes saw signs of our lapsing—she could detect, for example, that we were no longer wearing the official undergarments—it felt to her like a total tragedy.¹⁵ Phyllis's father reported to us, long after Luella died, that she wept through many a night as she thought about having “lost” her lapsed daughter: they would not be united in heaven after death.

THE ORIGIN OF HYPOCRISY

To avoid inflicting pain on relatives and shame on ourselves, Phyllis and I always tried to portray ourselves to the family as sincere “Mormons.” We attended services fairly often. We showed no open signs of breaking the Word of Wisdom. We taught Church classes until the mid-Sixties. But perceptive observers—not only those who patted us on the shoulder to feel if the undergarments were there—could detect, in word and deed, that we were hypocrites.

Sometimes our posing was ludicrous. Once when her parents were coming to visit us in Indiana, due to arrive within a few hours, we were having lunch with the kids, with wine on the table. Suddenly the Barnes car drove into our driveway, an hour or two earlier than expected. Phyll and I scrambled frantically to get the wine out of sight.

Did we manage it? I think so. But I now wonder about the lesson in behavior that our action inevitably conveyed to Katherine and Richard (Alison was probably too young to do any interpreting). “Mom and Dad are hypocrites! Deceiving is the right way to go.”

Long before that episode, something about me had made the family anxious. In Mother Barnes's letters to me in Paris more than a year before the marriage, she intimated a lot of anxiety about me, while disguising it as proud confidence that I would be a totally devout Mormon. (Although Father Barnes was equally devout, he had done a lot of thinking about many of the issues that troubled me—especially, with his Ph.D. in chemistry, the conflicts between science and miracles. But he never showed any signs of genuine lapsing, and he always joined Luella in blaming me—seldom to my face—for having corrupted Phyllis.)

15. Active Mormons—those who have qualified to go through the Temple ceremony—are expected, or rather, required, to wear specially designed underwear that has been specifically blessed for the wearing. Special “holy” symbols, derived originally from the Free Masons (Joseph Smith had been one), cover the nipples and navel. The garments have changed greatly over the years. For my grandparents, the arms and legs had to be fully covered, and some (legend says) wouldn't even take them off to bathe. Today you can't tell for sure whether a jogger in shorts has garments underneath.

One of the worst times occurred much later when Mother Barnes agreed to come to Pennsylvania in order to help care for two-year-old Kathie while Phyllis was giving birth to Richard. With Phyllis in the hospital, Luella and I confronted each other daily, and she saw it as the proper time to convert me back into total devotion. Here's my half-miserable journal entry of that time—ignoring the praise that loving Luella deserves for traveling cross-country to tend a grandchild. I can't remember any more painful example of how my Selves quarreled.

July 28, 1951

Presence of Mother B. makes a wonderfully unpleasant-pleasant situation. She is good with Kathie, and in everything but her passion for doctrinal conformance, a "good" woman. Yet all her qualities depend, or seem to depend, on her doctrinal conformance. With Phyllis away, I find it very trying to live with her. She delivers me ill-disguised sermons, in the form of anecdotes about acquaintances of hers who have been physically blessed or cursed according to their conformity or lack of conformity. She [recently] picked up Renan's *Life of Jesus*, read a bit, and confronted me about it, horrified.

"What do you think of that book of yours I was just reading?"

I spar, to avoid pain, both for her and myself. About the only thing I do well with her is look her in the eye. With all her feeling of virtue and superiority, and with all the guilt I would expect myself to feel (having put on my undergarments, after a fashion, for the duration of her stay), with all the wrongness of my position, I feel completely in the right, because of all my fears about this really frightful situation, the threat of hurting her is predominant. . . .

How long an open discussion can be averted at this rate I don't know. My novel [the never-finished *Polygamy Smith*], if it is published, will break everything into the open, but probably before that some slip of Kathie's or some chance discovery will throw everything into the light of their horrible disappointment. They are so vulnerable—that is my chief feeling—so awfully vulnerable. . . . I shrink from the revelation that must sooner or later come to them of our defection.

It's obvious that the diarist is understating his pain and anxiety: his whole life—especially when facing the loving devotee, hour by hour—is in tension. VainB, who has always longed for total approval of everyone, is losing it.

HypocriteB had suffered intensely in a nasty event a year earlier, when we were still in Chicago. Our ward bishop and his counselor made an official visit to complain about our irregular attendance.

May 1, 1950

The Bishop's visit was painful. I hedged: "Each person must work out his own destiny, Bishop; right now my habits are to stay away from church, and you must respect my decision. Perhaps later I'll discover my error and return." But I said nothing about the impossibility of return, in his sense of the word. I could no more stand up to that man and tell him that, to me, everything he believes—everything—is a colossal lie than I could stand up and tell mother the same thing.

Why would I have put it like that? I certainly did not believe that every Mormon belief the bishop accepted was false! The antiliteralist sounds foolishly arrogant to me—but he's anxious.

The high point of his plea came when he suggested that, although I said I enjoyed staying home on Sunday with my family more than going to church, I had no assurance that God would not see fit to take my family away from me, as punishment.

"Now, you say that your daughter has been having several bad colds. You don't know but what they might turn to pneumonia, and then where'd you be!" That he is an MD made, I suppose in his eyes, his whole plea more effective. Then his companion capped the whole thing with: "Wayne, you must have spent from \$1200 to \$1500 dollars on your mission. Don't lose that investment!"

I was tremendously guilt-ridden throughout the interview. To lose the esteem of those one esteems—and I do like, at least, some of the members—is always tough for me.

The bishop would no doubt have been convinced, two decades later, that my son Richard's death resulted strictly from our misbehavior.

Will my assertions here that I still believe in God—according to my definition—lead the stricken ones to forgive me? Will it help to confess my genuine embrace of many of the Church's values, especially the exhortation to serve others? Will it hurt to confess to more moments of HypocriteB's concealment of actual beliefs? Would it help if I offered his "mythic" embrace of many obviously impossible "historical" claims that most Mormons claim to embrace literally? Two Selves dispute about it:

ThinkerB: You've been overly hypocritical throughout here; you've not offered a single example of the historical discoveries that led you to reject this

or that central Mormon claim. Are you just a coward and hypocrite, afraid of expressing the truth? Are you simply imitating the Mormon authorities who, over the years, have hidden what they knew about the atrocious, “God-driven” 1857 massacre of 120 “gentiles” in Mountain Meadows, Utah? Is serving *your* faith more important than what you know as the *truth*?

Family-and-Church-LoverB: You’re absolutely wrong; the *LIFE* is going much too far with its silly report of objections. What’s the point of revealing all these doubts and conflicts that will upset friend after friend, relative after relative? You’ve either got to cut all that or stipulate that the book cannot be published until the year 2050. Or, at the very least, you could explain why, for you, so much of the Bible and Book of Mormon present wonderful mythical truths. Just last week I heard you arguing with friends that the Adam and Eve story gives a truer account of our origins, allegorically, than the one offered by dogmatic Darwinists.

LIFER: Shut up, you two. Why can’t you just let me get on with it?

HOW TO HANDLE THE GUILT

I won’t list more of my “behavior lapses” and “belief lapses.” But what about the question of obedience to those basic LDS commandments that still do seem admirable?

One that I admire most is the strict requirement to give the Church a full 10 percent of annual income. If I were God, I would have made it more progressive, with 90 percent from the billionaires and .05 percent from the impoverished, but it is still a daily, yearly reminder that something in “the world” is more important than merely adding to your possessions. Statistical studies show that Mormons give a lot more to their Church than do members of other denominations; they might also give more to other charities. Phyllis’s father told us, and I believe him, that his annual giving was about 20 percent.

Yet it has been many years since I paid a full 10 percent tithe to the Church, and by now I give relatively little. The definition of what is “full” is a bit shaky, and some are inevitably tempted to lie a bit to get or stay in. That was the route I took at first. Here’s how I put it in a letter to Phyllis from Paris four months before our marriage. The letter shows the soldier as a lot more hostile to this commandment than I feel now.

26 Feb. 1946

Dearest, . . .

Mother just wrote me this: “Wayne, I wrote a letter to you explaining that the Bishop said he could not give a recommend to the temple for anyone

who had not paid tithing. Don't let this spoil your marriage." I had been a little angry at the tone of an earlier letter written by your parents, but I must confess that nothing they said was as obviously full of evil portent as that quote from Mother. I'll probably send some tithing, but we must be honest and admit to ourselves at least what it is I shall be doing. The Church says, in effect, you may buy your way into eternal marriage. Mother says, in effect, you mustn't spoil your chances for a happy marriage by refusing to pay the blackmail. And I say, in effect, I'll pay the blackmail, not for the eternal marriage, which, if possible under any circumstances, would not be aided by paying a purchase tax, not for the happiness of which Mother speaks, but simply to keep her and the Bishop and all our relatives and friends and pious well-wishers quiet. The way the whole system is cleverly contrived to keep anyone who has emotional ties within the system safely tied in every other way, angers me, my love, positively angers me. I'm nearly as angry as my B.Y.U. prof was when the church first enforced the "no tithing—no job [at BYU]" policy. As if anyone who pays tithing in order to keep his job would gain anything spiritually from having given. But I'll show them. For every dollar I send home to the nice, considerate Bishop (and the trouble is, he really is nice and considerate and thinks he's doing a fine favor), I'll give two dollars to the KPD [German Communist Party]. That'll show 'em!

So I sent some cash to a bishop, and Phyllis and I were married four months later *for eternity* (in a manner of speaking). That time my lies were utterly defensible—the kind that don't hurt *anybody*: what I label *hypocrisy-upward*.

But again I have to ask, does the "good" of maintaining family love outweigh the "good" of being truthful?¹⁶

Eleven years later, HypocriteB did lie, blatantly. When my mother decided to marry Ray Davis after thirty years of widowhood, I wanted very much to attend her wedding ceremony in the Salt Lake Temple. But of course I couldn't attend without our bishop's "recommend," and he knew that I had been moving closer and closer to a point *beyond* the fringe. On the one hand, I was still a successful teacher of an adult Sunday School class, but on the other hand . . . well, the bishop had so many doubts about me that he sent me from Richmond to the stake president in Indianapolis, about seventy

16. For a wonderful current revival of traditional accounts of how to deal with conflicting goods and evils, see Michael Ignatieff's *The Lesser Evil* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004). He works hard to restore our ability to think hard—following Aristotle's *phronesis* (prudence), Machiavelli's *virtù*, and the Jesuits' "casuistry"—about when and how to balance one evil against another.

miles away, to be interrogated. HypocriteB managed to get his signature by employing promises, some faked and some genuine. I could state sincerely my devotion to Mormonism, and I felt fairly comfortable making an utterly fake promise to pay full 10 percent in the future.¹⁷

Since then I've never subjected myself to an interview, and I've never paid 10 percent. How, then, can I go on calling myself MoralB? Well, it's easy: every year at tax time I obey the commandment—according to *my* definition of what it *ought* to mean. I calculate my total charitable giving for the year to make sure that it comes to *at least* 10 percent of our total income.

That proves that I'm still in good standing “up there,” right? It is my God's will that I devote one-tenth of my “increase” to His causes, right? Actually, in the view of all of my current Selves, divided or united, when we consider our present income, the gifts ought to be a hell of a lot higher than 10 percent. Sometimes they are.

But why, then, do I not give more to the Church itself? You'll find answers to that question, explicit and implicit, through many other parts of this book. And you'll detect, as at this moment, a lot of suppression of annoyance, even anger, about some Church purchases squandering money that tithe-payers thought was going to God's causes. So I feel a lot of uneasiness about it—not quite guilt, perhaps, but . . .

WHO WINS WITHIN ME NOW?

That my youthful version of “inside” is totally abandoned should be obvious by now. I'm afraid that some Mormon readers here will misinterpret what I've said so far as too much on the side of the skeptical ThinkerB, showing nothing but contempt for the sexist-patriarchal-puritanical-racist culture that clashed so sharply with what I later embraced “outside.” “You've made it sound,” they must feel, “as if you had been ‘enclosed,’ ‘dominated,’ practically ‘enslaved,’ and then you were ‘freed’—even ‘saved’—to become the VainB you are stupidly proud of being right now.”

But I hope it's obvious that I see it all quite differently. Though in some ways I was freed by moving “out,” in other ways I was endangered. I was often tempted to be sucked into a culture—as in that example of actually trying marijuana—that strikes me today as in many respects far more threatening to my diverse Selves than the culture I was raised in. Obvious in everything

17. In the Temple, by now a bit out of date on procedures, I was initially puzzled to see all of us in attendance pinned with a little card reading “Time Only.” It took me a few minutes to remember that since Mama was already married for eternity to my father, she could not be married to Ray “for eternity”: it was for “time only.”

that follows, as in my “faked” annual tithing, is the sustained centrality of Mormon influence—conscious and unconscious.

MormonB (whispering): You see, I am absolutely still a Mormon.

ThinkerB (from his intellectual pedestal, wineglass in hand): That claim is just absurd! Don't you see that it's not hypocrisy-*upward* you're practicing as you go on using the Mormon label; you're just CheaterB practicing plain immoral cheating. Don't you feel annoyed right this minute by the new Church policy on X, Y, or Z? And what about your daily violations of the Word of Wisdom—tea, coffee, alcohol (though never cigarettes)?

LIFER: Well, really—can't we agree that those violations are unimportant? If the complaints about the Church leaders' bossiness disappeared, you know that we would have no trouble abstaining from caffeine and wine. We could even have the thrill of attending Temple ceremonies!

Quarrel over, temporarily.

I won't allow my moralizing self to spend time adding another tirade to the innumerable public attacks on the grotesque, often cruel, sins in our present culture; he is especially tempted to deal with how the wealthy and their minions in Washington are behaving. Instead I just want to underline how much greater the clash was for someone raised in the fold than it ever can be for someone raised—even in the most devout religious family—in our mass-mediated consumerist culture, in which we meet from too many directions the claim that “anything goes.” There is no longer—for too many—any remotely clear ethical code. My quarrel with the “loss of ethics” has been implicit in all of my teaching and writing, much more so than I often realized. As some critics have lamented, Booth is nothing *but* a moralizer.¹⁸

I still believe that being enculturated with moral norms can be harmful when the code is imposed thoughtlessly and with sheer dominating authority. But I can't give up my gratitude for having been indoctrinated with a code, at least some portions of which I still embrace—even claiming to do so “religiously.” Like many on the political and religious “right” and “left,” I fear our “true values” are disastrously eroding. I also fear that too many, on the right and left, pursue their codes destructively, as when an anti-abortionist kills someone for favoring free choice or our president takes us to war because he is sure God wants him to.

18. It's hard to resist here citing the “values” implicitly taught by most successful TV series or the “values” pursued by our business world, as revealed in business after business since the Enron revelations in 2002.

My main point is thus my daily gratitude for having been indoctrinated into the *fact* that there are serious moral limits to individualistic code breaking. There are genuine values in the world, and when you violate them you—even if you are a multimillionaire president of the country—you are guilty. I feel lucky (or blessed) to have been spared the miseries that I see others suffering or producing in their victims when they “go too far,” thinking that “anything goes” and shouting “I’m OK, you’re OK” or “Greed is good!” The Mormon teaching that “standards are real, not just invented,” though formulated differently in different decades, continues with me now, and I see many moments when, if I had not been indoctrinated from day one, my so-called Thinking might have landed me in disaster.