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## My Many Selves

Wayne C. Booth

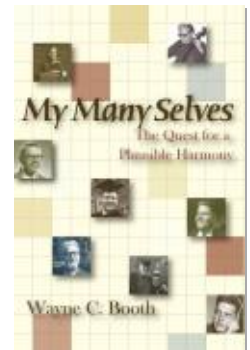
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## Chapter Six

# The Hypocritical Mormon Missionary Becomes a Skillful Masker, and Discovers “Hypocrisy-Upward”

*He said that everybody was at home in America because nobody was. Each one of us is out there every day creating himself for the crowd. The ones that start out knowing who they are, they are just repeating what they've been told.*

—*The Best of Jackson Payne* by Jack Fuller

*Literary egotism consists in playing the role of self, in making oneself a little more natural than nature, a little more oneself than one was a few minutes before.*

—Paul Valéry

*Man is a make-believe animal—he is never so truly himself as when he is acting a part.*

—William Hazlitt

*Hypocrisy is the highest compliment to virtue.*

—François de La Rochefoucauld

*Man is least himself when he talks in his own person. Give him a mask and he will tell the truth.*

—Oscar Wilde

*The human face is really like one of those Oriental gods: a whole group of faces juxtaposed on different planes; it is impossible to see them all simultaneously.*

—Marcel Proust

*Professor Lambert hates sham, as I do (I wonder, sometimes, if I am not all show, with no real qualities—I try hard not to be a hypocrite).*

—Wayne C., College Freshman, November 1938

*One of my reasons for liking Bergson is the beautiful way in which he suits my recent ‘conversion’ back to spirituality, my reversion from materialism.*

—Elder Wayne Booth, September 1942,  
illicitly reading philosophy while a missionary

For several days now my left knee has screamed at me as I walk. This morning, as I limped into our university library, I saw a colleague far across the hall and quickly stopped limping—and walked toward him smiling cheerfully but giving myself much greater pain than when limping.

We had a brief, good chat about his essay on Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, and I walked away still without limping, showing no signs of the pain and aging I felt. At least I think so. Turning the corner toward the elevator, now out of sight, I allowed my more honest "Self" to limp again to reduce the pain.

Was that show of total health a masking of my inner self? Obviously—or at least I masked one of my selves, the pained one. I was playing a role, enacting a pain-free character, pretending to be in better health than I was. I did not want to plague my colleague—not a close friend but a scholar I admire—with my minor troubles. I presented to him the healthy scholar; for all I know he may have been concealing his own pains. Thus we both acted out our roles—just as we all act out our diverse roles much of the time.

Is that kind of hypocrisy defensible or a morally contemptible gesture that ought to be labeled as cheating? I have friends who think it contemptible. I think it defensible, and in this chapter I'll explain some of the origins of that defense of "hypocrisy-upward." (If the notion that some forms of hypocrisy are defensible bothers you, have a look at your classical Greek dictionary: the word originally just meant "acting out," as on the stage. And if you don't think that some "acting out" in our everyday lives contributes to well-being, have a look at the last time you shaved, or put on lipstick, or bit your tongue when speaking out would have been disastrous. You still may want to call the chapter something like "A Hypocritical Moralist Struggles to Defend Himself.")

#### *Anecdote*

When visiting American Fork in the summer break from two years of college (Mama moved us to Provo for her new job), I accidentally left my copy of H. G. Wells's *Outline of History* in Gramma Booth's house. She and Aunt Relva read it, or at least some of it. They were appalled, and they anxiously grilled me.<sup>1</sup>

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1. As you encounter the flood of journal entries in this chapter, you may join some readers who have almost shouted, "Too many." Others have said they wish for even more. To

*Mid-July, 1940*

"The Bible is the word of God," Grandmother said, "therefore anything in disagreement with the story of creation is wrong."

Of course I was silent. I hadn't the courage to say, "I don't believe the story of creation, I believe in evolution. I admire Wells for his scientific attitude." I disliked being hypocritical, but I almost had to be silently so, as they would have thought me abandoned to the devil if I had said what I believed. . . . I hate to be around people who force me to be a hypocrite. (I don't mind lying, factually, in the least, but to have to disown one's beliefs for unworthy reasons—fear of dislike, fear of a scene, laziness—is terrible; I don't seem to be able to get away from it.)

Occasionally I find that young hypocrite writing a diatribe in his diary against other people's hypocrisy, even while providing loads of evidence about his own. (He had never even heard of Aristotle's *phronesis* or of the grand Jesuitical tradition of "casuistry" or of Machiavellian defenses of political lying, *virtù*—all three of which could be labeled as defenses of hypocrisy-upward.) On August 19, 1940, after writing a lengthy encomium of Plato's *Apology*, he laments,

I wish I had the honesty and strength to tell people what they don't know. I've tried it (that is, I've tried to point out to some people that I *think* they display hypocrisy, dishonesty, or lack of wisdom) but because of my youth, in part, and in part because of the unpleasantness of what I say, I am put down as being presumptuous. I'm going to do more of it—and I'm going to try to know a few things before I die, although I suppose I'll always be in doubt. If I can avoid becoming self-complacent, "knowing," as hypocritically as others, I will have done a lot. If I can help others to be honest in facing their ignorance, I'll have done more.

So far we see him employing the term only in its popular and utterly pejorative sense. But without knowing it, he is wrestling with the borderline between defensible and indefensible posing.

On August 26, 1941, after reading *Crime and Punishment* and speculating about Raskolnikov's immoral behavior, I recorded how my irrigation-companion and I were cheating the university with our reported hours (see chapter 2). Then I wrote,

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me, the very quantity dramatizes one key point about my life and this *LIFE*: the obsession with "getting it all down." That *is* my life. So—just skip at will.



Elder Booth on a mission

Yesterday I gave the “theme thought” in the Sunday School officers and teachers meeting. I hadn’t much time to prepare . . . but I believe I gave a good 12–14 minute talk, on honesty, of all things. I didn’t pull punches but gave them what I thought (within minor limits of maintaining silence on some things)—consequently I had no difficulty expressing myself. If teachers only would be honest with their pupils “what a great splash that would be. . . .”<sup>2</sup>

I find myself inclined to let ends justify means, to a certain degree. That is, honest as I try to be to myself, I often don’t hesitate to lie to others when I think it will help them, which is often. This ‘concession’ used to irk me terribly—it still does in principle—but I have decided one can be honest in important things, [practice] personal integrity in matters of self-analysis, etc., and still allow a little slipping at times. Of course this slipping hardly ever goes beyond saying I like your hat, when I don’t really.

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2. Note the parentheses: he is being *slightly* dishonest as he preaches on honesty. Obviously it has not yet occurred to the nineteen-year-old that all successful teachers do some posing; to succeed they must exercise some skill in performance.

How did ThinkerB land in all this messy thinking about hypocrisy, when he had been practicing it for most of his life and knew of so many others practicing it as daily routine?

I don't know the answer, but I do know why the thinking then came to a head. He accepted a "call" to serve two years as a Mormon missionary in the North Central States Mission.<sup>3</sup> That signing on shocked most of those who knew him intimately. He was not commanded to accept it. He just decided to, after internal conflict. As he put it to himself and to skeptical friends but never to the Church authorities, he was not going "out there" to "get people ducked into the baptismal water" but "to do good in the world" and "to start liberalizing the Church from within." But his days and nights were full of anxiety about how much hypocrisy such a decision entailed. His family members were pushing hard for acceptance. But his rising doubts about many Church doctrines and practices argued against it. Most painful was the internal suspicion that the decision to become a missionary was tainted by the fact that it would postpone his being drafted into the war. (Missionaries, as "clergymen," were not subject to the draft.)

*May 17, 1941*

The big objection in my mind is the imminence of the draft (and war?) and the questions, "Have I let the possibility of being drafted influence my decision to go on a mission? Am I using a mission, unconsciously, as a means of avoiding my responsibilities as a citizen?" It doesn't matter so much what people think, but, although I scorn to think of myself lacking integrity, I can't be sure that my decision is entirely ulterior-motive-free. I don't think it is, though. I almost wish they would lower the draft age to 20 [he's 20], to relieve me from making any moral decision.

He inevitably wrestles with that dilemma again and again, though usually coming out strongly with reasons like this, written a month later. As you read, I wish you could hear his contrasting actual words in this or that encounter with friends or Church officials.

I hope to get, for possibly the only time in my life, the feeling which comes only to those who devote their whole time to the service of others (useful service or not). . . . I feel that I have begun to synthesize a philosophy which can prove useful to people in leading their lives. . . . I have *started* to realize a

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3. Some of what follows is borrowed from my article, "Confessions of a Hypocritical (Ex)-Missionary," *Sunstone* 21, no. 1 (March 1998): 25–36. Responses to the article have been mixed, some expressing anger for what they see as an effort to undermine faith.

harmony between spirituality and a quest for learning, between science and religion, which has completely changed, in form, at least, my rank skepticism of a few months ago. . . . I think I can at least help a little in making available to people . . . the rather inspiring teaching of the L.D.S. concerning intelligence, eternal progression; second, the enlightened opinions of leading men, LDS & non-LDS concerning the realness of human communication with God, the greatness of human destiny, etc. [The confusion of the labels is real.]

If I cannot do even this happy message, at least I can stimulate people . . . to read and think about . . . these things. . . . If I . . . can inspire many people to a belief in the need for a working toward human betterment in this life, and incidentally preparing for improvement in a possible next life, I would have done more good than all the missionaries who spend their time trying to get people baptised.

The key moment of deciding about the mission was a long conversation with Professor Poulson:

*Scene:* The northwest corner of the Brigham Young University farmland, where I irrigate the farm, for sixteen to eighteen hours a day, sitting at the end of the furrows and reading my pocket Plato as I wait for the water to arrive. This evening, Professor Poulson stops his car as he sees me pulling up a headgate. As the water starts flowing, I move over to the car, put one hip boot on his fender, and we talk and talk—on through the beautiful sunset, on into the twilight, slapping mosquitoes, talking, talking, mainly about the Church.

*Poulson:* Don't throw out the baby with the bathwater. You keep leaping ahead into areas you know nothing about. The fact that some Church leaders are dishonest doesn't mean that the Church is valueless. Every institution, including every church, has some dishonest leaders. Surely you're not going to relapse into saying that because the Church claims to be divinely led and its leaders are clearly not divine, it must be valueless when judged in human terms.

*Wayne:* No, but I don't see any reason to . . .

*Poulson:* You shouldn't be looking only for reasons *to*. You should be looking only for genuine reasons *not to*. Here you are, raised in a marvelously vital, generous-spirited tradition, surrounded by an astonishing number of virtuous, intelligent people whose Church has helped them find ways of living effectively. You come along and ask them for reasons *to* do what they are doing! What you should ask for, before giving up anything they offer you, is really sound reasons against going along.

*Wayne:* But I just can't stand even *sitting* in Church without speaking up when somebody talks nonsense. Last Sunday they were talking about personal devils, and some of them really believed that stuff.

We don't bother to repeat the story of the professor's interrogation in Salt Lake City about the devils (see chapter 2). Poulson, at age fifty-five, owns what he calls "the best collection of books on Mormon history." He has surreptitiously shown me the collection, tucked away in his basement.

We talk on into the dark. . . . I can still feel myself standing there, chilling a bit in my wet socks and boots, worn out after twenty hours of work (not hard labor, admittedly), changing from one foot to the other—and exhilarated beyond description: this is what life can be, this is one of the great times. I'll stay here forever if he'll only go on.

*Poulson:* What you should be doing, instead of trying to undermine other men's beliefs, is discovering beliefs that you yourself can live by. And you'll find most of them being taught right in the Church by the people you're attacking. That's why I keep saying, "Show me a better Church." I'm not determined to stay with this one if you'll find me another one that does as much good and that has fewer corrupt leaders. . . .

*Wayne:* But that's not good enough. Don't we have the right to hope for an institution that is at least honest with itself? I long for a cause that I can give myself to as fully as believers give themselves to the Church—like my father and my grandparents did.

*Poulson:* Well, I'm sure you can find it if you want to badly enough. . . . *This* one could easily become *that* one to you if you want it to badly enough. This Church has plenty of members like that; all causes do. . . . What they really need is a corps of missionaries who know everything that's wrong about the Church—and who yet don't care because they know that it can be an instrument for good in their hands.

In the dark now, the moon not quite ready to rise, the stars brighter than most of us ever see these days, the "old" man's gray hair is faintly visible inside the car. When I ask whether he is suggesting that a half-believer like me should go on a mission, he answers sharply.

*Poulson:* Why not? If you could work not to get the people under the water in the greatest possible numbers but to tune in to them where you find them and help them to grow—why not? Can you think of a better way to spend two years than setting out to help other people with no concern about your own welfare? That's what the missionary system is, at its best.



. . . If you worked hard, if you thought hard, and if you could keep from worrying too much about your own reputation—you might make a real difference for a lot of people.

After following Poulson's advice and announcing his acceptance, the internally divided young man continued to get complaints from those who knew he could never honestly say, "I *know* that Joseph Smith is the only true modern prophet," or, "I *know* that the Book of Mormon was translated from gold plates given to Joseph Smith by the Angel Moroni."<sup>4</sup> Actually the budding hypocrite revealed those doubts to only a tiny percentage. And he naturally worried about whether he would be able to endure many more of the hypocritical moments he was facing.

*Sept. 24, 1941 [still three months to go]*

Will a mission be an enduring thing for me? Will I actually help people or will I only make them unhappy? Can I serve two years in an organization such as the missionary system is, doubting as I do, and not have irreconcilable differences arise between my mission presidents, my companions, and me? If the differences don't come to a head, will I be spoiled as a thinking being . . . as thousands of missionaries have been? Will the insidious self-hypnotism ["conversion"] get me, too? Will I start out by making concessions for the sake of peace, and end up believing in the things I have conceded to? Or will I come back bitter against the church as now functioning?

These are important questions, and they have me worried: but I am determined to work out a harmony without compromising my integrity or antagonizing my colleagues. I believe the missionary system needs me.

It was not long before he discovered that he had landed himself in more turbulent waters than he could have predicted. Even Poulson, who had served as a totally un hypocritical orthodox missionary before doing the historical research that destroyed for him the divine origin of Joseph Smith's golden plates, could not have foreseen what this "second-generation liberal" would encounter. Unlike the devout younger Poulson, I became a missionary only *pretending* to be committed to the *official* mission.

As I lived every hour with companions and supervisors, including many who took literal acceptance as even more important than love or charity or

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4. Note for non-Mormons: Joseph Smith founded the Church on the claim that God had led him to a holy text recorded on gold plates—a history of some of the "Twelve Tribes" who came to America many centuries before Columbus (some by submarine!).

any of the other virtues, I became submerged in the daily task of translating my internal language into public language that would not harmfully offend either my missionary companions or the non-Mormons they addressed.

Sometimes my behavior then appears now as quite impressive hypocrisy-upward: balancing inner beliefs and external goods. But often it was not just dubious activity but downright cowardice or fraud. Many moments of hypocrisy can hardly be defended as constructive, as "upward." How could I ever defend my having acceded, in Cincinnati, to the local Mormon practice of refusing to allow blacks to partake of the holy sacrament in the chapel? We were ordered to deliver the "sacred bread and water" to the only family of black members, *at their cottage*, rather than allowing them to partake of it in the chapel. I did protest, mildly, to supervisors, with no effect. Why didn't I organize a real protest? Even now I fantasize about doing that and, of course, then being renounced and sent back to Utah to be drafted. What a hero that would have been, in a *LIFE* I could now take pride in writing! Instead we meet a coward, a "pious" cheater—only occasionally "doing good in the world."

The waffling, posing, sweet-talking ranged widely, going far beyond the everyday, unavoidable masking that most, maybe all, missionaries practice in order to project total piety from the podium. For me it was a daily, even hourly, suppression of my own true beliefs, intellectual and sometimes moral. It entailed systematic probing for rhetorical devices for defending or explaining this or that doctrine in ways that I could accept, *metaphorically*, while hoping to lead literalists to deal with it more thoughtfully.

#### RHETOROLOGY DISCOVERED

What interests me most about all that now is the training it gave me in the kind of rhetorical probing for sufficient shared ground that allows genuine dialogue to take place. Whatever we call it, this is not the mere practice of persuasion (what the rhetor does, honestly or dishonestly) and not the mere study of how people persuade (what the academic rhetorician does) but the study and practice of how to interrelate conflicting rhetorics: "How can I reconcile their rhetoric with mine, their surface codes with what I am sure are shared beliefs that are more important than all those literal claims? How can I get each side to understand the other?"

To practice that extreme effort at dialogue requires, of course, a lot of skill in hypocritical posing, especially when the speaker knows, for example, that the very words "Book of Mormon" carry opposite meanings for him and for his audience. "Inwardly I disagree with you strongly, on many crucial points, but outwardly I must seem *not* to, hoping that we can move closer and closer to some point where we *really* agree—and thus can make some progress together."

I gradually got better and better at that form of posing. Sometimes it was still in ways that many a devout Mormon would damn as just plain fraud, but often it deserved my adjective “upward”—as do the posings of leaders of all churches whenever they leave their “everyday” world behind and present a persona far more pious than the one who shopped for cars yesterday.

It’s true that the young hypocrite accomplished little in pursuing his goal of “liberalizing the Church from within.” But he learned how to pray in public in a language that joined the literalists while not violating his own meditations. He learned how to give sermons that woke people up, undermined their clichés, and led them to dwell on the central virtues and limits of Mormonism, without leading (most of the time) to angry attacks against him for heterodoxy. He learned how to conduct official funerals without producing annoying and pointless debate about whether there is literal life on “the other side.” In short, he learned from the orthodox what was really valuable in their orthodoxy.

He did so well at all that posing that the mission president chose him (to VainB’s great pride) as number one missionary: mission secretary at headquarters in Chicago. And he was all the while training himself, without knowing it, for a lifetime pursuit of rhetorical inquiry and the ethical borderlines it always lands us on.

That cheerful account of what he learned is much simpler and more affirmative than the picture he often gave in his journal. Reading the journal entries now, I often see him as totally discouraged, deeply depressed—never suicidal, but often thinking about giving up the mission.

Yet he managed to slog it out for two squirming years, wrestling almost daily in his journal over the question of just which religious ideas, if any, he could embrace. Like the history of many probers through their youth, his account reveals great swings from almost total rejection of all religious belief to excited recovery of ways to reconcile reason and faith. Sometimes his reports strike me now as silly or clumsy, sometimes as a bit pathetic, sometimes admirably insightful. Though he often defends his hypocrisy-upward, he never thinks very hard about its difference from harmful fraud.

And meanwhile his commitment to Mormonism constantly felt challenged by his commitment to “scientific” truth and to political service. It’s always as if his Selves were challenging one another: “If you really care most deeply about genuine, rational truth, you ought to quit; *but* if you care most deeply about human welfare, now or in the future, you should continue.” “If you want most strongly to avoid the sin of deceiving others, you must quit; *but* if you care most about improving their lives, even while you are posing, you should continue.”

One comfort came from the discovery of how many great thinkers supported religion, denying the hard clash between reason and faith. As he read

more and more in philosophers and mystics and religious psychologists—Plato, Henri Bergson, Aldous Huxley, Carl Jung, and so on—he experienced what he called a “feeling of oneness and sympathy for all life and especially all human life, the feeling of a creative and impelling force greater than oneself.” He was especially grateful for Jung’s saying “that he has never known a psychological problem that was not essentially a religious problem.” What a relief, he writes, to “find that religion can actually be defended by fully rational thinkers.”

But the threats of “hard reason,” according to his narrow definition, were never far removed. In entry after entry he struggled to reduce the cognitive dissonance between “religious belief” and “rationally defensible belief.” As he went on reading—Joyce, Kafka, Whitehead, Santayana, William James—he inevitably continued to wrestle with his critical view of the Church. As his first long year drew to a close, he had the idea of organizing Church liberals.

If all the so-called liberals . . . could organize . . . some beneficial changes could be wrought (might even be just plain made, without having to be wrought, but I’m sure it would be much more effective if they were wrought).

But then, in a long fascinating paragraph, which I shall spare you most of, he described the differences among the liberals and concluded that

the group who think as I do probably numbers no more than twenty at the most (and of course this is the *right* way, and all the others will eventually come to our position: of course!). Yes, we [the larger group of “liberals”] are a hodge-podge of mal-contents, and we’ll probably never get together.

While engaging in these inner intellectual battles, his external behavior mainly remained “pure.” He complied publicly—most of the time—with all of the commandments. Only rarely does he mention actual violations of Mormon codes, though there were quite a few. One brief example:

*Sept. 5, 1942*

We went [four missionaries taken as guests] to a highly picturesque place called the Beachcomber . . . the food was delicious and exotic. . . . Tea was served—and drunk only by me and Mr. Burgener [our host]: I was not going to let a foolishly specific interpretation of the word of wisdom spoil my enjoyment of the meal. If the other missionaries had not been along I’m sure I would have accepted Mr. B’s invitation to join him in a delicious rum preparation, but I could not. (The tea was enough non-conformity for any Casper Milquetoast, anyway.)

His decision to take a few classes at the University of Chicago could be considered a much greater violation of Church rules than any glass of wine or cup of tea could be: it was going off into threatening territory. While he complied with all the physical commandments, the hypocrisy-upward was almost always totally intellectual.

*January 31, 1943*

Santayana, withal his naturalism, says more favorable things about religion—even dogmatic religion—than I would be able to. What is worse, he convinces me of the justice of his comments, thus making me apologetic for all the time I've spent condemning my religion and my people.

How to know where to draw lines, that is the goal of the Life of Reason, and because S. has never had to break away from a conventional belief on his own initiative, he doesn't realize the difficulties involved in drawing lines; he acts as though any halfway sensible person would be able to work out his compromises gracefully and quietly, without fanfare even in a diary.

Naturally the feeling that even his hypocrisy was wicked often almost choked him.

*March 16, 1943*

In trying to detect any particular theme running through my dreams, I find only one: I am a fake and in danger of being found out. One night I am back at my irrigation, doing my usual half-hearted job, not knowing where to go next nor when the water will get out of control, cheating the university (which, in reality, I did); next night I am claiming five pictures in an art gallery as my own, when in reality they are not. I stalk through my dream trying to avoid questions about my methods of work, knowing I cannot answer them intelligently. I even forget which are "mine" and am in fear that someone will ask me, and so on. Another night I am a crook going to high school, and I get discovered and have to shoot my way out.

*April 6, 1943*

One possibility [in explaining these dreams, considered, rather belatedly, after trying out some other interpretations] is the essential hypocrisy of my present position.

What I find most revealing about his daily record of inner turmoil is how all of it slowly began to resolve itself: in more aggressive and self-aware practices of rhetoric. Without quite knowing it, the young man was discovering the

new passion (call it a "religion," if you please) that informs so much of my professional and private life today.

*October 2, 1943*

I neglected to mention, I believe, the speech I gave at the Northshore Ward last week. I was in my old stride, at my best: perfectly at ease and composed, I yet had them intensely interested all the way—one can tell such things—and I *think* that I really made them think. My subject was, "Some of the faults which prevent Mormons from making what they could of themselves." (It was never thus expressed, but that's what it was.) I gave it to them straight, and I believe there was only one member who did not like it; and even he seemed interested. I am a little disappointed with myself for not having given more such good accounts of myself while on my mission. . . .

I hardly ever mention my mission and my opinion of it here [in the journal]. That is, I suppose, partly because I am generally quite discouraged about the little I have accomplished. I enjoy myself around my Mormon associates—more now than ever before.<sup>5</sup> I think the Mormon people are good people and I think that I am what I am, including the good parts, largely as a result of the Mormon environment. Yet I have been discouraged by the difficulties in the way of intellectual improvement among my people. The Mormon ideology is so firmly rooted in superstition that it seems impossible ever to separate the two: despite all my apologetics, one is simply not a Mormon unless one believes in the divinity of the Book of Mormon, any more than one is a Christian unless one believes in the literal Christ Jesus. . . .

In general I would say that I am glad I came on the mission, though it has been far different from anything I expected. . . . [But then] the last year or so of any active life always seems very valuable in retrospect.

I still have in mind doing a book about and for Mormons, analyzing our faults, proposing future attitudes, clearing away dead beliefs. . . .

My big problem now is: shall I continue with my people as a hypocrite, shall I openly express my doubts and take my chances with my group, or

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5. My favorite memories about such enjoyment involve "Elder Duff Hanks"—Marion Hanks, who later became a Church official. As I wrote to Phyllis from Paris, on December 8, 1944, the subject of redundancy somehow came to mind, and I recorded a memory: "At a conference, someone said, 'Nobody likes an arrogant missionary.' And I mumbled, hardly expecting anyone to hear, 'Don't be redundant,' meaning, of course, that Arrogant and Missionary meant the same thing. Duff looked at me and said, 'I don't know what you mean,' and I tried to explain and failed. . . . After we became good friends he still accused me of being a man who enjoyed too much throwing big words around without bothering to have them mean anything." That certainly wasn't good rhetoric, if Duff was right.



Missionary companions (Marion “Duff” Hanks, *left*)

shall I completely break away . . . ? As I see it now, the last named is completely impossible: I love too many Mormons.

He fails to add, “And am loved by too many.”

With the “highly successful” mission drawing to a close, the inner conflict intensified. He went on reading and reading and reading, hardly ever in the scriptures. He fell in love with and memorized Blake’s “London” and

quoted it entirely in the journal, commenting on the mind-forged manacles that he felt still binding him.

In every cry of every man,  
In every Infant's cry of fear  
In every voice, in every ban,  
The mind-forg'd manacles I hear.

*Jan. 7, 1944*

"We are all conscript minds, but in different armies. And none of us are striving to be free, but each to make his own conscription universal." Santayana is right; Blake is right. Yet there are some who work at least most of the manacles free—some who become conscientious objectors in the conscription of the mind. (Block that metaphor!) If I didn't think that I had, in part, cast off some of the manacles, I would have less hope of ever achieving any degree of greatness of spirit. But the distance ahead is indicated by nothing more than by my own "complicity" in the Jewish matter [the news about the Nazi atrocities was getting clearer and clearer]. With all my sincere horror and sympathy, with all my subscriptions to Refugee societies and my talking and debate, with all my reiterated concern about a society that allows mass brutality and does nothing until attacked, I find myself guilty, as I have found myself guilty a hundred times before, on the score of personal selfishness of the sort that has caused the war, personal desire for acclaim of the sort that breeds politicians and Hitlers, intolerance of the sort that persecutes Jews. . . .

Musing in this way leads one easily—unless one is careful—into nonsense about original sin. . . . Very few can ever maintain a true central position: man is neither good nor bad; he is good and bad. He is eternally damned and he has eternal possibilities of "salvation." Mankind as a whole will not go down to bestiality tomorrow, to please [Albert Jay] Nock or [Alfred] Kazin. . . . Nor will mankind achieve tomorrow any sort of Brave New World, with everyone being super-human, not even with social ills eliminated, not even with war eliminated (I'm afraid). But I know empirically that men can improve (I have actually improved, myself). They can learn; they can sublimate their selfish desires (to use a corny phrase). They can, in short, progress, whether they have done so or not in the past.

And with this, the young unbeliever who still believed in the Mormon doctrine of "progress," yet also in "the validity of the scientific method" and the continuing triumphs of science, in "the possibility of development of a beautiful spirit of man," in "free will" (though "science" would seem to



threaten this one especially strongly), in the moral truth that “it is always in all cultures wrong to hurt others,” and in the claim that with all its faults the Mormon Church was still one of the best, one of the most “true”—that young man, radically confused not just about the problem of original sin but about almost everything, completed his assigned two years and was belatedly drafted into World War II.

For two long years, then, he was learning what it takes to practice benign hypocrisy on an intellectual and emotional borderline. Most other skeptical Mormons he knew either gave up their skepticism and returned to orthodoxy or pushed it further and broke with the Church. He chose, as I still choose, to pursue the ground *shared* by the orthodox and the doubters, living daily with troublesome soul-splits. Just as he “prays” to “God” with full “devotion,” hoping for “salvation” (grant him his definitions all the way), so I am now a “devoted” “Mormon”—violating some of the codes every day and almost always practicing hypocrisy-upward when I’m with Mormon friends or relatives.<sup>6</sup>

#### AFTER THE MISSION

The borderline straddling went on, inevitably, even when the two years of totally imposed hypocrisy were over. A few weeks after returning to Utah, he wrote the following entries.

*Feb. 4, 1944, [home from mission]*

Chronological table of insignificant events:

*Jan. 19*, testimonial for me at mission home [in Chicago], with everyone pouring out praise in completely unbelievable quantities. Acutely embarrassing, even to think of it now.

*Jan. 31*, homecoming address, conciliating all forces quite successfully—and compromisingly. [Obviously he’s thinking of hypocrisy-upward but naturally employing less troublesome language.]

*Feb. 5, 1944*

B.Y.U. would like me to teach here after the war. . . . I remain completely undecided, as there are so many advantages and disadvantages. I think

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6. The ambiguities I see in all religious commitment are dramatized by the “prayer” I have for some years had pinned on the shelf above my desk: “ALLOW THE DAY TO FLOW! LEAVE THE FRUITS IN THE HANDS OF A (RELATIVELY INDIFFERENT ABOUT THE DETAILS, BUT IN THE LONG RUN [THE ETERNAL RUN] GENUINELY LOVING) GOD!”

Christensen [who was recommending me] was a little put out at me when I suggested that I was afraid of working at B.Y.U. I implied that I thought it would be hard on a man's integrity, to say nothing of the stifling effect on his intellectual abilities. I didn't mean to have him take it personally, but of course the implication was there, and he did not miss it. However, he is too intelligent to take offense at anything as well grounded in truth as my expressed fears of BYU influence. Finally he confessed that he *sometimes* felt that he *had* been poisoned by his many years here. I really don't think he has been, but I might be, since my moral courage is still unknown, if not proved deficient, already.

Do you need more evidence that you're dealing here with a lifetime hypocrite? I could go on quoting, into my thirties and forties and fifties—and on to the smile I put on for a grocery clerk yesterday when I felt that she had really insulted me. Or I could use, as further evidence for my case about the universality of hypocrisy, "totally honest" Phyllis's professional behavior. She sometimes poses, with a client, as totally cheerful when in fact she's feeling blue.

Back to the young hypocrite: Why did he not feel guilty—most of the time—about the hypocrisy implied by the "accommodation to the audience" required to survive as a missionary? Because, I think, he unconsciously had discerned that hypocrisy-upward is one of the essentials that makes the world go round. From Aristotle on through Quintilian and into modern times, rhetorical theorists have discussed—almost always superficially—just how much accommodation is ethical. The short answer is this: accommodate your means, hold fast to your ends—your convictions and purposes. But every rhetor knows how hard it is to draw a clear line between accommodation and selling out.

Why do I not feel guilty even now—except sometimes—about the innumerable other "accommodations" to the audience that my rhetorological inquiries have required? I think it was and is because that young man and I have been simultaneously "worshipping," or at least trying to serve, the deepest of all human values: understanding—sympathetic, serious listening to others—which almost always requires at least some biting of tongues, some posing. It is the rhetorological attempt to enter the spiritual domain of other human beings. Nothing we ever work at, I came to believe, is more important than the drive not just to maintain peace with rivals or enemies or misguided friends, not just to tolerate them generously, not just to condescend to them with a benign smile or hide something they would hate, but to understand them, to learn to think with them while assisting them to think with you in return.

That faith abides, and it informs many of the best moments of my life. It often enables me even to forget, for a while, my many divisions of Self.

And the role of Mormonism in that faith continues. Just as your deepest faith—whether “religious” or “atheist” or “agnostic”—penetrates all that you do, so what I sometimes call “the good side of Mormonism” penetrates my life and will be with me till I die.