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dealing blackjack (only blackjack Mormons, I guess), but there are good Mormons who own financial interest in casinos. Maybe some inventive souls will come up with a toy money casino where good Mormons could deal and gamble (and drink guilt-free booze) without straying a step from the letter of the law. Come to think of it, I haven't run into too many Mormons who oppose real gambling or who avoid the fleshpots of our neighbor state to the west when the chance comes to lose a few bucks.

I don't know if the no-alcohol wine will thrive here, but I hope it does. If this kind of thinking prevails, it won't be long before we will have a no-smoke cigarette, or, even more ingenious, no-sex adultery. That will be a real triumph of appearance over reality, and the inventor is bound to make a bundle.

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## P aradoxes and Perplexities

### IN DANGER OF THE SPEWING

Marv Rytting

In the latest issue of *Dialogue*, Jan Shippo tells what it is like to be "An 'Inside-Outsider' in Zion." This essay is important for many reasons, not the least of which is simply as an introduction to Jan Shippo. People who are interested in Mormon history or Mormon culture, especially from an academic perspective, should know Jan Shippo. For those who have not had the pleasure of meeting her in person, her essay is a delightful way to meet her vicariously. It also illustrates the value of writing disciplined reflection upon our personal experiences. Too often we save our analytic skills for academic or scholarly writing. We need more thoughtful personal sharing in our culture.

According to Jan, the process of becoming a Mormon—an insider— involves two things: accepting the truth claims of the religion and becoming part of the community, identifying with the culture. Although these are usually thought of as occurring together as a single process, they are separable. Jan has experienced becoming part of the community. But she has bracketed out the truth questions. "In all honesty,"

she says, "the matter of whether, in some ultimate sense, Latter-day Saints are or are not correct when they bear their formulaic testimonies that 'Mormonism is true' is simply not on my agenda of things to find out." If she were to conclude that the Church is true, she would become an insider. If she were to decide that it is obviously false, she would then be an outsider. By not being concerned with this question, she becomes an inside-outsider.

This stance causes many people considerable consternation. Those who are trying to prove that the Church is true and those who are trying to prove that it is false both suspect that Jan is secretly in the other camp because both groups share the opinion that there is no middle ground (a view which is becoming very common). Jan's experience contradicts this opinion.

And so does mine. If Jan Shippo is an inside-outsider in Zion, then I am an outside-insider. I am part of the community but I have also bracketed off the literal truth claims as being unimportant—and I have done so without leaving the community of the Saints or losing my identification with the culture. For Mormonism was bred into me. Biologically I am Mormon (tribe of Ephraim). Psychologically I

am Mormon (my world view is indelibly Mormon). Culturally, I am Mormon (part of the community of the Saints). I am even "active in the Church." I am incorrigibly Mormon. I could never be anything else. But I never did—at least in this mortal life—consciously choose to be Mormon.

It is ironic that I became aware of this most forcefully on my mission. My first companion observed after I had been out only a couple of months that if I had not been born a Mormon, I would never have joined the Church. How could that be true of me? All of my life I had been an almost perfect Mormon boy.

In nineteen years of socialization and compliance, complete with eleven straight years of perfect attendance at all of my meetings (except MIA, of course), I had only recently shown signs of even a subtle rebellion (I turned down my seventh Individual Award because by then it seemed superfluous). I never questioned the idea of going on a mission—of course I would go. My reputation was that of a spiritual giant. I would not join the Church? True. I would not join. I am not good convert material. I am not a true believer—in anything. I am blessed/cursed with the ability/compulsion to see both sides of every issue.

The paradox, I have come to realize, is that my Mormonness is so much ingrained within me that this does not matter; the literal truth claims of the Church are as irrelevant to me as they are to Jan Shippo. I am—and shall continue to be—Mormon irrespective of whether the LDS church is the only true church on the face of the earth or not. Even if someone could conclusively prove to me that Joseph Smith was not a prophet, I would continue to revere the man and value his philosophy. Even if they were to kick me out of the Church, I would still be a Mormon. It is an ethnic thing. I can no more cease to be Mormon than a Jew can cease to be Jewish, no matter the level of religious commitment. If this is the case, what difference does it make whether everything the Church teaches is literally true or not?

Some would argue that still it would be nice to know if we are indeed correct in our view of reality. I agree, but here we get into an epistemological question which defines the main reason that I am not concerned with the truth questions. I am a phenomenologist in the Kantian tradition. I do not believe that we can

experience reality directly but rather that we only experience our perceptions and that they can be distorted in a multitude of ways. It may be that we can experience reality subjectively (I think we can), but subjective experience is not appropriate for learning facts or knowing literal truths, only for understanding meanings. Thus I do not think it is possible to know for a certainty that the Church is true in a literal sense.

What is it like to be an outside-insider in Zion? In many ways it is similar to being an inside-outsider, which Jan Shipps describes as "sometimes uncomfortable, very often misunderstood, but none the less exciting, from time to time exhilarating. . . ." There is a continual subtle pressure upon me because practically everyone says that I am wrong—that there is no middle ground for Mormons. There are thousands of dedicated Mormons out there waiting to call me to repentance and testify that if I would only have more faith, I would know. There are scriptural reminders of what happens to the lukewarm and how easy it is for the devil to cheat our souls and lead us carefully down to hell. And there is no assurance that I am not being led in that direction. It is definitely a risk I am taking.

My motives are often suspect. In a recent letter to the editor of *Dialogue*, I was included in a list of elitist, liberal, intellectual snobs who specialize in condescending and belittling attitudes towards the faithful. There is some justification for the first half of this accusation—I do value my intellect, I am liberal, and I may on occasion entertain an elitist thought or two, but there is an irony to the rest of the charge. What I write—especially the *Dialogue* and *Sunstone* pieces—are personal expressions of my own perplexity. I do not claim to know the truth. I never try to convert anyone to my point of view (the missionary role fits me even less comfortably than the convert role). I only ask that different voices be heard so that we can share each other's journeys and that I be allowed to define my own experience for myself. Personally, I find nothing quite so condescending and belittling as the smug assurances of the religious elite that as soon as I am as humble as they are and truly receive the spirit, I too will know the truth and be no longer deceived—and of course agree with them. Yet, simply because I do not fit into the mold—or the fold—I am automatically accused of being a snob.

It is not only from the Mormon

community that I must confront the argument that there is no middle ground. My non-Mormon friends call me a "walking contradiction," wonder why I stay in a religion which causes me so much conflict and pain, and tell me that my balance is too precarious. Someday, they say, I shall have to choose one or the other. They do not pressure me to reject the Church, they simply have a difficult time understanding why I have not already done so.

Another problem with being an outside-insider is that people tend to lump us all together with the rest of the unfaithful. I am not an inactive Mormon. I am not a jack-Mormon. I am not even a "cultural Mormon." I am a committed Mormon—although committed to my way of experiencing Mormonism. I am a religious person—although I define and react to religion in a way that is not typical of orthodox Mormons. I am a believer, but not a true believer. I am aware that I choose to believe, that I could choose not to believe, and that reality owes no allegiance to my choice of beliefs.

A recent study of the relationship between religion and political views in the United States Congress points out that the traditional ways we have of thinking about religion are not very useful for research on the effects of religious commitment upon attitudes. Religious affiliation has very little to do with political and social attitudes when affiliation is defined as simply membership in a particular religious denomination. What is important is *how* we relate to whatever religion we choose or inherit.

In this research, a fairly sophisticated statistical procedure identified six distinct packages of religious values—ways of being religious. *Legalistic religionists*, for example, emphasize rules and restrictions and self-control. *Self-concerned religionists* focus on their personal relationship with God. *People-concerned religionists* are mostly concerned with relationships with other people and with religion as a challenge to work for change and social justice. *Integrated religionists* balance these themes. These are all legitimate perspectives for people in any religious group but these types of religious people are markedly different from each other. Legalistic and self-concerned religionists in Congress (and probably in general) tend to be politically and socially conservative, while people-concerned religionists are drawn to liberal positions and the integrated religionists are likely to be political moderates.

Our current orthodox Mormonism focuses on the legalistic and self-concerned themes, but I maintain that there ought to be room for those of us who are people-centered or integrated, even though we are more likely to agree politically with people-centered Gentiles than we are with other Mormons. I definitely do not want to be confused with (nor classified with) *nominal* Mormons who—if the research can be generalized—are likely to be closer in attitude to the orthodox Mormons than they are to me. Outside-insiders like me have very little in common with jack-Mormons or anti-Mormons. We are like other religious people who are concerned with ethical issues and moral living, but our religious energy is more directed to other people than to rules or to "truth" or even to God.

There are compensations in being an outside-insider. From this vantage point, it is easy to see the paradoxes and perplexities of the Mormon experience. Some people may not consider this an advantage, but for me it is. I love paradox. It is the source of the thinker's passion and opens up worlds to explore. It leads to a level of understanding of myself and the Church and our culture that I value. It also provides a breadth of experience that the true believer does not have access to. Granted that in return, I give up a depth of experience that the true believer can have, I value the variety of perspectives which I can explore.

In the final analysis, however, a discussion of advantages and disadvantages of being an outside-insider in Zion may be irrelevant. It is not useful as a way of trying to decide whether to be one or not nor is this description meant to convince anyone that it is good to be one. It is simply what I am. I do not advocate it. I am not trying to justify it. I am only defining it. I suspect that I did not choose this way of being any more than I chose to be Mormon. There is some research which indicates that fourth-born children tend to be outside-insiders in their families. They have the ability to step outside of the family and observe the dynamics within it. Such people often become students of the family. As a fourth-born child, this is certainly true of me with respect to my family and my profession as well as my church and culture, and perhaps my birth order is the reason. But the explanation for why I am an outside-insider is also irrelevant (I could as easily claim that it is because I am a Gemini). Irrespective of pros and cons, causes

and effects, I am what I am (or as Popeye would say it, "I yam what I yam"). And I choose to affirm and

value what I am. In the back of my mind, I hope—and expect—not to be spewed out because of it.

# I ssues of Intimacy

## GUILT AND INTIMACY Marybeth Raynes

A long-term client came through the door that Monday looking at the wall instead of me, sat down, and fixed his gaze on the bookcases. We had gone through periods of silence with each other before, but this time his agitation prefaced what his later stuttering words gradually revealed: overwhelming guilt about sexual abuse inflicted on him as a teenager by some members of his priesthood quorum and other neighborhood youths. The forcible abuse continued over several years and has greatly affected his life today.

An early-adolescent girl sobbed through a faltering and difficult admission to her parents about the guilt she feels for failing them: not being popular enough, not being obedient enough to them or to the Church, being angry with them at times. To their surprise, she had perceived their occasional anger at her as saying she was bad to the core.

A mother, six years after her son married outside of the Church, reports grilling herself daily about all the events in the past that she might have done differently so that he would not have taken that step. "I am such a failure as a mother because of this, and I'm feeling more shaky about everything I say to my other children now."

Guilt about stealing, cheating, or dishonesty, about being the victim of rape or incest, for having hit or yelled at someone, for not having done enough, for having been insensitive, for being responsible for parental conflict or divorce surfaces again and

again as I work with people who want to change their lives. At the center of all the guilt at least two issues consistently appear with Mormon clients of mine: *Unworthiness* and *Inhibited Intimacy*. Persistent or overwhelming guilt eventually erodes self esteem to feelings of "I am not worthy, not good enough, not whole—I am bad." The core belief about the self becomes negative. Continuing guilt builds barriers instead of bonds in relationships.

How does this happen? When one feels whole, accepted, and positive about personal emotions and experience, intimacy is easy. But guilt is negative and unsafe. Feeling guilty about a perceived wrong in a relationship almost always causes a person to pull away, to lose closeness not only with a particular person, but often with everyone else. He or she withdraws into an internal world of suffering. It is hard to reach out, to share.

Withdrawal is fed by the many rejection fantasies which accompany guilt: "The Lord doesn't love me." "What will my mother think?" "I will be ostracized by my ward." The answer to the title question of John Powell's book *Why Am I Afraid to Tell You Who I Am?* is "Because if I tell you, you may reject me." Many feel that if we share the negative, shameful parts of our lives, we will be rejected and left alone with nothing. Sometimes that is true, but the usual paradox is that if any significant trust exists, sharing pain and struggle fosters acceptance by destroying the illusion of perfection.

The free-flowing acceptance of self and others as they are rather than as they should be cannot develop, however, if a relationship is built on

the assumption that rules are more important than personal concerns. Intimacy rarely develops between two people obsessed with condemnation (external blame) and guilt (internal blame). Given the Mormon proclivity for commandments, a stressful relationship can develop if the rules are used as clubs rather than as guidelines both parties freely accept.

Examining the nature of guilt is preliminary to dealing with these issues. Guilt encompasses a host of other emotions because it is a secondary emotion, a reaction to more primary feelings. Just as anger is often a result of more basic feelings of helplessness, frustration, or rejection, guilt can be a reaction to shame, worthlessness, loss, and anger. Further, guilt may be a composite emotion. A simplified model might be: guilt=remorse+anger at self. Each half of the equation can be felt in many ways. Remorse can be experienced as sadness, loss, or regret; anger at oneself as shame, self deprecation, blame. (These lists are suggestive, not conclusive.)

Feelings of guilt, so layered and complex, make sorting everything out hard. We feel terrible, cannot see the end of it, ruminate about the situation again and again. What we want most is to get away from the thoughts and feelings. "If I had only" or "I haven't done enough" or "I will never be good enough," we say. Rather than carrying a scarlet "A" on our breasts, we struggle inside with a burdensome black "G." Often being around the person we feel guilty about reminds us of the pain, so we flee. As though suffering some unavoidable, painful disease, we take a pill of distraction or amnesia and let guilt run its course—or run us.

In light of all the negatives, is guilt bad? I believe not. As clearly as pain warns of something wrong physically, guilt often signals that something is wrong interpersonally.

Besides, it takes a certain amount of sensitivity to another person's feelings and needs to even feel guilty. Sociopaths are sociopaths because they do not feel the impact of others or society's (the collective other) needs, rules, or norms. Consequently they feel little guilt and have few internal constraints. So the question is not, "Is guilt bad?" but "When is it appropriate and how can it be resolved?"

I remember spending a year struggling with the idea of appropriate and inappropriate guilt. Every time I felt guilty about coming

fifteen minutes late to an appointment, not writing a thank you note, replying harshly to my child, accidentally running over a rabbit, or having an urge to try something I felt was wrong, I tried to discover if the feeling was appropriate to the situation. Although I don't have my feelings in neat categories yet (and hope I never have them compulsively tied down), I did emerge from those sessions with three general guidelines: (1) It is appropriate to feel guilty about things I have control over in my life (scheduling appointments, tone of voice with others) and inappropriate to feel guilty about things not in my control that occur by accident or luck, even if it is a disaster that results in injury or loss of life. (Deep grief and searching for what I might have done differently always occur, but not guilt which assumes blame.) (2) It is appropriate to feel guilty about values inappropriate to feel guilty about values that others hold but I do not. For example, for a long time I felt guilty when the visiting teachers found my house messy even though I do not believe a clean house is always important. (3) It is appropriate to feel guilty about actions I consciously commit or thoughts and fantasies I willfully indulge in that I think are out of bounds, but inappropriate to feel guilty about natural sensations, thoughts, and needs that everyone has or that occur unconsciously (sexual impulses or dreams, occasional thoughts of violence or death).

These guidelines may be helpful for putting guilt in balance with our inner thoughts and needs. Mormons, however, often struggle long and hard with the second category. Taught from youth to respond to external rules by parents who used strong reinforcements if we did not conform, we react in essentially the same way to a parental church. Feeling more intense guilt about rules and commandments than about principles creates a narrow rather than broad focus for our actions, a lack of perspective that becomes evident when we worry more about not smoking or about not fulfilling a Church assignment than about loving one another regardless of religious, social, or racial barriers. Although the function of the Church is to teach right and wrong and to help people wire in guilt for wrong actions and peace and contentment for right ones, once that wiring is complete we need to find our own way. We need to sort out which principles encourage continued growth in adult roles. This is the long, difficult journey into

adulthood. Our ethical and spiritual path must ultimately be our own responsibility, with helps and guidelines, to be sure, but still in all, our own.

How to put guilt in perspective so that it helps rather than hinders change? Results of research about anxiety and learning seem applicable. New information is most effectively learned when there is a moderate amount of anxiety accompanying the process. Too little anxiety fails to motivate; too much overrides and blocks new information. So with guilt. Short term or moderate guilt that spurs one to change is healthy as is guilt that contains larger components of remorse and loss than of self-anger. On the other hand, mild guilt only pinpricks the conscience momentarily. Severe guilt immobilizes by overwhelming any other thought or feeling. All guilt, however, is oriented in the past and cannot change behavior. Only subsequent thought and action can do that.

To help balance guilt with other emotions in life, I recommend the following:

1. When feeling guilty about something you did (or did not do) in a relationship with another person, try to separate your feelings about that person from the action to see which deeper sentiments sift out. Maybe it is not guilt but another feeling such as mistrust that is bothering you. A friend related feeling guilty about not getting close to her sister. Upon introspection she realized that she didn't trust her. The guilt cleared, and the problem then became "How do I build trust?"
2. Acknowledge that in every event you feel guilty about there are a number of emotions involved as well as a number of parts to the event—some for which you bear responsibility, some not. The key question is: which principle did I violate? Then, rather than condemn yourself, figure out something to do that matches the depth of the violation. The past is healed only in the present.
3. Talk to someone. You often don't know what you think or feel until you say it out loud. If a neutral person who has no investment in the action or the outcome is not available, seek a therapist or counselor who can not only help you sift out the guilt and what you can do about it but also can help you find friends who will support, not condemn.

A story that I hope is true was related in stake conference several years ago.

A young woman had slept with her boyfriend when she was 16 years old, one time only. Even though she never repeated her action, she felt tremendously guilty and carried it within her silently. In her mid-twenties she decided to go on a mission. In consultation with her bishop she passed over the morality question, but by the time she approached the stake president with her application her guilt was overpowering. She told him about the incident and about how terrible she felt. The stake president replied that the only thing she needed to do for clearance was to go home and tell her parents. In horror she replied that this truth would destroy them. He insisted; she did. Upon hearing her painful story, her father put his arms around her and said, "I am only sorry that you have carried this burden by yourself all these years."

4. Learn the fine art of self forgiveness. I am convinced that an outside authority's statement of forgiveness only releases us to do the forgiving within ourselves. The rational, loving parts of ourselves can speak to the hurting, guilty parts. Being your own therapist and gently persuading, caring, and forgiving yourself in troubled times sounds funny only until you have tried it. Inner, not outer peace, is the final resolution to guilt.

If the guilt is minor you should be able to handle the feelings and the actions fairly easily. If the guilt is major, realize that it generally takes weeks or months to deal with a major emotional crisis. Give yourself time to heal. If the cause of your guilt is continuing, separate yourself from the situation even if some drastic action needs to be taken. Broken feelings like broken limbs cannot heal under continuing stress.

My client who was sexually abused has come to understand that those past events were out of his control and were not his fault but that his resultant sexual fantasies are inappropriate to the sexual relationship he wants with his wife. He has acted to change them. His guilt is lifting. The mother is gradually realizing that expending all her thoughts on her son's action over which she had no control is robbing her of the energy she needs to change her life. I'm still feeling guilty these days, but I'm not overwhelmed anymore. Instead, guilt is becoming a particularly trusted guide for me. I find myself welcoming it as an indicator that I am getting off my internal track.