



CORNUCOPIA

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Mormon Musings

EDITOR'S NOTE: Carol Lynn Pearson's "Walk in the Pink Moccasins" is one of those rare gems in Mormon consciousness that gained its influence through circulation on the LDS underground. Written in the 1980s, it was included as part of Pearson's address to a gathering of the Mormon Women's Forum, but, as we at SUNSTONE were very surprised to learn at Sunstone West this past April, it was never formally published. We're very pleased to have the opportunity to showcase it now.

WALK IN THE PINK MOCCASINS

MEN CANNOT POSSIBLY KNOW WHAT IT IS LIKE to be a female child in a Motherless house unless they are shocked into glimpsing what it would be like to be a male child in a Fatherless house. I have had for years a kind of Walter Mitty daydream in which I teach them. I become one of the Presiding Sisters, speaking to the "boys of comparable age."

My dear young brethren, it is such a delight to be able to speak to you today. Your faces and your clothing look so clean and fresh. I know that our Mother in Heaven is pleased as she looks down on you this day. And I want, first of all, to convey to you the fact that our Mother loves you. I am persuaded that She loves you just as much as she loves her daughters, and I hope you can believe that.

And what a marvelous plan She has laid out for you! What a glorious role you are called to fill! How you must have rejoiced in spirit as She created the earth and placed there her crowning creation, Eve, the first and perfect woman. But of course our Mother could see that Eve was not complete, that she needed a worthy helpmeet to assist her in the great work she was called to do. And so this is where you come in, dear brethren. A rib from Eve's own body was fashioned into the body of Adam, and he was given her as a friend and helpmeet. What a glorious and noble calling! So important was he to Eve, and so important

the commandment her Mother had given, that even when Adam sinned because he was deceived, Eve knowingly sinned with him so they could remain together.

And over the centuries, how you must have rejoiced as the plan unfolded further—through the great Matriarchs, Sarah, Rebekah, Rachel—as our Mother's holy prophetesses continued to reveal her word to us, as woman after woman was sent to do important work, making us all better people so that we could bless the lives of our husbands and children.

Keep yourselves clean and pure, dear brethren, that one day one of our Mother's choice daughters might look with favor upon you, claim you as her own, and give to you the glorious privilege of serving as her helpmeet, adding glory unto her as she adds glory unto the Mother.

And do not listen to the voices that cry out to you from the world. We are living in dark and evil times. Satan herself desires you. Do not listen to the voices that tell you you are suppressed, that entice you to a thing called full personhood and freedom. The role of man has always been made clear by God Himself. The place he occupies in our Mother's plan is not in question—it is now, always has been, and always will be to stand by the side of woman, assisting her in the great work she has been given to do.

It is true that new doors are opening for man to contribute in many fields besides his primary one, and we are glad when a man shows talents and abilities in a wider range of service. We encourage this. We are proud of the achievements of our fine young men.

And as the light of our Mother grows brighter in this world, we learn even more of the glorious truths concerning manhood, that it is intended indeed to be a partnership with woman. In fact, one of the truths of our age, and I believe with all my heart this is a truth even though it is not official and we don't want to talk about it and the words were written by a man—somewhere we've a Father there! Imagine! Somewhere we've a Father there!"

In my daydream, when the dust of the shock settles, the men nod their heads and say, "I see," and they are never quite the same again.

CAROL LYNN PEARSON
Walnut Creek, California

*Cybersaints***DIFTOR HEH SMUSMA, T'HY'LA***“Live long and prosper, dude.”*

IN THE BOOK OF DANIEL, THE ROCK THAT IS CUT without hands shatters the image of Nebuchadnezzar and rolls on to become a mountain that fills the earth (Daniel 2:34–35). Though the Joseph Smith Translation does not alter these verses, the Star Trek Family Home Evening Group (<http://stfhe.jlcarroll.net/index.html>) apparently expects this rock to become a mountain that fills the galaxy, . . . well, at least the alpha and beta quadrants anyway.

In preparation for this marvelous work, several group members are currently translating the Book of Mormon into Klingon (http://stfhe.jlcarroll.net/Klingon_BoM/). Now, I understand we have to start our galactic proselyting somewhere, but why with the Klingons? It seems to me that good judgment would have us start with alien races whose unique talents might be better employed to our advantage in the advancement of the three-fold mission of the Church.

For instance, we could use the Borg to proclaim the gospel: “We are the Mormons. Prepare to be assimilated. Resistance is futile.” Though not of an alien race per se, the android Data could be given charge of redeeming the dead. With the inerrancy of his positronic brain, we could do an “in your face” dance for those smug translated beings who are planning to show up at the advent of the millennial reign to correct all the records they expect us to have screwed up. And, let’s face it, who is more qualified for the perfecting of the saints than the Vulcans? Okay, the tear-filled testimony isn’t going to be as effective a missionary tool with them as it has been with the Terrans, so we shift gears and try something else. It would be worth it. Just imagine what the logic of Sarak could bring to the institutional bureaucracy at the Church Office Building:

Officious Hireling: “Every female employee must wear pantyhose.”

Vulcan Apostle: “Why?”

Officious Hireling: “For modesty’s sake.”

Vulcan Apostle: “How are pantyhose more modest?”

Officious Hireling: “They cover the legs.”

Vulcan Apostle: “They are transparent.”

Officious Hireling: “The legs must be covered.”

Vulcan Apostle: “Then why not with pants?”

Officious Hireling: “Pants are immodest.”

Vulcan Apostle: “Fascinating. Report to personnel for your severance pay.”

Replacement Officious Hireling: “Every male employee must wear a white shirt.”

Vulcan Apostle: “Why?”

Other alien races could be very useful to the administration of the Church. Try lying your way through a worthiness interview with a Betazoid bishop. The genetically engineered Tosk could be trained to handle mundane and repetitive tasks such as proxy work, home teaching, and weeding at the stake farm.

The Idanian would be very useful in Church Security, performing retinal scans and DNA identification at the temple entrances. That’d certainly put an end to cross-dressers sitting among the women. Phlaxian assassins could take care of pesky intellectuals without the very public mess of excommunication. The Dream Aliens of the Delta Quadrant might be helpful in getting everyone painlessly through the three-hour Sabbath block. And who better to run correlation and doctrinal exposition than the Changelings?

Of course, not all alien races will be open to the gospel message. We might make inroads with the Bejorans if we can correlate the Orbs of the Prophets with the Brother of Jared’s stones, but I don’t know. Proselyting the Trills could be dicey. What if the humanoid host wants to be baptized, but the vermiform symbiot doesn’t? It would most certainly be a waste of time proselytizing the Ferengi, as they’d mostly likely choke on the Law of Tithing—which is too bad, because Deseret Book has got to be dying to get its hands on the *Rules of Acquisition*. In the Mormon marketplace, that would outsell even Stephen R. Covey. The androgynous J’naii will completely freak out when their kids graduate from Primary. I can’t see the Jem’Hadar warming to the Word of Wisdom if the isogenic enzyme Ketracel White takes its rightful place alongside the list of forbidden strong drinks. And forget the matriarchal Skrreea. The females would demand the priesthood, and the males would cry when they bear their testimonies. After President Hinckley’s general conference priesthood address on gambling, the Wadi are out. But the El-Aurians are good listeners, and, since they have a life expectancy of more than three hundred years, the missionary discussions could be expanded to include the really fun stuff like, . . . well, never mind.

Of course, some undesirable alien races should be avoided. The Romulans seem predisposed to priestcraft, and it would be just too difficult for the sentient creatures living inside the Bejor wormhole to make it to Enrichment Night. The inter-dimensional species 8472 is relatively peaceful, but prone to genocide when provoked, and who knows what could provoke them? All it might take is one bonehead Elder saying the wrong thing (and we all know there’s more than one out there). Besides, 8472 live in fluidic space. How would we baptize them? Would a good toweling off suffice? Tribbles may set the appropriate procreative example for us all, but without hands, how would they take the sacrament? And the telepathic races are out. They’ll know the answer the Gospel Doctrine teacher wants even before it’s asked. Wait a second. . . . Oh yeah, *everyone* knows the answer the Gospel Doctrine teacher wants before it’s asked.

IBEGAN THIS exercise in galactic missionary musing with a question about why the Star Trek Family Home Evening Group thought it best to first translate the Book of Mormon into Klingon. It’s not that I have any personal animus toward the Klingons. It’s just that I worry that it wouldn’t be long before some wingnut would get up on his hind legs claiming that the funky Qo’noS forehead is the true mark of Cain. Then we’d be smack in the middle of a big rhubarb over

All-seeing Eye

PUTTING THE “FUN” IN FUNDAMENTALISM



WHEN ELDORADO, TEXAS, RESIDENT JIM Runge heard that the Fundamentalist Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints was building a compound near his town, he reacted in time-honored American fashion—by seizing an opportunity for entrepreneurialism. The result: polygamy baseball caps, parking permits, and plural marriage licenses—all of which can be purchased online at www.eldoradosuccess.com.

“Eldorado, Polygamy Capital of Texas,” boasts the embroidered baseball cap (\$18). Sanctioned by the “Eldorado Olympic Bid Organizing Committee,” the parking permit (\$5) is apparently good for “Polygamy Games 2005,” and features a logo representing one male and four females. The marriage license (\$5) includes lines for one husband and up to ten wives. Not quite sufficient for some early Church leaders but probably more than enough for the average Eldoradoan polygamous Joe.

Runge recently sold these articles at the “Elgoatarod Festival,” an event he organizes every year in Eldorado. This year’s Elgoatarod was held four days before the date on which, according to FLDS President Warren Jeffs, the world was going to end (see related story on page 77). “After a year of reading about and hearing about Warren Jeffs, most people here are ready for a good laugh,” says Runge. “They want to be entertained, and that’s what Elgoatarod is all about.”

the whole ‘righteous male Klingons’ and the “full rights to the priesthood thing.” So, until there’s an official declaration disavowing the curse of Cain thing, I just think it’s good judgment to start with the Vulcans. Besides, the Evangelicals are already firmly ensconced on the Klingon home world (http://members.aol.com/_ht_a/preservedbygod/myhomepage/).

NETMO

*United Federation of Planets*In the Belly of the Whale

“WITH SOME SPIRITUALITY”

In this column, “In the Belly of the Whale,” humorist Todd Robert Petersen investigates Mormon culture, art, and politics from the perspective of a baptized outsider. This is the fourth column in the series.

*But in my heart there’ll always be
Precious and warm, a memory*

—“Blue Velvet” by Bernie Wayne and Lee Morris

EVERY TIME SOMEONE STANDS AT THE PULPIT during sacrament meeting in my ward and begs for the Scouting fund, I go silently nuts. My wife knows I’m going to do this, so she strokes my thigh, whispers in soothing tones, and smiles at me.

Right now Scouting is everywhere. The very cool Book of Mormon exhibit in the ward display case has been lost to a Scouting diorama, and the other morning in ward council, somebody mentioned a Scouting campout. I said, “You mean

our Scouts go camping?” The bishop said, “Sure they do.” (I have heard other stories—such as how they spent their last summer campout at an amusement park—but who am I to blow against the wind?). Someone on the council chuckled and intimated that I might be next in line for Scoutmaster. I said that I’d be surprised since I don’t believe in the program.

It was one of those moments where it seemed as if the piano player stopped playing and slid off his bench and snuck out the back of the saloon with his tip jar. Immediately the room hushed, everyone unfanned their cards, and somewhere in the room a pistol cocked. The bishop looked at me with his eyebrows tipped together like poles marking an avalanche zone, and said, “Of course you do.”

I shook my head, which seemed to confuse everybody.

Why don’t I believe in the Scouts? Because I don’t have fond memories of the Scouts, unlike, I gather, every other male in the Church. It is as if, aside from their missions, Scouting was the only time in their lives that men raised in the LDS Church felt connected and at peace. Me, I’m fond of my marriage.

I’ve been trying to forget Scouts. During the trip I took with my troop, I leaped from the back of a horse into the branches of a Douglas Fir as the horse was falling to the ground like it had been shot. As I clung there eight feet in the air like that little cub in Canada that ultimately became Smokey the Bear, my fellow Scouts rode on. (*A Scout is, I’ve been told, concerned about other people. He does things willingly without pay or reward.*) My horse rose from the mud, shook its rump, and swished its tail while I dropped to the ground and ran after my troop-

mates, cursing. Scouts is also where I learned that the word “menstruate” sounds a lot like a very different word that has absolutely nothing to do with a girl having her monthly period.

Perhaps the most profoundly depressing moment for me was at Camp Magruder on the Oregon Coast, when some poor kid was stripped of his toting chip and sent home because he had stabbed a bully in the butt with his pocket knife. The knife closed on his fingers, cutting him badly. Which is too bad because the bully had been mercilessly needling this kid about being bald—and the reason the kid was bald was his chemotherapy treatments. (*A Scout is a friend to all. He is a brother to other Scouts. He seeks to understand others.*) In a perfect world, that kid would have had a lock blade knife, and the

bully would have a scar on his butt the size of a matchstick.

But the world was no more perfect then than it is now, and every time people praise Scouting as the institution which “saved their life” or made their childhood worth remembering, I begin to wonder what kind of Scout troop they were in. In mine, the Eagle Scouts had beer in their jeep, listened to Foreigner, and talked about “nailing” chicks. But mostly they lounged around in the basement of an Episcopal church, tying knots in lengths of clothesline. I dropped out after a year, switched to the YMCA, and stayed until I was twenty-five.

The truth is that a lot of Mormons put a lot of faith in Scouting. Sometimes they put as much, if not more, faith in this secular program than they do in the gospel. In a lot of

Of Good Report

THE SAME, BUT NOT REALLY

In his memoir, My Faith So Far: A Story of Conversion and Confusion (Jossey-Bass, 2005), Patton Dodd writes powerfully of his experiences as a bright but aimless youth who during his senior year of high school became converted to evangelical Christianity at his community’s “charismatic megachurch.” My Faith So Far takes readers deep into the heart of this young seeker, into a journey of faith that includes worship through dance, glossolalia, charismatic healing, becoming a “prayer warrior,” and experiences as a student at Oral Roberts University. Dodd’s intellect and growth as a Christian eventually precipitated a time when “the bottom fell out” and he had to rethink the nature of faith. As the title suggests, My Faith So Far ends with Dodd’s current faith position somewhere “in the middle” but, as this excerpt from the book’s concluding chapters shows, a place still rich with adventure and hopefulness.

WHEN THE BOTTOM FALLS OUT, YOU FREE-fall. You clutch and grab. You scan about for some place to stand, some small piece of firm ground.

When the bottom falls out, you form a new library. “Read this book,” people suggest. . . .

When the bottom falls out, the Bible is an unwieldy book that is impossible to read. . . .

When the bottom falls out, you stay home Friday nights and pray. You fall on your face and scream to God for mercy, for a supernatural gift of faith. You ask why what used to come so simply now has to be so hard. . . .

When the bottom falls out, you want to reconstruct it however you can. You think that the best days of your life were the days you believed with full, complete, unmitigated faith. You long for those days. You want a return to them. But they are gone, and you fear they are never coming back. . . .

There is no simple Over in terms of my faith, or my doubt. Both are still with me strongly; I still doubt. . . . I wake to questions in the morning. Some days they hassle me all day long; other days they seem petty and foolish.

I cling to faith, too. I choose to do so.

The only honest way for this story to end is for it to come to a silent rest right in the middle. The middle is where I ended up, long after the narrative told here unfolded into new stages of life. The middle is where I remain; not rejecting completely, not embracing uncritically, but deliberating.

Working on my doubt from a position of faith. . . .

I am not alone. Lots of us are this way. Sure, you hear stories of radical young evangelicals who embrace their faith and its attendant culture—happily, comfortably so. But look to the right and the left, toward the margins, and you’ll see other Christians who aren’t so sure, who are put off by all that, who want to be Christians but are not certain how to negotiate a relationship with a culture that believes what they believe, but not really, and thinks how they think, but not really, and hopes for what they hope for, but not really. You’ll see on the margins a bunch of people who are not actually marginalized, but middled, stuck in between. People who believe in Jesus, yes, but who have to remind themselves why. People who love God, of course, but who have trouble expressing how. People who have faith, though not as much as they’d like. But they’re working on it.

I thought that faith equaled certainty but have discovered that it’s often more like certitude. It’s a confidence that grows, a reliability that is strengthened over time. I thought faith would be predictable, but it is a relentless surprise. I thought my development as a Christian had been arrested, but I found that I had just arrived at this middle territory, and I realized that living in the middle can be just as useful, adventurous, and fruitful as living in the extremes. So this story has to end in the middle, because that’s the only honest way to end: not perfect success, not total failure, but ambling along all the way.

ways, this faith in Scouts is just like the faith many Mormons put into the Motion Picture Association of America ratings system—another secular system adopted to help Mormon people get to the celestial kingdom. Let us not worry that the *For Strength of Youth* pamphlet says that ratings may not accurately reflect content, and let us not worry that the MPAA doesn't exist in other countries, and let us forget that there aren't any Mormon prophets or apostles sitting on the MPAA board (nor would they). Let us not worry about any of this, because the rating system is part of the escalator to heaven. The less we have to think about regarding our own spiritual welfare, the easier it'll be for us at the judgment bar. We can dump this duty off on others, professionals who watch the "dirty" movies for us and tell us what God wishes we would watch.

We trust we can use the anti-Liahona of the R-rating because, well. . . I'm not sure why. However, we know we can rely on the Scouts because it's a spiritual program that will get kids closer to God. Right? Maybe not. According to Young Men general president Elder F. Melvin Hammond in the January 2002 *Ensign*, "Scouting is primarily an activity program with some spirituality as well."

I'M NOT TRYING to say that the Church shouldn't support Scouting. I'm not even asking why it does. I'm merely stating that I don't believe in it. I've seen what Scouting can do for families. In much of Mormondom, a kid who doesn't want to pursue his Eagle might as well tell his folks he's in love with a boy named Nick. During my time in the Church, I've heard of knock-down, drag-out fights over Eagle badges, parents basically doing the work for their sons, buying them cars, or making them walk the plank. This is a lot of energy for what is "primarily an activity program."

So, when the kids come to church in their uniforms, and when the bishopric starts fundraising from the pulpit, I get edgy. I look over at my daughter, who is nearly three, who absolutely loves it outside, and I think about how much time and effort the church is going to put into her outdoor development. By my count, LDS girls camp lasts anywhere from two days to a week. The Church doesn't stand behind Girl Scouts or Campfire, so I'm basically going to have to teach her myself, without the benefit of merit badges or neckerchiefs. That might cut into whatever Scoutmaster time might be coming to me in the future. That's okay, I'm not an Eagle Scout, so maybe I'm not qualified. But I was a YMCA Assistant Camp Director for four years and counselor for six, so maybe I know something the Eagle Scouts don't. And hopefully, if I do things right, Zoe will know something about the outdoors that her husband never learned on his way to his Eagle.

In practical terms, relying on Scouting to "save the youth" means saving the young men. And young men need that focus, I guess, because they bear the priesthood. I am well aware that most Mormon Eagle Scouts go on missions (I found the figure of 94 percent on several LDS Scouting websites), but to say that Scouts causes them to go on missions is a textbook case of the old *post hoc, ergo propter hoc* fallacy. Perhaps those who prefer the Scouts are also the same kinds of people who prefer religious

missions. In any case, I have not read that merit badges can get a person in to the celestial kingdom though I'm sure even as you read this, it's under debate in some BYU dorm room.

Finally I guess I'm not 100 percent sure that we should put so much stock into what is, essentially, a secular, para-military program. Scouting has netted the world a whole range of outcomes: from Jimmy Stewart to Donald Rumsfeld. Sure, Scouting can turn kids around and get them clinging to the Iron Rod, but we have to keep in mind that Scouting also helped create the young man who invented Dennis Hopper's character, Frank, a nitrous oxide-huffing, F-word-spewing sociopath with what can only be called an Oedipus complex on steroids. I think it's important to see the balance in these issues, but I never get a chance to share my thoughts on this subject, because nobody in my ward has seen *Blue Velvet*.

Perhaps I could make my point better if I put it this way: for every Luke Skywalker, there must needs be a Darth Vader. There are two sides to the Force, so why not Scouts? Next time I hear someone winding up for the Scouting pitch, maybe I'll remember to take the *Star Wars* approach. I shouldn't have to wait too long. Someone is always lurking around. Their pitch is almost always the same: "The Lord has given us the Scouting program to fight the evil of this age. Let's think about how much it will mean to the spiritual development of our youth to do what we can for the program."

This is where I sigh and lean over to my wife (who has already braced herself) and say, "You know, David Lynch was an Eagle Scout."

TODD ROBERT PETERSEN
Cedar City, Utah

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