ENCYCLOPEDIA OF MORMONISM
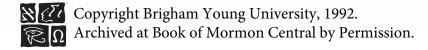
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The History, Scripture, Doctrine, and Procedure
of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

Most recently, more than twenty development projects have been sponsored by the Church in Africa (e.g., Kenya, Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Zaire, Chad, Mali, Nigeria, Ghana) as well as additional projects in Central and South America, Asia, and the United States.

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ISAAC C. FERGUSON

HUMILITY

True humility is the recognition of one's imperfection that is acquired only as one joyfully, voluntarily, and quietly submits one's whole life to God's will (Micah 6:8; James 4:6; Mosiah 4:10; Morm. 5:24; Ether 6:17). This includes obeying in love his every commandment, repenting of sins, honoring with endurance his every COVENANT, and striving for greater PERFECTION with self-discipline. Humility can result only from faithful submission to the teachings of Jesus Christ. Seeds of humility can be experienced in spontaneous moments of overwhelming gratitude, awe, and reverence when individuals recognize God's hand in the beauty of a sunset, the power of a waterfall, the miracle of life, or the magnitude and glory of human creations. Thus humility is not only a state of being but a process of obeying and reconciling one's life to God's providence as it is made known through his scriptures, prophets, creations, and answers to prayer.

Those seeking to be humble are counseled to pursue knowledge of God's glory, to experience his goodness and love, to receive a REMISSION OF SINS, and to "retain in remembrance, the greatness of God, and your own nothingness, and his goodness and long-suffering towards you" (Mosiah 4:11).

The Church promotes understanding of humility by encouraging members to study the scriptures and writings of Church leaders who pair this virtue with other virtues such as being meek, patient, loving, and submissive (Mosiah 3:19); gentle, long-suffering, diligent in obeying God's commandments, and full of hope and charity (Alma 7:23, 24); faithful and prayerful (D&C 105:23); repentant (Moro. 8:10); wise (Alma 32:12); able to bear adversity and weaknesses (Ether 12:27); joyful and pure in heart (Hel. 3:35); knowledgeable (D&C 4:6); self-disciplined; and teachable and broken-hearted. A lifestyle void of humility exhibits undesirable qualities: PRIDE (Hel. 4:12); haughtiness (Isa. 2:11), wickedness (2 Ne. 28:14), guile (D&C 124:97), jealousy (D&C 67:10), evil (2 Chr. 36:12), hate, envy, anger, arrogance, inordinate ambition, fault-finding, and self-righteousness.

Latter-day Saints with a TESTIMONY pursue humility as a duty, believing it is God's will to seek this virtue. "God will have a humble people. We can either choose to be humble or we can be compelled to be humble" (Benson, 1989, p. 6). As the foundation for spiritual progress, humility disposes people to hear God's word, to be receptive to inspiration, revelation, and spiritual wisdom. It befits members to accept CALLINGS in the Church. Humility must accompany REPENTANCE before BAPTISM (D&C 20:37), approaching the divine with "a broken heart and contrite spirit" (2 Ne. 2:7; 3 Ne. 12:19; D&C 20:37). To seek humility is to ask it of God, to recognize it as fruit of a spiritual life (2 Chr. 33:12). Divine grace, strength, and forgiveness are promised to the humble (1 Pet. 5:5; 3 Ne. 4:33; Ether 9:35; D&C 1:28; 104:23). Scripture warns the proud of impending afflictions, temptations, and even destruction (Isa. 10:33; 2 Chr. 12:7; Mosiah 3:18; Morm. 5:24; D&C 5:28, 32). Adversity and weaknesses can humble individuals, bringing them closer to God. TRIALS often develop spirituality and humility. However, Church leaders emphasize that good conduct and humility without covenants and ORDINANCES will neither redeem nor exalt (Packer, p. 82).

Latter-day Saints are enjoined to imitate Jesus, who was meek and lowly, following not only his example and teachings but also those of his prophets as they walk in his footsteps. "Only Jesus Christ is uniquely qualified to provide that hope,

that confidence and that strength to . . . rise above our human failings. To do that, we must . . . live by his laws and teachings" (Benson, 1983, p. 6). To become humble like Jesus, to become his disciples, individuals must take up their crosses, trust in him, approach perfection through wise choices, and submissively endure to the end (D&C 122:7). Christ's pattern of humility was unblemished. Though members aspire to this perfection, they are to keep perspective on their fallibility by balancing unfulfilled aspirations to emulate Christ with positive recognition of his gifts to them, of their worth as God's children, and of their progress toward humility over a lifetime. In the face of social pressures for self-interested individuality, the Church stresses selflessness and humility as keys for returning to God. Persons who would attain the fulness of the immortalizing promises of the ATONEMENT must persist in achieving humility in spite of obstacles and societal ethics that distract from this goal (Mosiah 3:19).

The desire for humility is nourished by an understanding acceptance of the greatness of the Savior's sacrifice to provide SALVATION and RESURRECTION for all. As people comprehend God's love for them, hearts and minds will be humbled and drawn into closer unity with him and with all fellow beings.

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ALICE T. CLARK

HUMOR

Although LDS doctrines, practices, and experiences have in some circles evoked a measure of scoffing and laughter over the years, only since the 1970s has a body of published humor dealing with the Mormon experience appeared. Institutionalized LDS humor divides roughly into an early period when the Church was the object of outsiders' jokes and a modern period when members have become able to laugh at themselves.

As with many minority groups, the first humor that dealt with the Church was created by antagonists to turn people away from it. Much of this humor took the form of cartoons in the popular press, and verses and parodies of popular or folk songs (Bunker and Bitton, 1983). These attacks were prevalent in nineteenth-century periodicals, and such noted writers as Mark Twain and Artemus Ward took aim at available targets like Brigham YOUNG and POLYGAMY.

From this early period, almost no pro-Mormon humor or humor regarding the Church created by the members of the Church themselves survives. While it is certain that members enjoyed humor, as evidenced in numerous JOURNALS and letters, little of it was apparently directed at their own experiences and cultural practices. This was particularly true of published material. Latter-day Saints were too involved with building a new way of life to indulge in frivolity or of anything that might appear to question their commitment. Humor, therefore, was incidental.

Around 1900 this attitude began to change, expressly in the talks of Elder J. Golden Kimball, of the Seventy. During his long tenure as a General Authority, his iconoclastic wit and biting sense of humor not only made the Saints love and quote him, but also helped them to see a lighter side of their often difficult existence.

Still, little in-group humor appeared in print before 1948, when Samuel W. Taylor's novel *Heaven Knows Why!* was published. Playing on the cultural patterns of typical small-town western Mormonism, the book gained limited success and recognition as an alternative selection of the Literary Guild, but it also caused a stir of discontent in the LDS community, hitting too close to home and seeming to ridicule not only lifestyle but also sacred doctrines. Because of its limited acceptance, it quickly dropped out of print.

A turning point seems to have come as a result of World War II, which brought outsiders into the almost exclusively LDS Rocky Mountain communities and spread members of the Church throughout the world. The resulting interchange showed both groups that in many ways they were not as different from each other as they had assumed, and allowed them to laugh at their common foibles and presumptions.

As the Church became better known as an American lifestyle, its members felt freer to find humor in their own cultural patterns and practices.