

ENCYCLOPEDIA OF MORMONISM



Edited by
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of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*

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treason, arson, and other charges growing out of the fall violence and attempts at defense. For the Prophet, this imprisonment evoked a legacy of strength and revelations from heaven (see DOCTRINE AND COVENANTS: SECTIONS 121–23). A trial was never held. On April 15, 1839, while being transported on a change of venue to Boone County, Joseph and his brother Hyrum were allowed to escape to join Saints and their families in Illinois.

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MAX H PARKIN

MODESTY

[A quality of mind, heart, and body, modesty is an attitude of humility, decency, and propriety that may be evidenced in thought, language, dress, and behavior. Modesty or immodesty is reflected in almost every aspect of human life. It will be manifest in the "example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity" (1 Tim. 4:12). Articles pertaining to this topic are Chastity; Humility; Lifestyle; Modesty in Dress; Profanity; Reverence; Righteousness.]

MODESTY IN DRESS

Latter-day Saints believe that modest dress reflects commitment to a Christlike life and shows respect for self, for fellow beings, and for God. In their homes and in the Church, they are taught that modest dress has a positive effect on both self-esteem and behavior.

According to LDS theology, the body is more than a biological entity; it is a temple that houses an eternal spirit (cf. 1 Cor. 3:16–17). Physical intimacy is reserved for marriage (see CHASTITY). Modest dress serves as a physical and spiritual

guard against immoral behavior and its inherent physical, emotional, and spiritual harm. Because modesty in dress cannot be reduced to a matter of particular styles, individuals are encouraged to use discretion to determine appropriate dress in varying situations.

Emphasizing the importance of modest dress, President Spencer W. KIMBALL stated, "I am positive that personal grooming and cleanliness, as well as the clothes we wear, can be tremendous factors in the standards we set and follow on the pathway to immortality and eternal life" (1979, p. 3).

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MICHELE THOMPSON-HOLBROOK

MORMON

Mormon was a PROPHET, an author, and the last NEPHITE military commander (c. A.D. 310–385). The Book of Mormon bears his name because he was the major abridger–writer of the GOLD PLATES from which it was translated. He was prepared by the experiences of his youth to become a prophet: he was taught "the learning of [his] people," was a "sober child" and "quick to observe," and in his fifteenth year was "visited of the Lord" (Morm. 1:2, 15). At sixteen he became the general of all the Nephite armies and largely succeeded in preserving his people from destruction until A.D. 385, when virtually all of them but his son MORONI₂ were destroyed in battles with the LAMANITES (6:8–15; 8:1–3). As keeper of the Nephite records, Mormon abridged the large PLATES of Nephi, bound with them the small plates of Nephi, and added his own short history (W of M 1:1–5; Morm. 1:1). Before his death, he hid the records entrusted to him in the hill CUMORAH, "save it were these few plates which I gave unto my son Moroni" (Morm. 6:6). The Prophet Joseph SMITH received and translated Mormon's abridgment, the small plates of Nephi, and a few other documents, and published them in 1830 as the Book of Mormon.

First and foremost, Mormon was a prophet to his people, urging them to "repent, and be baptized in the name of Jesus, and lay hold upon the

gospel of Christ” (Morm. 7:8). He taught that they were “a remnant of the seed of Jacob” (7:10) and could have the blessings of ISRAEL if they would live for them. He also underscored the supporting relationship of the Bible and the Book of Mormon: “For behold, this [record, the Book of Mormon] is written for the intent that ye may believe that [record, the Bible]; and if ye believe that ye will believe this also” (7:9).

Mormon’s son MORONI₂ finished the record, including one of Mormon’s addresses and two of Mormon’s epistles in his own book of Moroni. Mormon’s talk on FAITH, HOPE, and CHARITY (Moro. 7) teaches that charity, the greatest of those three virtues, is “the pure LOVE of Christ, and it endureth forever; and whoso is found possessed of it at the last day, it shall be well with him” (7:47). One of Mormon’s letters (Moro. 8) condemns INFANT BAPTISM as a practice that denies the ATONEMENT OF JESUS CHRIST, stating “it is solemn mockery before God, that ye should baptize little children” (8:9). Rather, little children need not repent, but “are alive in Christ, even from the foundation of the world” (8:12). In the other epistle (Moro. 9) Mormon notes that the destruction of the Nephites is just retribution for their wickedness, which is so bad that he “cannot recommend them unto God lest he should smite me” (9:21).

As abridger of Nephite records, Mormon had access to a veritable library of engraved documents and was commanded to make an abridgment of the large plates of Nephi so that Lamanites, Jews, and GENTILES of the latter days could know of the Lord’s COVENANTS and what he had done for their ancestors and could thereby be convinced that Jesus is the Christ (*see* BOOK OF MORMON: TITLE PAGE). While making his abridgment, Mormon often noted that he could not include even a hundredth part of the source records (e.g., Hel. 3:14). He regularly sought opportunity to draw spiritual lessons from the course of events experienced by his people. The phrase “and thus we see” frequently introduces one of Mormon’s interpretive observations (cf. Hel. 3:27–30). One of the most significant passages from his hand appears in Helaman 12 wherein he offers compelling views about the often vain and fickle character of human nature, especially in response to material prosperity.

As an author, Mormon expressed his feelings, sorrowing at living in a wicked society (Morm. 2:19), and confessing that he had loved and prayed for his people (3:12), but was at last without hope

(5:2). He measured civility by how women and children fared (4:14, 21), seeking to unite them with husbands and fathers even when facing certain doom (6:2, 7). When the last Nephites fell, he penned a poignant lament in their memory (6:16–22).

As general of the Nephite armies (Morm. 2–6), Mormon helped to preserve his people from destruction by the Lamanites for some fifty-eight years, but then began to lose them first to sin and then to death (Morm. 2:11–15). Even so, he taught survivors that they would be spared if they would repent and obey the GOSPEL OF JESUS CHRIST, “but it was in vain; and they did not realize that it was the Lord that had spared them, and granted unto them a chance for repentance” (3:3). At one time the Nephites became so vicious and hardened that Mormon refused to lead them into battle (3:11). But he could not bear to watch them perish, and although he had no hope that they could survive, he relented (5:1) and led them into their last battle from which only he, his son Moroni₂, and a few others survived (8:2–3). Moroni₂ lived to complete his father’s record (8:1).

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PHYLLIS ANN ROUNDY

MORMON BATTALION

Though it never fought a battle, the Mormon Battalion, a volunteer unit in the 1846 U.S. campaign against Mexico, earned a place in the history of the West. Its men cleared a wagon road from Santa Fe to San Diego and helped secure California as United States territory. Members of the Battalion helped preserve a tenuous peace in southern California before the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo ended hostilities. A wagon road they established between the Gila and the Rio Grande influenced the U.S. government to make the Gadsden Purchase. They also opened wagon roads via Carson and Cajon passes that linked California with Salt Lake City. Some former members of the Battalion eventually participated in the gold discovery and helped stimulate economic development in the Great Basin (*see* CALIFORNIA, PIONEER SETTLEMENTS IN). These former LDS soldiers ultimately