



Laughing with God: Humor, Culture, and Transformation

Gerald A. Arbuckle SM

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When Sarah overhears God tell Abraham that she will give birth to a son, she laughs. She laughs to herself at the impossibility of her, in her old age, bearing a child (Gen 18:12). But God's ways are not Sarah's ways; God is far more wonderful than Sarah imagines. Of course, Sarah does give birth to a son and names him Isaac, whose name means to laugh: God has brought laughter for me; everyone who hears will laugh with me (Gen 21:6). Surely, the ancient audience 'aware of the many incongruities in this story 'did laugh. But can we in modern times recover the divine humor, the paradox and promise, in this and other biblical accounts? Can we use that sacred laughter as a means to evangelize a world that longs for God every bit as much as the ancients did? In *Laughing with God: Humor, Culture, and Transformation*, Catholic priest and cultural anthropologist Gerald Arbuckle helps us do just that.

With Arbuckle, readers will enter many rich biblical stories and come away laughing, not laughter as in response to a joke or comedy, but a profound laughter of the heart. Readers will laugh at Sarah as she laughs at God, and they will laugh together with Sarah and God. Readers will discover divine humor in the parables of Jesus and even in his suffering and death, the ultimate paradox for Christians. In addition to uncovering and recovering humor in Scripture, Arbuckle's work is a treasure trove of modern examples of humor 'from literature, movies, and television 'that surprisingly can be a means of transforming cultures to better reflect the kingdom of God. In the end, readers will want to turn the phrase, He who laughs last, laughs best, into, They who laugh with God, evangelize best.

Gerald A. Arbuckle, SM, PhD, is co-director of Refounding and Pastoral Development, a research ministry, in Sydney, Australia. He is internationally known for his expertise in helping church leaders minister effectively in a postmodern world. Arbuckle's most recent books include: Confronting the Demon: A Gospel Response to Adult Bullying; Violence, Society, and the Church: A Cultural Approach; and Healthcare Ministry: Refounding the Mission in Tumultuous Times (2001 Catholic Press Association Award), all published by Liturgical Press.

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