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NOT SO AMAZING GRACE

If a cat can look at a king, maybe I can respectfully disagree with the priesthood holder, Donald P. Olsen, in his dissertation on the grace of Christ. By a stunning array of quotes he seems to say that our actions are irrelevant to our spiritual health or progress and only belief in the Redeemer is necessary. I can take the same books of scriptures he uses and by judicious selection "prove" exactly the opposite. Take any given verse. Maybe we know to whom the speaker is addressing his remarks, but do we know where and why and when and how—all those things that are so hard for a reporter to get straight face to face with a situation, let alone 2,000 years after the fact, relying on translated and retranslated texts, arguing from the perspective of different customs and mindsets. As an example of a wild distortion of a text, take President Reagan's recent quotation of Luke 14:31 (an analogy) as proof of Jesus' endorsement of the military buildup. What Reagan and Olsen lack in these inferences is common sense.

Five hundred years before Christ, Siddhartha Gautama wanted to know the meaning of life, of pain and old age and death. He sat under a wild fig tree and after a time rejoiced in being able to give this answer: "From good must come good, and from evil must come evil. This is the key to wisdom." He went on to teach that the soul of man lives forever and his spiritual progression is up to him. Siddhartha became known as the Enlightened One—the Buddha.

Jesus came from those of the Judaic faith who, though maintaining a strong belief in God, had no belief in an eternal life. A person lives on through his children and their memory of his good works, if you will. Some factions of Judaism still have this philosophy. Such believers surely become, at death, earth bound spirits, having no idea that there is a heaven to go to. They are in a way damned—

stopped. Jesus brought us (and tried to bring them) "salvation," knowledge that we do have eternal life and, through all phases of that eternity, we can better ourselves by following two great rules: love God and love our fellow man as ourselves. We can pile good on good in this way and become like him or pile evil on evil and retrogress. By our actions we show our faith in this salvation.

These teachings and the one proclaiming the uselessness of paying some priest to kill animals to show love of God were too threatening to the hierarchy, so the Savior had to die. His saving wisdom lives on.

Gay Taylor
Redwood City, California

NEVER SAY GRACE

The listing of Donald P. Olsen's article in volume 9 number 2 of SUNSTONE, "Understanding the Scope of the Grace of Christ," said that it concerned "a little-known concept among most Mormons." May I suggest it is little known for the same reason that the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception is little known among Mormons, namely, that it is not Mormon doctrine, at least in the extreme Protestant way that Mr. Olsen has framed it.

Mr. Olsen has certainly done something original in attempting to interpret latter-day scripture in a way compatible with Martin Luther's enshrinement of the verses concerning salvation by grace in Paul's letters to the Romans, the Galatians and Ephesians. In fact, he is more an orthodox Lutheran (in the sense of a theological follower of Luther) than many Protestants. With Luther, he appears to completely reject the idea that men and women can make any choice from day to day that affects their ultimate forgiveness of sins and entry into eternal life. Martin Luther took the logical next step and denied that humans have any effective free will so far as the most important facts of their existence are concerned. Furthermore, strict adherence to this system of logic forces the Protestant to conclude that since good acts cannot save us, neither can sinful acts condemn us so long as we have at some point been saved by grace.

When I was studying mathematics in college, one of the standard methods for disproving a theorem

was to show that the theorem resulted in conclusions which contradicted accepted and fundamental axioms. Mr. Olsen's theorem may be consistent unto itself, but it clearly contradicts Mormon beliefs in free agency, let alone Paul's belief in the need for continual exhortation to righteous conduct, and Jesus' solemn testimony that "if ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love. . . . This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you. . . . Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you" (John 15:10, 12-14). Paul in the very epistle to the Romans which Luther idolized, said explicitly that God "will render to every man according to his deeds; To them who by patient continuance in well-doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, eternal life: But unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath." (Rom. 2:5-8.)

It has always puzzled me why so many Protestants assume that Mormons are not saved by faith in Christ. If I point out that I have made a declaration of my faith by the time-honored and mandatory mode of baptism in his name, they claim that my faith is somehow inadequate because I didn't believe that my acts were totally ineffectual in obtaining salvation. Yet in all the Protestant religious crusades which seek a "Decision for Christ" I do not see the ministers turning away any of the people who walk up the aisles to declare their reliance on Jesus; no one is interviewed to determine whether they reject the notion that good works are commanded by God.

Richard Lloyd Anderson has done a wonderful job of piercing through the Lutheran rigamarole built up around Paul's epistles in his 1983 book *Understanding Paul*, by a detailed analysis of what Paul actually said in Romans, Galatians, and Ephesians. Indeed, if we step back and ask ourselves, "Why did Paul write these letters?" we are forced to conclude that Paul didn't believe in Martin Luther's theory. Paul knew that men and women have plenty of free will, which they can squander or harness especially after they have made the covenant of baptism and can, through sin, throw away their chance at eternal life after a promising beginning.

If Mr. Olsen is looking for fundamental Mormon doctrine on the

grace of Christ, why not look to the third article of faith: "We believe that through the Atonement of Christ, all mankind may be saved by obedience to the laws and ordinances of the Gospel." Or how about the sacrament prayers, in which we are told by the Father to pray to him as we covenant to take upon us the name of Christ, and always remember him, and keep his commandments so we may, as a consequence of holding up our small end of this contract, receive the immeasurable blessing of sanctification through the Holy Ghost.

Paul wrote a beautiful little sermon on the inadequacy of faith alone. "And though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing." Charity, the pure love of Christ, is the essence of righteous works. "And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity." (1 Cor. 13.)

*Raymond Takashi Swenson
Omaha, Nebraska*

DON'T WALK ON THE GRACE

Donald Olsen's welcome article about grace (SUNSTONE, vol. 9 no. 2) falls short of supporting his defensible thesis that modern revelation "enlarges considerably the scope of the grace of Christ." Perhaps because of his emphasis on Pauline doctrines, Olsen overlooks several important developments of the concept which are unique to Mormonism.

For example, the teaching that little children are saved in the celestial kingdom without baptism is based exclusively on the extension of grace to them through the Atonement (see D&C 29:46). Consequently, the Mormon denial of infant baptism is founded not on children's innate innocence, but rather on the doctrine that children, although "conceived in sin" are "whole from the foundation of the world" because "the Son of God hath atoned for original guilt" (Moses 6:53-55). Mormon scriptures affirm the reality of original sin and of children's fallen nature, but clarify that until they become accountable, the grace of Christ shelters them from the consequences of the Fall (Mosiah 3:16). Moreover, the LDS extension of grace applies to all those who die without the law (Mosiah 3:11).

Perhaps more radical are Joseph

Smith's teachings which extend portions of grace even to those who knowingly reject Christ's gospel. The assignment of the unjustified to varying degrees of glory according to their works is only possible through grace. Were it not for the mercy of Christ, unmitigated justice would condemn all to become "angels to the devil" (2 Ne. 9).

With regard to grace as the means of obtaining salvation, Joseph Smith affirmed then commonly held doctrines of justification and sanctification by grace (D&C 20:30-31). The fact that he could use these terms without any explanation appears to be an indication of how far we have digressed, as a people, in our understanding of fundamental Christian tenets. It may be that for first generation Mormons, the "fulness of the gospel" was needed only to complement and add upon the gospel which they had already embraced.

But even for nineteenth-century Mormons there were important distinctions from the orthodox view. One example is the teaching that grace is not irresistible. Nevertheless, it is also true that both the ability to choose life and the results of that choice are extended to us only through grace.

Another significant departure from protestant orthodoxy is the Mormon doctrine that ordinances are essential as a means of receiving saving grace: faith, repentance, and baptism for justification and further ordinances for sanctification. However, one must be careful not to assume too close a relationship between the receipt of an ordinance and the bestowal of the grace or spiritual endowment associated with it. Mormon scriptures give examples of individuals receiving forgiveness of sins and the birth of the Spirit before being baptised or confirmed (see Alma 19:29). In fact, the revealed "commandment to the church regarding the manner of baptism" requires these spiritual fruits as a prerequisite to the ordinances (D&C 20:37). On the other hand, there are scriptural cases of properly baptised individuals who after years of Church membership still had not been born again. (See Alma 5:14. Such a reversal may be the rule rather than the exception for modern Mormons.) This fairly loose relationship between ordinances and grace leaves open the possibility that many genuinely regenerated Chris-

tians exist, for a time, outside the LDS church and its ordinances. It may be that many of these are only "kept from the truth" because with true redemptive Mormonism so well concealed in the Church, "they know not where to find it."

An important clarification about ordinances is that they are not meant to be a merit system for salvation, despite the many efforts to make them so through elaborate qualifications and "worthiness requirements." To the contrary, in Joseph Smith's teachings ordinances reaffirm rather than diminish the free nature of salvation, performed "in a manner that thereby the people might know in what manner to look forward to his Son for redemption" (Alma 13:2). For example, the symbolism of baptism indicates that it is Jesus' death and resurrection that washes away our sins rather than any merit of our own. This redemptive symbolism is consistent in all LDS ordinances, including the temple ritual, which teaches that it is only by virtue of his wounds that we may enter the Lord's presence.

Another rather poorly preserved LDS teaching on grace is the relationship between the "state of grace" and the possibility of "falling from grace" (see D&C 20:29-34). LDS scriptures imply that we enter a state of grace at the time we are justified. This state of grace is a "state of righteousness" (Mosiah 27:25), or a condition of "retaining a remission of sins from day to day" (Mosiah 4:26).

Those within this state of grace rely "alone upon the merits of Christ" (Moro. 6:4) rather than on behavioral righteousness for salvation. Nevertheless, because free agency is still maintained, it is essential to "endure to the end," lest we fall from grace (3 Ne. 27:17, *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, pp. 338-39).

A final doctrinal clarification provided by Joseph Smith concerning grace is the concept that one may "grow in grace" (D&C 50:40; 93:20), a process of receiving, not earning (D&C 20:14; 45:8; 50:5).

In conclusion, Donald Olsen's article accurately establishes the basic orthodoxy of our scriptures with respect to justification and sanctification by grace. But there is much more. The revelations and teachings of Joseph Smith expand the scope of grace far beyond the relatively nar-

row limits imposed by traditional Christianity. Mature Mormon scholarship requires a synthesis of both the traditional and the unique aspects of this much neglected LDS fundamental.

Daniel H. Rector
Tucson, Arizona

CAPITALIZING ON CONSERVATISM?

I notice in Mr. Card's little "dictionary," *Saintspeak* that he says that SUNSTONE remains small in subscribed members. Card calls your journal "an unofficial magazine for Mormons" and then adds "For a good Mormon the three official Church magazines and the *Reader's Digest* are quite enough."

I received your circulated appeal for subscribers. But I can't imagine why someone would want to subscribe: If he wanted the Church news and views, he could subscribe to the Church magazines. If he wanted something more straightforward, he could subscribe to *Dialogue*.

Do you think that the reason your circulation "remains small" is that there really aren't enough LDS people between *Dialogue* and the Church mags to make it go? How do the Brethren regard your magazine? Do they think of it as a way to reach Mormons that their mags can't reach? Have they ever said that? I notice that some of our old contributors to *Dialogue* contribute to SUNSTONE too, like Dick Bushman and Leonard Arrington (who just married my first cousin). When I addressed the *Dialogue* crowd as the second annual speaker at Hotel Utah (Arrington was the first), I remember Dick Bushman, after I was finished, saying to his wife, "Now that wasn't so bad was it dear?" The response: "Oh yes it was!" (meaning that it was heretical).

Maybe your magazine follows the times nationally. Since the 60s, the country has been getting more conservative, and the hippies of yesterday are passe. Since *Dialogue* was founded, Church members have been getting more conservative too, perhaps, opening a slot for your magazine. Do you think that's true?

I grew up with Dick Cracroft of the Y, and I see he contributes to you too.

Hey, somebody told me Gene England and his wife (Charlotte) gave up on the Y and are running a

bed and breakfast place Monterey, CA. Is that true? Poor Gene. I think his father hoped that if he taught at the Y he might be called to be a General Authority. I think Steve Covey's parents thought that about him. They didn't realize it is the Church's asylum for thinkers, to which they sent Leonard Arrington, after they booted him out of the Church Historian's Office.

Anyway, how DO you justify the existence of your journal?

Joseph H. Jeppson
Woodside, California

NOT LIKE THE ENSIGN

I recently subscribed to the SUNSTONE thinking that like *This People* and the *Ensign*, *The Friend*, and *Church News*, that I would be getting reading materials that would be uplifting to myself and my family.

I am sorry to inform you that I have found most of the articles in the SUNSTONE almost apostate in their content and of spurious value. I am frankly quite surprised that you would allow some of the articles into print since they seem to be anti-Mormon in sentiment.

I have children and a wife that I am trying to rear in faith to the precepts in the Mormon church. I sincerely feel that Mr. Huffman's comments in the most recent SUNSTONE ("Readers Forum," vol. 10, no. 1) lacked faith in the Lord and the brethren that he has set at the helm of his church. I may be too-well molded into the Mormon tradition that bespeaks faith in the doctrines established by the Prophet Joseph Smith to tolerate the ramblings of some of the Lord's Saints. The Lord admonishes us to seek after things of good report, that are praiseworthy; we seek after these things. I cannot believe that Brother Huffman would attend the showing of an anti-Mormon film and be seeking something "praiseworthy."

The prior issue discussed "ethics" and the Mormon church as written by Mr. Courtney Campbell (vol. 9, no. 2). He fostered the concept that the Church leadership did not seem to voice a position on morally objectionable or cultural problems. He did quote President Hinckley with a statement that should have settled the question he was debating. Then he went on to only quote part of section 58 of the Doctrine and Covenants wherein the Lord tells all of us

that "it is not meet that I should command in all things." Were the Church to take a position on issues that men thought were important the work of the Lord would be slowed. And isn't that what the devil would want?

I have also read comments under "Stretching toward the Light" (vol. 10, no. 1). Thank you for sharing your testimony with us. It was one of the only articles I found refreshing to read.

I have decided that I cannot allow literature to be in my home where my little ones may read these articles and begin to question the leadership of the Church whether it's a question of ethics or changes in doctrine. Their faith could be damaged. I know that you would not want that. So I hereby cancel my subscription and request a pro-rated refund.

Even in my sins "Father" has witnessed to me the truthfulness of his gospel and the wisdom of his prophets. Who am I that I can withstand God and deny the things I know to be true? I strongly question that faith of anyone that can question the Lord or his prophets.

*Terry D. Smith
Las Vegas, Nevada*

BURNING DOWN THE TEPEES

I write in response to Miss Fletcher's editorial testament in the January issue. As there implied, she and the Sunstone Foundation insiders believe in God and in the afterlife. So do I. We all allow, I trust, that Joseph Smith had important religious contributions to make. But many do have problems with just these matters.

It is safe to say that a lot of doubting people have had their problems intensified, or even initiated, by what they have read in SUNSTONE. Surely, you are all aware of this? Surely, then, you understand why some would think you agnostic. As you are believers, I wonder what comprehension you may have of the problems of intelligent, critical folk who once believed and who want to believe again but who have been deprived, by SUNSTONE or others, of the supports of belief. Surely, you can see that the ecclesiastical inanities which SUNSTONE so skillfully exposes result from the absence of

exactly these intelligent, critical people from active, ascending roles in the Church. It is safe to say that many have been self-excluded as a result of information which SUNSTONE has disseminated. So the result is, the more SUNSTONE carps and snickers, the more there will be to carp and snicker about. Your defense might be that the truth must be expressed, no matter what the immediate cost. But you have perhaps heard Truman Madsen paraphrase the essayist William Hazlitt to the effect that one should not "burn down his tepee" until he has a new one to move into.

Is SUNSTONE providing any new "tepees"? Has SUNSTONE had anything effective to say to the person who has found reason to doubt that God exists? Or that there is an afterlife? To my knowledge, the only answers that have appeared have been at merely literary or dogmatic levels and not in any kind of argument that would pass modern skeptical examination. SUNSTONE not only has not provided new tepees, it has ignited existing tepees belonging to others, resulting randomly in doubt and despair.

Of course, these problems are not unique to Mormonism, or to SUNSTONE. For a long time, the asking of theological questions all over Judeo-Christendom has exceeded the scope of the answers that the learned world has offered, or rather the scope of those answers that have achieved notice. The difference with SUNSTONE is that SUNSTONE is in a unique position to bring to its intelligent readers the little-known subject of *natural theology*, which is the critical and constructive examination of the naturally occurring, universally available evidence for God's existence and characteristics, without resort to unique historical revelations through privileged persons. There are modern developments which remain practically unknown. The key names are F. R. Tennant and Dean Turner.

The Church could not pursue natural theology unless its leaders were to do so. This could hardly happen unless SUNSTONE, say, first drew attention to it. But what does SUNSTONE do instead? It now interdicts reviews of books that do not deal with specifically Mormon

concerns. This is a neat way of shutting off just the sort of non-denominational philosophical-theological discussion that could be helpful. There are paths to faith of which you know nothing.

Yes, intellectual-sounding questions have often destroyed faith. But guided intellectual endeavor can restore faith. Humanists tell us that no such things can be done where intelligent people are concerned. But anyone familiar with the history of science knows of the bias, bigotry, and defeatism which impeded the way of the founders. It is always harder to build than to tear down. But instead of despairing that "It can't be done," the proper attitude is that expressed by Victor Hugo: "The difficult we do today; the impossible takes a little longer." In this case, the labor is small compared to the reward.

*Dick Hazelett
Colchester, Vermont*

SPIRITUAL MENTOR

Each of us has his or her particular list of spiritual mentors—those whose lives, together with their words, have made a significant difference for us. The lives of these persons serve as beacons to those of us who otherwise fall so short in our faith and our availability to others; and we marvel at the mystery that produced such transcendent, other-directed beings.

The best thing SUNSTONE has ever done was to call its readers' attention to one who, for practically all who ever met him or read his simple words, radiates the same ennobling, succoring influence. Already in the 1950s Lowell Bennion had helped literally thousands of young Mormons to reconcile their faith and learning. For this he has never received the recognition he last of all would seek, yet so richly deserves.

How badly the body of the Church still needs the tempering influence of Lowell's all too rare spirit and example. Speaking for the many whose lives he has so meaningfully touched, I thank Peggy Fletcher for the excellent interview and express our abiding love for this man whose life has in turn blessed our own.

*Thomas F. Rogers
Provo, Utah*