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SOTERIOLOGY IN LDS THOUGHT

The relationship between divine grace and human response is at the center of theological reflection. It has also been the source of endless debate over the respective human and divine roles in salvation. It is a common charge brought against LDS thought that it preaches salvation by works and that it focuses on works to the exclusion of grace. It is this charge that I want to address here, and thus this chapter is somewhat polemical in nature. However, the discussion is necessary because Latter-day Saints have not devoted much time to addressing and reflecting on the issues of grace, works, and salvation; and those who have done so have often missed important expressions of grace within LDS scripture or simply reflected a misunderstanding of Catholic and Protestant thought—both of which misunderstand Paul’s writings.

I have presented divine love as a freely offered relationship as a matter of grace prior to any human response, but which leaves us free to accept or reject the relationship offered. Such grace is an expression of God’s universal love for all persons. Soteriology in LDS scripture is the explanation of how God makes us free to choose to be in relationship with him. The answer is the Atonement. This view, of course, conflicts with both the Augustinian doctrines of irresistible grace and predestination and the Lutheran and the Reformations views of justification by grace alone through faith alone in which God is the only active agent in the relationship. I have argued that these conventional views of grace are based upon a mistaken view of original sin which derived from Augustine’s emphatic