God’s Love is *Pure* or *Perfect*  
NOT Unconditional

**Any bold or underlined type is added emphasis unless otherwise stated.**

**Foundational Considerations**

*Joseph Fielding McConkie* (BYU, Annual Religious Education Faculty Summer Lecture, June 1987, pg. 4 ff.)

"Mine is not a call to repentance; such is not my office. Mine is an expression of concern, concern about the extent to which we as Latter-day Saints have allowed ourselves to be bound with the cords of tradition, the extent to which we are preoccupied, with doctrines established upon the authority of what someone said that someone said they heard Joseph Smith tell somebody else. I could fill a volume in the Mormon Talmud with apocryphal stories that have been told to me about my own father and my grandfather Joseph Fielding Smith . . . and a Mormon Talmud has no more power to save than the Jewish Talmud or a Talmud compiled by any other people.

"Fabrications, forgeries, imaginative tales, and embellished stories are not the only sources that threaten to Judaize Mormonism. We too have a rabbinic tradition; we have the idea that truth is established by the authority of what teachers of an earlier day said. Thus, we often expend greater energy in searching for quotations than in searching for understanding. We **become more concerned with scriptural commentary than with scripture.** So-and-so said it, or said that So-and-so said it, and thus the matter is settled. Again we find ourselves establishing our own oral tradition, developing our own Mishnah and Talmud. Supposedly, if someone else had the ability to think, write, and even part the heavens, we are spared the same effort and responsibility. And so we no longer teach as one having authority, but rather as the scribes and Pharisees. . . ."

". . . [L]et us take the idea of ‘unconditional love.’ In Latter-day Saint sermons of recent years it has been common for speakers to challenge the congregation to emulate God in exercising ‘unconditional love.’ I do not know who first figured out that God’s love is unconditional. I do know, however, that he did it **without the help of scripture.** Again, the phrase itself is entirely unscriptural; if there are scriptures that sustain the idea, I have been unable to find them. When I have asked people who teach this so-called doctrine how they distinguish God’s ‘unconditional love’ from salvation by grace as taught in the Protestant world, they have been unable to do so."

*Neal A. Maxwell* (General Conference, Ensign, May 1996, pg 34.)

"Only by searching the scriptures, not using them occasionally as quote books, can we begin to understand the implications as well as the declarations of the gospel…. [These truths] are not just theological niceties and philosophical footnotes. We need to ponder their implications as well as believe in their declarations regarding daily and eternal life. One cannot have adequate faith in a Christ whom he does not adequately know…. Do not be surprised when non-doers scoff. Do not be surprised, either, if these doctrines unsettle some. . . . **The only cure for doctrinal illiteracy of those who murmur will be to learn doctrines.**"

*Harold B. Lee,* ("The Place of the Living Prophet, Seer, and Revelator," address to religious educators, 18 July, 1968)

"It is not to be thought that every word spoken by the General Authorities is inspired, or that they are moved upon by the Holy Ghost in everything they speak and write. No you keep that in mind. I don’t care what his position is, if he writes something or speaks something that goes beyond anything that you can find in the standard church works, unless that one be the prophet, seer, and revelator–please note that one exception–you may immediately say, ‘Well, that is his own idea.’ And if he says something that contradicts what is found in the standard works (I think that is why we call them ‘standard’–it is the standard measure of all that men teach), you may know by that same token that it is false, regardless of the position of the man who says it."

**The Conditions, According to Scripture**

*John 15:10* "If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father’s commandments, and abide in his love."

*John 14:21* He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him.

*D&C 95:12.* "If you keep not my commandments, the love of the Father shall not continue with you, therefore you shall walk in darkness."

*D&C 29:17* "And it shall come to pass, because of the wickedness of the world, that I will take vengeance upon the wicked, for they will not repent; for the cup of mine indignation is full; for behold, my blood shall not cleanse them if they hear me not."
Mosiah 2:32-40
32 But, O my people, beware lest there shall arise contentions among you, and ye list to obey the evil spirit, which was spoken of by my father Mosiah.
33 For behold, there is a wo pronounced upon him who listeth to obey that spirit; for if he listeth to obey him, and remaineth and dieth in his sins, the same drinketh damnation to his own soul; for he receiveth for his wages an everlasting punishment, having transgressed the law of God contrary to his own knowledge.
34 I say unto you, that there are not any among you, except it be your little children that have not been taught concerning these things, but what knoweth that ye are eternally indebted to your heavenly Father, to render to him all that you have and are; and also have been taught concerning the records which contain the prophecies which have been spoken by the holy prophets, even down to the time our father, Lehi, left Jerusalem;
35 And also, all that has been spoken by our fathers until now. And behold, also, they spake that which was commanded them of the Lord; therefore, they are just and true.
36 And now, I say unto you, my brethren, that after ye have known and have been taught all these things, if ye should transgress and go contrary to that which has been spoken, ye do withdraw yourselves from the Spirit of the Lord, that it may have no place in you to guide you in wisdom's paths that ye may be blessed, prospered, and preserved--
37 I say unto you, the man that doeth this, the same cometh out in open rebellion against God; therefore he listeth to obey the evil spirit, and becometh an enemy to all righteousness; therefore, the Lord has no place in him, for he dwelleth not in unholy temples.
38 Therefore if that man repenteth not, and remaineth and dieth an enemy to God, the demands of divine justice do awaken his immortal soul to a lively sense of his own guilt, which doth cause him to shrink from the presence of the Lord, and doth fill his breast with guilt, and pain, and anguish, which is like an unquenchable fire, whose flame ascendeth up forever and ever.
39 And now I say unto you, that mercy hath no claim on that man; therefore his final doom is to endure a never-ending torment.
40 O, all ye old men, and also ye young men, and you little children who can understand my words, for I have spoken plainly unto you that ye might understand, I pray that ye should awake to a remembrance of the awful situation of those that have fallen into transgression.

Alma 42:13, 25
13 Therefore, according to justice, the plan of redemption could not be brought about, only on conditions of repentance of men in this probationary state, yea, this preparatory state; for except it were for these conditions, mercy could not take effect except it should destroy the work of justice. Now the work of justice could not be destroyed; if so, God would cease to be God.
25 What, do ye suppose that mercy can rob justice? I say unto you, Nay; not one whit. If so, God would cease to be God.

2 Nephi 28:32 Wo be unto the Gentiles, saith the Lord God of Hosts! For notwithstanding I shall lengthen out mine arm unto them from day to day, they will deny me; nevertheless, I will be merciful unto them, saith the Lord God, if they will repent and come unto me; for mine arm is lengthened out all the day long, saith the Lord God of Hosts.

D&C 138:19 And there he preached to them the everlasting gospel, the doctrine of the resurrection and the redemption of mankind from the fall, and from individual sins on conditions of repentance.

God's Love is Pure or Perfect

Moroni 7:47
47 But charity 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.

2 Nephi 26:29-31
29 He commandeth that there shall be no priestcrafts [the antithesis of Charity, or pure love]; for, behold, priestcrafts are that men preach and set themselves up for a light unto the world, that they may get gain and praise of the world; but they seek not the welfare of Zion.
30 Behold, the Lord hath forbidden this thing; wherefore, the Lord God hath given a commandment that all men should have charity, which charity is love. And except they should have charity they were nothing. Wherefore, if they should have charity they would not suffer the laborer in Zion to perish.
31 But the laborer in Zion shall labor for Zion [seek the welfare of Zion]; for if they labor for money they shall perish.

Moroni 8:16, 26
16 Wo be unto them that shall pervert the ways of the Lord after this manner, for they shall perish except they repent. Behold, I speak with boldness, having authority from God; and I fear not what man can do; for perfect love casteth out all fear.
26 And the remission of sins bringeth meekness, and lowliness of heart; and because of meekness and lowliness of heart cometh the visitation of the Holy Ghost, which Comforter filleth with hope and perfect love, which love endureth by diligence unto prayer, until the end shall come, when all the saints shall dwell with God.

2 Nephi 26:33
33 For none of these iniquities come of the Lord; for he doeth that which is good among the children of men; and he doeth nothing save it be plain unto the children of men; and he inviteth them all to come unto him and partake of his goodness; and he denieth none that come unto him, black and white, bond and free, male and female; and he remembereth the heathen; and all are alike unto God, both Jew and Gentile.
1 John 4:19
19 We love him, because he first loved us.

2 Peter 3:9
9 The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

1 Nephi 20:9, 11
9 Nevertheless, for my name's sake will I defer mine anger, and for my praise will I refrain from thee, that I cut thee not off.
11 For mine own sake, yea, for mine own sake will I do this, for I will not suffer my name to be polluted, and I will not give my glory unto another.

Bruce R. McConkie, The Millennial Messiah, p.498 - p.499 (THIS ENTIRE CHAPTER IS A MUST READ! (pp. 495-508))
Do these utterances of the ancient prophets seem brutal and punitive? Do they project the image of an austere and stern Deity who deals with men in a harsh and iron-fisted way? Does it seem from them that his purpose is to crush and condemn rather than save and exalt? It would seem that the answer in each instance is yes; and if this is so, so be it. That is, the answers are yes, where the wicked and ungodly are concerned. In his love and in his mercy, a gracious God seeks the salvation of all his children. But he cannot save the righteous without damning the wicked; he cannot reward the obedient without condemning the rebellious; he cannot fill the hearts of the righteous with unmeasured blessings without pouring out his wrath upon the wicked. Indeed, how could a just and holy Being who cannot look upon sin with the least degree of allowance do other than send wrath and vengeance upon those who worship Satan and rebel against Him?

God's Attributes of Anger, Hate, Wrath, Vengeance, etc.

2 Nephi 23:5-9
5 They come from a far country, from the end of heaven, yea, the Lord, and the weapons of his indignation, to destroy the whole land.
6 Howl ye, for the day of the Lord is at hand; it shall come as a destruction from the Almighty.
7 Therefore shall all hands be faint, every man's heart shall melt;
8 And they shall be afraid; pangs and sorrows shall take hold of them; they shall be amazed one at another; their faces shall be as flames.
9 Behold, the day of the Lord cometh, cruel both with wrath and fierce anger, to lay the land desolate; and he shall destroy the sinners thereof out of it.

D&C 133:45-53
45 For since the beginning of the world have not men heard nor perceived by the ear, neither hath any eye seen, O God, besides thee, how great things thou hast prepared for him that waiteth for thee.
46 And it shall be said: Who is this that cometh down from God in heaven with dyed garments; yea, from the regions which are not known, clothed in his glorious apparel, traveling in the greatness of his strength?
47 And he shall say: I am he who spake in righteousness, mighty to save.
48 And the Lord shall be red in his apparel, and his garments like him that treadeth in the wine-vat.
49 And so great shall be the glory of his presence that the sun shall hide his face in shame, and the moon shall withhold its light, and the stars shall be hurled from their places.
50 And his voice shall be heard: I have trodden the wine-press alone, and have brought judgment upon all people; and none were with me;
51 And I have trampled them in my fury, and I did tread upon them in mine anger, and their blood have I sprinkled upon my garments, and stained all my raiment; for this was the day of vengeance which was in my heart.

Psalms 5:4-5 "For thou [art] not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness: neither shall evil dwell with thee. The foolish shall not stand in thy sight: thou hatest all workers of iniquity"

Brigham Young
"Love your enemies!" What, love hell? When people do that, they get where devils are. If it had been written, "Love the spirits God has placed in tabernacles, and try to reclaim them and do them good, and pray for those who despitefully use you," I would feed and clothe them, take peculiar care of them, and place them where they would not hurt anybody. You may think that I am disputing the Bible. If you understood what the Lord means when he talks about loving his children, you would understand that he does not love them as they are now; for he hates and is angry with the wicked. He dislikes their wicked acts, but he loves his children, because he has organized them, and he wishes to see them obedient. (Journal of Discourses, 8:158)
Bruce R. McConkie, "Hatred," Mormon Doctrine, pg 344.

"Hat is the opposite of love; in its full force it is to abhor, abominate, and detest; in lesser degree it is merely to dislike or regard with displeasure. Hatred is a proper and holy emotion when channeled properly. 'Hate the evil, and love the good.' (Amos 5:15.)

Manifestations of perfect hatred are shown forth by Deity himself. 'I the Lord love judgment, I hate robbery,' he says. (Isa 61:8.) One of the best statements in the Proverbs is: 'These six things doth the Lord hate: yea, seven are an abomination unto him: A proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, An heart that deviseth wicked imaginations, feet that be swift in running to mischief, A false witness that speaketh lies, and he that soweth discord among brethren.' (Prov 6:16-19.)

'Like persecution, hatred is the heritage of the faithful. Our Lord told the Twelve: 'Ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake.' (Mt 10:22; 24:9.) Such a reaction to the Lord's ministers should cause no surprise, as he said: 'If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.' (Jn 15:18-19; 17:14.)

'Proper hatred on the part of the saints [**see Mormon 8:20**] must be against evil and not people. The gospel standard is: 'Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you.' (Mt 5:44; Lk 6:27.)"

**Bruce R. McConkie** (Doctrinal New Testament Commentary 2:515-516.) “Righteous anger is an attribute of Deity. His anger is eternally kindled against the wicked. (D&C 1:13; 5:8; 60:2; 63:11, 32; 84:24.)”

Orson Pratt (Millennial Star, 28:473-475; July 28, 1866.)

Anger, an Attribute of God and Man.

"... For wise purposes, God has given you appetites and passions, and has given you laws to control the same. Do not pray for these attributes of your nature to be taken away, but pray for strength and grace to submit them to the will of him who has given them to you. 

"Anger is a passion wisely given to intelligent beings, intended for a good purpose; but it is one easily perverted by fallen beings into an instrument of much evil. It is a passion pertaining to the Almighty, who is angry with the wicked every day. Righteous anger is a feeling of indignation against sin, a feeling of justice, a feeling that the evil doer merits punishment. This kind of anger is justifiable, whether it exists in the bosom of God, angels, or men; but anger founded upon any other principle is sinful, and when cultivated and indulged in out of its proper channel, it brings misery and wretchedness upon all its unhappy votaries. Because we are so liable to sin through an improper indulgence of anger, is it right to pray for a destruction of the attribute? It certainly is not; for if man were dispossessed of this attribute, he would be unfit for a kingdom, throne, he would be unfit for the society of the heavenly hosts, unfit for celestial, terrestrial, or telestial glory. Anger, founded on justice and properly governed, is essential to the happiness of every kingdom; without it there could be no exaltation, no glory, and man would cease to be man, and dwindle into a nondescript something, beneath the animal creation."


"Deity manifests wrath as one of his attributes. It is an accompaniment of anger; indignation is its emotional basis; inherent in it is the purpose and intent of meting out a just punishment upon those whose acts have caused it to be aroused. The wrath of God does not fall on the righteous, but upon the wicked."

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**Result of Thinking God's Love is "unconditional"**

2 Nephi 28:7-9, 21 (whole chapter)

7 Yea, and there shall be many which shall say: Eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we die; and it shall be well with us.
8 And there shall also be many which shall say: Eat, drink, and be merry; nevertheless, fear God--he will justify in committing a little sin; yea, lie a little, take the advantage of one because of his words, dig a pit for thy neighbor; there is no harm in this; and do all these things, for tomorrow we die; and if it so be that we are guilty, God will beat us with a few stripes, and at last we shall be saved in the kingdom of God.

9 Yea, and there shall be many which shall teach after this manner, false and vain and foolish doctrines, and shall be puffed up in their hearts, and shall seek deep to hide their counsels from the Lord; and their works shall be in the dark.
21 And others will he pacify, and lull them away into carnal security, that they will say: All is well in Zion; yea, Zion prospereth, all is well-and thus the devil cheateth their souls, and leadeth them away carefully down to hell.

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In the words of Anti-Christs . .

Alma 1:4 (Nehor)

4 And he also testified unto the people that all mankind should be saved at the last day, and that they need not fear nor tremble, but that they might lift up their heads and rejoice; for the Lord had created all men, and had also redeemed all men; and, in the end, all men should have eternal life.

Alma 30:18 (Korihor)

18 And thus he did preach unto them, leading away the hearts of many, causing them to lift up their heads in their wickedness, yea, leading away many women, and also men, to commit whoredoms . . .
Alma the Younger as an Example

Alma 36:12-21

Anger, Hate, Wrath, Vengeance, etc.

12 But I was racked with eternal torment, for my soul was harrowed up to the greatest degree and racked with all my sins.

13 Yea, I did remember all my sins and iniquities, for which I was tormented with the pains of hell; yea, I saw that I had rebelled against my God, and that I had not kept his holy commandments.

14 Yea, and I had murdered many of his children, or rather led them away unto destruction; yea, and in fine so great had been my iniquities, that the very thought of coming into the presence of my God did rack my soul with inexpressible horror.

15 Oh, thought I, that I could be banished and become extinct both soul and body, that I might not be brought to stand in the presence of my God, to be judged of my deeds.

16 And now, for three days and for three nights was I racked, even with the pains of a damned soul.

17 And it came to pass that as I was thus racked with torment, while I was harrowed up by the memory of my many sins, . . .

Condition / Repentance

. . . behold, I remembered also to have heard my father prophesy unto the people concerning the coming of one Jesus Christ, a Son of God, to atone for the sins of the world.

18 Now, as my mind caught hold upon this thought, I cried within my heart: O Jesus, thou Son of God, have mercy on me, who am in the gall of bitterness, and am encircled about by the everlasting chains of death.

God's Love

19 And now, behold, when I thought this, I could remember my pains no more; yea, I was harrowed up by the memory of my sins no more.

20 And oh, what joy, and what marvelous light I did behold; yea, my soul was filled with joy as exceeding as was my pain!

*** 21 Yea, I say unto you, my son, that there could be nothing so exquisite and so bitter as were my pains. Yea, and again I say unto you, my son, that on the other hand, there can be nothing so exquisite and sweet as was my joy. ***

An Invitation

Alma 42:27-30

27 Therefore, O my son, whosoever will come may come and partake of the waters of life freely; and whosoever will not come the same is not compelled to come; but in the last day it shall be restored unto him according to his deeds.

28 If he has desired to do evil, and has not repented in his days, behold, evil shall be done unto him, according to the restoration of God.

29 And now, my son, I desire that ye should let these things trouble you no more, and only let your sins trouble you, with that trouble which shall bring you down unto repentance.

30 O my son, I desire that ye should deny the justice of God no more. Do not endeavor to excuse yourself in the least point because of your sins, by denying the justice of God; but do you let the justice of God, and his mercy, and his long-suffering have full sway in your heart; and let it bring you down to the dust in humility.

The Emergence of "unconditional love"


"One outcome of this paper should be to help us see why thoughtful parents anguish in confusion when they hear from so many quarters that they are to 'love their children unconditionally'; to 'love their children no matter what those children do.' I hope in this paper to offer some relief to those who want to understand the relationship between misbehavior and the love the children may or may not receive from their parents. Sometimes it is necessary to chastise or reprimand children--something which is far from unconditional love....

"The notion of unconditional love emerged and rolled across not only this country but the world as a humanistic reaction to the mechanistic practice of socializing children through a growing technology of nurturance withdrawal paradigms (Carl R. Rogers, The characteristics of a helping relationship, Personnel and Guidance Journal, 34, p. 15-16) . . .

"The bandwagon response unconditional love received has even found its way to the pulpit and Sunday School classes. This acceptance has added to its popular appeal a kind of religious zeal and consequently an informal theological sanction.

"How shall we take the admonition that children are entitled to unconditional love from their parents? On the surface, one way to take this advice might be, 'No matter what you do I'll still love you.' And another might be, 'We should never say to a child, if you act like that I won't love you.' These are fairly accurate adages, but the concept goes deeper than them....

"A.S. Neill (A. S. Neill, Summerhill. New York: Hart, 1960) developed Summerhill, a private school in England, around this notion [of unconditional love]. The atmosphere in the school seemed to offer a fresh new approach to child education. In his chapter on love and approval, Neill criticizes religious education and condemns the imposition of moral values on children. He believes 'parents are spoiling their children's lives by forcing on them outdated beliefs, outdated manners, outdated morals. They are sacrificing the child to the past. This is particularly true of those parents who impose authoritative religion on their children just as it was once imposed on them' (page 118). As a reaction to giving moral instruction he declares with strong conviction that 'the boy is never in the wrong' (page 298). He thinks that in the case of children it is psychologically wrong to give moral instruction. . . .
"Instead he holds that 'children do not need teaching as much as they need love and understanding. They need approval and freedom to be naturally good' (page 118). The way parents can produce children whose lives are characterized by humanistic values is to 'be on the side of their children, demanding nothing in return, and therefore getting a lot' (p. 117). He wants a home and a school system in which 'the children and the adults have equal rights' (page 107). If children are given love and approval, if they are trusted and understood, if they are not forced to obey rules imposed by adults, and if parents will not disapprove of their children's misbehavior, because to children 'disapproval means hate,' they will become self-regulated and on their own come to protect the rights of others, 'soon accept(ing) social laws' (page 120).

"Remember, the idea of unconditional love became popular in the U.S. mostly through the writings and lectures of the father of client-centered humanistic therapy, Carl Rogers. In his writings as far back as the 1950s he admonished all who are in a caring relationship to treat children with 'unconditional positive regard' (Carl R. Rogers, A theory of therapy, personality, and interpersonal relationships; in S. Koch (ed.) Psychology: A study of science; vol. 3, New York: McGraw-Hill, pp. 184-256). . . .

"Both Rogers and Neill felt caught and stifled by the demands of their religious traditions. In fact, it was from the outset a reaction to their religious traditions that led them to look for a different set of values and a different methodology and to fight against any parenting procedure that imposed moral standards upon developing children (Neill, page 242; Carl R. Rogers, On becoming a person, Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1961, p. 5). But their look was more of a glance at some appealing existential ideas than a careful reading of the philosophical underpinnings that sprouted those ideas. When they borrowed some existential concepts they failed to bring with those concepts the underlying theoretical or philosophical principles which are the roots from which existential thinking grew. As a consequence of this serious blunder, their perception of human behavior remains essentially the same as the behaviorists'—causal and mechanistic. Consequently, any talk about freedom of the 'self' (which concept the humanists threw in as a thought on what caregivers should do to keep the self independent from interference) is quite hollow. But in insisting on the notion of a self they become indefensible to the behaviorists. For the behaviorists, self is a vague term and therefore meaningless and inoperable. Only observable behavior can be controlled by manipulations from the environment. Such conceptual inconsistencies make it difficult for rational people to embrace humanism.

"What was it Neill said? It really is quite behavioristic. The difference is not in method but in what variables are being manipulated. 'I believe that it is moral instruction that makes the child bad. I find that when I smash the moral instruction a bad boy has received, he becomes a good boy' (Neill, page 250).

"So what is the humanist solution? To give love unconditionally. True, the idea of unconditional love calls for a rethinking of what we are doing with love. But love expressed even unconditionally is actually conceived as an antecedent to the kind of behavior that the humanists are calling for. It is not a fresh approach at all, but only a modification of the same old causal theme. Instead of reinforcing the compliance to the traditional moral or ethical values, the humanists only reinforce a different set of values with a different set of contingencies. They want children to comply to such behaviors as being independent, creative, freed from nagging conscience, open to and having a sense of awareness of their own feelings, independent from institutions, free from binding rules and preconditions that stifle growth, etc. So if both conditional and unconditional love are the only extremes on how we manipulate the environment, then perhaps this dichotomization of love will turn out to be no love at all. Perhaps to take children's behavior to be the result of either extreme of the dichotomy is only a variation of feigned [faked] love.

"But this is not all; and this is the second problem. Think about applying the logic of unconditional love to the other end of the continuum: unconditional punishment, unconditional rejection, or unconditional hatred. The notion of 'whatever you do I will love you' is really quite problematic. Consider for a moment, by way of some sinister hyperbole, what the outcome might be if I were to proceed with my child on the basis of unconditional rejection. No matter what he does I will reject him. If my child comes home with bad grades, I reject him; if he comes home with good grades, I reject him. But, in the unconditional love causal model, if he comes home with good grades, I love him; if he comes home with bad grades, I love him equally.

"There is a problem of children's knowing what is punishment and what is reward. To some children some things are rewarding, but to others different things are rewards. The same with punishment. Similarly, how do you operationalize love? How does the child know when he is loved? If the child thinks he is loved when you ignore bad grades or when you give him what he wants, then what he does may not be what you expected. If our reason tells us that unconditional rejection is clearly wrong as a strategy for childrearing, why should we, at the other end of the same continuum, think that unconditional love is right? If in a causal model a child is rewarded for wrong and right behaviors [unconditional love], how will the child ever know which behavior is appropriate? So the best things we can say are that unconditional love is selective and that humanists are using it to increase the likelihood the child will perform the behaviors valued by the humanists. If it is selective, it may not be unconditional at all. It is quite likely the child will read in your indifference to the child's behavior that you don't love him or her at all; you want only to posture yourself as a kind parent. . . .

"Finally, while there has been a widespread popular appeal to the notion of unconditional love in our preaching, there nonetheless can be found no scriptural support for the concept or language whatsoever. While there are references and parables and stories of unfeigned love, there is not one single mention of the word or idea of unconditional love in holy writ. Nonetheless, many are citing (misrepresenting) the scriptural stories as evidence which they offer as a demonstration of the notion of unconditional love (for example, the Prodigal Son)."