**God’s Love: Other Dimensions**

Unconditional? Does he love all exactly the same? Can we do things that can cause us to lose God’s favor?

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**Docational foundations**


“The youth of the Church are hungry for things of the Spirit; they are eager to learn the gospel, and they want it straight, undiluted…. You do not have to sneak up behind these spiritually experienced youth and whisper religion in their ears; you can come right out, face to face, and talk with them. You do not need to disguise religious truths with a cloak of worldly things; you can bring these truths to them openly, in their natural guise. Youth may prove to be not more fearful of them than you are. There is no need for gradual approaches, for ‘bedtime’ stories, for coddling, for patronizing, or for any of the other childish devices used in efforts to reach those spiritually inexperienced and all but spiritually dead.”


“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—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 books, writings, explanations, expositions, views, and theories of even the wisest and greatest men, either in or out of the Church, do not rank with the standard works. Even the writings, teachings, and opinions of the prophets of God are acceptable only to the extent they are in harmony with what God has revealed and what is recorded in the standard works. When living oracles speak in the name of the Lord, however, their utterances are then binding upon all who hear, and whatever is said will *without any exception* be found to be in harmony with the standard works. The Lord’s house is a house of order, and one truth never contradicts another.”

**Care in Using Words—Where do we get our terminology?**

J. Reuben Clark, Jr., found in Earnest L. Wilkinson’s *BYU: the First 100 Years* (Provo: BYU Press, 1975-76), 2:382.

“Teachers will do well to give up indoctrinating themselves in the sectarianism of the modern ‘Divinity School Theology’ [from when comes the phrase *unconditional love*]. If they do not, they will probably bring themselves to a frame of mind where they will be no longer useful in our system. The most brilliant of them will find enough in the Gospel to tax all their brillianty, even genius. The heights and depths of the Gospel have yet to be sounded.

“The teachers will not teach ethics [the field *unconditional love* comes from] or philosophy, ancient or modern, pagan or so-called Christian; they will as already stated teach the Gospel and that only, and the Gospel as revealed in these last days.

“In their teaching, the teachers will use the verbiage and *terminology* which have become classic in the Church. They will not use terms and concepts which, though in one sense, are susceptible of being applied to the Church and Church doctrines, yet which, in another sense, are completely misleading. For example, no teacher should speak of either the Church *ideology* or Christian *ideology*, which if the teacher intends to say what he is in fact saying and if the student understands what the teacher is saying and intends to say, places the Gospel in the same category with any and every pagan religion or theology, and characterizes them all as ‘a science that treats of the history and evolution of human ideas.’ This concept, reduced to its lowest terms, may be expressed as conceiving that religion is man-made, that man makes his God, not God his man—a concept which is coming to be basic to the whole ‘Divinity School Theology,’ but which is contrary to all the teachings of the Church and to God’s revealed word.

“The Gospel should be spoken of as *the* Gospel, God’s revealed truth; it is not and must never be spoken of or treated as a ‘history and evolution of human ideas.’


“May I speak first for a moment of words and relate them to may theme. There is magic in words properly used. Some people use them accurately, others sloppily.

“Words are a means of communicating, and faulty signals give wrong impressions. Disorder and misunderstandings are the results. Words underlie our whole life and are the tools of our business, the expressions of our affections, and the records of our progress. Words cause hearts to throb and tears to flow in sympathy. Words can be sincere or hypocritical. Many of us are destitute of words and, consequently, are clumsy with our speech, which sometimes becomes but bubble. It was Paul who said: ‘Except ye utter by the tongue words easy to be understood, how shall it be known what is spoken? for ye shall speak into the air.’ (1 Cor 14:9.)


“It is important that in our teaching we make use of the language of holy writ. Alma said, ‘I ... do command you in the
language of him who hath commanded me” (Alma 5:61).

“The words and the way they are used in the Book of Mormon by the Lord should become our source of understanding and should be used by us in teaching gospel principles.

“God uses the power of the word of the Book of Mormon as an instrument to change people’s lives.... [See Alma 31:5.]

“I am deeply concerned about what we are doing to teach the Saints at all levels the gospel of Jesus Christ as completely and authoritatively as do the Book of Mormon and the Doctrine and Covenants. By this I mean teaching the “great plan of the Eternal God,” to use the words of Amulek (Alma 34:9).

“Are we using the messages and the method of teaching found in the Book of Mormon and other scriptures of the Restoration to teach this great plan of the Eternal God?

“...Are we accepting and teaching what the revelations tell us about the Creation, Adam and the fall of man, and redemption from that fall through the atonement of Christ?...

“Now, what should be the source for teaching the great plan of the Eternal God? The scriptures, of course—particularly the Book of Mormon. This should also include the other modern-day revelations. These should be coupled with the words of the Apostles and prophets and the promptings of the Spirit.”

Eternal life depends upon knowing God—What He is really like, not what we want him to be

• John 17:3.
• Matthew 7:21-23 (see difference in JST [Inspiried Version]).
• Matthew 25:12 (see difference in JST [Inspiried Version]).

Lectures on Faith, Lecture 3, ¶2-5.

“...three things are necessary in order that any rational and intelligent being may exercise faith in God unto life and salvation. First, the idea that he actually exists. Secondly, a correct idea of his character, perfections and attributes. Thirdly, an actual knowledge that the course of life which he is pursuing is according to his will. For without an acquaintance with these three important facts, the faith of every rational being must be imperfect and unproductive.”

Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, 345-346 [italics in original].

“It is the first principle of the Gospel [faith] to know for a certainty the Character of God, and to know that we may converse with him as one man converses with another, and that he was once a man like us; yea, that God himself, the Father of us all, dwell on an earth, the same as Jesus Christ himself did; and I will show it from the Bible.”

Does God Love Everyone the Same? Are there conditions to receiving God’s love?

Alma 5:10. Note the connection between “conditions” and “cause.”


While divine love can be called perfect, infinite, enduring, and universal, it cannot correctly be characterized as unconditional... Understanding that divine love and blessings are not truly “unconditional” can defend us against common fallacies such as these: “Since God’s love in unconditional, He will love me regardless ...” or “Since ‘God is love,’ He will love me unconditionally, regardless ...”

These arguments are used by anti-Christs to woo people with deception. Nehor, for example, promoted himself by teaching falsehoods ... Sadly, some of the people believed Nehor’s fallacious and unconditional concepts.

Joseph Fielding Smith, Doctrines of Salvation 1:313.

“... a soul already in the Church ... is just a little dearer to the Father, if possible, than is one who is on the outside. Of course, the Lord is no respecter of persons, and all souls are precious in his sight, but he [God] no doubt loves those who obey his voice and who are willing to walk in his truth, more than he does those who fail to do so.” [Italics in original.]


“... the special and preferential love [is] bestowed by the Lord upon those who love and serve him. Such are singled out by Deity to receive special grace and goodness.”


“As with mercy, justice, faith and all of the attributes of godliness, love is gained by obedience to law....

“...the knowledge of the divinity of the great latter-day work. ‘It means entering into the knowledge and love of God, having faith in his purpose and in his plan, to such an extent that we know we are right, and that we are not hunting for something else; we are not disturbed by every wind of doctrine, or by the cunning and craftiness of men who lie in wait to deceive.’ It is ‘rest from the religious turmoil of the world; from the cry that is going forth, here and there—or, here is Christ; lo, there is Christ.’ (Gospel Doctrine, 5th ed., 58, 125-126.) The rest of the Lord, in eternity, is to inherit eternal life, to gain the fulness of the Lord’s glory. (D. & C. 84:24.)” (Mormon Doctrine, 2nd ed., 633.)


“We must listen to and support the prophets if we are to gain favor with the Lord.”

Marion D. Hanks, Know the Book, 19.

“Note that the ‘favor’ of the Lord is the product of obedience to commandment.”

1 Ne 1:1. Nephi was favored of the Lord. Could Laman and Lemuel say the same?

1 Ne 17:35. God is no respecter of persons; he will accept repentance from anyone. But he favors the obedient.

1 Ne 17:40. God loves those who will have him to be their God. What about those who won’t?

Mosiah 11:24.

“Yes, and it shall come to pass that when they shall cry unto me I will be slow to hear...
their cries; yea, and I will suffer them that they be smitten by their enemies.”

Mosiah 21:15.

“And now the Lord was slow to hear their cry because of their iniquities [conditions]; nevertheless the Lord did hear their cries, and began to soften the hearts of the Lamanites that they began to ease their burdens; yet the Lord did not see fit to deliver them out of bondage.”


“I believe it [divorce, teenage pregnancies, fatherless children, increased prison populations, and a general lack of self-discipline ‘are the fruits of increasing secularization of our society’] is happening because we, as a nation, are forsaking the Almighty—and He is forsaking us.”

Mormon 8:19-22.

“For behold, the same that judgeth rashly shall be judged rashly again; for according to his works shall his wages be; therefore, he that smiteth shall be smitten again, of the Lord.”

“Behold what the scripture says—man shall not smite, neither shall he judge; for judgment is mine, saith the Lord, and vengeance is mine also, and I will repay.”

“And he that shall breathe out wrath and strives against the work of the Lord, and against the covenant people of the Lord who are the house of Israel, and shall say: We will destroy the work of the Lord, and the Lord will not remember his covenant which he hath made unto the house of Israel—the same is in danger to be hewn down and cast into the fire;”

“For the eternal purposes of the Lord shall roll on, until all his promises shall be fulfilled.”

Moroni 7:9.

“And likewise also is it counted evil unto a man, if he shall pray and not with real intent of heart; yea, and it profiteth him nothing, for God receiveth none such.”

Moroni 7:48.

“Wherefore, my beloved brethren, pray unto the Father with all the energy of heart, that ye may be filled with this love [the pure of Christ, and apparently they don't have it yet or they would not have to pray to get it], which he hath bestowed upon all who are true followers of his Son, Jesus Christ [condition]; that ye may become the sons of God; that when he shall appear we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is; that we may have this hope; that we may be purified even as he is pure. Amen.”

D&C 95:12.

“If you keep not my commandments, the love of the Father shall not continue with you [note: not ‘in’ you; it is not inherent but comes from God], therefore you shall walk in darkness.”

D&C 101:7.

“They were slow to hearken unto the voice of the Lord their God; therefore, the Lord their God is slow to hearken unto their prayers, to answer them in the day of their trouble.”

2 Chronicles 24:19-20.

“And the Spirit of God came upon Zechariah the son of Jehoiada the priest, which stood above the people, and said unto them, Thus saith God, Why transgress ye which he has to my testimony [condition], I, the Lord, love him.”

Proverbs 8:17.

“I love those that love me [condition].”

Joseph Smith, Jr., History of the Church 4:262-263.

“... if He [God] had no respect to the actions of men, He would be just as well pleased with a wicked man for breaking His law as a righteous man for keeping it.”

(Exodus 33:13-19; Romans 9:15).


“If I were to ask which characteristic of his life you would identify first, I think you might name his attribute of love. That would include his compassion, kindness, charity, devotion, forgiveness, mercy, justice, and more. Jesus loved his Father and loved his mother. [Jn 19:25-27.] He loved his family and the Saints. [Jn 13:1; 2 Thess 2:16.] He loved the sinner, without excusing the sin. [D&C 24:2; JST Mt 9:2.] And he taught us how we can show our love for him. He said, ‘If ye love me, keep my commandments.’ [Jn 14:15.] Then, to underscore that his love was not unconditional, he added ‘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.’ [Jn 15:10; see also D&C 95:12; 124:87.”]

Joseph Fielding McConkie, A Scriptural Search for the Ten Tribes and Other Things We Lost, 4ff.

“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 [false, in this case] stories that have been told to me about my own father [Bruce R. McConkie] and my grandfather Joseph Fielding Smith....

“Judaism and historical Christianity both provide marvelous case studies for the process by which tradition supplants revelation and is elevated to the status of doctrine. What of Mormonism? Do we face the same danger? Do we commonly teach as doctrine things for which there is not a shred of scriptural evidence? I am fearful that we do. Let me suggest four illustrations, matters that are frequently the subject of discussions in Church classes. My challenge of the theological roots of these so-called doctrines will probably be sufficient to cause some annoyance this evening. Should that be true, it will help establish my concern that we may be every bit as susceptible to the enticements of traditions in preference to revelation as were our ancient Jewish and Christian counterparts.

“My first illustration is what we have come to call eternal progression. The phrase ‘eternal progression’ is not found anywhere in the Standard Works and we have no evidence that the phrase ever fell from the lips of Joseph Smith. When it first appeared in our conversations and literature I do not know. The scriptures do explicitly state that all who are exalted will enjoy the ‘fulness of the Father,’ be ‘joint heirs’ with him, and be equal with him in power, might, and dominion (see D&C 93:5-17; Romans 8:14-18; D&C 76:94-95; 84:33-41). Scores of scriptural passages attest that God has all wisdom and knowledge, both in heaven and on earth (see Mosiah 4:9; 5:15). His knowledge is spoken of as being ‘infinite’
(Psalms 147:5). The only sense in which the scriptures sustain the idea that god progresses is in bringing to pass the exaltation of his children (Moses 1:39; D&C 130:4; 132:63).

“Second, let 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.

“He that hath my commandments and keepeth them,’ Christ said, ‘he 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’ (John 14:21). Again, the Savior said: ‘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 15:10).

“As a third illustration, let us consider ‘guardian angels.’ Once again we are using a phrase that is without scriptural warrant. True, it is found in hymns, patriarchal blessings, and sermons. Certainly a righteous father who has died will continue to look after his family and scores of his sons and daughters. This is a proper way to emulate God in exercising ‘unconditional love.’

“Fourth, consider the on-going argument as to the possibility of advancing after the resurrection from one degree of glory to another. More properly stated, can we advance from one resurrection to another? The debate ignores the scriptural definition of resurrection as the inseparable union of body and spirit (see Alma 11:45; D&C 138:17). If a terrestrial body and a terrestrial spirit have been ‘united never again to be divided,’ can we change them into that which is celestial? The strongest argument in favor of the hope of advancement from one degree to another is that the scriptures are not explicit in rejecting it. The scriptures do state that there is no progressions from the telestial kingdom (D&C 76:112) and that there is no progressions in the celestial kingdom (D&C 132:17 and D&C 131:1-4). The unavoidable point, however, is that we are without the slightest indication in the scriptures that such could be the case. Surely the fact that the scriptures do not say that there is no leprosy in heaven is hardly reason to argue that there is.”


“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, 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. 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’ (page 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, 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, 242; Carl R. Rogers, *On becoming a person*, Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1961, 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, 250). [Just do away with law, so that nothing one does is wrong. President J. Reuben Clark taught that this was one of Satan’s ploys in the preexistence. CR, Oct 1956, 84.]...

“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 bad 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 thing 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 unfigned 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).” [See Spencer W. Kimball, Miracle of Forgiveness, about the prodigal son not repenting.]


The second heresy arose some four hundred years later in 91 t.c. when a man named Nehor taught a pleasing doctrine of universal salvation without the need for repentance: “For the Lord had created all men, and had also redeemed all men; and, in the end, all men should have eternal life.” (Al 1:4; cf. 15:15.) Humanity’s redemption required no sacrifice on God’s part; he simply willed it. So Nehorism predestined everyone to heaven; hell was no problem.

The spirit of Nehorism is alive and well in many Christian churches where much sermonizing on God’s unconditional love can be heard. Because God loves us, they say, sin is not as sinful as once thought. And if there is a hell — which is doubtful — it will be a vast improvement over the old fire-and-brimstone one of eternal burnings. This deceptive attitude was foreseen by Nephi: “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.” (2 Ne 28:9.)


“Ours is a day when ‘every man walketh in his own way’ (D&C 1:16). Thus there is also a special need to consider how dangerous pleasing oneself can be; it may be the most dangerous form of preening, lulling us into the fatal illusion one commentator aptly described: “For if God is a socially conscious political being whose views invariably correspond to our own prejudices on every essential point of doctrine, he demands of us no more than our politics require. Besides, if God is finite, progressive, and Pure Love, we may as well skip church next Sunday and go to the movies. For if we have nothing to fear from this all-loving, all-forgiving God, how would
our worship of him constitute more than self-congratulation for our own moral standard? As an atheist, I like this God. It is good to see him every morning while I am shaving” (Eugene D. Genovese, “Pilgrim’s Progress,” The New Republic, 11 May 1992, 38; italics added by Elder Maxwell.)


“O God, put away justice and truth for we cannot understand them and do not want them. Eternity would bore us dreadfully. Leave Thy heavens and come down to our earth of waterclocks and hedges. Become our uncle. Look after Baby, amuse Grandfather, escort Madam to the Opera, help Willy with his home-work, introduce Muriel to a handsome naval officer. Be interesting and weak like us, and we will love you as we love ourselves.”

Joseph Smith, History of the Church 3:295;
Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, 137.

“Thy mind, O man! if thou wilt lead a soul unto salvation, must stretch as high as the utmost heavens, and search into and contemplate the darkest abyss, and the broad expanse of eternity—thou must commune with God. How much more dignified and noble are the thoughts of God, than the vain imaginations of the human heart! None but fools will trifle with the souls of men.”

Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, 257.

“Our heavenly Father is more liberal in His views, and boundless in His mercies and blessings, than we are ready to believe or receive; and, at the same time, is more terrible to the workers of iniquity, more awful in the executions of His punishments, and more ready to detect every false way, than we are apt to suppose Him to be.”

Persecution Causes Greater Diligence.

As a people, in times past we have been careless and indifferent in many directions. Neglect of duties has been too common everywhere. Hypocrisy has been indulged in to some extent, and a laxity has prevailed in many quarters concerning the keeping of the laws of God which is not in accord with the spirit of the Gospel. Under these circumstances the Lord has permitted persecutions and trials to come upon His people that have had the effect of stirring them up to greater diligence. When the Lord, for any reason, turns his face away from His people, and is slow to hear their cries, thorough repentance on their part, and a complete abandonment of their evil ways, are sure to bring back His favor, and to cause His countenance to shine upon them.

This has been the case in every age when God has had a people upon the earth. In our own day we have seen frequent illustrations of this. We have never feared for the people, nor for the prosperity of the work, when the Latter-day Saints have been fully alive to the duties and requirements of their religion. But when they have been careless and neglectful, or disobedient and hard in their hearts, then we have trembled; for when the Saints are in such a condition the displeasure of the Lord is sure to be awakened against them, and His scourges are likely to fall upon them.

The Lord does not permit his enemies, nor the enemies of His people, to prevail over them for any length of time when they are living near unto Him and complying strictly with His will. All His promises, of the brightest and most glorious character, encouraging and hopeful, are given to those who keep His commandments, and who seek earnestly to carry out in their lives the principles of salvation which He has revealed. When a people are in this condition their enemies cannot have much power over them. (April 8, 1887, Millennial Star 49:290)


“If individuals reject the will of God, they will be rejected by him; and this applies also to the Church.”

John 14:21, 23.

“He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me [condition] shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him....

“Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me [condition], he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abodes with him.”

John 15:10, 14.

“If ye keep my commandments [condition], ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love....

“Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you [condition].”

John 16:27.

“For the Father himself loveth you, because ye have loved me [condition], and have believed that I came out from God [condition].”

1 John 2:15-16.

“Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world [condition], the love of the Father is not in him.

“For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.”

1 John 3:1.

“Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not.”

Hymn #117 “Come Unto Jesus”

“Come unto Jesus; He’ll surely hear you, If you in meekness plead for his love.”

Limited, or Conditional, Atonement
Alma 11:40-41.

“And he shall come into the world to redeem his people; and he shall take upon him the transgressions of those who believe on his name; and these are they that shall have eternal life, and salvation cometh to none else.

“Therefore the wicked remain as though there had been no redemption made, except it be the loosing of the bands of death; for behold, the day cometh that all shall rise from the dead and stand before God, and be judged according to their works.”

Alma 34:16.

“And thus mercy can satisfy the demands of justice, and encircles them in the arms of safety, while he that exercises no faith unto repentance is exposed to the whole law of the demands of justice; therefore only unto him that hath faith unto repentance is brought about the great and eternal plan of redemption.”

Mosiah 15:26-27.

“But behold, and fear, and tremble before God, for ye ought to tremble [Abinadi speaking to Noah and his priests]; for the Lord redeemeth none such that rebel against him and die in their sins; yea, even all those that have perished in their sins ever since the world began, that have wilfully rebelled against God, that have known the commandments of God, and would not keep
them; these are they that have no part in the first resurrection.

“Therefore ought ye not to tremble? For salvation cometh to none such; for the Lord hath redeemed none such; for he cannot deny himself; for he cannot deny justice when it has its claim.”

Alma 42:25.

“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.”

Mosiah 16:5.

“But remember that he that persists in his own carnal nature, and goes on in the ways of sin and rebellion against God, remaineth in his fallen state and the devil hath all power over him. Therefore he is as though there was no redemption made, being an enemy to God; and also is the devil an enemy to God.”

2 Ne 2:7.

“Behold he offereth himself a sacrifice for sin, to answer the ends of the law, unto all those who have a broken heart and a contrite spirit; and unto none else can the ends of the law be answered.”

2 Ne 9:21a.

“And he cometh into the world that he may save all men if they will hearken unto his voice.”

Are there those whom God dislikes?

2 Nephi 9:42 -- 

“...the wise, and the learned, and they that are rich, who are puffed up because of their learning, and their wisdom, and their riches — yea, they are they whom he [God] despiseth; and save they shall cast these things away, and consider themselves fools before God, and come down in the depths of humility, he will not open unto them.”

Joseph F. Smith, Gospel Doctrine, 214.

God “has no sympathy with Satan, nor with him who knoweth to do good and doeth evil.”

Joseph F. Smith, Gospel Doctrine, 338.

“Some of our good Latter-day Saints have become so exceedingly good (?) [question mark in original — a little sarcasm?] that they cannot tell the difference between a Saint of God, an honest man, and a son of Beezlebub, who has yielded himself absolutely to sin and wickedness. And they call that liberality, broadness of mind, exceeding love. I do not want to become so blinded with love for my enemies that I cannot discern between light and darkness, between truth and error, between good and evil.”


“Renegade” Mormon dissenters are running through the world and spreading various foul and libelous reports against us, thinking thereby to gain the friendship of the world, because they know that we are not of the world, and that the world hates us; therefore, they make a tool of these fellows; and by them try to do all the injury they can, and after that they hate them worse than they do us, because they find them to be base traitors and sycophants [flatterers, toadies].

“Such characters God hates, we cannot love them. The world hates them, and we sometimes think that the devil ought to be ashamed of them....”

Brethren, from henceforth, let truth and righteousness prevail and abound in you; and in all things be temperate; abstain from drunkenness, and from swearing, and from all profane language, and from everything which is unrighteous or unholy; also from enmity, and hatred, and covetousness, and from every unholy desire. Be honest one with another, for it seems that some have come short of these things, and some have been uncharitable, and have manifested greediness because of their debts towards those who have been persecuted and dragged about with chains without cause, and imprisoned. Such characters God hates—and they shall have their turn of sorrow in the rolling of the great wheel, for it rolleth and none can hinder. Zion shall yet live, though she seem to be dead.”

“Remember that whatsoever measure you mete out to others, it shall be measured to you again. We say unto you, brethren, be not afraid of your adversaries; contend earnestly against mobs, and the unlawful works of dissenters and of darkness.

“And the very God of peace shall be with you, and make a way for your escape from the adversary of your souls. We commend you to God and the word of His grace, which is able to make us wise unto salvation. Amen.” [Emphasis added.]

Joseph Smith, Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, 189.

“The whole of the chapter [Rom 9] had reference to the Priesthood and the house of Israel; and unconditional election of individuals to eternal life was not taught by the Apostles. God did elect or predestinate, that all those who would be saved, should be saved in Christ Jesus, and through obedience to the Gospel; but He passes over no man’s sins, but visits them with correction, and if His children will not repent of their sins He will discard them.”


“I do not think the term was any more misapplied than when the Apostles wrote, ‘Love your enemies’; for I do not believe a word of that. ‘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 understand 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” [emphasis added.]

Joseph Fielding McConkie, Seeking the Spirit, 10.

“We choose to associate with those among us with whom we feel most comfortable; the Spirit of the Lord does likewise.”


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


“As with nearly all strong emotions or passions, anger is manifest both in righteousness and in unrighteousness. Always there is a sense of displeasure attending it, and usually this is accompanied by a feeling of antagonism, excited by a sense of injury of insult. Righteous anger is an attribute of Deity. His anger is eternally kindled against the wicked.


“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.)”


“Hate 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.)

“For 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 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.)”


“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.

1 Ne 22:15-23.

“For behold, saith the prophet, the time cometh speedily that Satan shall have no more power over the hearts of the children of men; for the day soon cometh that all the proud and they who do wickedly shall be as stubble; and the day cometh that they must be burned.

“For the time soon cometh that the fulness of the wrath of God shall be poured out upon all the children of men; for he will not suffer that the wicked shall destroy the righteous.

“Wherefore, he will preserve the righteous by his power, even if it so be that the fulness of his wrath must come, and the righteous be preserved, even unto the destruction of their enemies by fire. Wherefore, the righteous need not fear; for thus saith the prophet, they shall be saved, even if it so be as by fire.

“Behold, my brethren, I say unto you, that these things must shortly come; yea, even blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke must come; and it must needs be upon the face of this earth; and it cometh unto men according to the flesh if it so be that they will harden their hearts against the Holy One of Israel.

“For behold, the righteous shall not perish; for the time surely must come that all they who fight against Zion shall be cut off.

“And the Lord will surely prepare a way for his people, unto the fulfilling of the words of Moses, which he spake, saying: A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you, like unto me; him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you. And it shall come to pass that all those who will not hear that prophet shall be cut off from among the people.

“And now I, Nephi, declare unto you, that this prophet of whom Moses spake was the Holy One of Israel; wherefore, he shall execute judgment in righteousness.

“And the righteous need not fear, for they are those who shall not be confounded. But it is the kingdom of the devil, which shall be built up among the children of men, which kingdom is established among them which are in the flesh--

“For the time speedily shall come that all churches which are built up to get gain, and all those who are built up to get power over the flesh, and those who are built up to become popular in the eyes of the world, and those who seek the lusts of the flesh and the things of the world, and to do all manner of iniquity; yea, in fine, all those who belong to the kingdom of the devil are they who need fear, and tremble, and quake; they are those who must be brought low in the dust; they are those who must be consumed as stubble; and this is according to the words of the prophet.”

2 Nephi 30:9-10.

“And with righteousness shall the Lord God judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth. And he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth; and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked.

“For the time speedily cometh that the Lord God shall cause a great division among the people, and the wicked will he destroy; and he will spare his people, yea, even if it so be that he must destroy the wicked by fire.”

Mosiah 5:14.

“And again, doth a man take an ass which belongeth to his neighbor, and keep him? I say unto you, Nay; he will not even suffer that he shall feed among his flocks, but will drive him away, and cast him out. I say unto you, that even so shall it be among you if ye know not the name by which ye are called.”
Helaman 15:4.
“But behold my brethren, the Lamanites hath he [God] hated because their deeds have been evil continuously, and this because of the iniquity of the tradition of their fathers.” [Spoken by Samuel the Lamanite; note that it says nothing about hating only their deeds, but hating the Lamanites.]

Deut 7:9-10.
“Know therefore that the Lord thy God, he is God, the faithful God, which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love him and keep his commandments to a thousand generations;
“And repayeth them that hate him to their face, to destroy them: he will not be slack to him that hateth him, he will repay him to his face.”

Psalms 5:5.
“The foolish shall not stand in thy sight: thou hatest all workers of iniquity.”

Psalms 11: heading [Written by Elder Bruce R. McConkie and approved by the First Presidency and Council of the Twelve] and verse 5.
“... The Lord tests the righteous and hates the wicked...”

Malachi 1:2-3.
“I have loved you, saith the Lord. Yet ye say, Wherein hast thou loved us? Was not Esau Jacob’s brother? saith the Lord: yet I loved Jacob, “And I hated Esau, and laid his mountains and his heritage waste for the dragons of the wilderness.”

Romans 9:13.
“As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated.”

Other passages:
D&C 1:7-10, 13-17, 33
D&C 3:4, 18; D&C 5:8, 19
D&C 19:3-5
D&C 29:17
D&C 34:3; 36:6; 38:6, 12
D&C 41:1; 45:49-50, 74-75
D&C 56:1; D&C 61:31;
D&C 63:2-6, 11-19, 32-34
D&C 64:24
D&C 76:5, 33, 104-106
D&C 82:6
D&C 97:22-24; D&C 98:19-21; 99:4
D&C 101:10-11, 89-90, 93
D&C 103:2, 25; D&C 104:8
D&C 109:25-33, 38, 50-53
D&C 121:5, 11 ff.
D&C 124:52; 127:2
D&C 133:51
1 Ne 11:22 cf. 15:35–36 (Rejected from the love of God)
Mosiah 26:25-28, 32
Alma 12:35
Helaman 7:18-19, 28
Helaman 10:10; 11:11
Helaman 13:30-31
3 Ne 28:6, 34-35; 29:4, 7, 9
Ether 1:1
Gen 37:3
Deut. 28:63
1 Sam 2:30
2 Chron 26:16-21
Prov 1:26-32
Prov 15:29
Isa 1:15; 5:25
Jn 3:36; 5:42
Rom 9:10-14
2 Thess 3:6, 14-15
1 Jn 2:5

“The Lord trieth the righteous: but the wicked and him that loveth violence his soul hateth.”

“... The Lord tests the righteous and hates the wicked...”