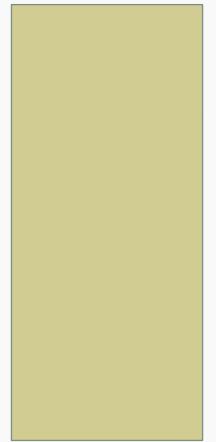


“LOVE WINS.”  
CHARITY LOSES.



# ALL YOU NEED IS LOVE?







# FAIRMORMON

Critical questions. Faithful answers.

# THE CHRISTIAN PROBLEM OF UNIVERSAL LOVE

SUBSTANCE // UNIVERSALISM

## BLAIR HODGES, “NONE OF US WITH PERFECT KNOWLEDGE, OR ALL OF US WITH LOVE”

- “love for one another” (John 13:35) as the “reliable indicator of our Christian discipleship.”
- “If we can be united on this one single idea, we will be united in the one thing that ultimately matters.”
- Since “we could be wrong about any particular subject,” but not, it seems, about something called “love,” our beliefs concerning the content of God’s love for us, that is, concerning his plan for us, must not enter into the way we show love.

# CRAIG HARLINE, “GOING ALL SORTS OF GENTILE”

- “if you’re going to go to people you think are strangers and invite them to join you and stay with you, then you have to really go to them, instead of expecting them to do things just the way you do.”
- “...make a wholesale change and rethink even certain apparently non-negotiable unmissable ways in order to help accommodate people you’d thought were strangers, because ...your mutual hope and love in Jesus rose above all that, or better yet underlay it, like some big pillow, softening everything.

# TOM SPENCER RE. HARLINE (MERIDIAN MAGAZINE / EXPAND)

- “Harline has in fact set himself outside the realm of sincere discussion [of the content of belief], because he has already declared the common ground of content-indifferent Jesus-believing to be in fact the whole ground.
- For Harline “... the gospel boils down to a social form--the form of the Jesus community--that has no necessary connection to any particular content, which is why all specific commandments or doctrines can be changed.”
- “The transformation of eternal truths into you-just-thought-they-were-eternal truths is categorically incompatible with basic Mormon theology...”



# CRAIG HARLINE, *CONVERSIONS* (AS REVIEWED BY BALMER IN BYU'S MSR)

- Tension between Christian morality and homosexuality can be resolved by
  - A) the cultural diversity of the Enlightenment or the postmodern validation of an infinite variety of experiences.
  - B) “the New Testament teaching that love trumps law,” ....overcoming “the premise of dogma.”
- Beyond tolerance to “a willing embrace of the Other.”

# ADAM MILLER, *FUTURE MORMON*

(SEE REVIEW AT [MORMONINTERPRETER.COM](http://MORMONINTERPRETER.COM))

- “our love must be practiced with a kind of disregard for the law.”
- Focus on obedience a ““strategy for suppressing the truth and avoiding God’s grace” by attempting “to put God in your debt.”
- In effort to win over God by obedience, we “set ourselves up ... as lords of the earth and judges of what graces we will and won’t receive”
- “what God, in all his goodness and wisdom and mercy, is actually trying to give” vs. “what we think we want.”
- For Miller, our desires have no end beyond themselves, and to look for any higher end, to hope for and to work to prepare for a better world, is to sin against grace, to resist the love that has no purpose beyond the world that God is always giving and always taking away in every moment.
- Miller excludes any ranking of goods and work towards another, better world.
- Miller’s immanent, universal grace disarms moral efforts.

# CHRISTIAN UNIVERSALISM AND THE GENESIS OF SECULARISM

- Two kinds of particularism for Christianity to overcome:
  - Jewish Law
  - Natural (pagan) virtues. Aristotle.

# PAUL'S "FULFILLMENT" OF THE LAW

- The law that defines a chosen, covenant people no longer in effect?
- Marcion (founded sect 144 AD) radicalizes Paul: Hebrew Scriptures and Hebrew God rejected.
- A precursor to "Love Wins"

# AUGUSTINE OF HIPPO (354-430 AD)

- The virtues of the pagans [Aristotle, Stoics, etc.] are nothing but splendid vices.
- Higher goods of soul are beyond our natural powers, only available by grace and realized in the next life, the City of God.
- Present virtues merely utilitarian.
- The “secularization” of this world.

# CHRISTIANITY'S MORAL CONTENT? – THE RISK IN UNIVERSALISM

- Jewish law surpassed?
- Natural virtue debunked?
- Without Jerusalem or Athens, what is content of Christian morality? What is practical meaning of “love”?
- Modern Secularism as the mutually eroding interaction between Christian faith and pagan reason:
  - Christian humility vs. the pride of reason
  - Critical reason vs. supernatural claims of Christianity.

# ORIGINS OF MODERN SECULARISM

- Protestant Reformation
  - Embraced Paul's critique of "works righteousness" (law)
  - Radicalized Augustine's critique of natural virtue.
- Modern political-philosophical project:
  - Human beings take responsibility for universal liberation of humanity from fear and want.

# DESCARTES' (1596-1650) POST-CHRISTIAN CHARITY

- Descartes aims to induce all who have the common good of man at heart, that is, all who are *virtuous in truth, and not merely in appearance, or according to opinion,*” to support his project.
- He appeals explicitly to a secularized law of humanitarian love, arguing that we *must not sin “against the law by which we are bound to promote, as far as in us lies, the general good of mankind.”*
- And we can avoid this sin against humanity only by cooperating in Descartes’ project that aims *“render ourselves the lords and possessors of nature.”* – that is, not beings limited by natural or divine law.



# SECULAR-HUMANITARIAN LOVE VS. LAW AND VIRTUE

- There is a direct line between the detachment of human love from both the commands of the law and the natural virtues and the humanistic and technological project of mastery over nature and overcoming of the limitations of the human condition.
- The subversion of Charity by the secular ethic of “Love Wins” is thus not just a mistake. It is the mistake, the substitution of the one true thing by its alluring counterfeit.

# ELDER OAKS VS. RELIGION OF SECULARISM

- “The denial of God or the downplaying of His role in human affairs that began in the Renaissance has become pervasive today.” While “the glorifying of human reasoning has had good and bad effects,” Elder Oaks explains, “prophecies of the last days foretell great opposition to inspired truth and action. Some of these prophecies concern the anti-Christ, and others speak of the great and abominable church.”
- The core teaching of this “great and abominable church,” which “must be something far more pervasive and widespread than a single “church,” as we understand that term today” is linked with assertions of Korihor in the Book of Mormon and with “moral relativism”:

# ELDER OAKS VS. RELIGION OF SECULARISM (CONT.)

- ...Today we call Korihor's philosophy moral relativism. This is the belief applied by many in the popular media and in response to peer pressure. "Break free of the old rules. Do what feels good to you. There is no accountability beyond what man's laws or public disapproval impose on those who are caught." Behind such ideas is the assumption that there is no God or, if there is, He has given no commandments that apply to us today.
- The rejection of an unprovable God and the denial of right and wrong are most influential in the world of higher education. Secular humanism, a branch of humanism probably so labeled because of its strong alignment with secularism, is deliberately or inadvertently embodied in the teachings of faculty members in many colleges and universities.

# POPE BENEDICT ON FIRST TEMPTATION OF CHRIST

- “Moral posturing is part and parcel of temptation. It does not invite us directly to do evil – no, that would be far too blatant. It pretends to show us a better way, where we finally abandon our illusions and throw ourselves into the work of actually making the world a better place. It claims, moreover, to speak for true realism: What’s real is what is right there in front of us – power and bread.” ... Does not the Redeemer of the world have to prove his credentials by feeding everyone? Isn’t the problem of feeding the world – and, more generally, are not social problems – the primary, the true yardstick by which redemption has to be measured.... The fact is that scriptural exegesis [think of the liberationists’ distortions of Paul] can become a tool of the Antichrist.”

# FLANNERY O'CONNOR (1925-1964) ON SECULAR COUNTERFEIT OF CHARITY

- Ivan Karamazov cannot believe, as long as one child is in torment; Camus' hero cannot accept the divinity of Christ, because of the massacre of the innocents. [Our Mormon prophets of secular compassion, cannot accept the authority of a Church that does not accept at face value the sexual disorientation some members.] In this popular pity [i.e., "compassion"], we mark our gain in sensibility and our loss in vision. ... In the absence of ... faith, we govern by tenderness. It is a tenderness which, long since cut off from the person of Christ, is wrapped in theory [the modern project of human mastery]. When tenderness is detached from the source of tenderness, its logical outcome is terror."

## MOSES 4:1: UNIVERSALISM VS. AGENCY

- “Behold, here I am, send me, I will be thy son, and I will redeem *all mankind, that one soul shall not be lost, and surely I will do it; wherefore give me thine honor.*”

# PHILOSOPHICAL AND HISTORICAL RESOURCES FOR RESPONDING TO HUMANISTIC SUBVERSION OF CHARITY

- Christian authors who bring classical virtue and Christian humility/universalism together, in tradition of Thomas Aquinas.
  - Aquinas: grace does not destroy nature, but completes it.
  - G.K. Chesterton, C.S. Lewis, Alasdair MacIntyre, Pierre Manent.
- Careful attention to Christian scripture, especially Paul.

# N.T. WRIGHT (B. 1948) ON PAUL

- Retired Anglican bishop, great biblical scholar.
- And this new community, in abandoning the ‘chief Jewish devices for distinguishing the covenanted people from the world of polytheism’, was not doing so on the basis of an ideal of ‘tolerance’ or antinomianism. Their abandoning of those Jewish markers does not mean . . . that they themselves did not also maintain strong boundaries to define themselves over against that world.
- But if they are called to be God’s free and freedom-bringing people, then they must learn to live as God’s free people, giving up the habit of slavery—yes, slavery is as much a habit of mind as a physical state—and learning the art of responsible, free living. To put it another way, if these people are to take redemptive responsibility for the whole of creation, they must anticipate that by taking redemptive responsibility, in the present time, for that one bit of creation over which they have the most obvious control—namely, their own bodies.



# N.T. WRIGHT (CONT.)

- What Paul is arguing for is a Christian form of the ancient pagan theory of virtue. The terms in which he issues that warning, echoing and endorsing central prohibitions from the Old Testament, make it clear that, despite popular impressions to the contrary, he is firmly endorsing the ancient Jewish prohibition on sexual relationships of any sort outside the lifelong marriage of a man and a woman.
- If they are to be the royal priesthood, ruling over God's new world (Romans 5.17), they must be people through whose lives shine a genuine humanness, reborn in Christ after judgment has been passed on their own sin. God's work of rescuing, restorative justice must happen in us in order that it can happen through us. But the love of which Paul speaks is tough. In fact, it's the toughest thing there is. The love of which Paul speaks is clearly a virtue.

# DIETER F. UCHTDORF, THE GIFT OF GRACE (APRIL 2015)

- ... But the grace of God does not merely restore us to our previous innocent state. If salvation means only erasing our mistakes and sins, then salvation—as wonderful as it is—does not fulfill the Father’s aspirations for us. His aim is much higher: He wants His sons and daughters to become like Him.
- With the gift of God’s grace, the path of discipleship does not lead backward; it leads upward.
- It leads to heights we can scarcely comprehend! It leads to exaltation in the celestial kingdom of our Heavenly Father, ...
- To inherit this glory, we need more than an unlocked gate; we must enter through this gate with a heart’s desire to be changed—a change so dramatic that the scriptures describe it as being “born again; yea, born of God, changed from [our worldly] and fallen state, to a state of righteousness, being redeemed of God, becoming his sons and daughters.”<sup>21</sup> Mosiah 27:25
- ... Throughout our lives, God’s grace bestows temporal blessings and spiritual gifts that magnify our abilities and enrich our lives. His grace refines us. His grace helps us become our best selves.
- ... Brothers and sisters, we obey the commandments of God—out of love for Him!

## J.R. HOLLAND, “THE COSTS (AND BLESSINGS) OF DISCIPLESHIP”

- Sadly enough, my young friends, it is a characteristic of our age that if people want any gods at all, they want them to be gods who do not demand much, ...
- Talk about man creating God in his own image! Jesus...said not only should we not break commandments, but we should not even think about breaking them. And if we do think about breaking them, we have already broken them in our heart. Does that sound like “comfortable” doctrine, easy on the ear and popular down at the village love-in?

# HOLLAND, “DISCIPLESHIP” (CONT)

- Jesus said, “Love one another, as I have loved you.” To make certain they understood exactly what kind of love that was, **He said, “If ye love me, keep my commandments”** ... Christlike love is the greatest need we have on this planet in part because righteousness was always supposed to accompany it.
- So if love is to be our watchword, as it must be, then by the word of Him who is love personified, we must forsake transgression and any hint of advocacy for it in others. Jesus clearly understood what many in our modern culture seem to forget: that there is a crucial difference between the commandment to forgive sin (which He had an infinite capacity to do) and the warning against condoning it (which He never ever did even once).