

# Relative (in part) X absolute

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It has always been standard procedure for Satan and his servants to attack strong arguments in favor of the truth as if they were weak and wrong. In today's world, take a hard look at any 'principle' or 'law' that Satan is using, such as 'everything is relative' or 'hate speech'. It is the opposite that will be true. The purpose of this article is to take up the claim that 'everything is relative'. The statement itself, 'everything is relative', rejects the existence of the Sovereign Creator, because He cannot be 'relative', obviously. He is absolute. Anyone who rejects the Creator belongs to Satan's kingdom, and that is very serious.

To begin, the truth is not relative; neither is it democratic, it is not determined by human vote or opinion. The truth is. The truth, or actual fact, about anything is not relative, it is absolute. It is our perception, or opinion or interpretation that is 'relative'. That is because no one on earth has complete knowledge about anything; our 'knowledge' is condemned to be partial, incomplete. That is because we are finite, small, with limited mental capacity. We are surrounded by limitation: our bodies confine us to one place at a time, as well as limit us in a variety of ways; our language limits how we think, as does our culture; our ignorance of the supernatural condemns us to be wrong about all sorts of things. As the Creator's Manual affirms, "we know in part" (1 Corinthians 13:9).

However, knowing in part does not mean that we do not know at all. It also does not mean that the 'in part' is not real truth. If you cut off a piece from a beef steak, that piece does not stop being real meat—it is 'in part', but it is still real. Even though our knowledge is not complete, it can be adequate for practical purposes within a given context. Perhaps the most serious consequence of the doctrine that everything is relative has been the 'conclusion' that man does not, and cannot, know anything for sure, that true knowledge does not exist. Facts are facts, and they exist. The sun exists, water exists, trees exist; fire is hot, ice is cold;  $2 + 2 = 4$ . It was true knowledge that permitted a man to walk on the moon. To know for sure that fire is hot, just stick your hand in a fire.

I lived and worked with an indigenous people in the Amazon jungle for a number of years. They did not believe in germs and bacteria, because they couldn't see them. That did not prevent them from getting sick and dying. What they believed did not change the facts.

The C.S. Lewis Institute recently posted an article by Christopher L. Reese, "Isn't Morality Relative?"<sup>1</sup> It says some of what I want to say so well that I will repeat some of it.

It is widely accepted in the Western world today that morality is relative. People who say this usually mean that morality is a matter of personal or cultural sentiment that

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has no objective basis in reality. Many modern people tend to think of the physical world as consisting of matters of fact (it's not relative whether water is H<sub>2</sub>O) but of morality as being a matter of subjective opinion.

If we accept the modern, secular story of the world, this is a natural belief. If there is no higher authority on moral issues than individual or group opinion, then moral judgments are indeed subjective. Further, if the naturalistic story is true, and all that exists are matter and energy governed by natural laws, then good and evil are illusory concepts with no basis in reality. After all, no material thing has the property of being good or evil; there are no good or evil atoms or molecules, thus, neither good nor evil exists. Yes, one could have ideas about good and evil on this view, but they wouldn't be any different from ideas about unicorns or leprechauns—none of these, in reality, would exist.

Well, up to a point. As I have already said, I lived and worked with an indigenous people in the Amazon jungle for a number of years. Although they had never been exposed to the Bible, they had a morality, they believed that some things are good and others are bad. If I am not mistaken, all cultures in the world have a morality of some sort. Without cultural norms, people cannot coexist peacefully. The Sovereign Creator, while walking this earth in the body of Jesus, gave the clue: "Beware of false prophets who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves. You will know them by their fruits. Do people gather grapes from thorn bushes, or figs from thistles? Just so, every good tree produces good fruits, but the rotten tree produces evil fruits"<sup>2</sup> (Matthew 7:15-17). Check the results of what people do; if the results are bad, then that activity is not good.

Naturalism undermines any basis for objective moral values and duties. The key word here is objective, meaning something that exists or is true regardless of what any person or group of people believe about it. Even if every person in an ancient culture believed that human sacrifice was a good and necessary practice, they would still be objectively wrong—that is, if an objective standard of morality exists. And the only plausible candidate for such an objective standard is God, whose very nature determines what is good.

Many who hold to a naturalistic worldview have never thought through its logical implications, especially in relation to morality. A number of leading naturalistic thinkers, though, have recognized and acknowledged that morality and naturalism are incompatible. It is difficult for most secular moderns to come to grips with this idea. One can hardly blame them, because the implications of naturalism are truly horrifying. It represents the complete dissolution of all objective meaning, value, purpose, and morality. **[[ Is that not truly horrifying? ]]** [In today's world, are not many people lost in a moral quagmire?]

All genuine science is based on the principle of cause and effect—we observe an effect and try to isolate the cause; and it is logically impossible for a cause to produce an effect larger

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<sup>2</sup> The Lord uses 'rotten' and 'evil' (or 'malignant') because He is really talking about people, not trees.

or more complex than itself. Any human being who is both honest and intelligent, when confronted with the observable universe with its incredible organization and complexity, is obliged to conclude that there must be a CAUSE, a Cause with intelligence and power beyond our understanding—to refuse to do so is to be perverse.

The evolutionary hypothesis of origins is scientifically impossible; stupidly, ridiculously impossible. A number of decades ago the scholar Sir Frederick Hoyle was contracted to evaluate the scientific probability that life could have appeared on the planet by chance (he had unlimited funding and free access to libraries). He arrived at the following conclusion: it would be easier for a whirlwind to pass through a junk yard and a perfect Boeing 747 come flying out of the other side than for life to have appeared on our planet by chance. Well, well, well, that life could have originated by an evolutionary process is absolutely impossible: obviously, stupidly, ridiculously impossible. [By the way, any questions about the morality of the Creator have nothing to do with science.]

Since a Sovereign Creator exists, He holds absolute authority over what He has created. But in what ways can authority be exercised? It can be exercised by fiat, by sovereign intervention, but doing that to beings created in God's own image would turn them into robots, which would be contradictory to the purpose in creating such beings. As the Sovereign said to the Samaritan woman, while He walked this earth: "the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth" (John 4:23-24). If the Father is seeking spontaneous, or at least voluntary, worship, then it cannot be coerced, or forced. But how can man know what the Sovereign Creator wants? There must be communication. But what form could such communication take? To communicate concepts, He would have to use human language. Since human language is governed by rules—phonological, grammatical, semantic—the Creator would have to limit Himself to the repertoire of possibilities offered by the language of choice.

If the Creator was only concerned to transmit information to a given individual, or group, at a given point in time, for a specific purpose, it could be done orally, either speaking directly, or through a representative. But if the Creator's purpose was to furnish orientation that would be valid for subsequent generations as well, then the appropriate form would be in writing. Consider 1 Chronicles 16:15, "the word which He commanded for a thousand generations". Well now, there have scarcely been 300 generations since Adam, so the Creator's written revelation will be in effect until the end of the world. However, to be in effect until the end, it must be kept available until the end. For more about that, see my book, *God Has Preserved His Text* (fifth edition).

If the Sovereign Creator exists, and if He has addressed a written Revelation to our race, then nothing is more important for us than to know what He said (with a view to obeying it, if we are smart). This because such a revelation will have objective authority over us (although the Creator gives us the option of rejecting that authority [but due regard should be given to the consequences]). Objective authority depends on verifiable meaning; if a reader/hearer can give any meaning he chooses to a message, any authority it ends up having for him will be relative and subjective (the 'neo-orthodox' approach).

As a linguist (PhD) I affirm that the fundamental principle of communication is this: both the speaker/writer and the hearer/reader must respect the norms of language, in particular those of the specific code being used. If the encoder violates the rules, he will be deceiving the decoder (deliberately, if he knows what he is doing). If the decoder violates the rules, he will misrepresent the encoder (deliberately, if he knows what he is doing). In either event, communication is damaged; the extent of the damage will depend on the circumstances.

Not only does the idea that ‘everything is relative’ reject the existence of the Sovereign Creator, it does away with the objective authority of the biblical Text. Of course, since a non-existent Creator can’t do anything, much less produce a revelation with objective authority. But that idea does not alter the fact, and there will certainly be an Accounting.

Having said all of the above, however, I recognize that to affirm the divine inspiration of the Bible is a declaration of faith—an intelligent faith that is based on evidences, but still faith, since the evidences are not absolute;<sup>3</sup> and they are not absolute for a very good reason. The Sovereign Creator deliberately does not allow the evidences to be absolute, because then there would be no true test. The Creator requires that men choose between good and evil, and the choice may not be coerced.

Another very serious derivative of the doctrine that there is no true knowledge is the idea of ‘your truth’, that each person creates his own ‘truth’. In itself, the very act of determining that you can define your own truth amounts to a rejection of God’s Truth. It demonstrates an attitude of rebellion against the Sovereign Creator, and rebellion against the Creator is Satan’s ‘thing’. Someone who defines his own truth will almost certainly deny that he is a sinner, and therefore will deny that he needs salvation. The obvious difficulty with that is that denying that he is a sinner and needs salvation does not change the fact. That ‘someone’ is condemning himself to spend eternity in the Lake. To deny the existence of the Lake does not change the fact.

Well, maybe not. If there really is no Heaven or Hell, my believing that they exist does not create them. It is equally true that if there really is both Heaven and Hell, someone’s not believing that they exist does not destroy them. And there is a further detail that should be considered. If my belief is wrong, I have lost nothing (except my expectation), but if that someone’s belief is wrong, he has lost everything, and forever. I like my chances better than that someone’s. (I once saw a nasty little exchange between two college students: “What is the difference between true love and herpes?” “Herpes is forever.” Right. Hell is forever.)

There are only two spiritual kingdoms in this world. While the Sovereign Creator was walking this earth in the body of Jesus He declared: “He who is not with me is against me, and he who does not gather with me, scatters” (Luke 11:23, Matthew 12:30). Note that the Sovereign does not permit neutrality; either you are with Him or you are against Him (agnosticism is a passive rejection). Even what we do is not neutral; if we are not gathering

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<sup>3</sup> So we are not dealing with science, in an objective sense.

with Him, we are scattering. There is no third option. Whoever is not with Jesus is with Satan, automatically. This applies to everything in this life.

Why do people reject the evidence, or at least ignore it? Because Satan blinds their minds, as is plainly stated in 2 Corinthians 4:3-4. "So where our Gospel has actually been concealed, it has been hidden from those who are being wasted, 4 among whom the god of this age has blinded the minds of the unbelieving, so that the light of the Gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should not dawn on them." See also Mark 4:15 and Luke 8:12.

In John 8:44 the Sovereign declared that Satan is "the father of lying", and that "there is no truth in him". According to Hebrew idiomatic usage, the 'son' of something is characterized by that something. It follows that to be the 'father' of something is to be the owner of that something. Several times Jesus called the Holy Spirit "the Spirit of the Truth" (John 14:17, 15:26, 16:13). So, all truth belongs to the Holy Spirit, and all falsehood belongs to Satan. It follows that whenever someone lies, he will be serving Satan. And whenever someone embraces a lie (such as evolutionism, Marxism, humanism, relativism, etc.), he will be giving Satan a bridgehead in his mind, which Satan will try to develop into a stronghold. A stronghold of Satan on a given subject does not allow one to think freely about that subject. The person is forced to stay with the lie. (The only way out is for someone with the power of God to come and nullify the stronghold.)

Ephesians 2:2 states that Satan is "the spirit who is now at work in the sons of the disobedience". This spirit is presently at work (present tense) in 'the sons of the disobedience'. 'Sons' of something are characterized by that something, and the something in this case is 'the' disobedience (the Text has the definite article)—a continuation of the original rebellion against the Sovereign of the universe. Anyone in rebellion against the Creator is under satanic influence, direct or indirect (in most cases a demon acts as Satan's agent, since he is not omnipresent, when something more than the influence of the surrounding culture is required; that includes the academic culture). Anyone in rebellion against the Creator will also have strongholds of Satan in his mind. Of a certainty.

Further on the subject that our knowledge is 'in part', not relative, I offer the following: Most computers are binary; that is, they are programmed to make a sequence of binary choices—plus or minus, yes or no. Over the years the speed with which those choices are made has kept increasing. If I am not mistaken, modern computers can process millions of such choices per second (which I find difficult to comprehend). I suggest for the consideration of the reader that our opinion on any subject is also binary; that is, an opinion is made up of a number of components that are either true or false. The higher the proportion of true components to false ones, the more nearly valid will the opinion be, the closer its approximation to the fact. Because opinions are many and varied, they are commonly said to be 'relative'. But the truth is not relative. The open-ended number of components that make up our opinions are either true or false.

I will close with Isaiah 29:11-12. “The whole vision has become to you like the words of a book that is sealed, which men deliver to one who is literate, saying, ‘Read this, please.’ And he says, ‘I cannot, for it is sealed.’ Then the book is delivered to one who is illiterate, saying, ‘Read this, please.’ And he says, ‘I am not literate.’” (NKJV) The result is that the people remain in ignorance about the contents of the book, **and are condemned to suffer the consequences of that ignorance**. How many schools, or churches, or organizations of any kind teach that the Bible has objective authority? How many teach the Bible at all? The consequences are not pretty.