

Chapter 2

Relativism — Satan's Old Plan

When the Eternal Father announced his plan of salvation — a plan that called for a mortal probation for all his spirit children; a plan that required a Redeemer to ransom men from the coming fall; a plan that could only operate if mortal men had agency — when the Father announced his plan, when he chose Christ as the Redeemer and rejected Lucifer, then there was a war in heaven. That war was a war of words; it was a conflict of ideologies; it was a rebellion against God and his laws. Lucifer sought to dethrone God, to sit himself on the divine throne, and to save all men without reference to their works. He sought to deny men their agency so they could not sin. He offered a mortal life of carnality and sensuality, of evil and crime and murder, following which all men would be saved. His offer was a philosophical impossibility. There must needs be an opposition in all things. Unless there are opposites, there is nothing. There can be no light without darkness, no heat without cold, no virtue without vice, no good without evil, no salvation without damnation. And so, in the courts of heaven, the war of wars was waged. Christ and Michael and a mighty host of noble and great spirits preached the gospel of God and exhorted their brethren to follow the Father. Lucifer and his lieutenants preached another gospel, a gospel of fear and hate and lasciviousness and compulsion. They sought salvation without keeping the commandments, without overcoming the world, without choosing between opposites. - Elder Bruce R. McConkie¹

Since the premortal existence, there have been opposing plans for the solution of ethical dilemmas. God introduced a plan which involved *mortal probation for all his spirit children, a Redeemer to ransom men from the coming fall, agency, and accountability*. This plan is based on fundamental, eternal truths which remain constant to all peoples. It provides for agency which allows us to make choices based on our understanding of God's immortal laws. We alone are accountable for our choices and actions and as a consequence, receive the eternal rewards.

God knew that His spirit children would make mistakes in mortality and asked for a volunteer to serve as a *Redeemer* to make an atonement that would satisfy the demands of justice. Our elder brother, Jesus Christ, volunteered to be our Savior. Through our efforts and the Savior's atonement, it is possible for us to return to God's presence.

Lucifer or Satan presented an alternate plan whereby all mankind would be saved *without reference to their works*. His plan relied on a system of no laws — *salvation without keeping the commandments*. A subtle way of arriving at this kind of a system is to set standards of

behavior so low that all behavior is acceptable. Without laws or a set of high standards, there would be no sin, no consequences of sin, and no need for agency. In the absence of sin, all mankind would be automatically saved. In this plan, *a gospel of fear and hate and lasciviousness and compulsion*, people would have been saved *without overcoming the world, without choosing between opposites*. But as Elder McConkie stated, this is a *philosophical impossibility*. Justice demands that people be rewarded for their own efforts which require *an opposition in all things*.

Lucifer lost the *war of wars* but continues the battle in this mortal existence. He has won many converts who have preached his philosophy. Currently, it is disguised in such terms as relativism, situational ethics, and egoism.

About 70 BC, Korihor came to the land of Zarahemla and began preaching to the Nephites. Korihor's teachings have been analyzed in several commentaries and related to the ideas of many modern philosophies, including relativism.²⁻⁴ In Alma 30:12-17, we read,

*And this Anti-Christ, whose name was Korihor, (and the law could have no hold upon him) began to preach unto the people that there should be no Christ. And after this manner did he preach, saying: O ye that are bound down under a foolish and a vain hope, why do ye yoke yourselves with such foolish things? Why do ye look for a Christ? For no man can know of anything which is to come. Behold, these things which ye call prophecies, which ye say are handed down by holy prophets, behold, they are foolish traditions of your fathers. How do ye know of their surety? Behold, ye cannot know of things which ye do not see; therefore ye cannot know that there shall be a Christ. Ye look forward and say that ye see a remission of your sins. But behold, it is the effect of a frenzied mind; and this derangement of your minds comes because of the traditions of your fathers, which lead you away into a belief of things which are not so. And many more such things did he say unto them, **telling them that there could be no atonement made for the sins of men, but every man fared in this life according to the management of the creature; therefore every man prospered according to his genius, and that every man conquered according to his strength; and whatsoever a man did was no crime.** (Alma 30:12-17)*

In Korihor's attempt to teach the people that *whatsoever a man did was no crime*, he was advocating the plan which Lucifer proposed in the premortal existence. Korihor later admitted,

. . . .the devil hath deceived me; for he appeared unto me in the form of an angel, and said unto me: Go and reclaim this people, for they have all gone astray after an unknown God. And he said unto me: There is no God; yea, and he taught me that which I should say. And I have taught his words. (Alma 30:53)

Satan tried a different approach with Adam's son, Cain. He instructed Cain to offer a sacrifice that was a lower standard than what he knew God would accept. In the Pearl of Great Price, we read,

*And Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bare Cain, and said: I have gotten a man from the Lord; wherefore he may not reject his words. But behold, Cain hearkened not, saying: Who is the Lord that I should know him? And she again conceived and bare his brother Abel. And Abel hearkened unto the voice of the Lord. And Abel was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground. And Cain loved Satan more than God. And Satan commanded him, saying: Make an offering unto the Lord. And in process of time it came to pass that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the Lord. And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock, and of the fat thereof. And the Lord had respect unto Abel, and to his offering; **But unto Cain, and to his offering, he had not respect. Now Satan knew this, and it pleased him.** And Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell. And the Lord said unto Cain: Why art thou wroth? Why is thy countenance fallen? If thou doest well, thou shalt be accepted. And if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door, and Satan desireth to have thee; and except thou shalt hearken unto my commandments, I will deliver thee up, and it shall be unto thee according to his desire. And thou shalt rule over him; For from this time forth thou shalt be the father of his lies; thou shalt be called Perdition; for thou wast also before the world. And it shall be said in time to come—That these abominations were had from Cain; for he rejected the greater counsel which was had from God; and this is a cursing which I will put upon thee, except thou repent. And Cain was wroth, and listened not any more to the voice of the Lord. (Moses 5: 16-26)*

Satan then tried to convince Cain that God was being unfair for not accepting the lower standard. Cain fell for Satan's temptations and rebelled against God. The lowering of standards is a common ploy used by Satan, examples of which include:

- Satan convincing people that in order to talk to God they needed to build the tower of Babel thus lowering the standard of prayer.
- Satan convincing the Zoramites they were better than others and to construct the Rameumptom thus lowering the standard of worship.
- Satan convincing Esau to marry outside the faith thus lowering the standard of the marriage covenant.

President Gordon B. Hinckley has said, "While standards generally may totter, we of the Church are without excuse if we drift in the same manner."⁵ In a recent leadership meeting, Elder Earl Tingey, then a member of the First Quorum of the Seventy, led a discussion regarding the concept of spiritual drift.⁶ He drew a diagram similar to the one shown in Figure 2.1 and pointed out that the world's standards are drifting downward with time as shown by the dashed line. The horizontal-solid line represents an individual maintaining the constant standards that God has established. He warned that individuals trying to keep their standards higher than the world's standards could be fooled into allowing them to drift downward as shown by the angled-solid line. This could be done by succumbing to Satan's temptations represented by the following statements:

- "Yes, it's an R rated movie but there is only one short scene that is bad. It won't affect

me.”

- “It’s ok, it’s just a little white lie.”
- “I only have to work on Sunday once a month. It won’t hurt to miss sacrament meeting once.”

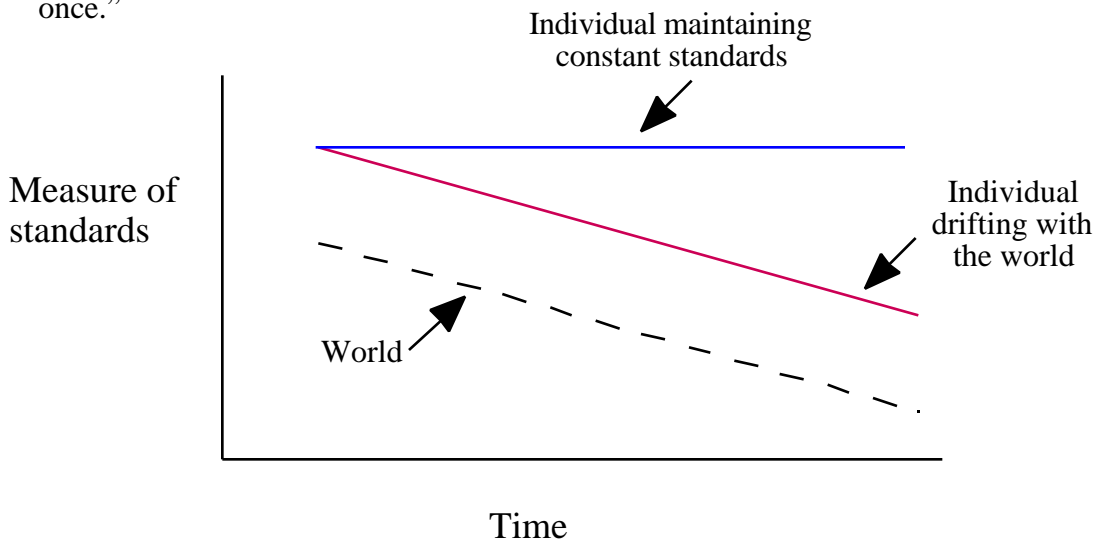


Figure 2.1 Spiritual Drift of Standards

Some might make a distinction between rationalization and relativism. The term rationalization would refer to the justifying of behavior by an individual even though that individual is aware of a higher set of standards. Nephi describes it as another ploy by Satan to get people to disobey commandments, etc. In 2 Nephi, we read:

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. Yea, and there shall be many which shall teach after this manner, false and vain and foolish doctrines. . . (2 Nephi 28:8-9)

However, rationalization can also be looked at as simply another form of relativism. If one justifies disobedience from standards, then the person is effectively saying that the standards are arbitrary and do not need to be obeyed in certain situations. This is precisely the definition of situational ethics. There is either a set of standards or there is not. We cannot have it both ways.

The Savior said it a little differently to His disciples in the Sermon on the Mount when He said:

No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to one, and despise the other. (Matt: 6:24)

Alma also taught this principle to the people of Zarahemla.

Behold, I say unto you, that the good shepherd doth call you; yea, and in his own name he doth call you, which is the name of Christ; and if ye will not hearken unto the voice of the good shepherd, to the name by which ye are called, behold, ye are not the sheep of the good shepherd. And now if ye are not the sheep of the good shepherd, of what fold are ye? Behold, I say unto you, that the devil is your shepherd, and ye are of his fold; and now, who can deny this? (Alma 5:38-39)

Commenting on Alma's teaching, President David O. McKay quoted Byron's biblical drama *Cain* in a conference address given in April 1908:

An interesting illustration in Byron's *Cain*. Cain is tempted by Lucifer; and after the devil has led him on, telling him that the gospel is nothing, that Adam was deceived, that the Lord is only a cruel God, Cain says:

Cain: "Wilt thou teach me all things?"

Satan: "Aye, upon one condition."

Cain: "Name it."

Satan: "That you fall down and worship me, the lord."

Cain: "Thou art not the Lord my father worships?"

Satan: "No."

Cain: "His equal?"

Satan: "No. And have naught in common with Him. No; nor want anything to do with Him. I would be aught above, beneath, I would rather be anything than subject to His power. I dwell apart; yet am I strong and many there are who follow me, and many yet who shall. Be thou among the first."

Cain: "I have never yet bowed to my father's God, though my brother, Abel, oft implores that I should offer sacrifices with him."

Lucifer quickly catches him:

Satan: "Hast thou not bowed to Him?"

Cain: "Have I not said it? Need I say it? Dost not thy mighty knowledge teach thee that?"

Then these words, and Byron never uttered a greater truth:

Satan: *"He who bows not to Him has bowed to me."*

He who bows not to God has bowed to Lucifer.

Cain: "But, I will bow to neither."

Satan: "Ne'ertheless, thou art my worshiper; he who worships not Him is mine the

same."

This truth harmonizes with the scripture. *No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to one, and despise the other.* (Matt: 6:24)⁷

Whether one does not believe in a set of standards or whether one has no commitment to follow them, the results are the same. David McPherson in a Brigham Young University devotional address said the following:

Thus, so are we in our relationship with the Lord. The laws, commandments, and ordinances of God are the invariant. Our relation to them is the variant. Any thought of our relativity to His will is because of where we stand spiritually. Obedience and accountability are not related to our perceptions or our needs. We are completely and independently accountable for our actions: *For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all* (James 2:10).⁸

Modern Relativism

In ancient Greece, the Sophists based relativism on the belief that morality, justice, and virtue were a matter of a social convention uniquely defined by a society. As a result, a society could have its own moral code relative to its beliefs. A leading Sophist, Protagoras, summarized this philosophy: "Whatever seems to me to be the case is true for me, and whatever seems to you to be the case is true for you. No belief can be said to be true or false in itself, for there is no objective truth."⁹

Some argue that modern relativism has grown out of the notions of tolerance and respect for human rights which fundamentally are good values. Satan always seems to disguise his philosophy under a cloak of 'goodness'. However, when tolerance and respect are carried to the extreme where all behavior is accepted such as — "if it's right for you, then it's right" or "whatever turns you on" — then society has the basis for relativism and moral anarchy. Modern relativism follows the Sophists' belief that there is no objective truth which leads to the philosophy that 'anything goes'. This is Satan's old plan to remove agency by eliminating laws and/or lowering standards.

In Athens, Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle attempted to counter the ideas of the Sophists with rigid definitions of truth, goodness, and virtue. However, the people of Athens drifted away from applying these definitions and eventually pursued an attitude of freedom from responsibility. Sir Edward Gibbon, author of *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, also wrote the following about the fall of Athens.

In the end, more than they wanted freedom, they wanted security and they wanted a comfortable life. And they lost it all - security, comfort, and freedom. The Athenians finally wanted not to give to society, but for society to give to them. When the freedom they wished for most was freedom from responsibility, then Athens ceased to be free.¹⁰

Historian Jacob Burckhardt stated more than a century ago, “When men lose their sense of established standards, they inevitably fall victim to the urge for pleasure or power.”¹¹ Interestingly, Korihor makes this commentary after he admits his error to Alma.

*I always knew that there was a God. But behold, the devil hath deceived me; for he appeared unto me in the form of an angel, and said unto me: Go and reclaim this people, for they have all gone astray after an unknown God. And he said unto me: There is no God; yea, and he taught me that which I should say. And I have taught his words; and I taught them because they were **pleasing unto the carnal mind**; and I taught them, even until **I had much success**, insomuch that I verily believed that they were true; and for this cause I withstood the truth, even until I have brought this great curse upon me. (Alma 30:52-53 emphasis added)*

Korihor taught the principles of relativism because they brought him *much success* or power and because they *were pleasing unto the carnal mind*. Unfortunately, Korihor did not measure Satan’s teachings against God’s standards but against the temporary and fickle concepts of pleasure and power. When Korihor tried to teach Satan’s philosophy to the anti-Lehi-Nephites, who used God’s standards as measures, he had no success.

Commenting on an increasingly secularized society, Elder Neal A. Maxwell has said:

An eminent Japanese thinker recently looked at our pleasure-centered Western society and wrote insightfully of a dilemma growing out of this sense so many mortals have of planless-ness and purposelessness. He wrote, “If there is nothing beyond death, then what is wrong with giving oneself wholly to pleasure in the short time one has left to live? The loss of faith in the ‘other world’ has saddled modern Western society with a fatal moral problem.”^{12,13}

Many civilizations have flourished and then decayed when pride led the people to pursue pleasure and power. The Athenian, as noted above, and the Roman civilizations are classic examples of this. The Nephite civilization underwent repeated cycles of righteousness-wickedness, largely because of the pursuit of pleasure and power. A modern example was the German nation under Hitler. Many Americans feel that the United States has become a nation full of people obsessed with these two attributes and is experiencing moral anarchy. Others are giving warning signals to the entire world. Rush Kidder wrote, “Something deep in the soul of our collective future seems out of balance, and the world appears to be in a long, slow drift toward moral recession.”¹⁴

In 1968, Will Herberg wrote an essay in *The Intercollegiate Review* titled “What Is the Moral

Crisis of Our Time?”¹¹ His conclusion was “that the moral crisis of our time consists primarily not in the widespread violation of accepted moral standards . . . but in the repudiation of those very moral standards themselves.” He argued that throughout history communities have had a moral code which served as a basis for behavior to which some individuals have been disobedient. However, he believes that in our age the very notion that there is a set of moral standards has been challenged. There is much evidence to suggest that Herberg was right. Consider the following actual examples.

- In a demonstration of political protest, a Maori activist recently used a sledgehammer to crush the America’s Cup on public display at the Royal New Zealand Yacht Squadron. He defended his actions stating that the America’s Cup stands for everything that his organization despises and that he had a moral right to do what he did.¹⁵
- In a study conducted by Sharon Stoll at the Center for Ethics at the University of Idaho, it was found that student athletes scored 12 percent below non-athletes on a morals test. In the same study, a survey of ninth grade students entering one of the U.S.’s largest school districts in South Carolina found that those students who considered themselves ‘sports competitors’ agreed more often than others that bending the rules was OK. The student athletes were able to rationalize and justify their behavior and attitude believing that they were different than everyone else.¹⁶
- In a study of dishonesty among male college students, McCabe and Bowers found that students have changing attitudes about what constitutes academic dishonesty. Specifically, it was found that a majority of the students that were surveyed do not view the fabricating/falsifying of bibliographies and copying material without stating a reference as serious cheating.¹⁷
- In the U.S. News and World Report that discussed a 1987 U.S. News-CNN poll on honesty in the United States, Jody Powell, former White House press secretary, was quoted as saying, “There is a growing degree of cynicism and sophistication in our society - a sense that all things are relative and that nothing is absolutely right or wrong.”¹⁸

In the Book of Mormon, Moroni writes about the events and circumstances of our day.

Yea there shall be great pollutions upon the face of the earth when there shall be many who will say, Do this, or do that, and it mattereth not, for the Lord will uphold such at the last day. (Mormon 8:31)

A modern apostle, Elder Neal A. Maxwell has said,

Relativism involves the denial of the existence of absolute truths and, therefore, of an absolute truth-giver, God. Relativism has sometimes been a small, satanic sea breeze, but now the winds of relativism have reached gale proportions. Over a period of several decades relativism has eroded ethics, public and personal, has worn down the will of many, has contributed to a slackening sense of duty, civic and personal. The old

mountains of individual morality have been worn down. This erosion has left mankind in a sand-dune society, in a desert of disbelief where there are no landmarks, and no north, no east, no west, and no south! There is only the dust of despair!¹⁹

Relativism has fueled an increase of violence such as the devastating terrorists' attacks on scores of innocent individuals. Terrorists do not consider the killing of innocent people to be wrong because they justify their actions on the ideas of relativism. Particularly disturbing is the spread of this violence to people within cultures and within families. Throughout history, people of different cultures have fought over land, resources, and/or religion. Today there are battles being waged by individuals without feeling for people within their own cultures. The spread of this violence to our young people is alarming. In a recent *U.S. News and Report* article, Ted Guest wrote the following:

The most vexing problem is the small minority of teens who kill or maim with little moral compunction. Citing a wave of "undisciplined, untutored, unnurtured young people," Judge David Grossman of Cincinnati, president of a national juvenile judges' group, says that "gangs have become the alternative to a nurturing family." Many young murderers "are incapable of empathy," says Kathleen Heide, a Florida psychotherapist and criminologist. She mentions a teen who gunned down and paralyzed a jogger who refused to hand over a gold neck chain. Asked what a preferable outcome might have been, the gunman said: "He could have given me his chain. I asked him twice." Police officers are encountering more "kids with no hope, no fear, no rules, and no life expectancy," says John Firman of the International Association of Chiefs and Police.²⁰

This, unfortunately, has been played out in our nation's schools repeatedly.

In the Book of Mormon, Moroni recorded a letter from his father, Mormon, describing the conditions of the people near the end of the Nephite civilization. Moroni and modern day prophets have related these conditions to our own day. In Mormon's words,

*And now behold, my son, I fear lest the Lamanites shall destroy this people; for they do not repent, and **Satan stirreth them up continually to anger one with another.** Behold, I am laboring with them continually; and when I speak the word of God with sharpness they tremble and anger against me; and when I use no sharpness they harden their hearts against it; wherefore, I fear lest the Spirit of the Lord hath ceased striving with them. For so exceedingly do they anger that it seemeth me that they have no fear of death; and **they have lost their love, one towards another; and they thirst after blood and revenge continually.** And now, my beloved son, notwithstanding their hardness, let us labor diligently; for if we should cease to labor, we should be brought under condemnation; for we have a labor to perform whilst in this tabernacle of clay, that we may conquer the enemy of all righteousness, and rest our souls in the kingdom of God. And now I write somewhat concerning the sufferings of this people. For according to the knowledge which I have received from Amoron, behold, the Lamanites have many prisoners, which they took from the tower of Sherrizah; and there were men, women, and children.. And the husbands and fathers of those women and children they have slain; and they feed the*

women upon the flesh of their husbands, and the children upon the flesh of their fathers; and no water, save a little, do they give unto them. And notwithstanding this great abomination of the Lamanites, it doth not exceed that of our people in Moriantum. For behold, many of the daughters of the Lamanites have they taken prisoners; **and after depriving them of that which was most dear and precious above all things, which is chastity and virtue— And after they had done this thing, they did murder them in a most cruel manner, torturing their bodies even unto death;** and after they have done this, they devour their flesh like unto wild beasts, because of the hardness of their hearts; and they do it for a token of bravery. *O my beloved son, how can a people like this, **that are without civilization**— (And only a few years have passed away, and they were a civil and delightful people) But O my son, how can a people like this, whose delight is in so much abomination— How can we expect that God will stay his hand in judgment against us? Behold, my heart cries: Wo unto this people. Come out in judgment, O God, and hide their sins, and wickedness, and abominations from before thy face! And again, my son, there are many widows and their daughters who remain in Sherrizah; and that part of the provisions which the Lamanites did not carry away, behold, the army of Zenephi has carried away, and left them to wander whithersoever they can for food; and many old women do faint by the way and die. And the army which is with me is weak; and the armies of the Lamanites are betwixt Sherrizah and me; and as many as have fled to the army of Aaron have fallen victims to their awful brutality. **O the depravity of my people! They are without order and without mercy.** Behold, I am but a man, and I have but the strength of a man, and I cannot any longer enforce my commands. And **they have become strong in their perversion;** and they are alike brutal, sparing none, neither old nor young; and they delight in everything save that which is good; and the suffering of our women and our children upon all the face of this land doth exceed everything; yea, tongue cannot tell, neither can it be written. And now, my son, I dwell no longer upon this horrible scene. Behold, thou knowest the wickedness of this people; thou knowest that they are without principle, and past feeling; and their wickedness doth exceed that of the Lamanites. Behold, my son, **I cannot recommend them unto God** lest he should smite me. (Moroni 9: 3-21 emphasis added)*

Satan's philosophy of relativism is the basis for people being *angry* and *without civilization*. Some people condone violent behavior in the name of 'good' things. As examples in our day, radical extremists use their own set of 'standards' to justify killing doctors that have performed abortions or to rationalize the destruction of property to further environmental causes. Extremism leads to people being out of balance which can hinder the communication with the spirit and lead to decisions that are not confirmed by God.

The world appears to be approaching the conditions that existed in Noah's day. It is recorded in the Pearl of Great Price that Enoch asked the Lord why He wept as He looked at the residue of His people during that time. In response, the Lord stated,

And unto thy brethren have I said, and also given commandment, that they should love one another, and that they should choose me, their Father; but behold, they are without affection, and they hate their own blood. (Moses 7:33)

Relativism and Our Increasing Technological World

The philosophy of relativism coupled with our highly technological world can lead to grave consequences in the solution of ethical dilemmas. Consider the following examples in the fields of human genetics and natural resources.

The Human Genome Project. Genetic technology has fueled incredible discoveries in the medical field. Scientists are now able to identify some diseases and malformities in fetuses and perform surgical procedures to correct some of these ailments. But with these discoveries, comes a host of ethical questions. For example, suppose medical science is able to identify the gene or DNA sequence that would predict diabetes. Do we have the right to alter that gene in a particular fetus? Will governments eventually be allowed to dictate the altering of that gene because it has been defined as being 'bad'? Who defines 'good' and 'bad'? How far should we go with our research in gene mapping? How do we apply it to the human race? These are not always easy questions to answer. How might the philosophy of relativism alter the answers?

In a recent New York Time News Service article, Gina Kolata discussed the rapidity at which the whole notion of cloning is being accepted by the scientific community.

Just nine months have passed since an astonished world got its first glimpse of Dolly the lamb, the first animal cloned from a cell taken from an adult. It was a feat that science had declared impossible. In the hubbub that ensued, scientist after scientist and ethicist after ethicist declared that Dolly should not conjure up fears of a Brave New World. There would be no interest in using the technology to clone people, they said. They are already being proved wrong. There has been an enormous change in attitudes in just a few months; scientists have become sanguine about the notion of cloning and, in particular, cloning a human being. . . "I absolutely think the tenor has changed," Andrews (Lori Andrews, a professor at Chicago-Kent College of Law) said. People who said human cloning would never be done "are now saying, 'Well, the risks aren't that great'," she said. "I see a total shift in the burden of proof to saying that unless you can prove there is actually going to be harm, then we should allow it," she said. Andrews likes to quote two fertility experts, Dr. Sophia Kleegman and Dr. Sherwin Kaufman, who wrote three decades ago that new reproductive arrangements pass through several predictable stages, from "horrified negation" to "negation without horror" to "slow and gradual curiosity, study, evaluation, and finally a very slow but steady acceptance." That happened, she said, with artificial insemination, with in vitro fertilization, with the freezing of human embryos and with surrogate mothers. And it is happening with cloning, Andrews said. But what is so striking, she added, is that "the time frame from 'horrified negation' to 'let's do it' is so much shorter."²¹

The speed of this acceptance is what is troubling since people are not taking the necessary time to address the ethical issues. Someone's agenda is being rushed through this portion of medical science and the agenda smacks of Satan's relativism. We have seen something akin to this in the rapid acceptance of abortion, assisted suicide, and euthanasia. Whenever there are issues of life

and death, Satan will try and influence them with his philosophy. Elder Jeffery Holland spoke of the importance that God places on these issues when he said the following:

Clearly God’s greatest concerns regarding mortality are how one gets into this world and how one gets out of it. These two most important issues in our very personal and carefully supervised progress are the two issues that He as our Creator and Father and Guide wishes most to reserve to Himself. These are the two matters that He has repeatedly told us He wants us never to take illegally, illicitly, unfaithfully, without sanction.²²

It is interesting to note in the following table the reasons given by women for having abortions as indicated in a 1987 survey conducted by the Alan Guttmacher Institute, a pro-abortion group.²³

Table 1. Reasons given by women for having abortions.

<u>Reason</u>	<u>Percentage*</u>
Concerned about how having a baby could change her life	76
Can’t afford baby now	68
Problems with relationship or wants to avoid single parenthood	51
Unready for responsibility	31
Doesn’t want others to know she has had sex or is pregnant	31
Not mature enough, or is too young to have a child	30
Has all the children she wanted, or has all grown-up children	26
Husband or partner wants the abortion to happen	23
Fetus has possible health problem	7
Parents want her to have abortion	7
Victim of rape or incest	1
Other	6

* Percentage of women who gave the reason.

Eight of the first eleven reasons involve the notion of convenience which is unrelated to the health of either the woman or the fetus. These reasons are selfish and lend themselves to the ideas of relativism. Satan has declared war on God’s children. When his philosophy drives people’s actions which involve decisions of life and death, then the eternal truths of the gospel are pushed aside for reasons of convenience. This is a reminder of Moroni’s warning and description of our days.

Natural Resources and the Environment. Modern technology has made it possible to harness the earth’s resources to provide energy for all of it’s people. Advances in nutrition and farming technology have allowed us to generate enough food to feed the entire population. Distribution problems still exist but these problems are being addressed by technologists and world governments. The counsel and injunction given to Adam and Eve that the earth and all things therein was for their use and to ‘dress it and keep it’ has guided the development of the earth’s resources. But with this comes a responsibility to develop the resources wisely which has not always been done. Technology has aided in the destruction and depletion of vital resources. Frequently this was done unintentionally since people did not know the effects that a certain technology would have on the environment. But whether by ignorance, accident, or choice,

problems have occurred.

As an example, consider the Chernobyl nuclear accident that caused significant death and global environmental problems. In his book, *How Good People Make Tough Choices*, Rush Kidder tells how two very capable engineers, who held prestigious nuclear engineering positions in the former Soviet Union, were responsible for this tragedy.²⁴ They had purposely turned off several safety mechanisms and were performing an unauthorized experiment at conditions where the reactor was extremely unstable. When they realized they were in danger, they tried to abort the experiment but couldn't. The result was an explosion and a release of radioactive material that killed 31 people initially and ultimately led to hundreds of other deaths. The effects of the radioactive plume generated by the explosion was felt around the world in the loss of plant and animal life. This accident certainly could have been avoided. Was it a technical or an ethical error? Many feel that it was an ethical error that affected millions of people negatively.

The Lord has said in reference to taking care of the poor,

For it is expedient that I, the Lord, should make every man accountable, as a steward over earthly blessings, which I have made and prepared for my creatures. I, the Lord, stretched out the heavens, and built the earth, my very handiwork; and all things therein are mine. And it is my purpose to provide for my saints, for all things are mine. But it must needs be done in mine own way; and behold this is the way that I, the Lord, have decreed to provide for my saints, that the poor shall be exalted, in that the rich are made low. For the earth is full, and there is enough and to spare; yea, I prepared all things, and have given unto the children of men to be agents unto themselves. (D&C 104:13-17)

There are ample resources for all of earth's inhabitants providing we are good stewards of those resources. With the potential to do immeasurable damage to those resources, it is critical that decisions regarding their development be based on fixed, eternal principles which reflect proper stewardship and accountability.

An example of the synthesis of the philosophy of relativism, technology, concern for the environment, and terrorism is the recent escalation of eco-terrorism in America. Over 1500 attacks have been reported during the period 1980-1998. These attacks include fires and bombings of public and private buildings and lands by radical environmentalists. Steven Paulson reported in an Associated Press article that one of these groups claimed responsibility for the burning of a ski lodge and other buildings at Vail, Colorado.²⁵ This arson resulted in an estimated \$12 million of damage. The fires were set to protest the expansion of ski facilities that would "ruin the last, best lynx habitat in the state (Colorado)."²⁵ While these acts did not involve the loss of life as did the Chernobyl disaster, individuals attempted to justify their behavior on their own set of standards as do those who believe in relativism and situational ethics.

There have always been individuals who believed in Satan's philosophy and the principles of relativism and no shortage of people that have chosen evil over good. But never before could the

impact of a poor ethical decision be felt by so much of the world's people. In areas such as drug and nuclear arms trafficking, the ethics of a few have the potential to destroy the lives of millions. Rush Kidder wrote about the effect of our technological systems:

Widespread, designed for great speed, often decentralized, such systems are increasingly susceptible to misuse or manipulation by a single individual making a single wrong decision. Why is that fact so important? Simply because such systems leverage our ethics so highly. Like megaphones, they amplify small whispers of wrongdoing into vast bellows of amorality. In that megaphone effect, a single moral lapse – a single ethical Chernobyl – can now affect millions for centuries.²⁴

A Call for Values

Many voices have risen in a call for clearly defined values to help provide a moral basis for ethical decisions. These voices include: The United Nations' Commission of Global Governance author of, *Our Global Neighbourhood*²⁶, Rush Kidder author of *Shared Values for a Troubled World: Conversations with Men and Women of Conscience*¹⁴ and *Global Values, Moral Boundaries - A Pilot Study*²⁷ with William Loges, William Bennett author of *The Book of Virtues*²⁸ and *The Moral Compass*²⁹, Stephen Covey author of *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*³⁰ and *Principle-Centered Leadership*³¹, Linda and Richard Eyre authors of *Teaching Your Children Values*³², and Linda Popov author of *The Family Virtues Guide*³³. A listing of several of these sets of values can be found in Appendix 1.

The United Nations Commission's report entitled *Our Global Neighbourhood* is a good example of the message that is being advocated by these voices. In this report, the commission suggests ways to improve the management of the world's common interests at the global level. In their summary, the authors of the commission's report wrote the following:

We also believe the world's arrangements for the conduct of its affairs must be underpinned by certain common values. Ultimately, no organization will work and no law upheld unless they rest on a foundation made strong by shared values. These values must be informed by a sense of common responsibility for both present and future generations.²⁶

The Greek philosophers, Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle argued that the good and moral life was based on constant, unchanging moral principles. They taught that each individual found happiness in pursuing and abiding by them. The idea of the natural law can be found in the writings of the Roman philosophers as well. In the Judeo-Christian philosophy, happiness was also founded on the pursuit and the observance of unchanging moral laws. This is also true in the Eastern religions. Philosophers from nearly all cultures are unified on the idea that truth and happiness are founded on moral principles or standards that exist independent of humankind. They espouse that

to lead a 'good life', men and women must conform to these moral principles. This shouldn't be a surprise since values are part of God's eternal plan which has been taught since the days of Adam.

Throughout recorded history, we find attempts of various people to define a set of standards. For instance, the great American inventor, philosopher, and politician, Benjamin Franklin wrote the following:

It was about this time I conceived the bold an arduous project of arriving at moral perfection. I wished to live without committing any fault at any time; I would conquer all that either natural inclination, custom, or company might lead me into. . . . In the various enumerations of the moral virtues I had met with in my reading, I found the catalog more or less numerous, as different writers included more or fewer ideas under the same name.³⁴

He then made a list of the virtues that he would pursue.

1. Temperance - Eat not to dullness. Drink not to elevation.
2. Silence - Speak not but what may benefit others or yourself.
3. Order - Let all your things have their places.
4. Resolution - Resolve to perform what you ought. Perform without fail what you resolve.
5. Frugality - Make no expense but to do good to others or yourself.
6. Industry - Lose no time. Be always employed in something useful.
7. Sincerity - Use no hurtful deceit. Think innocently and justly; and, if you speak, speak accordingly.
8. Justice - Wrong none by doing injuries or omitting the benefits that are your duty.
9. Moderation - Avoid extremes.
10. Cleanliness - Tolerate no uncleanness in body, clothes or habitation.
11. Tranquility - Be not disturbed at trifles or at accidents common or unavoidable.
12. Chastity - Rarely use venery but for health or offspring — never to dullness, weakness, or the injury of your own or another's peace or reputation.
13. Humility - Imitate Jesus and Socrates.³⁴

Rush Kidder and his Institute for Global Ethics conducted a multi-year study to elucidate a set of values that would be somewhat common to the entire world population. Kidder's publication *Shared Values for a Troubled World: Conversations with Men and Women of Conscience* described a set of 24 interviews that he conducted with individuals representing 16 different countries and several walks of life, including, those from government organizations, private business organizations, educational institutions, the press, and religions.¹⁴ They were posed the following question: "If you could help create a global code of ethics, what would be on it?" Kidder condensed the answers and developed the following list of values: love, truthfulness, fairness, freedom, unity, tolerance, responsibility, and respect for life. In a follow up study conducted in 1996, the Institute for Global Ethics polled 272 participants from 40 countries and 50 different religious backgrounds attending the annual meeting of the World Forum.²⁷ They were provided a list of 15 moral values and asked to choose the five that were the most important to them, and then specify the one that was paramount. Table 2 contains the results of that survey.

The value is shown in the first column, the number of times it was chosen in the set of five in the second column, and the number of times it was selected as the most important in the third column. Kidder's conclusion is that there is a set of common values that the world can and should be working from as a basis of ethical decision making.

Table 2. Results of Survey from *Global Values, Moral Boundaries - A Pilot Survey*²⁷

Value	Chosen in group of 5*	Most Important*
Truth	169 (62)	33 (16)
Compassion	153 (56)	44 (21)
Responsibility	147 (54)	33 (16)
Freedom	113 (42)	19 (9)
Reverence for life	108 (40)	25 (12)
Fairness	100 (37)	12 (6)
Self-Respect	96 (35)	16 (8)
Preservation of Nature	92 (34)	5 (2)
Tolerance	86 (32)	8 (4)
Generosity	73 (27)	4 (2)
Humility	50 (18)	4 (2)
Social Harmony	43 (16)	2 (1)
Honor	31 (11)	4 (2)
Devotion	27 (10)	4 (2)
Respect for Elders	19 (7)	0 (0)

* first number listed is actual number of respondents, second number listed is in percent

While the voices being raised for a shared value system are not without *signification* as Paul states in the following scripture, the prophets have been speaking with a certain sound based on correct principles. They have encouraged and plead with the world to adhere to God's standards since the time of Adam. As we form a basis for our ethical decision making, it would behoove us to listen to their counsel.

Now, brethren, if I come unto you speaking with tongues, what shall I profit you, except I shall speak to you either by revelation, or by knowledge, or by prophesying, or by doctrine? And even things without life giving sound, whether pipe or harp, except they give a distinction in the sounds, how shall it be known what is piped or harped? For if the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle? So likewise ye, 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. There are, it may be, so many kinds of voices in the world, and none of them [is] without signification. (1 Cor 14:6-10)

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