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# CHRISTIANITY TODAY



||| A PRESBYTERIAN JOURNAL DEVOTED TO STATING, DEFENDING  
AND FURTHERING THE GOSPEL IN THE MODERN WORLD |||

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## Editorial Notes and Comments

### THE CHRISTIAN PATTERN OF CONDUCT

**T**HE worst of all heresies is the antinomian heresy—the heresy that asserts that conduct does not matter as long as belief is correct. Christ came to save men from their sins, not merely from the consequences of sin, so that His efforts fall short of their aim save as He becomes a transforming and sanctifying power in human lives. Whatever else Christianity is, it is a manner of life; more particularly, it is a manner of life that finds its pattern in the life that Jesus Himself lived.

In the Gospel, Jesus presents Himself as one who not only says, "I am the truth", "My teachings are free from the alloy of error", but as one who says, "I have given you an example that you should do as I have done", "I have always acted as I should have acted." There have been many others who have had a firm conviction of the truth of what they taught and who have not hesitated to exhort others to do as they said, but no other has ever said with equal emphasis, "Do as I have done." And that because others have been conscious—in proportion as their lives have been pure and their ideals lofty—of the chasm that yawned between what they were and what they ought to have been. Jesus, however, was conscious of no such contrast and so had as little hesitation about saying, "Do as I say," as He had about saying, "Do as I say."

There is something even more remarkable to be noted in this connection. Mankind as a whole, in as far as it has had knowledge of Jesus, has acknowledged the justice of this demand. In the case of most great teachers, it is easier to pick flaws in their conduct than in their teachings. Most of us find it easier to defend our beliefs than our practices. The reverse has proven true in the case of Jesus. We do not mean to imply that it is easier to discover flaws in His teachings than in His conduct—we regard both as flawless. What we mean is that many who have seen what they supposed to be flaws in His teachings have affirmed the flawlessness of His life. It is true that there have been and are those who ascribe imperfection to Jesus even in the realm of conduct; none the less, mankind as a whole, in as far as

it has known Him, has made its own the words of Pilate: "Behold, I find no fault in Him."

Only as we live as Jesus lived are we exemplifying the kind of life Christianity asks of its adherents. So difficult and apparently impossible are the things demanded that we are tempted to look upon it as a wholly impracticable demand. "What", we are disposed to ask, "do you mean to say that I in my ordinary life, I with my antecedents and surroundings, I with my way to make in the world as it is—must I seriously endeavor to live as Jesus lived if I am to call myself a Christian and rejoice in the thought that I share the Christian heritage?" Well, that is just about what we mean. The demand may seem a hard one, but we have no authority to change it. Men may judge the demand impracticable but only as they judge Christ and His apostles as impracticable. It is upon their authority, not our own, that we proclaim it.

There are those who think that Christianity would have achieved greater results, been more effective in the field of moral transformation, if it had not urged so lofty an ideal. It is often said that to set up perfection as a goal is to deaden effort and to enthrone despair. Surely no one can live up to the standard set by Jesus. Why, then, attempt it? We agree in as far as it is meant that none of Christ's imitators have ever fully realized their ideal, but differ in as far as it is meant that a man with an imperfect ideal will make greater progress in the ethical life than a man with a perfect ideal. A lowering of our standard always means a slackening of our efforts. Any standard short of perfection enables us to look upon evil with a certain degree of allowance. History and experience, we believe, alike justify the thought that our ideal ought to be perfect however imperfect our attempt to translate it into conduct. Practical wisdom as well as lofty aspiration lie back of and give significance to the demand that we take Jesus as our model, that we walk as He walked, do as He did.

By way of caution we need to keep in mind, in the first place, that our imitation of Jesus should be according to the spirit rather than according to the letter. To say that we should do as He did is not to say that we should do the same identical things He did. It is to say rather that we

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## Relativity and the Absolute

By Rev. David S. Clark, D.D.

**S**WIVEL-CHAIR abstractions? No, practical ethics. For as a man thinketh in his heart so is he. It makes some difference in a man's life whether his philosophy is Relativity or the Absolute.

There are some fads in philosophy; and philosophies change like the fashions of women's bonnets. There are lords many and gods many in philosophy; and they multiply at that.

It is a far cry from the Idealism of Berkeley and Hegel to the materialism of Tyndall and Haeckel. Berkeley denied the corporeity of the world; and Tyndall told the British Association for the Advancement of Science that "we must look to matter for the power and potency of all that is."

There are even styles of Materialism and Idealism. It is some step from the materialism of Hobbes and Haeckel to the Behaviorism of John Dewey, or the super-behaviorism of the later philosophers who substitute for the human soul the mere response of the organism to its environment. The farther this latter philosophy proceeds, the worse it becomes. Matter has some recognizable qualities even if we deny it mentality. But to rest mentality on mere organization of neural and vital forces is to step from terra firma into empty space. The newer materialism is more subtle and more irrational than the older.

Idealism has had its developments. There is some difference between the Idealism of Berkeley and that of Schelling; and also between both of them and the modern Idealism of Josiah Royce and James H. Snowden.

All Idealism loses the tangible world in the subjective conception. But there are differences even in that. Berkeley referred it to the fiat of God; but the later Idealists to the all-pervading life of God,—a distinction which only makes the modern Idealism more abstruse and incomprehensible, with a little tinge of Pantheism.

The philosophy of Fichte, Schelling and Hegel is known as the philosophy of the Absolute. But the chief error in the philosophy of Schelling and Hegel at least lay not in its Absolutism, but in its extreme Pantheism.

There must be an Absolute. We may not be able to get our fingers on it, but it is a metaphysical necessity. It takes its place in our thinking along with the axioms of Euclid, and the First Principles of Dr. McCosh. The Absolute, together with the Infinite, is a necessity of thought. It is questionable whether the relative is conceivable apart from the Absolute, in regard to which it is relative. Or can the relative be relative to another relativity, the second as uncertain as the first?

When we proceed along these lines we discover that relativity ends in universal doubt. That is why the discussion of this subject has a religious value. This is not swivel-chair philosophy. It is the solvency or bankruptcy of all thought, life, and truth.

Here we touch the question, not only what is truth? but is there any truth? Some European writer recently de-

clared that relativity is worse than materialism. Quite true. Materialism believed something;—held that its premises were true,—argued on the basis of those premises to what it thought were legitimate conclusions. It kept its feet on the ground to say the least. But Relativity stands in a quagmire without bottom. It is not worth while to argue with Relativity, because no premise, for it, has any certainty. And no argument can be built on universal negation. If all is uncertain, then relativity is as uncertain as all the rest. And therefore its very uncertainty is uncertain; and thus it destroys itself.

Further if Relativity is destructive of truth, it is likewise destructive of religion and morality. The most soul-blasting heresy in the world is to think that there is nothing right and nothing wrong and it doesn't make any difference anyway. No religion nor morality can survive such a philosophy. How refreshing to turn from the vagaries of the world to the faith of the New Testament and hear Paul and John say: "I know", "I know."

Relativity applies to only a few realms of human knowledge, and is questionable even there. If it obtains in the sphere of the empirical, and even that is not absolutely certain always and everywhere, at least we are sure that it has no place in consciousness. There is no disputing with consciousness that I am, or that I know my states, or my personal identity.

Neither have the mathematical certainties been weakened by any claims of relativity. The multiplication table is good for all time and all worlds; and true in spite of all philosophies. We think there are some things in human knowledge that may lay claim to being fundamental truth. Fundamentalism, whether in religion or philosophy, is the only rational standpoint.

It is supposed that the New Physics favors Relativity, and that therefore Relativity has a quasi scientific basis. But the New Physics is itself only a theory and in need of verification. And another generation will probably leave most of it on the scrap-heap, while some newer theory will clamor for recognition.

Our humble conviction is that the Quantum Theory will not stand; and that Energism as a philosophy is unthinkable. Much is said these days about "pure energy." We venture to think that there is no such thing. Energy does not exist apart from substance. Energy as we know it in this world is an effect, and cannot exist without a cause. It is not *sui generis*. As there can be no motion without something that moves, so there can be no force without something that gives rise to it.

We are far from thinking that the resolution of the atom into electricity has banished matter. The resultant electricity is still material substance, according to the best authorities. No bridge has been found to span the gap between matter and spirit, and the chasm is too wide to leap across. Up to the present we are decidedly dualists.

An assumed velocity has been invoked to destroy the fact of gravitation, and the estimate of measurements. If the earth should hurtle through space 161,000 miles per second our horizontal, head-on yard sticks would be reduced to 18 inches, and the distance from Philadelphia to Harrisburg, or from Pittsburgh to Altoona would shrink to 50 miles. So that attraction and distance are relative to velocity.

Even admitting the principle for the sake of generosity, what we are concerned with is not what would result under unreal and impossible conditions, but what is the fact under the conditions that now exist.

Alluding to another phase of the subject, Einstein's algebraic equations are incomprehensible to the ordinary scholar, not because Algebra is incomprehensible; but because of the values, or rather lack of values, attributable to the terms. In Algebra if  $a, b, c$  have assigned values, then  $x, y, z$  are easily deducible. But if  $a, b, c$  represent nothing definite, nor numerical, what conclusion can be arrived at as to  $x, y, z$ ? This seems to us another phase of the quagmire.

For example, Professor Edington says: "If today you ask a physicist what he has finally made out the aether or the electron to be, the answer will not be a description in terms of billiard balls or flywheels or anything concrete;

he will point instead to a number of symbols and a set of mathematical equations which they satisfy. What do the symbols stand for? The mysterious reply is given that physics is indifferent to that; it has no means of probing beneath the symbolism. To understand the phenomena of the physical world it is necessary to know the equations which the symbols obey, but not the nature of that which is being symbolized."

One could wish for something more concrete; and wonders whether such indefinite processes insure reality in the visible and tangible world in which we live.

We think that even in this age of uncertainty there are some things certain enough to enable us to say with the man born blind: "One thing I know."

We think too that in this time when uncertainty is exploited in physics and philosophy, the Absolute deserves renewed emphasis. A merely empirical philosophy may result in the Unknowable of Herbert Spencer. But there is an *a priori*ism that has to be recognized, and the Absolute is a metaphysical necessity. The laws of thought are as valid and far more certain than scientific experimentation.

Religion and morality find a Gibraltar in the Absolute, while Relativity presents itself as The Beautiful Isle of Nowhere.

## Presbyterianism, Lutheranism and Methodism: Our Common Heritage and Our Differences

By Dr. Loraine Boettner, Professor of Bible, Pikeville College, Pikeville, Ky.

### Part III Evangelicalism

**W**E SHOULD notice that in the Reformed Church the Reformation was much more radical and complete than in the Lutheran Church. While both churches accepted the Bible as their final authority, the tendency in the Lutheran Church was to keep all of the old system which did not have to be thrown out, while in the Reformed Church the tendency was to throw out all that did not have to be kept. Many Lutherans even at the present day boast that theirs was a "conservative reformation." The fact of the matter is that some few elements of the old sacerdotal or priestcraft system are still found in Lutheranism. While the evangelicalism of the Protestant churches was set over against the legalistic system of the Roman Church in which it was taught that man could receive salvation only through the instrumentalities of the Church, it is fairly clear that the evangelicalism of the Lutheran Church was formed on the basis of the sacerdotalism of the old church, out of which they had made a rather painful but not altogether perfect exit, while that of the Reformed Church was based only on the Scriptures as a guide and was designed to contrast as strongly as possible with the old system. True evangelicalism sweeps away every intermediary between the soul and its God, and

leaves the person dependent for salvation on God alone. Evangelicalism does not do away with the church and its ordinances, but keeps them in their proper place as instrumentalities through which the Holy Spirit ordinarily works in bringing a soul to salvation.

Lutheranism, like Romanism, teaches that the grace of God is conveyed mainly—some say only—through the means of grace, stress being laid not on the sacraments but on the Word, which is referred to as the chief "means of grace." True, in Lutheran sacerdotalism we do not hear much about "the Church," which is the very heart of Roman sacerdotalism, for at this point the system is not very consistent. But in holding that saving grace is given mainly or only through the means of grace, it imposes a set of instrumentalities between the sinner and his God. This means that the central evil of sacerdotalism has been brought over into Lutheranism; and where it is consistently worked out we find men exalting the means of grace and giving proportionally less attention to the Holy Spirit who is the true agent in all of these saving operations. Hence the energy with which the Reformed have insisted that, while the means of grace are important in their place as instruments for developing and strengthening faith, the Holy Spirit works immediately upon the soul in regeneration and brings the person from a state of