

November 2021

Dear Brethren:

Does God want us to be closed-minded or more open-minded concerning our beliefs? What do you think?

The world champions the idea of *reason*, and the power of *rationalism* to help mankind expand knowledge and to grow through nurturing intellectual curiosity and the exploration of new ideas. They tell us that one of the great inspirations of history is the example of scientific pioneers who were willing to challenge the status quo, overcoming fear in order to pursue new concepts considered heretical by the *expert majorities* of their day. It required visionaries like Galileo to discover the real truth about our solar system, even while he brought persecution upon himself at the hands of civic and church hierarchies enmeshed in erroneous dogmas. Christopher Columbus rejected the "limited wisdom" of the authorities of his day, who opposed his fantastical pursuit of new knowledge through exploration of the uncharted world. Without such visionaries—who were willing to challenge accepted knowledge boundaries—we would never have broken out of our primitive view of the world and amass the kind of knowledge that we possess today. Therefore, *questioning* in general and "thinking outside of the box" are highlighted as progressive tools to help *break the bonds of ignorance* and to cast off *outdated modes of thinking*. Those refusing to reconsider and to challenge their long-held beliefs are treated as Neanderthals, while those who accept *no past knowledge as being exclusive or sacred* are celebrated as our most forward-leaning sages—the real future of mankind.

Is Dogma Bad?

Is this progressive—questioning—ideology limited to the natural sciences? Of course not. Human beings apply it just as much to religion as to any other intellectual endeavor. Even though religion is steeped in ethereal philosophies that cannot truly be subjected to the scientific method, many still attempt to apply this *testing-proving-challenging-reproving* rationalism to *dogmatic concepts* concerning God, man, and the real purposes for all that exists in the universe. The very word—*dogma*—has become a dirty word to many. Technically, "dogma" means *a settled or established opinion, belief, or principle*. If it is "settled," then it is no longer subject to questioning. It is taken as fact right now and forevermore.

The Catholic Church, for instance, defines its core beliefs *without apology* according to an authoritative interpretation of every murky religious question concerning God and man. In that regard, *dogma* refers to a specific set of tenets, or doctrines, authoritatively laid down by the church. In theory, if you choose to be Catholic, you accept Catholic dogma as being true. If you do not believe that the Catholic Church is the bastion of real truth, then you are free to go someplace else. However, the actual reality for the Catholic Church—as with almost every other church—is far from this kind of clear-cut acceptance of *unchallenged dogma*.

For example: There are many practicing Catholics who oppose the church's doctrine concerning abortion. The church still says that abortion is a sin, but many progressive Catholics think that particular *dogma* is outdated and needs to be changed. The idea of being dogmatic about this teaching is disdainfully interpreted as old-fashioned, closed-minded, and intellectually backwards. After all, if one is just willing to be *open-minded* and to reevaluate the whole question afresh, is this not a more *honest and rational* approach?

Regardless of your choice of religious faith, the real question is, are you one who lives your life according to firmly settled beliefs—based upon unchanging principles—or are you one who embraces an ideology of *growth through change*, ever willing to challenge previous dogmas?

Plato and Hegel Champion Change

This struggle between absolute ideologies and the concept of "evolving truth" is nothing new. The Greek philosopher Plato believed that higher levels of understanding could best be achieved by debating conflicting ideas rationally. The very *act of debating* two opposing ideologies could be used as a platform to generate "new truth" as a by-product. But then that "new truth" was never treated by Plato as a new absolute either, because another brand new challenge was encouraged that questioned *that* "former truth" so that the ensuing *new debate* could further result in new levels of understanding never yet achieved. In other words, *unending questioning* was the chosen tool of the preeminent philosophers. Accepting any tenet as being absolute—unchanging—was the enemy of all true reason and enlightenment.

The seventeenth-century German philosopher Georg Hegel took those concepts of Plato to a whole new level, formulating a very specific program of thought to employ this *questioning philosophy* in achieving profound social and political changes on a global scale. That process became known as the *Hegelian Dialectic*, and has now permeated all higher

education in this world for many generations. What is the *Hegelian Dialectic*, and what does it have to do with you and your Christianity?

The point is not to do a "deep dive" into this complex philosophical scheme. There are many weighty books and scholarly papers written about it for those who seek more detail. Fairly easy-to-understand summaries are available online by authors like Brent Parrish, who wrote *Hegelian Dialectics for Dummies* (January 24, 2014). In summary, Hegel used a three-part formula including *thesis*, *antithesis*, and *synthesis* to achieve Plato's dream of enlightenment. *Thesis* is like your current opinion on a topic. *Antithesis* is someone else's opposite view on that same topic. *Dialectic* comes from the Greek word, *dialektik*, relating to "dialogue." It is all about being willing to *discuss* opposing viewpoints in an open and non-threatening environment so that the outcome of such dialogue becomes a new *consensus*. This new consensus is the *synthesis* that results when a *controlled conflict* between *thesis* and *antithesis* is moderated by a helpful *change agent*. In short, put two disagreeing people in a room together. A *neutral moderator* will help them discuss their opposing viewpoints, and out of that positive dialogue will come *new understanding*. This *new truth* is not the original idea of either one of the debaters, but a *synthesized* concept that emerges from the very *exercise of conflict*. Each party has to be willing to be open-minded and flexible. Being dogmatic about your own beliefs is the enemy of all reason. True growth in knowledge, they believe, comes from everyone being willing to modify his former belief to one extent or another. In other words, willingness to change is critical! Plato and Hegel demand that you expunge your dogmatism and become pliable in *accepting change*!

From a worldly standpoint, it might be easy to see why this *Hegelian Dialectic* is so alluring. After all, would not many of the problems in this world be made better if people were just willing to set aside emotion and pride and to sit down with an opponent to *seek common ground*? It is simply a way to create peace, right? And did not even Jesus say that we should seek to find agreement with our enemies?

Agree with thine adversary quickly, whiles thou art in the way with him; lest at any time the adversary deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and thou be cast into prison (Matthew 5:25) [emphasis mine throughout].

We can never *agree* with an enemy if we are unwilling to engage in *dialogue*, can we? But the fallacy in this argument is that we are not talking about using *dialogue* and *consensus* to resolve material disagreements between people (like property disputes between neighbors). We are talking about *intellectuals* using this process as a tool to try to discover *new understanding* about God, man, the universe, and *what is Truth*.

Will human beings—even well-intentioned ones—ever be able to discuss opposing views about God (for instance), and then come up with a better approximation of the Truth through their open-minded dialogue? Of course not! At least, not if you believe what God says concerning the topic!

The Bible Refutes Intellectual Rationalism

This is what the maker of man says about man's quest for truth:

For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. . . . But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned (1 Corinthians 2:11, 14).

If you believe this statement to be true, it shows that Plato's quest for enlightenment was destined to fail. Lacking the miracle of God's *divine gift of spiritual truth*, it is impossible for any human being ever to know it.

If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward: How that *by revelation he made known unto me the mystery*; (as I wrote afore in few words, Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ) Which in other ages *was not made known unto the sons of men*, as it is now *revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit* (Ephesians 3:2–5).

No amount of reasoning, searching, pondering, or scientific testing will ever lead man to real enlightenment, because a purposeful Creator God has reserved that knowledge for Himself, and in particular for *those to whom He specifically chooses out of the world to reveal it*.

But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ (Galatians 1:11–12).

And who was it that received this divine knowledge, given through chosen servants of God? In other words, who was the target audience of this *spiritual enlightenment*?

At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because *thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes*. Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in thy sight. All things are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; *neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him* (Matthew 11:25–27).

Is it just possible that the true Creator God has intentionally prevented man from taking spiritual knowledge to himself, and has given it instead to an assembly of humble, hand-picked converts—members of the Church of God?

But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and *ye know all things*. I have not written unto you because ye know not the truth, but because *ye know it*, and that no lie is of the truth (1 John 2:20–21).

To whom was the Apostle John writing this epistle? It was to the Church raised up by Jesus Christ! If these words are actually true, how does this same God then view every human attempt to thwart His *divine restriction* upon access to spiritual knowledge? They seek to break down the bastions that impede their quest for esoteric enlightenment. They believe that they have a right, because, after all, they are simply engaging in an honest quest for greater understanding! Nevertheless, God, for reason, will not permit it!

Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: . . . *Ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth* (2 Timothy 3:5, 7).

Yes, their quest for knowledge is unceasing and unquenchable. But every method they employ to achieve that altruistic aim becomes futile because, fundamentally, they reject the only means by which true spiritual knowledge will ever be acquired—by the divine revelation of their Creator. They can appeal to the methods of the Greek philosophers all they want. They can deploy Hegelian Dialectics to their hearts' content. But they will never break the bands of God's imposed limits.

God Lays Down the Gauntlet

Embracing never-ending, open-minded exploration of new ideas is not just a concept that is unhelpful to a true Christian, it is actually antithetical to the very practice of true Christianity. In other words, it is a philosophy that *prevents a true Christian from obeying very specific commands given by Jesus Christ*. What are these specific commands?

In short, God tells His called people that their mission is, 1) to accept the revealed doctrines of God as being absolute, and then, 2) to refuse to let anyone convince them to give them up.

Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for *the faith which was once delivered* unto the saints (Jude 3).

Jesus answered them, and said, My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me. If any man will do his will, *he shall know of the doctrine*, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself (John 7:16–17).

Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that *abideth in the doctrine of Christ*, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you, and bring not *this doctrine*, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds (2 John 9–11).

How are you ever going to fulfill this command—to know of the doctrine, to abide in that doctrine, and to eschew anyone who espouses something contrary to that doctrine—if you insist upon entering into *open-minded dialogue* with every scholar advancing contrary ideas? You can never have it both ways! Either you were one who received the miracle of divinely-revealed Truth already, or else you are one intentionally blinded by God. And if you received access to Christ's revelation of Truth, then your job is to treat it as absolute and never to forsake it. If Truth is absolute, then how in good conscience can you ever engage in Hegelian Dialectics to continue to question that foundational *dogma*? Christ is dogmatic. What about you?

Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, but *not to doubtful disputations* (Romans 14:1).

Plato and Hegel *thrived upon doubtful disputations*. Jesus Christ does not! Whose philosophy will you embrace? You cannot have it both ways.

That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and *carried about with every wind of doctrine*, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ (Ephesians 4:14–15).

Let that therefore abide in you, which ye have heard from the beginning. If that which ye have heard from the beginning shall remain in you, ye also shall continue in the Son, and in the Father. And this is the promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life. These things have I written unto you concerning them that seduce you. But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him. And now, little children, abide in him; that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming (1 John 2:24–28).

"Abide" means to continue, to endure, to remain, and to stand. You can never do that unless you believe that God's Truth is given to man as an absolute.

If You Do Not Know, Why Not?

If you are not yet called by God, you have not yet been given the miracle of an open mind, and your attempts to achieve *Platonic enlightenment* are simply a waste of your time. In that case, wait for your appointed time in God's glorious Master Plan. He will call you. You will then have your one opportunity to respond to the *revealed Faith*.

But if you are one of those current *babes in Christ* today—touched by God with a miraculous calling—then He has now made available to you the *true spiritual enlightenment*, and you can have it. In fact, you have no excuse for not possessing it.

And if you are one of those few called-out ones, but yet you still continue to waffle, debate, search, and chase your tail in confusion, it is evidence that something is very wrong. What might that be? It cannot be that God failed. He promised to reveal Himself—the embodiment of absolute Truth—to His Church. If you are not sure of that Truth, it cannot be His fault. Uncertainty and confusion are warning signs that you need to act. God is not the author of our confusion (1 Corinthians 14:33), so any doubt or uncertainty is your responsibility to resolve.

Many of the Called Reject Revelation

It would be nice to think that everyone who is truly called by God would embrace His revealed Truth without question. After all, if it is really the Truth, should not it be evident to those who receive that miracle of an open mind? Truth should just "seem right," and be

easy to accept, should it not? But that is not what history in the Bible shows us. The Holy Scriptures make it very plain that it is not just the deceived people of the world who reject God's Truth, but sadly, many of the ones who should know better. The world is not to blame for being blind, but those called by God have no excuse:

And Jesus said, For judgment I am come into this world, that they which see not might see; and that they which see might be made blind. And some of the Pharisees which were with him heard these words, and said unto him, Are we blind also? Jesus said unto them, If ye were blind, ye should have no sin: but now ye say, We see; therefore your sin remaineth (John 9:39–41).

Some—like Plato—were blind in spite of their intelligence, because it was God's will to keep them in the dark. But there are others who Christ said were also blind, but had absolutely no excuse for it. And for those, without eventual repentance, it involves sin that threatens their very salvation.

Now as Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses, so do these also *resist the truth*: men of corrupt minds, reprobate concerning the faith. But they shall proceed no further: for their folly shall be manifest unto all men, as theirs also was (2 Timothy 3:8–9).

For the time will come when *they will not endure sound doctrine*; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall *turn away their ears from the truth*, and shall be turned unto fables (2 Timothy 4:3–4).

You cannot turn away from something that you never first possessed. Plato and Hegel never possessed God's divine Truth. But someone else did. And these are the ones who are in danger of being condemned, because they *turned back* to the foolishness of man's ignorant philosophies after they were called. They should have known better.

And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish [are perishing]; because *they received not the love of the truth*, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness (2 Thessalonians 2:10–12).

For how many would this rejection of revealed Truth apply? Just a few of God's called children? Or would it affect many?

But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. *And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of* (2 Peter 2:1–2).

Again, this is not talking about the deceived peoples of the world, but those who were called into the true Church of God. Nevertheless, many of them were prophesied to reject God's spiritual enlightenment and to trade it for the false notions of the deceived.

How Would This Deception Come?

How would this corruption of Truth be accomplished among *many* of God's people? Would it come by God's children being enticed by *outside entities* to forsake the Truth? We just read in 2 Peter 2:1 that it would come at the hands of *false prophets among the people*. That means it would come through the very ministers who were commissioned to teach God's revelation, but who instead would do the very opposite and lead the church astray. It is the very same behavior that the priests of Israel always seemed to manifest (Jeremiah 23; Ezekiel 34). It is also what many of the true ministers of God were prophesied to do, both in the first century as well as in the very last days:

For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God. Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy [Spirit] hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. For I know this, that after my departing *shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them* (Acts 20:27–30).

So the rejection of God's revealed Way of Life would happen from within, and at the hands of the very servants who were commissioned to proclaim and to preserve the Faith.

The Anatomy of Apostasy

What are some of the actual philosophies that would be used to entice God's people to turn away from revealed Truth—to embrace apostasy? How would ministers of God be able to convince the brethren to abandon God's absolute, dogmatic Way?

Perhaps it would occur by *questioning the very foundation of divine wisdom*? If you are part of a Church that professes to have been established upon Jesus Christ, there is no better way to make members second-guess their beliefs than to begin to denigrate the very means by which church doctrine was first established within that body. Perhaps begin to say that the founder of the church was well-meaning but limited in his personal Bible scholarship, thereby making him subject to many errors in doctrinal conclusions.

How about beginning to elevate the idea of *questioning past doctrine* as a necessary evolution toward growing in *more and more truth*?

But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ (2 Peter 3:18).

That is exactly what the ministry of the Worldwide Church of God began to do in the early 1970s to justify picking apart the foundational teachings of their own founder, Herbert W. Armstrong. The "enlightened scholars" under Mr. Armstrong disagreed with a number of church doctrines and desired to change them. They bided their time, and in the midst of serious crises in the church after 1972, they sponsored a means of "saving the church" by going back to the drawing board to "re-prove" all of the past teachings, one by one. (This story is told in detail in our book, *A Peculiar Treasure: The Enduring Legacy of Herbert & Loma Armstrong*.) Of course, the doctrinal committee they formed had no intention of preserving the teachings that they already hated. This so-called *scholarly committee* was formed under the auspices of an *objective review*, and they actually championed many of Plato's and Hegel's methodologies—attempting to *grow in knowledge* of the real Truth by *questioning past dogmas*. Somehow, they seemed to have overlooked the fact that if they were legitimately part of God's true Church (as opposed to the many deceived, man-created churches of the world), then it was so because Jesus Christ Himself had formed that Church and made sure that it was *founded upon real Truth*. God uses men to do His Work, but He never allows those human servants to get major doctrine wrong, even though the servants themselves are fallible. If it was a church whose major doctrines were wrong from the beginning, then that is simply evidence that God was never a part of it at all. Either it was God's Work, and therefore it had the Truth *from the beginning by a miracle of a Revelator*, or else it was *just another false church* created by men. If it was merely the work of Herbert Armstrong—the man—then no amount of tinkering with the doctrines *after the fact* would ever turn a sow's ear into a silk purse.

Whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, brethren, *stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught*, whether by word, or our epistle (2 Thessalonians 2:14–15).

Is Their Quest for Knowledge Truly Sincere?

The supposed premise of Plato was a sincere quest for enlightenment. The goal of Georg Hegel was allegedly to offer a formal structure by which *true knowledge* could be acquired for the betterment of man. But is that truly how the Hegelian Dialectic is being used today? If you believe what God said about the true nature of all human beings (Romans 3:10–12), it would be foolish to accept their claims of *innocent inquiry for the sake of humanitarian progress*.

Even as many of the ministers in the Worldwide Church of God in the early 1970s had *a pre-existing agenda* to overturn key doctrines that they did not like, so too are similar efforts seen in this world today, sponsored by world leaders to bring about *premeditated changes* to national and economic institutions that they despise. To them, individual liberty and the sovereignty of nations is the enemy. In the name of seeking to create their own version of Plato's Utopia upon this earth (which is a totalitarian communistic regime), they are using the Hegelian Dialectic as a means to get us there.

There is no innocent quest for truth. They are simply *starting with the end in mind*, believing that *they already know* what the ideal form of government should be upon this earth. But rather than using a violent overthrow of current norms to get us there, they seek to mask their true intentions with a facade of innocent "quest for growth" through intellectual curiosity. There is a reason that Karl Marx embraced Hegel's theories and incorporated them into his own program to achieve a communistic "utopia." The Marxists are not seeking altruistic advancement of human wisdom. They already know what they want, but to get most peoples to buy in, they have to convince their adversaries to enter into *honest dialogue* with them. If you are unwilling to "come to the table," then you are the problem. The supposed "wise" among us will engage in discussions with those whose ideas we currently oppose so that the end result of the exercise will be that we all arrive at "a new level of wisdom" not previously known. They offer "unbiased moderators" to facilitate the debates, when in reality these individuals are dyed-in-the-wool Marxists, working aggressively to move the whole process to their predetermined ends. They are willing to create a crisis, just so that they *can lead us to the "solution."* Create a crisis (or capitalize upon one that occurs organically), encourage dialogue amidst the clash of opposing views, and then broker (mediate) a solution—a new *consensus*.

So, under the guise of *honest scholarship*, they stack the deck to make sure that the end product of all such *dialogue* is the pre-determined conclusions that they already sought.

Does this sound like conspiracy theory? Sure it is. But the alternative to believing that there are global conspiracies happening right now—conscious plans of influential people and institutions dedicated to totally rewriting global governance upon this earth—is to

believe that most of these powerful entities in high places today are operating with *sincere integrity* to make the world a better place through the preservation of our individual freedoms and basic human rights. If you believe that is really true, who is the real fool among us?

Our intent is not to encourage you to become a conspiracy nut and to spend all of your time seeking to ferret out their individual schemes. *That is a total waste of time for the true people of God!* If you know what God says prophetically is happening in the last days, then you know that men are liars, and our world leaders—inspired by the true enemy of man, Satan the Devil—are driving us closer and closer to oblivion. Except for the divine intervention of Jesus Christ to save us—and to take possession of this planet Himself and to rule—all of these human endeavors are simply going to destroy the earth. And their paths in so doing are filled with lies, deceits, and manipulations of the gullible.

Do not spend your time digging into *the weeds* of their nefarious schemes. That is a waste of your valuable time as a true Christian. The point of this discussion of Plato, Hegel, and the use of the Hegelian Dialectic is to *give you knowledge that you need to avoid getting caught up in it*. If you allow yourself to be brow-beaten into having "open-minded discussions" with those who oppose your religious beliefs, never accept that they are innocently seeking to engage you in order to achieve *greater collective enlightenment* through the process. They know exactly what they are doing, and what they are really seeking to achieve. Agreeing to "come to the table" with them simply makes you a party to the scheme. Jesus Christ warned us not to cast our pearls before swine (Matthew 7:6). That means we should recognize when the quest for knowledge is insincere, and avoid engaging with them according to their own terms.

They will accuse you of being *closed-minded*. They will say that you are weak in your personal convictions because you refuse to engage in dialogue with others who have opposing views. If you are confident in your beliefs, of what do you have to be afraid? But that is simply a ploy to get you on their turf. Whether they know it or not, they have bought in to the false notion of Plato and Hegel, which is the antithesis of the path to godly wisdom.

So, are you open-minded about your beliefs? If so, you are not standing upon a sure spiritual foundation. The good news is, as the called of God, you have every reason and opportunity to know the Truth, and to stand firm in it to the very end.

Yours with love and devotion in Christ Jesus,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jon W. Brisby". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned centrally below the typed name.

Jon W. Brisby