

Palisades Community Bible Church

Online Sunday School

Are You An Independent Thinker?

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Comedian, Steve Martin, had this skit in one of his stage acts:

Martin: Let's take the non-conformist's oath. Repeat after me: I promise to be unique!

Crowd: I promise to be unique!

Martin: I promise to be different!

Crowd: I promise to be different!

Martin: I promise NOT to repeat things other people say!

Crowd: laughter

The irony is cute, but how often have you heard Christians criticized as having 'blind faith,' or of being non-thinking conformists? It just seems to be the perception of many non-Christians, especially the highly educated ones; that Christians have no valid, educated, basis for their beliefs. I suppose there are those who just follow along without much thinking, or who have a more emotional basis for their faith....or who don't read their Bibles. That is NOT unique to Christianity, for sure.

Probably more prevalent are those Christians who simply aren't good in a debate. They get tongue-tied when challenged. That does not mean their faith is baseless conformity. But, for a non-Christian to characterize Christianity as a World View that does NOT promote independent thinking is actually oxymoronic and self-contradicting. Let's see why.

Webster's definition of independent thinking includes; "*not depending on the authority of others*" and "*not dependent on others for forming an opinion*" and "*showing a desire for freedom.*" In other words, making up your own mind on your own. These are highly desirable concepts. Don't we ALL want to think for ourselves, to be so smart that we need nobody else to do our thinking? Isn't

independence of thought and intellectual freedom the epitome of adult achievement?

If Christians are characterized as intellectual drones and blind adherents, then why do our critics; “independent thinkers,” study the writings and teachings of others? Hmmm. I suspect a flaw in the premise.

If we examine independent thinkers, such as pilots, truck drivers and surgeons, don't we HOPE they don't rely on advice before making a critical decision? What is the foundation of that decision making? Is it not a discipline, a training, a profession that was engineered, developed and taught by OTHERS? Only when one has the proper education, or skill set, can we expect independence of thought.

For a true Christian, his/her learning never stops. Yes, there are faith, feelings, morals, AND there is also weekly education into scientific, legal, financial, and psychological aspects of the world God has created (like what you're currently reading). God's word tells the Christian that his/her own body is to be the temple of the Holy Spirit. That, necessarily requires a strong relationship with our living Creator. True Christians exhibit superior intellect by absorbing the “mind” of God and NOT clinging to their base, flawed, human nature.

Consider this; ‘independent thinking’ is NOT ‘original thinking.’ Original thinking is creating something brand new, never before birthed. And, to the secular mind, original thought and independent thought run together. As long as they can exclude God, and replace Him with themselves, then, any new idea to themselves is ORIGINAL. They credit themselves with the ability to create new ideas and thoughts, and to process them expertly, all by one's self....not relying on anyone, or anything, else.

This self-important form of thinking is as old as humanity. Since their rebellion against God in the Garden of Eden, humans have not had ONE original thought...zero! **Psalm 85:11 Truth shall spring out of the earth, and righteousness shall look down from heaven.**

Is true independent, original thinking even possible? Eve certainly wanted this. In Genesis 2, we read that the serpent asked Eve if God told her not to eat of any particular tree in the garden. **2 The woman said to the serpent, “We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, 3 but God did say, ‘You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.’” 4 “You will not certainly die,” the serpent said to the woman. 5 “For God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.” 6 When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it.**

This was the ORIGINAL sin; Eve wanted to be independently knowledgeable and wise – apart from God. Is it any wonder that, today, Satan continues to employ the lure of intellectual independence to entice people away from the truth of God? And, just WHERE does one gain such individuality of thought? Why, by attending the university where one studies the thoughts and ideas of OTHERS!! Look, again, at the definition of independent thinking. This seems as contradictory as Steve Martin’s ‘non-conformist’s oath’!

If one is to have actual independence of thought, they must have the TRUTH guide their thinking. Otherwise, it is not independent of flawed humanity. The TRUTH is immutable, it’s unchangeable, it is ubiquitous, it’s timeless; it guides ALL wisdom all the time. So, if one is to get to the point of being an independent thinker, the TRUTH must be central...foundational...in their quest. And, in order to make truth central, it must be pursued. **Proverbs 3:5 Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding.**

If one does not pursue truth, s/he is, by default, pursuing the flawed, human-centric thinking that has plundered people’s minds through history. In essence, the apostate mortal puts him/herself on the throne of his own mind and prevents any unwelcome thinking from entering their ‘kingdom.’ They may claim high level intelligence, but it cannot reach any farther than the “hamster ball” in which it resides.

By avoiding the pursuit of truth, and falling in love with one's own belief system, s/he hamstring the process and ends up with a self-made idol.

An illustration: I took a writing course in college, led by a 30-year veteran journalist. After reading my first submission, he told me I needed to "murder my darlings." My confused look was answered with "It's easy to see the thoughts and ideas you love most in your writing, because that's where you lose your objectivity. You lavish lots of attention on these 'darlings' of yours. You need to kill them and focus on the facts. This does not mean these points are worthless. Just don't let your love for them ruin your objectivity." What a great admonition!

This is not to say that the apostate has no merit in their beliefs. IT IS TO SAY that the apostate is a fool when s/he does not pursue the truth of God with integrity. Pursue it honestly, and if the answer is "yes," or if the answer is "no," put your trust in that. But, don't just automatically fall in love with your darlings.

Consider some of the great non-Christian 'thinkers' that have influenced millions of others: Muhammed, Joseph Smith, Buddha, Darwin, Confucius, Alinsky, Nietzsche, Dawkins – even Satan. These figures have shaped a great deal of modern ideals. However, NONE of these was/is an independent thinker, here's why: none of these has TRUTH as their foundation. There may be truths in them, but they reject the highest truth; God. **Psalm 92:6 A senseless man does not know, nor does a fool understand this.**

Therefore, and this is key, each of these thinkers is a SLAVE to their supposed independent thought (idol, or darling). Because their philosophies are not truth-based (rejecting God), they are slaves to the process of gaining HUMAN acceptance to establish legitimacy. They rely on uneducated, uninspired, indoctrinated, and/or unwitting followers, to accept their ideas as valid. It is cult leaders who capitalize on the ignorance of others and lead them down a false path! **John 8:32 And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."**

While these supposed independent thinkers gather their flocks, Jesus caused such insincere followers to leave him. He has no need for disciples with one foot in and one foot out:

Matthew 16: 23 But Jesus turned and said to Peter, “Get behind Me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to Me. For you do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men.”

Muhammed teaches that Allah is ‘one God;’ a monolithic figure. He acknowledges Jesus as a good teacher/prophet, but not as the son of God, and there is no room in Muhammed’s thinking for the Holy Spirit. So, the Father, Son and Spirit (as God describes himself in the Bible) are an anathema to Islam. Imams have perpetrated this set of non-truths to followers who cannot, will not, think for themselves! Most Muslims are conditioned and indoctrinated, from infancy, to trust the teachings of Muhammed unquestioningly. Indeed, Islam is 100% dependent upon its followers NOT knowing the truth and NOT thinking for themselves. To keep the followers of Islam captive in this thinking, severe consequences are heaped upon the one who breaks ranks and thinks independently.

[Allah is creator of the universe and all that is in it; he is one; he has no son or associate; he is omnipotent and merciful. Allah wills both good and evil. Islamic Law (Sharia) is the supreme law of Allah; it is above all other laws. Allah loves Muslims but hates non-Muslims. Allah and God are one and the same (Qur’an 29:46)]

Contrast ‘Alah....hates non-Muslims...’ with God’s word: **John 3:16 “For God so loved the world that He gave his only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have everlasting life.”**

Interestingly; Judaism is similar to Islam in its beliefs about God. The Jew will acknowledge God as creator, but neither Jesus as God’s son, nor the Holy Spirit. And, since the 700s AD, Rabbis have abstained from reading and teaching from their own Holy Scriptures the prophesies of the Messiah (Jesus) throughout Psalms, Isaiah, and other prophets. As with Islam, the “teacher” is the ‘gatekeeper’ of the information and the religion relies heavily upon their followers being kept ignorant to a certain degree. Similarly, there are severe consequences

for any who think independently. A Jew who faces the truth is a Christian.

[From teachings from the Torah; One of the primary expressions of Jewish faith, recited twice daily in [prayer](#), is the Shema, which begins "Hear, Israel: the LORD is our God, the LORD is one". This simple statement encompasses several different ideas:

- There is only one God.
- No other being participated in the work of creation.
- God is a unity. He is a single, whole, complete indivisible entity. He cannot be divided into parts or described by attributes.
- Any attempt to ascribe attributes to God is merely man's imperfect attempt to understand the infinite.
- God is the only being to whom we should offer praise. The Shema can also be translated as "the LORD is our God, the LORD alone", meaning that no other is our God, and we should not [pray](#) to any other.]

How interesting that the Jew, who agrees that he was created in God's image, refuses to accept God's description of Himself as Father, Son and Spirit. Yet, a Jewish man may be a father, a son and he has a soul, or spirit. How can a man be able to function in these in three capacities, yet deny these of his creator, who 'made man in His image?' The Jewish man says God has but ONE of these attributes. Is this independent thinking, or delusion?

Buddhists, Confucians, atheists and agnostics acknowledge no God at all. They prefer the teachings of an "enlightened" mortal, which excludes a divine creator from the equation. However, simple logic (the very logic that these thinkers espouse) shows that the universe WAS created. Every discipline of science acknowledges that the universe is moving from an ordered state to disorder ([second law of Thermodynamics](#)). Since something cannot come from nothing, it is ludicrous to maintain that the once orderly universe is moving toward disorder, when it (as they claim) has "always existed." ([First law of Thermodynamics](#)) Yet, how can the universe be increasingly disordered ([entropy](#)) if it had no beginning state of order? And, if the universe had a beginning, from whence came that beginning? Simple science tells us that something cannot be produced by nothing.

Can such thinkers consider themselves enlightened, or independent, if they refuse any standard of intellectual integrity? In this system of agnosticism, the individual is his own gatekeeper. He prevents himself from seeking truth by blocking logic with logic.

Famous atheists, such as Alinsky, Nietzsche, Dawkins, etc. are just as expert at this gatekeeping technique. They have their ideas, models, paradigms and teachings, (darlings) and EACH uses logic to conceal the TRUTH. The singular reason these names are even noteworthy is that they have many ignorant adherents who do not seek out the truth. Yet, these famous people are front and center claiming that Christians are not capable of independent thought. They espouse some of the centuries old, most established ideals of Satanism. They will cite the 'scientific' claims of others to support their logic, but they are self-proclaimed "Independent Thinkers" who dutifully repeat age-old Satanic mantras. ["Gods are fragile things; they may be killed by a whiff of science or a dose of common sense." Richard Dawkins]

John 18: 37 "Then You are a king!" Pilate said. "You say that I am a king," Jesus answered. "For this reason, I was born and have come into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to My voice." 38a "What is truth?" Pilate asked...."

John 8:44 "You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it."

The term "Independent thinker" instantly grabs at the human ego. It aligns with our desire to be fully adult, but also feeds the sinister appetite for power and prestige. What greater achievement can an atheist/agnostic enjoy than defeating a Christian in a debate? Let's compliment this discussion with another term "critical thinker." Webster offers two definitions for 'critical' that are practical and supportive of one's quest to be a truly independent thinker.

Critical: *Exercising or involving careful judgment or judicious evaluation. Of, relating to, or being a turning point or especially important juncture.* Critical thinking involves careful evaluation and judgment especially as it relates to an important juncture. Let's see this in action....

A repeating paradigm in history is how God made sure that Israel's oppressors recognized His power and authority over all creation. Historical records In Daniel 4, King Nebuchadnezzar (the greatest human leader known, at the time) – who considered himself god - had this to say after Daniel interpreted his dream. **V: 18** **“This dream I, King Nebuchadnezzar, have seen. Now you, Belteshazzar (Daniel), declare its interpretation, since all the wise men of my kingdom are not able to make known to me the interpretation; but you are able, for the Spirit of the Holy God is in you.”**

Nebuchadnezzar had a frightening dream and called all his wise men in to interpret it; **“...magicians, enchanters, astrologers and diviners...”** This turned into a test to judge the validity of his gaggle of wise men. The king asked that his dream be interpreted, but would not reveal it. Only Daniel was successful. This was critical thinking on the king's part! Even this apostate tyrant who considered himself to be the very god of the world yielded to the realization that the God of Daniel was far greater than himself, and all the greatest wisdom in his kingdom. This is what TRUTH accomplishes! Speaking the truth is always testament to God. Like a candle in a dark room, the light of the truth illuminates every corner. **Psalm 119:30 I have chosen the way of truth; Your judgments I have laid before me. 2 Corinthians 13:8 For we can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth.**

Back to the idea of independence...God is a creator. He set things in motion. Then, He stood back and called them 'good,' because they serve as a reflection of Himself. **Colossians 1:16 For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him.**

Most agnostics who deny God's existence will venerate God's creation. They hold high the importance of life, the environment, our air and water, etc. Yet, their intellectual pursuit is neutered by their prejudices against a Holy God as creator.

This is NOT independent thinking – it is DEPENDENT thinking. It is thinking inside a box. All of their thinking is based on the initial constraint; no god. **Romans 1:25** **“Because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator...”**

This is not to say that the agnostic or atheist MUST believe in God. It is to say that their logic, which says; **“I’m intelligent, and I say there is no god. Therefore, there is no god.”** is utter foolishness. It lacks the intellectual honesty to realize that, in order to prove there is no God, one would have to BE God. (the law of non-contradiction; a thing cannot be, and not be, at the same time)

1 Corinthians 2:14 **“The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned.”**

If I was an agnostic/atheist, I would be intellectually dishonest if I did not take this scripture (above) as an intellectual challenge. I would be a liar if I could not, would not, dive into a line of research that would erase; **“...for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them...”** I would work to understand them, and to prove that I am not as this scripture claims. If I could/would not do this, I would demonstrate my own folly just as that scripture states.

Indeed, how great an agnostic/atheist might I then be if I could disprove this scripture!! But, then, many scientists and great thinkers through history have taken this challenge and come to discover the preeminence of God. What else could explain the research showing 59% of scientists believe in God (from the American Association for the Advancement of Science)?

The general pre-supposition is that science is about facts and empirical evidence while faith in God is about feelings, moral meaning, and values. This comparison is entirely false. Whether or not God exists has absolutely nothing to do with faith, feelings, or morals. Either God exists, or He does not. Science that cannot prove whether God exists using facts and empirical evidence is a false discipline. Science that does not prove/disprove God is a tool of the beholder – entirely dishonest.

Believing that God is, or is not, is equally subjective on both sides of the argument; those opposed to acknowledging God, and proponents of God's existence. Many who believe in God do so for non-factual reasons, as well. What better vehicle to come to the aid of such a dilemma than science? But, where is such research? Oh, it's there! If you're an independent thinker, can you find it on your own? Do you dare even look?

The agnostic/atheist/Jew/Muslim dare not enter such a study for fear of the outcome. I submit, also, that many who claim faith in God are equally afraid of such a study. It is a threatening question. How much more comfortable it is for adherents on both sides to ignore the painful job of objective analysis and rigorous scientific discipline? It's no wonder atheists/agnostics claim that followers of God are emotion-based; their own belief that God does not exist is equally emotion-based...devoid of disciplined analysis.

Hosea 4:6a "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge; because you have rejected knowledge..."

John 16:13 "When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come."

John 17:17 "Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth."

From the moment Adam and Eve handed their gifts of creative ability over to Satan, mortal man has had no more power over creation than to re-arrange what God has given him. No scientist can create a flower, no carpenter can make a board longer, no doctor can prevent death, no theologian can see the other side of the grave. And, no teacher can discuss the physical universe accurately without glorifying the God who created it. Likewise, no minister can speak of love, or grace, or mercy, or forgiveness without inadvertently praising the God who possesses all of those attributes. Any, and all thinking that excludes or contradicts God is imperfect.

Just as God put all the gold He's ever going to put into the earth, He has put all the knowledge that can ever be attained into the universe. We can only do our best to discover and arrange God's existing knowledge for our benefit. We cannot 'invent' anything new, because everything that exists has already been created. We can only stack the existing building blocks in different ways.

Man has landed on Mars by using absolutely NOTHING more than the elements God put into His creation at the beginning, and the physical and chemical principles that God established at creation.

A scientist was boasting that he could create life. God challenged him: "Go ahead, make something that lives."

The scientist said; "Simple, I take some dirt and some...."

"Hold on!" said God. "Make your OWN dirt!"

As mortals, we can only peel back layers of our lack of knowledge to reveal more and more of God's truth. Independent thinking can only come through the critical pursuit of truth. Thinking that is not based on truth is vain. [Psalm 85:11 Truth shall spring out of the earth, and righteousness shall look down from heaven.](#)

Lord, Jesus, how majestic is your name in all the earth!

Transform us that we may testify of your greatness! Amen