

A Sermon on Church

Sermon by Rev. Minister Angela Smith of COPE for February 12th, 2023 (and beyond)

I was meditating on what role churches play in modern times and now I'm delivering this sermon based on that individual meditation. Primitive and arguably archaic social organization involving some semblance of governance, trade, education, and hierarchical socialization on which all modern societies were established to some degree (and often a great degree) were theocracies of some sort. Churches in the US are symbolically self-governed but all people are equal and subject to the law, which recognizes and defends individual first amendment rights. Churches no longer govern the whole of society in any non-theocratic government. Trade is done in a free market and modern churches are charities that give and receive with varying degrees of graciousness either way. Some churches are more hierarchical and some more democratic in how structured. The Catholic Church is extremely hierarchical and many Pentecostal church services are akin to a free for all where anyone moved by the spirit can speak freely even if others are speaking at the same time, even the preacher. If you noticed I skipped education in the lead up to elaborating on the second sentence, good looking out.

In my view, churches in modern times provide a sense of continuity as well as historical context for understanding how modern governments evolved. The good churches, in my opinion, are the ones focused on charity and start out the seeming feral with the very basics to function in civil society. And, I believe churches provide parents of minor children with an opportunity to lead by example by going to a class every week, paying attention or at least sitting quietly, socializing with friends made in class, and even opportunities to explore public speaking, drama, art, charity/volunteering, and proper conduct for school, court, and other situations where holding your peace, waiting your turn, and showing respect even for the sake of ceremony alone is the protocol. I consider that educational and lectures/sermons, sketches, demonstrations, and/or other performance art focusing on ethical, moral, and conscientious subject matter in hopes to inspire and encourage the good educational as well, even if subject matter is delivered in a fantastical way at times in order to promote and practice truth and virtue. But, if the fantastical is used to instill fear in the ignorant in order to subjugate in accordance with the hierarchical structure of any church, I oppose that and think it should stop either by people walking away or choosing to so stop that by recognizing fallibility and error where it clearly exists.

I'm using the word "church" here loosely and ask that you feel free to associate that word with mosque, synagogue, temple, meeting house or body that promotes and practices truth and virtue regardless of storefront or cultural influences. Beyond the second paragraph, I otherwise find churches obsolete. US law requires those engaging in trade do so in good faith which means being honest and fair in dealing to avoid penalties at law. And, faith communities reinforce that standard and prepare congregants for things such as holding their peace, waiting their turn to speak, and showing respect even for the sake of ceremony alone. Some say "practice makes perfect" and some take that literally and it goes to their heads, which undermines the Golden Rule and results in utter hypocrisy.

MEDITATIVE QUESTIONS:

Do you view church as an entertainment venue? What about mega-churches that have relative and topical merchandise/"merch"?

Do you view church as an educational service? If so, what information or experiences are the most practically applicable to your daily life or secular life?

Do you view church as a charitable charity or something else?

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"And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." John 8:32 KJV Willful blindness is an abomination.

COPE accepts Feedback, critical and complimentary. Learn more at <https://www.cope.church/feedback.htm> . For the sake of keeping myself and others humble, a sense of humor is welcome on all sides.

For More About COPE and the HEAL Mission, see:

<https://www.cope.church> and <https://www.heal-online.org>