

A Sermon on the Importance of Good Humor

Sermon by Rev. Minister Angela Smith of COPE for April 30th, 2023 (and beyond)

One of the tasks of the HEAL Mission of COPE Ministries is helping victims of cults (and other human trafficking (for sex and/or labor) storefronts) process trauma and report crimes and other violations to law enforcement/appropriate regulatory bodies. For additional information on trauma caused by being victimized in such a way, please see <https://www.colleenrussellmft.com/high-demand-group-or-cult-education-a-recovery> and <https://www.cs.cmu.edu/~dst/Amway/AUS/cultism.htm>. The second link shows that a symptom of being in a cult is the loss of a sense of humor. As many of you may already know a sense of humor is like many things that can only be known through observation and experience with no material evidence. This idea is discussed further at <https://www.cope.church/manifestevidence.htm>. If someone you know has lost their sense of humor, avoid invitations to join and report evidence of crimes to the proper law enforcement body including kidnapping and fraud (theft by deceit). This isn't a joke and lives are literally lost as a result. The good news is recovery is possible and the sense of humor can be restored in time to help manage even the worst trauma. Source: <https://www.13newsnow.com/article/news/national/military-news/helping-vets-with-ptsd-through-the-power-of-comedy/291-351874787> There's hope for all of us.

The rest of this sermon is in dialogue format.

DIALOGUE

Philosopher: If there is a single Creator responsible for all that exists, what evidence is there that said Creator has a sense of humor? And, is a sense of humor evidence of God as COPE Ministries suggests or postulates at <https://www.cope.church/manifestevidence.htm> ?

#TaoFu Joker: Assume there's not and that a sense of humor is something completely different. Who said there was and is the source reliable?

Philosopher: For the sake of argument, which I believe is part of the ethos of COPE Ministries as a Wycliffite church, assume there is and answer the question.

#TaoFu Joker: The fact that you have time to consider this topic a serious inquiry is the evidence that God has a sense of humor, as does my response.

Philosopher: Potentially, I was thinking more of material evidence. I'm seeking material evidence of abstract concepts or entities, specifically evidence of intelligent design and a sense of humor.

#TaoFu Joker: One cannot prove the existence of immaterial concepts and abstract ideas. However, one can observe examples of humor, name and identify said examples, and come to know all humor including one's own sense of humor.

Philosopher: How does that prove the existence of a single Creator or of God?

#TaoFu Joker: “Humans share more than 50 percent of their genetic information with plants and animals in general. They share about 80 percent with cows, 61 percent with bugs such as fruit flies. You'll even find human DNA in a banana – about 60 percent!”
Source: <https://sciencing.com/animals-share-human-dna-sequences-8628167.html> While that doesn't prove intelligent design per se, it does suggest all living things are related. I lean towards natural defenses including the immune system being evidence of intelligent design. We're all designed to protect life, at least our own. A human being sharing 60% of their DNA with a banana is arguably evidence of a sense of humor.

Philosopher: I'm 60% banana?

#TaoFu Joker: And, arguably 82% platypus. Source: <https://www.nytimes.com/2008/05/08/science/08platypus.html#:~:text=The%20platypus%20shares%2082%20percent,%2C%20dog%2C%20opossum%20and%20chicken.> Also, about 96% bat. Source: [https://www.nature.com/articles/s41586-020-2486-3#:~:text=4a%2C%20Supplementary%20Note%205.1\),shared%20between%20bats%20and%20humans](https://www.nature.com/articles/s41586-020-2486-3#:~:text=4a%2C%20Supplementary%20Note%205.1),shared%20between%20bats%20and%20humans)).

Philosopher: That explains COVID.

#TaoFu Joker: How is that funny?

END DIALOGUE

FINAL THOUGHT: The delusion of grandeur that leads any individual human being to believe they could be omniscient, and thereby equal to any omniscient being whether referred to as God or Creator, is evident in the difference between objective curiosity and subjective dogmatic adherence. The philosopher is just philosophizing, not establishing dogma. And, the philosopher is not making any arguments, just looking for more evidence for claims others make or have made. I grew up believing in one Creator that is God and that all that exists is God's creation. As a result, I felt God created an entire world to explore and learn about that is always changing to some degree with extinctions and new species being discovered every year where you can learn more about God by learning about God's creation. I still feel that way. When someone tells me I need to shut out God's creation and only listen to and obey them, I call foul. Why would I choose to sequester myself in a controlled environment with a megalomaniac at the helm rather than explore God's creation freely? If you think that's what God wants, you've never created anything worth sharing. This year I experimented with ingredients and designed a moist delicious fudge brownie cookie that holds like a cookie but gives the full fudge brownie experience. Molasses is the secret and not much of one. Everyone I've shared them with is happy to have had the experience of eating them. I know they are worth sharing and such has been confirmed by those with whom I've so shared. If someone sought to cut me and/or the rest of the world off from that experience, I'd dissent heartily. And, because I think that, I think I can relate to a Creator and how one would feel if

someone was prevented from even considering the possibility that such a cookie or creation could exist, let alone wonder who or what was behind it. If someday someone makes you a great fudge brownie cookie and no one knows where the recipe came from, it might be mine. I'm okay if you don't know it's mine because it could be someone else's recipe, I still hope you enjoy it. And, if it's mine, you will for sure unless unable to partake due to any allergies to the ingredients. As long as no one is unjustly nor unjustifiably harmed, I hope everyone shares the joy even if they can't partake. I believe God may feel similarly.

But, the microcosm of my fudge brownie cookie recipe and experience to the macrocosm of the Creator of all that exists, puts me in awe while recognizing in full context everything and everyone is mostly good even though some people have allergies which limits their experience and enjoyment. However, such does result in a variety of perspectives and challenges which make life more interesting if not always more enjoyable. The material world offers a lot to work with and facilitates things like my fudge brownie cookies. I appreciate that and thank all who make them possible.

In addition, every living plant, human, and nonhuman species eats and is subject to being eaten. Plants kill intentionally both defensively and sometimes for food. "Poisonous plants are plants that produce toxins that deter herbivores from consuming them. Plants cannot move to escape their predators, so they must have other means of protecting themselves from herbivorous animals. Some plants have physical defenses such as thorns, spines and prickles, but by far the most common type of protection is chemical. Over millennia, through the process of natural selection, plants have evolved the means to produce a vast and complicated array of chemical compounds in order to deter herbivores. Tannin, for example, is a defensive compound that emerged relatively early in the evolutionary history of plants, while more complex molecules such as polyacetylenes are found in younger groups of plants such as the Asterales. Many of the known plant defense compounds primarily defend against consumption by insects, though other animals, including humans, that consume such plants may also experience negative effects, ranging from mild discomfort to death." Source: [https://chem.libretexts.org/Bookshelves/Introductory_Chemistry/Chemistry_for_Changing_Times_\(Hill_and_McCreary\)/22%3A_Poisons/22.01%3A_Natural_Poisons_and_Food_Poisoning](https://chem.libretexts.org/Bookshelves/Introductory_Chemistry/Chemistry_for_Changing_Times_(Hill_and_McCreary)/22%3A_Poisons/22.01%3A_Natural_Poisons_and_Food_Poisoning) And, sometimes when plants kill nearby plants they find threatening, the plants they kill become fertilizer that feeds the surviving plant. "As leaves decompose, they act as a natural fertilizer for your lawn, putting nutrients — like carbon, nitrogen, and phosphorus — back into the soil." Source: <https://why.org/articles/fallen-leaves-yard-fertilizer-winter/> . And, of course there are carnivorous plants that even eat some mammals. The Tropical Pitcher Plant eats rodents and birds. Source: <https://www.popsoci.com/environment/article/2009-08/newly-discovered-plant-species-eats-rats-named-after-famous-naturalist/> So, all living things have a will to live and evolve defenses against predators and/or any perceived threats. Killing, self-defense, eating and being potentially eaten are universal truths for all living things. Somewhat surprisingly, mosquitoes kill over 700,000 people per year, which is more than any other nonhuman animal annually. Source:

<https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/health/2023/02/02/what-animal-kills-most-humans/7878440001/>

“A Nile crocodile named Gustave has been terrorizing residents around Burundi’s Ruzizi River and the northern shores of Lake Tanganyika since the 1980s. It is believed to have killed more than 300 people and was the subject of a 2004 PBS documentary. Several unsuccessful attempts have been made to capture the killer croc, believed to be more than 18 feet long. Gustave was last sighted in 2015.” Source: <https://www.britannica.com/story/6-real-life-man-eating-animals> It’s amazing how some people claim to love and embrace nature while simultaneously denouncing its lack of civility or domestication while claiming without unbridled freedom death is preferable. I find such a contradictory position to be untenable and unreasonable as well as self-negating in full context. I find moderation, reasonably weighing all risks and benefits of any choices, and respect for the possibility I might be eaten by Gustave if I ever take a tour of the Nile, aligned with reality. I would find it highly hypocritical if any living thing that eats anything ever tried to stop me from eating a well-balanced diet while promoting inequality or extinction with plans to convert or destroy any who do not share their dietary regimen regardless of species. Professor Jeff McMahan of Rutgers University said "I am therefore inclined to embrace the heretical conclusion that we have reason to desire the extinction of all carnivorous species." Source: <https://archive.nytimes.com/opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2010/09/19/the-meat-eaters/> When some call for extermination of the majority of species on the planet, because only 32% are herbivores and so they are the minority in a universal sense, I find that alarming and hateful. Source: <https://www.science.org/content/article/world-s-first-animal-was-probably-carnivore> But, if only plants are food, will they evolve better defenses and poison the herbivores that exterminated everyone they couldn’t convert? I believe God is more reasonable, tolerant and pro-Life than that and I hope you are too. Amen.

#TaoFu Joker says: I think that’s fair even if you don’t think it’s funny. She used to be vegan because she loves all creatures great and small.

Philosopher: Then she couldn’t possibly want 68% to go extinct.

I said the dialogue portion had ended and I meant it. Amen is a closing.

#TaoFu Joker says: Amen.

Philosopher: Isn’t the final thought part of the dialogue? The introductory paragraph said the rest of the sermon was in dialogue. The final thought wasn’t part of the dialogue? But it came after "END DIALOGUE" which ended the sermon per the introduction. So, the final thought is more like a post-script and not part of the sermon?

#TaoFu Joker says: That’s why I commented at the end of the final thought. But, then the "END DIALOGUE" seems erroneous. I’m just going to say "Amen" again. Amen.

For those interested in starting #TaoFu Self-Defense Exercises, please see <https://www.cope.church/taofu.htm> and begin at any time.

There are opportunities to send messages, receive mystery bonus blessings, and more with or without donating available now on our "Pass the Basket" page at <https://www.cope.church/basket.htm> . Thank You.

"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, see:

<https://www.cope.church>