

A Sermon on “FEAR OF THE UNKNOWN?” Sermon Originally Delivered 2/16/20
Sermon by Rev. Angela Smith of COPE for October 16th, 2022 (and beyond)

For this week’s sermon, I’m critically reviewing the sermon "FEAR OF THE UNKNOWN” originally delivered February 16th, 2020 and provided in full below this sermon. The title is appropriate given the body and capitalization of titles is common enough so I don’t feel the title is "yelling" by being capitalized. I’m a minister when it comes to mission services and a reverend when it comes to church services. But, I am not fond of labels and consider everyone equal so feel either title is acceptable depending on context.

I agree with the first sentence of the first paragraph. As far as the question “What do you know about yourself and the world around you?”, it must be rhetorical because it would honestly take too long for anyone to fully answer that question. If asked that, I might respond with “Should I start with fruit? I enjoy seedless grapes, apples, strawberries, pineapple, avocado, bananas, oranges, and a lot more. Do you want me to keep listing fruits I like? I am allergic to plums, peaches, cherries, and apricots. I avoid them. The fruits aren’t a part of me until arguably after I eat them, but a part of the world around me before I eat them. I like lemon too, but usually sweetened or as a flavor component of another dish like seafood or something.” One may consider that question rhetorical or meditative because expecting a complete answer would be absurd. The second question may be difficult for people who don’t know the difference between objective and subjective reasoning. But, there are ways to look things up when you are reading something you don’t understand so you can understand it. And, I’m open to feedback and will respond to questions helpfully and patiently more often than not. Whether either question is rhetorical or meditative is up to the individual. How I would answer the second question is the rest of the first paragraph of that sermon.

I think the second paragraph should be eliminated or revised. I’d take out everything after the first sentence. I don’t like how it is written after the first sentence. The reason is it is too personal and too vague at the same time. I don’t believe it is necessary to make the points that were and/or are the purpose of that sermon.

I love the third paragraph. But, I feel it has strayed from the sermon title and topic to some degree. And, I have the same issue with the fourth paragraph. However, I’m doing the review piece-meal and not as a whole. It is possible once I’ve read through the whole sermon again, that this paragraph will be eliminated or become something to criticize or review later.

The issue with the fifth paragraph is that it is too long and really topic-adjacent but arguably not on topic. Where is the discussion of the “fear of the unknown”? There is coverage of fear and fearful situations. There is coverage of different responses to said situations. But, it applies to known real world threats or harms, though it is possible some people reading the sermon did not know those threats existed in the world before reading the sermon. If assuming the audience is that ignorant, then some of the

commentary is really too academic in content, and, if assuming they already know, the paragraph is off-topic.

I'm wondering who would be offended and believe the first statement of the 6th paragraph is a Straw Man in which the reader/audience has been accused of holding or potentially holding a position no one has claimed to hold. This does lend to a conversational writing style and I admit that is part of my style. But, I imagine the Straw Man position may result in dismissal of the entire sermon by anyone who doesn't hold the position alleged by or through employment of the Straw Man for conversational fluidity even though a monologue.

And, the 6th and final paragraph concludes with reference to the topic and summarizes a potential development of it that didn't appear to manifest in the rest of the sermon. Overall I think the subject may have been covered better in the May 3rd, 2020 sermon archived and available here: <https://www.cope.church/superstition.pdf> . I may critically review that one at some point in the future.

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 and the HEAL Mission, see:

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

END SERMON

FEAR OF THE UNKNOWN?

Sermon by Minister Angela Smith of COPE for February 16th, 2020 (and beyond)

Ignorance is the basis of all unreasonable and irrational fears. What do you know about yourself and the world around you? How honest are you and how objective in your reasoning? God is the Absolute Truth and the further anyone strays through dishonesty and deception, the further removed from God to a point they become unrecognizable. The Church Of Philosophical Exploration is a House of God.

In contemplating various perspectives and the abstract perfect versions of any intangible quality (such as a vice or virtue), I meditated on oppression and prayed for guidance on how to best address oppression. And, I believe ending oppression for me starts with me and when I am not oppressive I am leading by example and avoiding hypocrisy where I oppose oppression. I was thinking of economic disparity while understanding history and having many conversations with people from every economic position. And, I've dined with the homeless as a volunteer at a soup kitchen and with the affluent at 5 star restaurants. I listen.

What if I had nothing but my body, my mind, my soul (TRUTH & VIRTUE), and the clothes on my back, shoes on my feet, and no other resources? And, I saw other people in civilization had abundant resources beyond what I reasonably would imagine ever acquiring? How did they acquire the abundant resources? Are there rules for doing so and have the rules (a.k.a. laws) evolved over time to help keep the peace for the sake of civilization which includes making chattel slavery illegal? Can I reject civilization and the rules of society while benefiting from the abundance civilization and said rules facilitate without being a hypocrite or oppressive in my own right? I believe the answer to the last question is "No". And, this is why I'm a Christian Church. I am in full agreement with Jesus Christ that hypocrisy is the biggest problem then and now.

So, for civilized society, those who appear to be feral humans to some degree that reject civilized society's rules while assuming authority to dictate how the abundant resources are distributed or simply redistributing without authority to do so are hypocritical because you are either an anarchist and totally self-reliant with full commitment to rejecting civilized society or a Cain/Lucifer/Narcissist that wishes to oppress established civilization solely for personal gain without offering anything but your satisfaction in exchange. And, if an anarchist and totally self-reliant, not relying on charitable assistance and refusing any if totally committed. However, if a total self-reliant anarchist living amongst those with established rules and law enforcement, you will find if you violate those rules in a given jurisdiction like incompetent or feral nonhuman animals, you may be destroyed by death or institutionalization. So, regardless, it is best to stay committed to Truth and Virtue (a.k.a. GOD) regardless of politics or economic status.

This may be a good time to explain how #TaoFu (Jesus and The Way as a Defense Strategy) using the Socratic Method (which I believe should perhaps be known as the Platonic Method as I hypothesize that Socrates was an artful or creative construct by Plato and perhaps never actually existed beyond Plato's concepts of Socrates as a teaching tool and opinion about the appropriate way to handle someone who causes children to sin or corrupts youth) may help you think about issues more objectively in terms of seeing everyone as equal to yourself. So, outside of economic variables and considering yourself as equal to everyone else and vice versa, what general rules (a.k.a. laws) would you like to universally apply in how people govern ourselves collectively and individually? If you said "no rules should apply to anyone", then it's alright with you if I rape and murder you and your whole family because there are no rules. Now, considering that fact, think about what belongs to you as solely being your mind, body, soul, and clothes on your back (shoes on feet included). I'm barefoot and need shoes, you

look to be the same size, should I take your shoes if I need them and leave you barefoot? What's your initial response to that? Did you think "I'd like to see you try and I'll fight you for it?" Did you think, "If I don't protest and give them without actually verbally agreeing to your taking my shoes, can I still report it as theft to the authorities if I felt intimidated or coerced into giving them to you or parting with my shoes?" Did you think, "That's my only pair of shoes and I don't see why I should have to go barefoot just because you want to trade places with me in some way by taking my shoes?" Now, without any laws or rules at all, likely coming down to "might makes right" in all such scenarios and whomever has the most brute force wins. Is that the world you'd prefer to the one with a human and therefore fallible justice system to deal with such situations? If not, then you understand even where economic variables are a factor that you might prefer having shoes yourself and that the person who wants them ask where to get their own rather than demand or forcibly take your shoes, right? And, if they approached you demanding or threatening to force you to give them your shoes you'd feel threatened and perhaps adopt a flight or fight posture in response to the perceived threat, right? So, where they might ask where you got them or how to get them too, you might provide options including those listed at <http://www.churchofphilosophicalexploration.church/resources.htm> as a place to get a pair of shoes rather than take your only pair from you leaving you barefoot. But, some may feel since you know where to get them you should just go get another pair and understand it is more convenient for them if you just give them your pair of shoes. And, if you feel that's unreasonable, then you understand how from some perspectives #TaoFu self-examination using the Socratic/Platonic Method to avoid hypocrisy can be useful and why #TaoFu is a predominant part of my church's philosophy and religious practice.

Now, before you get offended at all, please understand ignorance can be overcome. For best results, start with math and the scientific method for determining what is reasonably true versus what is reasonably false when objectively considered. The closer you are to the Absolute Truth, the closer you are to GOD. And, overcoming ignorance is the best way to address any fear of the unknown. This requires a willingness to learn and consider multiple sources of information while exercising due diligence to fact check so you make the best informed decisions for life. And, it totally sucks that any trust issues exist between people that prevent a rising tide that lifts all proverbial sails. But, we all have to be honest (including intellectually honest) if we want to overcome fear of the unknown because as long as some are deceiving others won't trust and progress will be stymied. So, overcoming fear of the unknown begins with your total honesty (including intellectual honesty) and commitment to overcome ignorance through diligent study and cross-referencing, fact checking, and exercise of honest reason in service of the Absolute Truth (a.k.a. GOD).

For more about COPE Ministries, see:
<http://www.churchofphilosophicalexploration.church>