

# Where Is The Church?

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The Church comprises four activities. The Church, therefore, may be identified by the presence of these four activities. They are:

**Faith**

**Prayer**

**Service**

**Evangelism**

Where these activities occur, there is The Church.

## **Section I**

The manners in which The Church carries out these activities evolve through time and place. They are not constants at all times and places. Doing them creates circumstances of both time and place.

### **Evangelism**

Thus, we may observe that the activity of Evangelism - spreading the Word that Jesus is the Christ, the New Being, the Power and Presence of God, for all times and places - reached its plenary fulfillment among humanity during the years as the 19th Century turned into the 20th. By then, all heard the Good News. The Church's responsibility to evangelize humanity was successfully discharged. Organized Evangelism by The Church has been an unnecessary and therefore a harmful activity since those years.

Each of the Five Great Faiths, including Islam, shares the same status with respect to its Evangelism. Evangelism *per se*, by any Faith, is unnecessary

and therefore harmful. The patent violence of Islamic "Evangelism" - flying aircraft into buildings, murdering leaders, terrorizing populations - surely makes this point. The patent violence of Hindu "Evangelism" and the latent/patent violence of Christian, Buddhist and Zoroastrian "Evangelism" also indicate the universal non-necessity and therefore harmfulness of organized Evangelism by representatives of any Faith.

## Service

Again, we may observe that the activity of Service — providing comfort and required tangible assistance to those overwhelmed by circumstances beyond their control, regardless of their profession of Faith — reached its plenary fulfillment among humanity by the second half of the 20th Century. By then, inspired by the clear need for and success of Service by The Church - and by representatives of the other Great Faiths - all governments accepted responsibility for the welfare of their citizens, either in fact or by being held to that responsibility by the community of nations.

With respect to Service, The Church "turned itself inside out," deliberately constituting its Service mission, structures and power as policies, branches and agencies of governments worldwide. This achievement must be regarded with reverence and gratitude.

It was extensive, reaching every aspect of culture and every grouping of society. Through Chancellor Bismarck working conditions, wages and long-term financial protections for laborers became normative. Through President Lincoln, the abolition of slavery and the integrity of nations became normative. Through Horace Mann common education for all citizens became normative. Through the Founding Fathers of the United States of America and Chief Justice John Marshall, the wisdom and practice of representative government through three separate but equal branches became normative. Through the great existential philosophers, to include Marx, Freud, Nietzsche, Kierkegaard, Heidegger, Sartre,

Bergson and, quintessentially, Paul Tillich, the polarity of Freedom and Destiny was forever instilled in the consciousness of humanity so that resistance to any "ism" – that is, any idolatry, any taking of non-ultimates for ultimate, any demonic allegiance - became normative. Through the German Army, and later through the United States Army, the principle of full-range, coordinated operation, military and civilian, through a General Staff became normative.

Finally, let us remark two intellectual norms of culture that The Church made normative for humanity. One is the Scientific Method, which though limited in applicability and therefore usefulness, nonetheless guarantees two requirements of culture: (1) the production of goods and services that occasion prosperity and peace, and (2) the suppression of delusion and therefore demagoguery, which degrade prosperity and peace.

The other – and, it should be emphasized, a consequence specifically of Protestant Christianity – is the opening of Sacred Scripture to Historical Criticism with the consequence, among several, that, in the words of Paul Tillich, "The certitude of faith does not imply certainty about questions of historical research." <sup>1</sup>

From [Huss](#) through [Luther](#) and [Reimarus](#) to [Bultmann](#), no other Faith, to include Roman Catholic Christianity, has dared to expose Sacred Scripture to historical criticism excepting Protestant Christianity. As a result, among nations that developed from the Service of The Church, only those of mainly Protestant descent have been able to participate generally in the creative developments of civilization. These nations have avoided isolation into unresponsive and therefore uncreative structures such as latently characterize Roman Catholic and "Fundamental" Christianity and patently characterize Islamic and Hindu "Fundamentalism."

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<sup>1</sup> [Systematic Theology, Vol. II, p. 108, 1957, University of Chicago Press.](#)

The courage to encourage examination to run its course stands in Faith in the sovereign benignity of Truth, which is God. Through the Service of Protestant Divines, this courage, an essential foundation of culture, became normative worldwide.

These are a few examples of the extent of the achievement of The Church in transforming its Service responsibility into the lineaments of national life and the expectation of civilization as cultured living. The Church "turned itself inside out" with respect to its Service responsibility, reconstituting that responsibility as the policies and agencies of governments, the activities of non-governmental organization and philanthropic foundations, and the great benefactions of universal education and citizen-driven industry and commerce.

The Church's Service responsibility was successfully discharged by about the time of the assassination of President John F. Kennedy. Organized Service by The Church has been unnecessary and therefore harmful since that time.

### **Précis Of Section I**

Evangelism and Service now comprise the silent work of the adherent of each Faith. Using these two activities as indicators of the presence of The Church is possible only if one is aware that the adherent whose silent work is seen as Evangelism or Service is a Christian. Evangelism and Service are the silent warp and woof of everyday life, not something specially organized. "Duty is God, Work is Worship" [[Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba](#)] is the watchword and call-sign of the new world order, which is The Church "turned inside out."

Each of the Five Great Faiths, including Islam, shares the same status with respect to its Service responsibility. Organized Service, by any Faith, is unnecessary and therefore harmful. All Service, worldwide, is organized

now by governments, non-governmental organizations, philanthropic foundations and educational and industrial/commercial structures.

## Section II

What about Prayer and Faith? What activities of Prayer and Faith indicate the presence of The Church? And are these activities of The Church fulfilled, as are Evangelism and Service? Are there valid continuing organized activities of Prayer and Faith that indicate the presence of The Church? Are organized Prayer and Faith unnecessary and therefore harmful, either to Christians or to nations or to culture or humanity generally?

### Faith

Let us treat of Faith first since it is the prius of religious activity at all and so from an examination of it we may ascertain the answer to the question of Prayer.

Faith is the evidence of itself. Faith does not derive from conclusions or arguments or deductions or reasoning or logic or proofs, although each of these important labors occurs within the orbit of Faith. But they neither drive nor verify Faith. They occur because of Faith, not as a prelude to Faith, nor as a pretext or condition of Faith. Faith is its own driver and its own verification, its own pretext and its own condition. It is immediate (not mediated by conclusions or arguments, etc.) and decisive (*de + scission* = cutting away non-germane possibilities/alternatives) and it is both evidence of the reuniting of essential man and existential man and the prius of that reuniting. Faith, therefore, is both the structure and the power of religion (*re + ligare* = to bind back together). Faith also is the evidence of the Divine Presence, the *Parousia*.

There is one Religion, the Religion of Love. There are Five Great Faiths, measured by number of adherents and significance in the development of culture, and eleven lesser Faiths, again, measured by number of adherents and significance in the development of culture. The Five Great Faiths are Hinduism, Buddhism, Zoroastrianism, Islam and Christianity. The essence of every Faith is the practice of love, that is, the practice of the one Religion that is common to humanity. Faith is the prius of the practice of love, the prius of Religion.

Thus, Faith is a constant activity of The Church and as such continuously indicates the presence of The Church. The Church is present wherever Faith is present. If the Faith is Hindu or Buddhist or Islamic or Zoroastrian, The Church is present where that Faith is. Wherever love is, The Church is. Wherever The Church is, love is.

The Church is never corrupt because love and Faith are never corrupt. By definition, The Church, love and Faith represent the reuniting of essential man and existential man through the initiative of Grace. Corruption is excluded from that reunion.

Since it is a reuniting of what has been estranged, Faith is by definition organized. It is indeed the ultimate organization since Faith establishes the harmony of Divine Life in the midst of the exigencies of spatial-temporal existence, that is, in the midst of the world. Harmony is the definition of organization because it unites in itself the static, the dynamic and the entropic qualities of spatial-temporal existence.

Faith does not have to be organized. Faith is the prius and the content of organization. It is power with structure that is creative and therefore produces peace, prosperity and happiness. Faith is the prius of culture and of civilization generally. In the absence of Faith, social structures are brutish, tyrannical and violent, that is, destructive.

Thus, the purpose of Faith is always fulfilled and always being fulfilled. There is never a time or a place where Faith is not fulfilled — it fulfills itself from itself — nor is there ever a time or place where Faith is not concatenating its own fulfillment — and therefore humanity's.

## Prayer

Now let us treat of Prayer. Prayer indicates religious activity *per se*, of all kinds. The condition of Prayer is Faith. Outside Faith there can be no Prayer, just as outside Faith there could be no Service or Evangelism. Even Service conducted by governments, non-governmental organizations, philanthropic foundations and educational and industrial/commercial structures arises in Faith, induce by Grace, in the transitory nature of estrangement and the permanent nature of unification.

Prayer is a constant and necessary activity of The Church and constitutes evidence of the presence of The Church.

The question therefore is not whether Prayer is a necessary organized activity of The Church. It is and always will be. The question is, what form does Prayer take in The Church that (1) has fulfilled its Evangelical and Service responsibilities and (2) admits Faith as articulated by, at the least, the Five Great Faiths as the Faith of The Church?

In this situation Prayer cannot be denominational. It must from the start presume the situation just described, that the Faith of The Church comprises the Faiths of each of the Five Great Faiths. Since there is one God and one Religion, there can be necessarily only one Faith, although, from the presence of the Five Great Faiths and the existence of eleven lesser Faiths, we are aware that the one Faith can be articulated as several definite systems of thought and culture.

This is the real meaning of the cliché, “all paths lead to the same place,” which on its face is not a true statement. The truth is that each path that derives from Faith leads to Faith. To make of Faith anything sequential is to misrepresent its nature, which is tautological if viewed through the rubrics of logic. Faith cannot be induced or confirmed by anything other than itself. Like Truth, Faith has no second, nothing that can understand it, nothing by which it can be measured – other than itself.

## **Précis Of Section II**

So if Prayer cannot be denominated, it must be unified. What structure of organization does that? The form of organized Prayer now is The Prayer Hall. The watchword is this: One Prayer Hall for each neighborhood, one home for all the Faiths.

Local taste, talent and materials will determine specifics, but here is a basic plan with some design details:

The Prayer Hall is a 3-dimensional [Sarva Dharma Symbol](#), domed at the center and with a half-dome over each of the five alcoves. The interior could include a central sunken garden with running water. Topped by a lotus bud with flame emerging at its center, a candle-shaped structure could rise from the middle of the garden. The alcoves could be adorned, following the order of the [Sarva Dharma Symbol](#), with the theology, iconography and piety unique to each of the Five Great Faiths.

## **Postscript**

The Five Great Faiths symbolize the one Faith that reunites essential and existential man and the one Religion of Love. In actuality, each person has their own unique Faith, their own religion, and rightly so. There are as many Faiths and religions as there are minds. The Five Great Faiths serve humanity by, among other things, providing structural and operational

markers that facilitate discrimination between Faith, including Faith uniquely held by individuals, and demonic faith, which is asserted to be valid by certain personalities and combinations. If Faith unique to a group or an individual does not derive from one of the Five Great Faiths – or to a lesser extent from one of the eleven lesser Faiths – it is a demonic faith rather than Faith and must be rejected as destructive to humanity. Demonic faiths are man-made and include Santeria, Masonry, Voodoo, Theosophy, Rasta, Kawaida/Kwanzaa, Satanism and all other structures based on the quest for individual power. Faith is induced by and therefore is the Power of Being, which is spoken of symbolically as the Power of God.

A.M.D.G.