A Tragic Beauty?

Quakerism, Christian Tradition, and Secular Misconceptions:

A Christian's Thoughts on the Political Philosophy of Ihsan

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In his elegant and insightful book Muqtedar Khan admonishes Muslims to do beautiful things. It is an arresting call in a book itself beautiful in style, clarity, and boldness of vision for a better world. Professor Khan's quest for beauty in a specific Muslim context: the beauty that arises when actions are done with the inescapable sense that God sees all one does – or, *Ihsan*. But what exactly do the commands of God require of those who, knowing He is watching, set themselves the task of scrupulously doing His will?

Khan's claim is that God wishes that Muslims should act in what he sees as the best traditions of Sufi Islam. Khan also argues that a broad embrace of the best in Sufism can enable contemporary Islam to avoid on one hand excessive religious legalism, and on another the siren song of contemporary secularism, understood as the erosion of attachment to the central tenets of Islam itself. Hence, Khan writes: "the high road" of *Ihsan* repudiates "harshness, intolerance, compulsion and violence." Yet it also refuses to counsel an "abandonment of the faith at the level of [personal] agency."[1]

Concretely, the path between legalism and secularism lies through the human heart. In Khan's rendering, *Ihsan* seeks "love over law, process over structure" and "virtue" over "self-assertion."[2] As such, a culture of *Ihsan* will "nurture compassion, mercy and love in societies."[3]

Khan's task is to highlight that such a tradition exists within Islam, to revivify its adherence, and to encourage its adoption not simply as an individual spiritual goal but as a guide for political philosophy in Muslim-majority nations. To do so, Khan's work traces, in turn, "the loss of *Ihsan*" occasioned by the expansion of rigorist extremism; the adoption of an equally distorted conception of Islam reducing faith to an "identity" bereft of spiritual depth, a hollow self-definition serviceable mostly as a vehicle for political mobilization, and, in its concluding section, an exegesis of *Ihsan* that celebrates it not simply as a path to personal spiritual purity – as many across Muslim history have – but as a blueprint for good governance in our contemporary, broken world. *Ihsan* as a political program can help to heal the wounded world in part by giving to states that "forcibly implement divine law" no sanction.[4]

Khan's bold vision, I believe, can benefit from a comparative religious studies perspective. In this regard, I think it is helpful to note the similarities between Sufism in Islam and Quakerism in Christianity. Quakers also arose against both proponents of a legalistic view of the faith and those who were espousing a kind of de-Christianization, and thus a kind of secularization. Additionally, the Quaker endeavor aligns well with that of the great Sufi mystics: a religion of what they call "the inner light," which ensures possession of religious truth while inspiring an ethic of loving service. Further, as with Khan's proposal so too with Quakerism: the internal guide is not simply the soul's sourcebook for spiritual strength but is a blueprint for social and political reform – a template for "good governance."

Can we gain some insights from Quakerism as applicable to Khan's important book? If we look at this question from the view of a friendly outsider to Islam, as I am, I think we can see in the history of Quakerism a trajectory which might beset Khan's noble enterprise – and discomfit his beautiful project. I present, in what follows, a sincere measure of external advice.

The Pre-history of Quakerism: The Traditional Christian View

The main thrust of Christianity understood as a body of theological truths stakes its claim on individuals "called to freedom."[5] Indeed, properly grasped, freedom suffuses Christianity through the concepts of creation, covenant, and conscience. As to creation, only God is sacred--not the moons, planets, or states that populate the created order. Due to the centrality of creation, neither the world nor any entity within it is permanent or necessary, as the whole universe is the free act of the creator's will. God, in turn, values the free will of created men and women – individuals made in the image of his own creative nature.[6] Free choice also radiates from the biblical notion of covenant: God directly asks men to act freely as He Himself freely created. Indeed, does God through leaders like Joshua – "if serving the LORD seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve"[7] – not ask us to *choose*?

And this choice cannot be coerced. As Jesus relates, "The kings of

the gentiles lord it over them, but it shall not be so among you."[8] The highly influential Gregory of Nyssa relates Christ's point as follows: "Some are saying that God if he wanted could by force bring even the disinclined to accept the message. But then where would free choice be? Where their virtue? Where their praise for having succeeded? To be brought around [by force] to the purpose of another's will belongs only to creatures without a soul or rational mind."[9] Or, as Lactantius, theologian to the Emperor Constantine, asserts: "Nothing is as much based on free will as religion, which, if the mind of the worshipper is disinclined to it, is already blown away and becomes nothing."[10]

Lastly, as to conscience, each person is gifted with an innate recognition, beyond the compulsion of external forces, of what is right, and a command to follow it – what Paul speaks of as an inner law "bearing witness."[11] These concepts shaped not only the early church but remained relevant, in an important sense, throughout Christendom. They are found, for example, in the writings of Aquinas, for whom conscience binds – even when one's conscience leads to an

objective error. This means, for Aquinas, that if there is something that in good conscience one believes one cannot do – even were the Catholic Church to command it – one could not do it without committing a sin.[12] Godfrey of Fontaines, a master at the University of Paris in the decades following Aquinas, echoes this point: "One sins more gravely in violating one's conscience – even if it is in error – than acting in accord with it."[13] Even the most powerful pope of the High Middle Ages, Pope Innocent III, concurred stating that "whatever is done against one's conscience leads to hell" – a statement affirmed at the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215.[14]

At the same time, personal freedom for the Christian is to be guided by divinely instituted authority. For Christ has not left his followers orphaned[15] but has given them "the Spirit of truth" who "will guide into all truth."[16] For the vast majority of Christians before the Reformation, this great divine gift of authoritative guidance through the Holy Spirit is found in the apostles and their successors, with an emphasis either on Petrine succession or the collegium of

bishops. In fact, even among the great medieval heresies we also see a similar respect for establishment. The Cathars, for instance, held to their own counter-hierarchy of senior teachers.[17] The idea of religious hierarchy survives even after the Reformation, as in Calvin's vision of authoritative guidance supplied to the faithful by the leaders of a righteous and godly city (as in Calvin's own Geneva).

Given what is seen as the divine gift of authoritative insight on the Christian message, the core Christian concept of conscience, which one must always be free to follow, has usually taken a particular hue. As Robert Lewis Wilken remarks, "appeal to conscience is not a simple allowance for private judgment," but is rather an inner feeling of "obedience to the voice of God revealed in scripture and handed down" through established structures.[18] Hence, Aquinas, who as we saw says one's good conscience must ultimately be followed, also declares that one's conscience is most in a position to be good – and so most in the condition to issue binding judgment – only if the individual has "taken care to form your conscience as well as you can"; this for Christians means only if one has immersed oneself in the teachings of Bible and the

traditions of the Church. Likewise, non-Christians must in their own way fully trust their conscience only if it is informed by an impartial reception to the best guidance individuals can acquire.

Indeed, in Catholicism, refusal to follow one's conscience can lead to hell if one has received the divine teachings flowing from *Ecclesia Mater* with an open mind. Eastern Orthodox theologians give voice to this long-standing view by maintaining that conscience, in its truest sense, is "the internalization of th[e] voice of Christ through the Church," since in its fullest substance, conscience is "essentially ecclesiastical." In turn, "Depending on the ecclesial degree reached by conscience, one can talk about a warranty that Christ truly speaks in the depths of our hearts."[19]

So, yes, the conscience is free and must be followed, but the faithful should shape their consciences in accord with the protective *tendance* of God-given religious authority. In fact, it bears emphasizing that the traditional view of religious elect sees it as a great gift of divine *caritas*. As a loving Father, the creator has deeded to his children the

reality of good counsel – empowering them to avoid the misuse of personal freedom. Indeed, both the ease and the consequence of such misuse of liberty can be shattering, especially for those compellingly exposed to the Christian truth. For error abounds and can readily tempt the faithful into a poor discharge of their personal freedom. Hence, in the New Testament we read, "Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves."[20] Also: "Know that after I leave, savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock. Even from your own number men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them. So be on your guard!"[21] Similar messages are found in First Timothy[22] and Second Peter.[23]

Conscience, therefore, is free and must be heeded, but "stay awake!"[24] and "if anyone has ears to hear, let them hear" the guidance God has gifted his followers through the blessing of religious authority.[25] In addition, more often than not, in Christian thought the state has been seen as a surrogate force for the true confession. To be sure, inherent in Christianity is the superiority of the church, however

defined, to the political state – a stand, nonetheless, that does not counsel anarchism since as Paul instructs, the state when not hostile to the faith must be seen as a force for effecting the basic desires of God for his creation to sustain itself in peace and commodious order.[26]

However, given the dangers facing believers owing to the seductive ease of error, it should strike one as unsurprising that a great tradition in Christian thought holds that if the state can assist the body of true believers, it is appropriate for the state to do so. Hence, although Locke could write in his *Letter Concerning Toleration*, "He jumbles heaven and earth together, the things most remote and opposite, who mixes the two societies [of church and state],"[27] England remains to this day quite "jumbled," with guaranteed seats in the House of Lords for high-ranking Anglican bishops to ensure a Christian voice informs governmental affairs. Lutheranism, too, sought to embed itself by force of law, as did the Calvinists and their progeny. In the United States, while the federal government is prohibited from "laws respecting an establishment of religion," state governments retained extensive powers with which they encouraged and

protected religion at the state and local level until the Supreme Court in the post-World War II period imposed a strict and now effectively complete separation of church and state.[28]

The Bold and Beautiful Move: Quakerism

Enter the Society of Religious Friends, soon called Quakers. Quakerism arose, in the mid-1600s in England, from a period presented with some of the same challenges for which Khan identifies Sufism as a remedy. It also saw itself (and to some degree still does) as adopting a bold vision that allows the faith to be neither mired in legalism nor put away by the secular sandstorms of contemporary life. Specifically, Quakerism emerged during a time that Paul Lim has called "The Modern Challenge in England to the Trinity."[29] In the England of the 1600s, writers such as John Biddle (often called "the Father of English Unitarianism"), Paul Best, and others were denying the truth of the trinity – a core Christian doctrine. In response, traditional believers were rigorously defending the doctrine and with a commitment to a

severe form of religious enforcement (Biddle's books were seized; Best was imprisoned). In this context, Quakerism was born: Quaker theology represented a way to save Trinitarianism while repudiating harsh religious legalism.

Indeed, punitive legalism has found expression throughout extended periods of Christian history. Despite the theological thrust of the Christian faith, we can see demonstration of the fragility of religious freedom in the history of Christianity since at least the emperorship of Theodosius I (reigned 379-395). At times, complete religious liberty came to be thwarted by Christian states who saw their mission not merely as providing some measure of external support to the faithful but as sustaining the faith through excessively bitter enactments. Angelo Cardinal Scola has recently argued that the primary (but not exclusive)[30] source of Christian religious repression was the pain of Christian heresy: the wretched presence of those who, told by religious authority they were in theological error, refused to give up either their understanding of Christian doctrine or their membership in a Christian state.[31] The distressing existence of those eschewing the gift of divine guidance – who remained always

fallen men – would eventually unleash among the Christian faithful what R.I. Moore labelled the "persecuting society."[32]

In response both to a legacy of harsh legalism and to the rising threats to traditional Christian claims, as Sally Bruynell documents, the early Quakers maintained Trinitarianism but experienced the Trinity in a way that "freed themselves from the need for the conciliar traditions railed against" by the new 'secular' (as in non-orthodox) thinkers, including the legendary Thomas Hobbes. The Quakers "found a novel way of coming to terms with" core doctrines ultimately traceable to the Bible, such as the Trinity,[33] "by espousing the idea that the Spirit which inspired scripture was the very same one that dwelt within them,"[34] and which through an "inner light" taught them the truth of the Holy Trinity. Authority is now, by the power of the inner Spirit, wholly within you,[35] resulting in the Spirit-lit personal conscience.

In an additional bold and beautiful move, Quakerism came to assert that its vision of the pure religious conscience should serve as the blueprint for the organization and operation of governmental power. As Mahendra Kumar remarks,

> questions of State and politics are not non-religious matters for Quakers. They aim at combining membership of political community with the practice of Christian life. They believe that the State should be Christianized and that the State needs the message of the Gospel to fulfil its task rightly. Thus, the Quaker concept of a secular State differs from the modern concept in so far as the former is concerned with an attitude of tolerance towards all faiths and views religion to be the basis of the State while the latter adopts an attitude of total indifference towards religion.[36]

In addition to state-funded and Christian-fueled social benevolence, for Quakers this means the state should provide no secondary or supportive service defending the one true faith.

Kumar summarizes this aspect of Quaker theology as it relates to state power: a "very important conviction of Quakers about the nature of the State [became their] insistence that the machinery of the State is not to be used to impose *any sort* of religious orthodoxy" in the form of a state-preferred confession or creed. [37] What is new in Quakerism is not that religious truths should not be forcibly imposed through coercion; although observed often in the breech, that inheres in the predominant interpretations of the Christian faith. No, what is (effectively)[38] new is the idea that the state should do nothing *of any sort* within its scope of power to protect and advance the true confession: no government messaging on behalf of Christian truth; no special tax benefits for the faithful, and no privileging of the faith in the education of the young – for the inward light alone can protect Christian truth.

Seen from the external perspective of religious studies, it is safe to say that Quakerism became popular because it kept faith with core Christian tenets including the trinity but did so without deference to authoritative structures of any kind, relying only on the felt power of the inner spirit. In this way, Quakerism could present itself as avoiding legalism while keeping true to the deposit of faith.

The Power of Quakerism and its Tremendous Social Good

As is well known and amply documented,[39] Quakerism became a powerful ally for public good. Quakers were at the forefront of shaping a culture of financial savings and reinvestment of profits in lieu of luxurious living; they also spearheaded prison reform, anti-slavery activism, democratic reform, and women's rights (a long-held principle as one of their founding leaders was a woman, Margaret Fell, affectionately called the "Mother of Quakerism").

Core aspects of Quakerism impelled their social activism: the intrinsic egalitarianism of Christian thought,[40] compounded by the radical egalitarianism of each individual as an equal soul bearing the inviolate inner light, and a complete freedom from compromising with political powers to secure their protection of a particular doctrine or canon. All of these propelled a bold and assertive self-confidence.

Here we can reflect briefly on the parallels between Quakerism and the political philosophy of *Ihsan* so brilliantly described by Khan. Both seek to chart a *via media* between secularism and rigid legalism; both affirm an inner illumination of the heart and the mind as a key to true faith; both seek to concretize these principles in public law, and both see the faith compelling adherents to great and noble causes of social reform and cultural improvement.

The Inner Light Eclipses Christian Truth

The inner light of the Society of Friends, however, could remain at once inviolate and orthodox only so long. By the 19th Century, a major tumult wracked the Quaker community. The inner light came to teach that the trinity is a human construct. Such became the theology of the highly influential Quaker Elias Hicks. In the early 1820s, Hicks came to question the Triunity of God including the divinity of Jesus. Jesus, he held, was a "great pattern" for man, who can be called the son of God only because of his perfect obedience to the inner light within him; He was not God's incarnate God in the orthodox sense.

In response to Hicks, many Quakers returned to the traditional Christian paradigm of constituting authoritative guidance for personal conscience. Some Quakers did so first by seeking a formalized binding creed and, second, by a policy of having Quaker elders conduct visitations to Quaker communities to ensure the inmost illumination was only to be obeyed when its deliverances proved consistent with traditional truth. In turn, many Quakers resented what they saw as fundamental breeches of the defining Quaker confidence in the individual inner light. So, schism erupted. And over time Hicksite Quakerism came to predominate. In fact, so powerful is the legacy of Hicks that social science research indicates that a great percentage of contemporary Quakers are not coherently describable as orthodox Christians at all. Indeed, according to a recent study, "Atheists comprise a rising 14% of professed Quakers, while a full 43% feel 'unable to profess a belief in God.'"[41]

Problems

What problems follow from the dynamic just described? First, from a Christian perspective, it is always disheartening and painful to witness apostasy. Second, this dynamic discloses the birth of a serious secular misconception about goodness and faithfulness. Hicks was an early abolitionist and a strong supporter of a range of noble social causes. To some extent, therefore, the virtue of abolitionism came in the popular mind to be co-mingled with unorthodoxy.

Moreover, the Hicksite movement exercised a powerful influence on what at first were small groups, but which over time would rise to positions of great power – groups committed at once to social reform and to religious heterodoxy. Quakerism became an inspiring model for groups such as American Unitarians as well as Universalists and it had a generative influence on that most American of heresies, Transcendentalism. Walt Whitman, a paradigmatic Transcendentalist, was deeply impacted by Hicksianism. As Christiana Davey remarks, "Whitman believed in the Inner Light. In 1890, he told Horace Traubel, who recorded Whitman's conversations from 1888 until the poet's death, that he subscribed to Hicks's views of spirituality."[42]

As to Unitarianism, although the movement arose at roughly the same time as the first Quakers, Unitarianism fell into decline by the early 1800s along with its close cousin Deism. But the Unitarian movement by the 1830s was energized by the challenge of Transcendentalism. For "the Transcendentalists rejected everything formalistic, authoritarian, or doctrinaire in religion," and Unitarian rationalism of the Deist sort had come to be defined in just these same terms. The Transcendentalists instead "preferred a first-hand experience of reality and the divine unmediated by church or clergy," seeking in Emerson words, "a religion [of a] revelation to us."[43] This new "revelation to us" led Transcendentalists to an unorthodox pantheistic spiritualism. Importantly, though, the spiritualism they adopted often had social reform as its cornerstone – a spiritualism of practical benevolence. We need look no further than Thoreau's famous protests over the Fugitive Slave Act for evidence.

In response to the challenge Transcendentalism represented to Unitarians, Unitarianism sought to

defend their conception of Christianity against the effectively non-Christian movement of Transcendentalism and its spiritual vision of mystical social benevolence. To do so, Unitarians doubled down on their own theology, one that saw divinity present in what Unitarian minister Barry Andrews calls "introspection ... necessarily wedded to social action."[44] Unitarianism began to claim that they too preached a message of the inner light, and that the spark of inner divinity flamed most warmly in the doing of societal good. Such a theology of worldly do-goodism, to the Unitarian mind, showed that one could be in their sense Christian and do beneficial works without adhering to the full repudiation of Christianity found in Transcendentalism.

In turn, the success in doing good realized by Unitarians came to be seen as a challenge to some Christian movements that were initially more orthodox than Unitarianism – and especially by the "Social-Gospel" Protestants, who though formally adhering to the traditional faith, became so desirous of showing that their faith could be an agent of collective improvement that they over time collapsed the traditional faith into their

sheer practice of doing social service.[45]

In all, erosions of traditional Christianity – all colored with the doing of good works – became prominent in the spiritual landscape. This, consequently, gave rise to an unhelpful secular misconception: that one will have to choose between doing good or remaining true to the traditional faith. How did this emerge? While traditional Christian believers could well point to how they themselves had done tremendous social benevolence (such as in Evangelical anti-slavery work, the expansion of female education, and advocacy for the rights of Indians), and although in many ways the unorthodox were themselves oddly counterproductive to the public good,[46]the fact is that the unorthodoxy of social welfare was at a decided advantage over traditional faith.

Indeed, traditionalism will always be at a disadvantage in such a contest. For it has to do *twice* the work of religions of social praxis: it both has to practice as well as defend the traditional faith *and* to do the social work that comes from a living faith. In comparison, this dual task was (and is) less pressing for those who put core beliefs behind the doing of good works –

they can focus *only* on the doing of social good.

As a result of this entire unfolding, as mentioned, an ominous social misperception has come to light – a terrible disjunction: the doing of good *or* faithfulness. The "either/or" mentality in fact defines the apologetical challenge orthodox Christians face today. The faith's primary and most effective opponents are not dour materialists with a reductive worldview, for their metaphysics is (to this author at least) unsuitable for human flourishing.[47] No, among the real challenges are those who are content with vague spiritualisms but say Christianity is insufficiently committed to doing social good.[48] In fact, as the decline in Christianity recently has proven, atheism hasn't gained from Christianity's losses, but rather spiritualistic social welfarism.

The root of all this lies, to a very real degree, in Quakerism's bold and beautiful dream. A tragic beauty, indeed.

An Outsider's Friendly Advice

The same fate that I described could also occur in Islam – absent, of course, a special protective grace. Sufi theology of the inner heart will, if centered in Islamic politics, achieve great deeds in the world. Yet, can it remain true to central Islamic teachings – especially as it enters the arena of contentious political and cultural debate? Will it once again be "lost" by experiencing its own Hicksian schisms?[49] If it were, then in response to more traditional Islamic criticism, these once-Islamic reformers might double down on the doing of good works to vindicate themselves through the fruits of their public benevolence. Further, it seems likely that other Muslim communities – inspired perhaps by the Qur'an's command "to compete in good works"[50] – will join the fray, seeking to exonerate their position through the immediate performance of noble deeds – even if unmoored to the disciplined thinking required in the Islamic tradition.

In turn, in the mind of the *ummah* could arise the misconception with which Christians now must contend: that to do good one has to decenter, or even eliminate, the faith of the fathers. In light of this possibility, let me end by offering my Muslim friends an outsider's friendly counsel. Aspire to the reforms Khan sets forward, by all

means. But, in addition, make sure that reform is also seen to grow from a source more readily identifiable as within the more traditional views of the faith. Yes, the dual work of traditional piety and social benevolence is more laborious than the doing of good works alone. And, as Khan illustrates, it might be especially hard to secure both when having to contend with a powerful legalistic ethos in substantial segments of contemporary Islam. But do not tire.

Anchor beauty also in the bedrock of more traditional faith so that the tragic beauty of a faith that has lost its way might either never become prominent or leave the core claims of the faith unscathed.

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END NOTES

[1] M.A. Muqtedar Khan, *Islam and Good Governance: A Political Philosophy of* Ihsan (New York: Palgrave, 2019), 2.

[2] Khan, *Islam and Good Governance*, 1-2.

[3] Khan, *Islam and Good Governance*, 2.

[4] Khan, *Islam and Good Governance*, 2.

[5] Galatians 5:13.

[6] Genesis 1:27.

[7] Joshua 24:15.

[8] Luke 22:25.

[9] Gregory of Nyssa, *Great Catechism of 383*, section 1034 in William A. Jurgens, ed., *The Faith of the Early Fathers* Volume 2 (Collegeville MN: The Liturgical Press, 1979), 49.

[10] Maijastina Kahlos, *Forbearance and Compulsion: The Rhetoric of Religious Toleration* (London: Duckworth, 2009 46; Lactantius, *Institutes* 5.19.23.

[11] Romans 2:15.

[12] https://aquinasonline.com/conscience/

[13] Robert Louis Wilken, *Liberty in the Things of God: The Christian Origins of Religious Freedom* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2019), 41.

[14] Quoted in Wilken, *Liberty in the Things of God*, 41.
[15] John 14:18.

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[16] John 16:13.

[17] Catharism by the early 13th Century developed what appeared to be a fully constituted counter-church, with a fairly well-organized structure both at the local and international level. See Colin Morris, *The Papal Monarchy: The Western Church from 1050-1250* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 345; and Steven Runciman, *The Medieval Manichee: A Study of the Christian Dualist Heresy* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 161.

[18] Wilken, *Liberty in the Things of God*, 40.

[19] Teofan Mada, "Moral Conscience in Eastern Patristic Theology," *International Journal of Orthodox Theology* 5:2 (2014): 75-102, 85.

[20] Matthew 7:15.

[21] Acts of the Apostles 20:29-31.

[22] 4:1-2.

[23] 3: 17.

[24] Mark 13: 33.

[25] Mark 4:25.

[26] Romans 13:1.

[27] John Locke, First *Letter Concerning Toleration*, (1689), 15, at file:///C:/Users/WAC/Dropbox/Locke's%20first%20letter%20on%20Toleration.pdf

[28] See David Sehat, *The Myth of American Religious Freedom* (Oxford; Oxford University Press, 2015) and Jonathan Zimmerman, "Anti-Blasphemy Laws Have a History in America," *WHYY, PBS*, 9 October 2012, at https://whyy.org/articles/anti-blasphemy-laws-have-a-history-in-america/

[29] Paul C. H. Lim, *Mystery Unveiled: The Crisis of the Trinity in Early Modern England* Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2012.

[30] One can think of the statement of Emperor Justinian (reigned 527-65) that "since we strive by all means to enforce the civil laws, whose power God in His goodness has entrusted to us for the security of our subjects, how much more keenly should we endeavor to enforce the holy canons and the divine laws which have been framed for the salvation of our souls," which could imply a harsh legalism toward those inside the Empire but outside orthodox faith (Justinian, *Corpus Iuris Civilis* III, *Novellae*, ed. R. Sholl and G. Kroll, 8th ed. Berlin: Weidmann, 1963, 695); think also of the Baltic Crusades of the 12th century which, though endorsed by the papacy on defensive

grounds, embodied in the Christian military orders a desire for the Christian conquest of pagans.

[31] *Vide* Cardinal Angelo Scola, *Let's Not Forget God: Freedom of Faith, Culture, and Politics*. Trans. Matthew Sherry. (New York: Image, 2014), p. 42. Many heretical groups, especially in the East, would migrate outside the Roman Empire's borders. See Canan Seyfeli, "Byzantine Paulicians: Beliefs and Practices," *Journal of Religious Inquiries* 3, 1 (2020): 45-68, 53.

[32] R.I. Moore, *The Formation of a Persecuting Society* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1987).

[33] In the Gospel of Mathew the risen Jesus commands his disciples to baptize "in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit," the traditional Trinitarian formula (Matthew 28:19).

[34] R. Scott Spurlock, review of *Mystery Unveiled: The Crisis of the Trinity in Early Modern England*, (review no. 1411) at https://reviews.history.ac.uk/review/1411. See Sally Bruynel*, Margaret Fell and the End of Time: The Theology of the Mother of Quakerism* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2010).

[35] To be sure, in elements of early Lutheranism and in the so-called Radical Reformation attempts were made to announce a religiosity of the Bible without further authority, or even a religiosity of the personal conscience, wholly alone before God. But these movements tended over time either to ramify into exiguous factions that faded from history, or to reassert a claim to divinely sanctioned guidance. Wilken writes of how Reformation groups that refused external authority "fragmented" and became "scattered throughout," having no "staying power." Wilkens, *Liberty in the Things of God*, 102.

[36] Mahendra Kumar, "The Quaker Theory of State and Democracy," *The Indian Journal of Political Science* 22, 1/2 (1961): 144-158, 147.

[37] Kumar, "The Quaker Theory of State and Democracy," 146. Emphasis added. No doubt with Protestantism individuals could remove themselves from one Erastian state to another. And for denominations not backed by the state, such as Methodists and Baptists, it became easier to leave this conference or that convention, etc.; but when individuals or groups did so, most often the first task came to be a re-integration within or a re-creation of some authoritative and guiding structure, on what was hoped would be an improved basis.

[38] Little of course is genuinely new. Medieval Christianity would see occasional outbursts somewhat similar to Quakerism among, for example, the adherents of Joachim of Fiore (1135-1202) or in certain later Franciscan groups.

[39] See Susan Sachs Goldman *Friends In Deed: The Story of Quaker Social Reform in America* (Highmark Press: Washington, D.C., 2012).

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40 For more see Stephen Strehle, *The Egalitarian Spirit of Christianity: The Sacred Roots of American and British Government* (Transaction: Piscataway, NJ, 2008).

41 Jessica Hubbard-Baily and Gabriel Cabrera, "We Don't Need God?" *Quakers, Social Justice and Revolution*, 5 May 2018 at https://kislingjeff.wordpress.com/2018/05/05/we-dont-need-god/

42 Christina Davey, "Hicks, Elias (1748–1830)" in *Walt Whitman: An Encyclopedia*, J.R. LeMaster and Donald D. Kummings, eds (New York: Garland Publishing, 1998) at https://whitmanarchive.org/criticism/current/encyclopedia/entry_192.html.

43 Barry M. Andrews, "The Roots of Unitarian Universalist Spirituality in New England Transcendentalism," 1992 Selected Essays, Unitarian Universalist Ministers Association, at http://transcendentalistspirituality.com/roots-of-unitarian-universalist-spirituality-in-new-england-transcendentalism/. Emerson, quoted from his essay *Nature,* which Andrews calls "The Transcendentalist manifesto."

44 Andrews, "The Roots of Unitarian Universalist Spirituality in New England Transcendentalism."

45 Did not key Social Gospel leader Walter Rauschenbusch say in the early 1900s that core tenets of the Christian faith are secondary, such as the reality of that paradise which Jesus promised the condemned man he would see that very day (Luke 23:43)? Did Rauschenbusch not exclaim: "The kingdom of God is *not* a matter of getting individuals to heaven, but of transforming the life *on earth* into the harmony of heaven"? Walter Rauschenbusch, *Christianity and the Social Crisis* (London: Macmillan, 1913), 65. Emphasis added.

46 Quakers, for example, had a pacifism that left frontier communities prey to Indian attacks, had an unwillingness to take oaths that meant that if they had needed testimony in court cases to convict violent disrupters of the public peace, they would often refuse to give it; and Transcendentalists at times could subvert social reform through their fascination with their own spiritual self-growth, so much so that one of its leading lights could say derisively of Christian poverty relief, "Are they *my* poor?" Ralph Waldo Emerson, "Self-Reliance." Emphasis added.

47 To be sure, global secularisms are diverse, and attempts have been made to cover a nature "red in tooth and claw" with a patina of grandeur and ennobling awe. See Ronald Dworkin, *Religion without God* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2013) and Alain de Botton, *Religion for Atheists: A Non-believers Guide to the Uses of Religion* (New York: Vintage, 2013). Whether these writers can overcome "the firm foundation of unyielding despair" to which so famous an unbeliever as Bertrand Rusell was led by contemplation of man as "the product of causes which had no prevision of the end they were achieving; that his origin, his growth, his hopes and fears, his loves and his beliefs, are but the outcome of accidental collocations of atoms; that no fire, no heroism, no

intensity of thought and feeling, can preserve an individual life beyond the grave; that all the labours of the ages, all the devotion, all the inspiration, all the noonday brightness of human genius, are destined to extinction in the vast death of the solar system, and that the whole temple of Man's achievement must inevitably be buried beneath the débris of a universe in ruins"—seems, to this author at least, doubtful. Bertrand Russell, *A Free Man's Worship*, 1903 (Portland, ME: Thomas, Bird. Moher, 1923).

[48] The content of this social good also has become a challenge, no doubt. But this too is to be expected: unmoored to a traditional creed, why should a religion of social praxis remain committed to a traditional moral code?

[49] To be sure, Quakerism and Sufism are not identical. (How could they be?) Sufism does not eschew all authoritative guidance, for segments within Sufism have long prized fraternal orders with strong spiritual leaders. Indeed, its focus on the tutelage of the spiritual master is so strong that it has been written of Sufism that "the disciple should be in the hands of the master 'like a corpse in the hand of the washer'" (https://www.britannica.com/topic/Sufism/Sufi-thought-and-practice). To be sure, Sufism is internally diverse and has groupings which operate outside of hierarchical arrangements, and Professor Khan is drawing mostly on newer Sufi movements that eschew the strict *murshid*/*murid* hierarchy. In any case, the point is that there is little authority beyond the fraternal order, the pupil-master relationship, or the personal devotee. And here trouble might lurk.

[50] 5:48.