RELIGIOUS TOLERANCE

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In the increasingly diverse and multi-religious societies of the West, the topic of religious tolerance has come to the forefront. The concept of religious tolerance permeates the notion of hope for harmony and projects the utopian view that humans, despite their religious differences, can live together in peace. The allure of living in harmony and peace is so strong that it has sparked ecumenical discussions throughout the Western hemisphere, with interfaith dialogues among different religious communities as well as mainstream academic conferences.

While I would like to support the thesis that it is possible and prudent to practise religious tolerance in the ‘genuine sense’, to my dismay, I must defend the opposite. Genuine religious tolerance is, at best, an incoherent concept and, at worst, a perilous illusion. An example of genuine tolerance would be when two individuals looking at a triangle agree that it is a triangle and not a square, or agree that the chairs they are sitting in are chairs and not babies. Such agreements do not require tolerance in the sense of ‘putting up with’ something – they are natural and genuine. Tolerance is non-genuine when I say ‘God is Allah’ and you say ‘God is Jesus’. Since neither of us want to hurt each other’s feelings or escalate the conflict, we simply smile and move on. No agreement or acceptance of the other side is believed, and hence, we have a case of intellectual intolerance or a non-genuine sense of tolerance.

My contention is that religious tolerance in the intellectual sense is not a virtue, but a vice. In fact, it is the intellectual intolerance of religious beliefs that is both a virtue and a moral imperative, for the sake of society’s greater good. At the outset, let me be clear that my argument is based solely on an intellectual intolerance of religious beliefs. It is imperative to emphasize that while I call for an intellectual practice of intolerance, practically speaking, I find it desirable for everyone to tolerate people of other religions.

The word ‘tolerance’, coming from its Latin root tolero means to bear, endure, sustain; it is cognate to tollo, to lift up or carry, and derived from the Indo-European root tela, to lift or weigh. Tolerance implies that one is putting up with something, suggesting that one who practices tolerance will shoulder the burden of another, presumably for a greater good. By its very nature, tolerance is neither pleasant nor desirable, and as such is merely a means to an end. It is the very nature of this greater good that is the subject of our inquiry. Does intellectual tolerance of religious beliefs bring about social peace and harmony, or precisely the opposite? While the idea of toleration in the contemporary world has come to be synonymous with being civilized and fulfilling one’s civic duty – a key virtue, deemed always to be good – in some rare
cases the same is thought of intellectual (and in some cases physical) intolerance. Surely, most people agree that we should not be tolerant of racism, bigotry, genocide, or child abuse. Intolerance in these cases is not only a virtue but a moral imperative; while tolerating them is a vice and morally reprehensible. Religions have often justified or tolerated racism, bigotry, and genocide through declaring certain races savage, labelling other religions as heretical, and identifying violence as a sacred duty. Pope Urban II initiated the Crusades against Muslims while assuring a place in paradise for the Christians martyred, and radical Muslims consider suicide bombings to be an act of jihad and martyrdom. Whether it is the Spanish Inquisition, the Holocaust, the occupation of Palestine, or the violence committed by Muslim Jihadis, sacred scriptures are often used as a means of justification. Examples are plenty; the black race is black because it was cursed by God, and the white race is evil because an experiment by a black scientist went bad in Africa several thousand years ago. Should we not be intellectually intolerant of religions and texts that espouse violence, racism, and bigotry? Furthermore, is it not a moral imperative of modern humans to actively challenge the views that consider vast numbers of people to belong to the untouchable caste in India, that Jews bear the collective guilt of having killed Christ, that only Christians are ‘saved’, and that polygamy is granted by God to both Muslims and Mormons? These examples are only a small sample of what many religions teach. I question how and why anyone should be tolerant of them. Where is the virtue and benefit of being respectful towards such beliefs, either individually or collectively?

One may argue that I have over-emphasized the more negative aspects of religions and ignore their humane teachings and rituals. Religions are not to be defined solely by their metaphysical claims; there is certainly a treasure house of wisdom that exists in established religions that have survived the test of time. Religions also teach about peace and love; they have created civilizations and have been the source of much good, particularly in reconciling persons to the cruelties of nature. Furthermore, the relationship most people have with their respective religious traditions is not primarily an intellectual one, but rather one of practicality. The average Christian does not dwell on the doctrine of the Trinity, a Jew on the miracles of Moses, or a Muslim on the intricacies of eschatological matters. The lived experience of religions is summarized in a set of moral, practical, and dietary laws. Much of the moral teachings of religions is quite sensible, e.g., charity, love of neighbours, and consoling those in distress, among others.

My contention is not to deny the value of such moral teachings, but rather to allude to the danger that lies in the very basis upon which religious individuals hold such views. It is not the act of charity, loving one’s neighbours, consoling those in distress, and fulfilling moral and legal injunctions of religions that is being questioned, but rather the ‘logic’ of acting based on divine commandment that I find to be unreasonable, unfounded, and unverifiable. Doing good or bad based on an unreasonable, unfounded, and unverifiable ground is harmful to the individuals who practise such views, as well as to the societies that embrace them. It is highly dubious whether societies that tolerate unreasonable ideas for utilitarian reasons are better off in the long term than those who do not.

1

To speak of religious tolerance is, most importantly, to speak of a state of mind in which one accepts another’s right to believe his/her doctrinal claims, while nonetheless supposing that those ideas are false, perhaps even egregiously so. To speak of religious intolerance in the intellectual sense is to speak of the act of taking to task objectionable claims to truth that are unreasonable, unfounded, and unverifiable. The question of tolerance becomes particularly thorny when it
comes to reconciling beliefs in absolute truths with beliefs that contradict one another, e.g., when what God has deemed to be sacred is disputed between different religious traditions. The question is, ‘How can one remain religious while being tolerant and not whether one remains tolerant given the truth of religion’ (Aminrazavi and Ambuel 1997). Before presenting my arguments as to why being intellectually intolerant of religious beliefs may be a virtue and a moral duty, let us examine the arguments generally offered in favour of religious tolerance and possible replies to them.

1. Argument from utility

If we all intellectually tolerate each other’s religious beliefs no matter how preposterous they might be, it would be a more peaceful world. To put it in the much used and abused phrase, religious tolerance is good and necessary for ‘world peace’.

Reply: One may argue that religions are often exclusionary and thus divisive to begin with; to tolerate them for the sake of peace would be an oxymoron and detrimental to society. While social cohesion is desirable and societies that are uniform and homogeneous in their belief systems tend to have less divisiveness, tolerating ideas that are utterly unreasonable cannot be good individually or collectively. It would be absurd to tolerate that certain races, religions or ethnic groups are inferior or superior to others, hoping that this would eventually lead to a more peaceful society. Tolerance in this sense is more of a civic duty and does not offer a genuine form of tolerance.

2. Feel-good argument

Intuitively, it feels good to get along with others. There is something disconcerting and anxiety-provoking in discord and conflict. Tolerating religious ideas, no matter how different they are from our own, generates a type of genteel and saintly feeling; one may even describe it as a feeling of moral serendipity. One’s ability to transcend beyond differences and love the ‘Other’ bears testament to the type of person one is.

In social gatherings, people naturally tend to be more agreeable and understanding of one another. Few go to social gatherings with the intention of provoking a heated argument. In the feel-good argument, the instinct to be accommodating and agreeable, particularly in the religious domain, appears as accepting and even appreciating the ‘Other’. When I, as a Muslim or a Jew, accept your right to be religiously different from me, I have not surrendered my claim to be exclusively right but have made room in my religious universe for you while I acknowledge that you are mistaken in your beliefs. After all, such an accommodation further validates the spiritual truth and superiority of my religion for putting up with you. I tolerate you the same way loving parents tolerate their mischievous children by allowing them to act childish. Imagine the feeling you experience when, in a crowded place, you offer your seat to an elderly or disabled person: the sacrifice results in a feeling of gratification.

Tolerance as appreciating the other is a more contemporary concept in which one goes beyond tolerance and actually appreciates ‘otherness’ as somehow enriching to one self and the spiritual landscape. In this case, one can see the world as a spiritual tapestry, hence appreciating the beauty, wisdom, and richness of individual religious traditions as complementary to one’s own.

Reply: The feel-good argument implies and necessitates that I acknowledge the truth of your religious claim along with mine. It would be a contradiction if I strongly disagreed with you and thought your views were unfounded and unreasonable, and yet still somehow appreciated you. Since most religions don’t claim to be only partially true, in what way would it be possible
for me to not only tolerate your views when they contradict mine, but also appreciate them? If anything, what is satisfying is to oppose what is unreasonable and irrational, such as the Qur’anic view that heretics should be killed, the Biblical view that ‘if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out’, or the practice of Sati (cremating along with her husband the living wife of a Hindu man who has died). Nothing gives me greater pleasure than to oppose the above ideas that are unfounded and unreasonable, and unverifiable.

3. Pragmatic argument

This argument considers religious tolerance to be a practical necessity arising from living in multi-religious societies of the modern world. Members of other religious traditions have settled in the West, and in the absence of an alternative, by necessity, we must tolerate one another. It is said that in France, more Muslims attend mosques than Christians attend churches. By the year 2020, it is predicted that there will be more Muslims in America than Episcopalians. In light of such statistics, what choices do we have but to tolerate one another’s religions?

Reply: This argument also reverts to the first – Argument from utility. Namely, tolerance is a necessity for any multi-cultural and multi-religious society interested in social cohesion, law, and order. Although it has social and political utility, this argument promotes tolerance as a convenience, rather than in a ‘genuine sense’. This is analogous to when I tolerate traffic laws: I do not like to stop for red lights, but I have no choice. The dual approach to the question of tolerance in a pragmatic argument lends itself to utility versus truth considerations, or what Jordan (1997) refers to as ‘benefit directed’ and ‘truth directed’ considerations. In a utility-driven argument, the benefits gained from tolerance exceed the harm which is a sufficient ground for adopting it. The truth-based, pragmatic argument maintains that ‘if \( p \) should turn out to be true, the benefit gained from believing that \( p \), will be impressive’ (Jordon 1997: 537). The other side of a pragmatic argument is to tolerate someone else’s beliefs in case my beliefs turn out to be false or less accurate than I had initially believed. Each of the above propositions is inconsistent with the divinely revealed nature of religious beliefs.

Finally, one wonders if it is in the long-term interest of any society to sacrifice a genuine and rigorous inquiry regarding the truth of ideas held by its members in the interest of having a peaceful society, the so called ‘melting pot’. It is the opinion of this author that the eventual fate of a society that sacrifices truth for convenience will be the melting of the pot.

4. Argument from unity

There are those who espouse the view that the core teachings of religions that have survived the test of time are primarily the same. This school of thought, often referred to in religious studies as ‘Perennialism’, argues that the Truth that lies at the heart of all divinely revealed religions is the same, but its manifestations appear in different forms, hence different religions. Accordingly, our differences beautify the world; we should embrace rather than shun them. The universality of this Truth, however, can only be comprehended and/or experienced by the intellectual and spiritual elite. The advocates of ‘Perennialism’, many of whom are prominent academics such as Huston Smith, Seyyed Hossein Nasr, and Ninian Smart, argue that this is not a new school of thought. Rather, it is a perennial tradition of wisdom that sees Divine unity in a multiplicity of forms and manifestations. Multiplicity of religions is the story of the elephant in the dark room; Ultimate Reality is singular in essence but appears in myriad sacred forms. In the words of S.H. Nasr, ‘To live in the world of manifestation is, therefore, to live in a world of opposites which can be transcended only in that reality which is the coincidentia oppositorum
Religious tolerance

and which on their own level are often in opposition and usually intolerant of each other’ (Nasr 1997: 43).

Reply: In his article ‘An elephant, an ocean, and the freedom of faith’, David Cain aptly refers to the major problem of Perennialism when he asks ‘Who sees the elephant? The blind persons do not know they have an elephant by the tail or toe. Who draws the circle? Who knows what the blind persons do not?’ (Cain 1997: 63).

Perennialists’ observations of the similarities among religions have some merit, but they are often over-simplified. While it is true that no religion of which I am aware instructs its members to murder, steal, cheat and lie needlessly, the devil is in the details. The major problem with Perennialism, however, is the fact that its core claim cannot be verified. Perennialists identify Truth with God. Since most religions believe in a supreme deity or lend themselves to theistic interpretation, at their core they adhere to the notion of a Supreme Reality. In other words, a Muslim, a Jew and a Christian, despite their differences, actually believe in the same Truth, even if they do not know it.

Perennialists argue the spiritual elite can experience the inner truth of religion through a special epistemic mode of cognition, such as mystical vision, intellectual intuition, or philosophical insight, and can therefore comprehend the universal nature of this Truth. The assumption is that St. Thomas Aquinas of Christianity, Avicenna of Islam, and Maimonides of Judaism must have known the same Truth. And yet, disagreements among the spiritual and intellectual elites are abundant. From the above, it follows that several thousand years of religious arguments, wars, and atrocities have been based on misunderstandings of the same truth that lies at the heart of their respective traditions.

For the majority of religious people, every aspect of their religion is as sacred as any other, and therefore the Perennialist model of dividing a religion into a shell with a kernel of Truth at the heart of it is unacceptable. While to most Muslims, the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus has no special significance for their faith, to a Christian, the crucifixion and resurrection is the most important part of the Christian message.

The following story symbolically depicts why the argument from unity inevitably runs into difficulty:

I was walking across a bridge one day, and I saw a man standing on the edge, about to jump off. So I ran over and said, ‘Stop! Don’t do it!’ ‘Why shouldn’t I?’ he said. I said, ‘Well, there’s so much to live for!’ He said, ‘Like what?’ I said, ‘Religious or atheist’ He said, ‘Religious.’ I said, ‘Me too! Are you Christian or Buddhist?’ He said, ‘Christian.’ I said, ‘Me too! Are you Catholic or protestant?’ He said, ‘Protestant.’ I said, ‘Me too! Are you Episcopalian or Baptist?’ He said, ‘Baptist!’ I said, ‘Wow! Me too! Are you Baptist Church of God or Baptist Church of the Lord?’ He said, ‘Baptist Church of God!’ I said, ‘Me too! Are you original Baptist Church of God, or are you reformed Baptist Church of God?’ He said, ‘Reformed Baptist Church of God!’ I said, ‘Me too! Are you reformed Baptist Church of God, reformation of 1879, or reformed Baptist Church of God, reformation of 1915?’ He said, ‘Reformed Baptist Church of God, reformation of 1915!’ I said, ‘Die, heretic scum,’ and pushed him off the bridge.

When even the apparently most insignificant differences in religious belief can generate such large amounts of hostility and hatred, it is very hard to believe that the teachings of the many religious sects and denominations are all essentially the same.
In the foregoing discussion, I have considered some of the arguments for religious tolerance and concluded that, at best, a superficial sense of toleration can exist for utilitarian reasons. Let us now examine whether it is possible for a genuine sense of religious tolerance to exist, and, if so, what the necessary conditions would be.

I can be tolerant of your beliefs in the genuine sense if I find merits in your beliefs, but that requires that we operate on a mutually agreed-upon set of criteria in determining the truth or falsehood of beliefs. As John Hick puts it, ‘any ground for believing a particular religion to be true must operate as a ground for believing every other religion to be false; accordingly, for any particular religion there will always be far more reasons for believing it to be false than believing it to be true. This is the sceptical argument that arises from the conflicting truth claims of the various world faiths’ (Hick 1999). When I am tolerant of another’s religious beliefs in the genuine sense, I can say, ‘I have no problem accepting this and that idea of yours, because I can see how that can be true’. Tolerance, in the genuine sense, is when I and the person with whom I am speaking present what we both consider to be reasonable and verifiable. When members of different religions disagree with one another, one of the following must be the case:

1. We both are wrong.
2. We both are right.
3. I am wrong, the other is right.
4. I am right, the other is wrong.

The first proposition cannot be true since divine revelations must have been captured and reflected in at least one religion. Otherwise, either there is no divine revelation and thereby no religious truth, or a divinely revealed religion exists such that no one knows it. The first view negates the authenticity of all theistic religions, and the second is absurd. Given the contradictory truth claims and practices in various religions, the second possibility cannot be true, otherwise God must have contradicted Himself. For instance, eating pork is either inherently good or inherently bad and thus permissible or impermissible for all. God would be contradicting Himself if He instructed Christians that it is permissible for anyone to eat pork but instructed Jews and Muslims that it is impermissible for anyone to eat pork. The third proposition is unacceptable because if I know I am wrong, why would I continue to hold such beliefs? That leaves us with the fourth alternative: one of us is right and that person can only be me.

Clearly, if I hold certain beliefs with conviction, I must be convinced that they are true and those of others contradicting my beliefs are false. In order to be intellectually tolerant of someone else’s beliefs that contradict or are substantially different from my own, I must allow that my beliefs be partially or completely incorrect. This is a possibility that cannot exist if or when my beliefs are based on a divinely revealed scripture.

As mentioned before, to have a coherent discussion on religious tolerance, we must adopt a model or a mode of discourse that is mutually agreeable and verifiable to all concerned and that can only be a discursive reasoning that lends itself to verifiability. Any epistemic claim based on private experience or any other non-propositional or unverifiable truth claim does not leave much room for discourse. Among the epistemic bases for such claims, we can mention mysticism, intuition, or truth by personal or scriptural authority. If one can provide clear and consistent evidence to prove the falsity of my beliefs, why would an intellectual tolerance of my beliefs be called for? Furthermore, how can I be expected to be tolerant of the religious beliefs of anyone holding beliefs different from mine if or when I am convinced of the absolute truth
of my beliefs? Even if I am proved wrong, I will take refuge in the fact that the Lord works in mysterious ways and that God’s logic is superior to that of humans. Consider the following hypothetical argument between a Muslim and a Christian:

**MUSLIM:** What evidence do you have that Jesus was God as well as the son of God? It simply does not make sense.

**CHRISTIAN:** The Bible clearly confirms Jesus’ divinity. Besides, either Jesus was a liar or he wasn’t. He was not a liar and therefore he must have told the truth. What makes you question Jesus’ divinity?

**MUSLIM:** The Qur’an says he was neither God nor the son of God and the Qur’an is the word of God.

In the above conversation, how can a genuine case of intellectual tolerance be expected of either side? Such an expectation requires that the Muslim or the Christian would have to allow for the possibility of the fallibility of their scriptures, in which case they would each cease to be followers of their respective faiths.

In the foregoing discussion, I have established a case in favour of being intellectually intolerant towards those who hold religious beliefs. Let us now go one step further and turn our attention towards why the practice of religious intolerance in its intellectual sense is both a virtue and a moral duty. In my view, there is a moral imperative for humans to be engaged in an aggressive form of inquiry when it comes to religious beliefs, as opposed to the passive form of tolerance that is promoted today. Given that the very logic of claims based on divinely commanded beliefs is most often unfounded, unreasonable, and unverifiable, it is my contention that intellectual intolerance must be practised towards those who hold and propagate such beliefs. This intolerance could also be described as casting a heavily critical eye on divinely commanded beliefs and the actions that may arise from believing in them. Such intolerance is good and necessary both in and of itself and for the sake of the greater good of a society.

I take it to be self-evident that it is one’s moral duty to be intolerant of racism, bigotry, slavery, and child abuse. I furthermore take it to be clear that those who hold such beliefs do so based on unfounded, unreasonable, unverifiable, and insufficient evidence, even though they think otherwise. Advocates of such views exercise a type of ‘faith’ supported by the so-called ‘fact’ that the white race is superior to blacks, or the Nazi perspective that gypsies and Jews are inferior to those of Germanic roots. The logic of such views does not change when we change the label of a religious or secular school of thought which advocates certain truths based on truth by authority. One often finds truth claims in religions that are seemingly harmless: Muhammad physically ascended to heaven on horseback, Jews must keep kosher, Moses parted the Red Sea, and Jesus walked on water. What is harmful in these cases is not the nature of the claims but the logical basis upon which such beliefs are held to be true by so many; i.e., an authority, stated in a divinely revealed book or decreed by God directly.

The family resemblance between the logic of the radical views stated above and those of a religious nature held by so many is essentially the same: it is not what is said that matters as much as how one has arrived at the conclusion. Precisely this ‘howness’ necessitates the practice of intellectual intolerance. One must be intolerant of any truth claim that is unreasonable and unverifiable no matter how seemingly harmless it might appear. If we tolerate the incoherent logic that Moses opened the Red Sea, Jesus was resurrected from the dead, or Muhammad was told by God he may have as many wives as he wants, why not tolerate truth claims made by KKK, Nazis, or Bin Laden, whose claims are also based on an authority or Divine commandment? Acceptance of truth by authority seems to be the logical basis of these groups even though the context of their claims is clearly very different.
It is imperative to note that I am not neglecting the positive side of the moral teachings of the great religious traditions, nor am I comparing them in all aspects with criminal cults and hate groups. My argument is that the epistemic mode that underlies many claims made by the religious peoples and members of hate groups or cults is the same. They are claims based on faith enshrined by a body of superfluous evidence, which upon careful examination does not stand up to the scrutiny of reason. In fact, if religiously held beliefs did withstand the scrutiny of reason, there would not be a need for ‘faith’; just as faith is not required to accept that 2+2 = 4.

The argument I have advanced here bears some resemblance to that advanced by Clifford in his essay ‘The Ethics of Belief’. Clifford argues that beliefs in general, and religious beliefs in particular, are not private matters, as is generally believed to be the case. In fact, he questions whether privately held beliefs can even exist in a society in which one’s beliefs inevitably affect others in some form or fashion. Clifford asserts, ‘It is wrong always, everywhere, and for anyone, to believe anything upon insufficient evidence’. Based on what Clifford calls ‘the web of belief’, members of a society are not to be seen as isolated islands, but rather as a series of interconnected entities, each of which influences all the others. Our beliefs, according to Clifford, affect other people directly and indirectly, and likewise, we are affected by others. For him, there exists a ‘web of belief’ in a society in which our lives are interwoven. Given the above argument, how one comes to form one’s beliefs necessarily not only affects an individual’s character, but also has an impact on the society as a whole. If I have formed my beliefs based on unreasonable, unverifiable, and insufficient evidence, and I then propagate them as truth to others, this will affect my audience, however miniscule the effect might be. The majority of religious people have been taught by other religious people that certain beliefs are facts. Few people, during times of slavery, questioned the logic of the inferiority of blacks if they grew up with the notion; the concept became integrated into the culture and was accepted as a norm. The same unfounded, unreasonable, and unverifiable beliefs that underlie the concept of slavery or racism can still be found among individuals who believe in the inferiority or superiority of a race or religion.

Advocating unreasonable and unverifiable beliefs creates an unhealthy environment where free and fair debate becomes difficult. In their most benign forms, these attitudes can lead to the acceptance of beliefs based on a text, authority, or mystical experience, while in their most malignant forms, they can produce hateful and destructive ideas. Peace and coexistence do not come from intellectual tolerance and acceptance of beliefs based on faith – a shallow and fragile social etiquette is the more likely outcome of tolerance based on utility.

3

The argument I have advanced is that an intellectual intolerance of biased, unfounded, unreasonable, and unverifiable claims is a moral imperative. Intellectual intolerance and challenging those who hold ideas based on pure faith leads to the eventual demystification of claims based on absolute notions of truth or falsehood. I have also made a case that even though many ideas and concepts in religions are seemingly harmless and compassionate, the danger lies not in the content of the belief, but rather in the process of how one has arrived at such beliefs. Reasons for being intellectually intolerant of religious claims may vary, but it is always harmful to the intellectual integrity of individuals and society to hold unfounded, unreasonable, and unverifiable beliefs. One may raise the question of how it is possible to respect others if we think their convictions are unreasonable. To this, I reply that understanding the ‘Other’ is not the necessary condition for respecting the ‘Other’. I do not have to understand the indigenous religions of Australian aborigines or the Bush people of South Africa in order to respect them. I can respect them as
Religious tolerance

individuals while rejecting their belief systems. Respect and reverence for others as individuals is just as morally critical as opposing others’ beliefs that are unfounded, unreasonable, and unverifiable is morally imperative.

Notes

1 The standard Biblical justification for this is that, after the flood, Noah cursed Ham – his youngest son – who had seen him naked. See Genesis 9: 25–27.
2 This view is held by the ‘Nation of Islam’, a uniquely African-American version of Islam.
3 Qur’an 5.33: ‘The punishment of those who wage war against Allah and His apostle and strive to make mischief in the land is only this, that they should be murdered or crucified or their hands and their feet should be cut off on opposite sides or they should be imprisoned; this shall be as a disgrace for them in this world, and in the hereafter they shall have a grievous chastisement.’ Qur’an 4.89: ‘They wish that you should disbelieve as they disbelieve, and then you would be equal; therefore take not to yourselves friends of them, until they emigrate in the way of God; then, if they turn their backs, take them, and slay them wherever you find them; take not to yourselves any one of them as friend or helper.’ (And, of course, Bukhari 52:260: ‘The Prophet said, “If somebody (a Muslim) discards his religion, kill him.”’)
4 Mark 9:47. In Matthew 5:29 we read ‘If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away’.
5 Though ‘Perennialism’ considers itself to have ancient roots, the name appeared in the early part of the twentieth century CE. Among its major figures are R. Guénon, A.K. Coomaraswamy, F. Schuon, and S.H. Nasr, who argue for the essential unity of religions based on a common esoteric reality.
6 A story by the comedian Emo Phillips.