

Orthodoxy vs. Orthopraxy and the Eight Laws of Change - Helping to create Zion.

While orthodoxy is about correct beliefs, orthopraxy is about right practice: doing the practices and living the lifestyles that end up changing our consciousness. Francis of Assisi said to the first friars, "You only know as much as you do!"

The Franciscans are not alone in their emphasis on practice. In his book The 8 Laws of Change: How to Be an Agent of Personal and Social Transformation, author Stephan A. Schwartz offers life-practices he gathered from observing the Quakers. Their actions—grounded in contemplation—have had a profound impact, helping to abolish slavery, promote gender equity, and reform prisons and other institutions. Schwartz writes:

How could this small group of people create movements that ultimately involve millions, tens of millions? This is a tiny group whose beingness is so powerful that enough people personally change their choices so that the desired change becomes society's new norm. In studying the histories of these great social transformations, eight laws—I hesitate to call them laws, but because they are constants in each case, I think they have earned the term—begin to emerge. . . . Taken together, they reveal how individual choice linked in consensus becomes the strategy of beingness that creates change. Adherence to these Eight Laws is not the unique domain of Quakers, of course. But in their efforts, it can be clearly seen.

Here are the laws:

First Law. The individuals, individually, and the group, collectively, must share a common intention.

Second Law. The individuals and the group may have goals, but they may not have cherished outcomes.

Third Law. The individuals in the group must accept that their goals may not be reached in their lifetimes and be okay with this.

Fourth Law. The individuals in the group must accept that they may not get either credit or acknowledgment for what they have done and be authentically okay with this.

Fifth Law. Each person in the group, regardless of gender, religion, race, or culture, must enjoy fundamental equality, even as the various roles in the hierarchy of the effort are respected.

Sixth Law. The individuals in the group must foreswear violence in word, act, or thought.

Seventh Law. The individuals in the group and the group itself must make their private selves consistent with their public postures.

Eighth Law. The individuals in the group and the group collectively must always act from the beingness of life-affirming integrity.