

ATHEIST OVERREACH, WHAT ATHEISM CAN'T DELIVER BY CHRISTIAN SMITH

This book sees the atheist principles namely

- you can be good without faith in God
- you can believe in being universally good without God
- science refutes God

as false and tries to argue thus.

Many atheists agree with him. Some say that good is only a metaphor, the word should be grey. By grey, one is only admitting that everything is about taking a direction that has a helpful side and a horrible side.

QUOTE REGARDING DEFINITION OF RELIGION SAYING IT IS A: matter of ongoing and vexing dispute among scholars. I define "religion" as "a complex of culturally prescribed practices that are based on premises about the existence and nature of superhuman powers." These powers may be personal or impersonal, but they are always superhuman, in the dual sense that they can do things humans cannot do and that they do not depend for their existence on human activities. Religious people engage in practices intended to gain access to and communicate or align themselves with these superhuman powers. Their primary hope in doing so, I believe, is to avert misfortune, obtain blessings, and receive deliverance from crises in this life and perhaps after death. People are religious, on this view, in order to tap those superhuman powers to help them avert and solve problems they confront—from getting hurt or sick to suffering a bad existence after death. This substantive definition of religion provides traction for identifying when religion is present or absent, stronger or weaker, in human life. It does not focus on religious beliefs but on religious practices.

COMMENT: So a Catholic that does not do the required core Catholic things is not a Catholic. A less strong claim is that Catholic is not a religious label but a description of what religious commitments you made. So you are Catholic but not a believing one. It is possible that being a believing Catholic is what matters and being one as in label and in background is of little value in comparison. As God is about the now and leaving the past in the past that would make sense. As being loyal and believing matters most, making a deal then about being Catholic would be trying to abuse the term like some kind of label. It would be wrong.

It is interesting that he speaks of religion as a crutch and there is no mention of using religious faith to overcome sin and be part of forming a wholesome spiritual community.

Culture is such a cover for being bad and for political advantage that religion if a form of culture or too married to it is a bad thing. If it is culturally acceptable to burn widows then that will be changed faster than it would be if religion was there justifying it as well.

A religion should not be pointing to its good deeds when accused of being immoral or something that would better disband. That is using the good deeds. Catholicism tends to argue that what we should be asking about with religion is "Is it true?" If it is true then we can criticise its badness and hope that people will let the principles sink in. The religion can remain valid even if every member is a terrorist violating its doctrine.

The Christian definition of religion could be, "a complex of genuinely supernaturally prescribed practices that are based on truths about the existence and nature of superhuman powers."

QUOTE - A GOOD ANSWER TO HYPOCRITES WHO SAY RELIGIOUS TERRORISTS DO NOT REALLY BELONG TO THEIR RELIGION: Why exactly—having both dismissed all religions as false and relegated all judgments of objective truth to mere personal opinions—Bayer and Figdor believe they are in a position to declare which forms of Islam are authentic and misguided is beyond my comprehension, but that is another matter.

COMMENT: A religiously motivated terror incident happens. Politicians and social commentators and journalists who say, "It's not a real Muslim" or whatever are just usurping the role of theology or the founder of the religion or its authorised representatives to decide that! It's an attempt to use religious labels as weapons against those who do harm in the name of their religion. But it cuts the other way. If you can mess with words like that then the person who simply self-identifies as Muslim is Muslim which means any terrorist can identify as Muslim to smear Islam.

Religious violence is enabled by religion yes but also by enablers outside the fold. That is so disturbing. Religion can be bad and evil simply because of the effect it has on its enablers.

