

Biblical Theological Seminary
ST777 Seminar: Attacks on Christianity
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I Don't Need Religion

Introduction

This response could be given by people for any of a wide variety of reasons. Thus helpful to probe deeper to find out why person thinks religion not needed. Before doing so, however, should consider a rather common response by Xns which seems to me rather weak:

A Bad Response: Christianity isn't a religion.

"Christianity is not a religion. Religion is man trying to reach up to God, whereas Xy is God reaching down to man."

This emphasis on grace vs works is certainly Biblical, but the claims made here of what religion is, and that Xy isn't religion, are mistaken.

A Dictionary Definition of "religion"

[*Webster's New World Dict of American Language* (1955)]

1. *belief* in a divine or supernatural power or powers to be obeyed & worshiped as the creator(s) & ruler(s) of the universe.
2. *expression* of this belief in conduct & ritual.
3. a) any specific *system* of belief, worship, conduct, etc., often involving a code of ethics & a philosophy: as the Xn religion, the Buddhist religion, etc.
b) *loosely*, any system of beliefs, practices, ethical values, etc., resembling, suggestive of, or likened to such a system: as humanism is his religion.
4. a *state of mind* or *way of life* expressing love for and trust in God, and one's will & effort to act according to the will of God, esp. within a monastic order or community: as, he achieved religion.
5. any *object of conscientious regard & pursuit*: as, cleanliness was a religion to him.
6. [obsolete] a) the *practice* of religious observances or rites; b) pl. religious *rites*.

Certainly meanings 1, 2, 3a and 4 fit Christianity.

The Biblical Usage of "religion"

Agrees more or less with dictionary definitions 1-4

Word is used generically, both favorably and negatively

In KJV, used only in NT, to translate *qrhsko,j* and *qrhskai,a* (and in paraphrases of Ioudaismoj)

Acts 26:5 - of Paul's Judaism (Gal 1:13-14 same) (negative?)

James 1:26-27 - not religious if tongue not under control; pure religion *acceptable to God* is concern for widows & orphans, keeping self unpolluted by world. (positive)

In OT Greek versions, use of *qrhskai,a*, etc.

LXX only in Apocrypha:

Wisd 11:15 - worship of reptiles (-)

Wisd 14:16,18,27 - worship of idols (-)

4 Macc 5:6,13 - OT observances (+)

Symmachus has uses in Canonical OT:

Jer 3:19 - following God (+)

Ezk 20:6,15 - reads last clause as "which will be the [place of?] worship of all the lands" (+)

Dan 2:46 - Nebuchadnezzar worshiping Daniel (-)

While we want to distinguish Xy from false religions, using a bad definition of "religion" is not the way to do it.

A Better Response: Why don't you think you need religion?

May provide input for further discussion, if person willing to continue.

Some possible responses the person might give:

Religion/Christianity is just a crutch.

Religion is not important.

There is no God.

I am not the religious type.

I don't need organized religion. I can worship God just as well in my own way on the golf course.

I don't need Jesus, forgiveness, etc.

Various Responses Based on Person's Answer:

There is no God:

Give evidences for existence of God

Religion is not important:

If there is a God, it may well be.

How do you *know* it is not important?

I am not the religious type:

What is "the religious type"?

I know all sorts of people who are Christians.

This may draw a response re/ what person means by "religious."

Religion/Christianity is just a crutch:

Just a crutch? Christianity claims to be much more.

Even if it is a "crutch," how do you know you are not "crippled"?

I don't need organized religion, etc.:

Do you really love God with all your heart, mind and soul on the golf course?

If you think so, why do you ignore God's command to meet together with other worshipers (Heb 10:25)?

I don't need Jesus, forgiveness, etc.:

Give message of Bible together with evidences for its being the Word of God.