

## Are all religions the same?

Sure - so long as you ignore all the differences! (Ninian Smart's 7 dimensions of religious traditions: practical & ritual, experiential & emotional, narrative, doctrinal & philosophical, ethical & legal, social & institutional, material.)

Religious **diversity**: the fact that people are loyal to different religions (and to no religion).

Religious **pluralism**: a theory that all religions (or all the major ones?) are in some way(s) equally valuable.

- All true?
- All have equally good effects on their adherents and on the wider world?
- All involve interaction with the same Being?
- All equally able to deliver the cure?
- All really the same *in their essential core*.

**Four core claims** in the teaching of any religion:

- **Diagnosis**: The fundamental problem facing human beings.
- **Cure**: A way to positively and permanently resolve that problem.
- **Methods**: Things you can do in order to get the cure.
- **Exemplar**: Actual person(s) whose lives show us how to live out the methods, getting the cure.
  - Examples: biblical Christianity, the Buddhism of the Pali canon sutras

Arguably all religions have this sort of teaching. So do many systems of thought that may or may not be classified as "religions" - e.g. Communism.

**Now it's your turn. What do your non-Christian peers think is the diagnosis and cure?**

Diagnosis:

Cure:

*Some recommended resources:*

- Screencast lectures from a college course by me introducing you to the traditions of Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, and well as to some of the basic ideas in Religious Studies: <http://tinyurl.com/religionsclass>
- Winfried Corduan, *Neighboring Faiths: A Christian Introduction to World Religion, 2nd Edition*.
- "Theories of Religious Diversity," my survey of varieties of religious pluralism together with their rivals, called "inclusivism" and "exclusivism." <http://www.iep.utm.edu/reli-div/>
- On recent Christian philosophy and how it helps with apologetics: Michael J. Murray, ed. *Reason for the Hope Within*.
- A careful Christian critique of the currently hippest traditional religion: Yandell and Netland, *Buddhism: A Christian Exploration and Appraisal*.