

The Word@ZPC

The Case for God in an Anti-God World

World Religions

Sizing Up the Competition

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Everybody is Religious!

Every human being is required to make some sort of response to life's fundamental questions:

What is the nature of the universe, and why is it here?

What is human nature?

What is the meaning of human life, and how should we then live?

Whether one self-identifies as "secular," "agnostic," or far outside the traditional religious mainstream, we all must address these fundamentally *religious* issues.

The dream of establishing *values-free* public policy is just that...a dream.

The Biggest Objection to Christianity: *Exclusivity*

Even if we grant that everyone must own up to life's basic religious issues, it seems too much that Christianity makes claims to _____ truth.

The spirit of the age is embodied in three illustrations:

Paths up the same mountain

Buckets being lowered into the same aquifer

Blind men examining different parts of the same elephant

The Baha'i Faith asserts that all religions are equally _____.

Anti-theists declare that all religions are equally _____.

What should Christians say in response?

(1) Each popular illustration assumes absolute truth about _____.

Those who tell these stories assume they have a clear vantage point.

(2) The major religions clearly _____ each other.

There is no way they can all be true simultaneously.

Insisting that doctrines do not matter is itself a religious doctrine.

If someone says that *no one* can say what is true or false, why should we believe what they are saying?

(3) _____ is the one who makes absolute claims for Jesus.

(4) Every religion, without exception, makes _____ truth claims.

Is “shopping” for a religion more like going to a grocery store, an auto mall, or a pharmacy?

Sorting Out the Options

The world’s major religions or worldviews break into four broad categories:

There is No God

Buddhism
Taoism
Atheism / Darwinism

God(s) are Finite and Personal

Animism or Primitive Religion
Satanism and the Occult
Ancient religions of the Greeks, Romans, and Egyptians
Shinto, Confucianism, and Ancestor Worship
Mormonism

God is Infinite and Impersonal

Hinduism
New Age Spirituality (although this is hard to categorize)

God is Infinite and Personal

Judaism
Christianity
Islam

In Eastern religions, God is either impersonal or non-existent.

The Western religions of Category #4 are the so-called Abrahamic faiths.

All religions promise to _____ human beings, but how that happens (and what we are released from!) are radically different.

Hinduism (formed gradually in India around 1000-600 B.C.)

The essential proposition of Hinduism is that God and the cosmos are _____

Tat tvam asi may be roughly translated, "Thou art That."

The *Atman* (individual _____) is *Brahman* (all-pervading God).

Hinduism embraces multiple contradictions, and even what is illogical.

It is better understood as a way of life than a theology with set points.

In the end, the best way to communicate God's reality is _____.

The great ethical challenge for Hinduism is defining what is good and evil.

The Law of Karma (accrued merits or demerits from previous lives) has historically blunted the impulse for social action and _____.

Buddhism (life of Siddhartha Guatama: 563-483 B.C.)

The Buddha ("the Enlightened One") declared that human beings could be released from the bondage of Karma in just one life.

The Eightfold Path of rigorous disciplines will eradicate _____.

The goal is Nirvana, in which all individuality is extinguished.

Judaism (descendents of Abraham, ca. 2000 B.C.; followers of Moses, ca. 1250 B.C.)

Judaism is optimistic about human nature; rabbis teach that personal _____ will bring about a right relationship with God.

Justice in this world supersedes a concern for the next world.

Islam (followers of Muhammad, A.D. 560-632)

Muslims (“those who _____”) obey Muhammad’s words in the *Qur’an*.

Allah / God is absolutely holy and separate from human beings, and there is little possibility of knowing God personally.

A right relationship with Allah is achieved through obedience to the Five Pillars of Islam (creed, prayer, fasting, almsgiving, pilgrimage).

Jesus is honored by Muslims, but his _____ and its meaning is denied.

The Difference of Christianity and the Difference it Makes

God is infinite, personal, and _____: God is by nature a community.

Christianity alone embraces all the claims and work of Jesus of Nazareth.

Human beings are made in God’s image, but also fallen. They are helpless to help themselves overcome their inherent desires to rebel against God.

Christianity alone teaches the doctrine of _____.

All other religions are self-improvement projects.

Christianity alone teaches that the _____ itself will be redeemed.

Perfect shalom, justice, and wholeness will come to God’s creation.

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