

A Taxonomy of Religions
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Religions									
----- Theistic									Atheistic
----- Monotheistic								Polytheistic	
----- Christianity					Judaism	Islam	Other		
----- Catholicism	Protestantism			Other					
	----- Baptist		Other						
	----- SB	Other							
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

Definitions: (a) a religion is **theistic** when it postulates (posits) the existence of at least one personal god; (b) a religion is **atheistic** when it does not postulate the existence of at least one personal god; (c) a religion is **monotheistic** when it postulates the existence of one god; (d) a religion is **polytheistic** when it postulates the existence of more than one god; (e) **“SB”** means Southern Baptist.

Notes: (a) This is a taxonomy of *religions*. Religions have *adherents*. Not every person is religious, of course, and, as the taxonomy shows, some who are religious are atheistic. Atheists divide into two categories: those, such as Jainists and Buddhists, who are religious (category 10 on the taxonomy) and those who are not religious. (b) The taxonomy is *jointly exhaustive* (meaning that every religion goes in one of its ten categories) and *mutually exclusive* (meaning that no religion goes in more than one of its ten categories). Not all taxonomies are jointly exhaustive and mutually exclusive, but this one is. I made it so by the way I defined terms and by the way I used residuary (“other”) categories. (c) For any set of objects, there are, in principle, many ways to carve it up—that is, many taxonomies of it. Taxonomies are neither true nor false; they are only more or less useful for various purposes. (d) Other names for a taxonomy are “typology,” “classification scheme,” and “intellectual framework.” (e) The focus of this course will be *theistic* religions, and specifically *monotheism*. We will rarely go “below” monotheism on the taxonomy, so if you are a Christian (for example), you should not expect a discussion of your distinctively Christian beliefs. Perhaps a better name for the course would be “Philosophy of Monotheism.” (f) I thank my former colleague, Tim Mahoney, for constructive critical comments.