

Categories of Religious Groups

The Interfaith Evangelism Team (IE) of the North American Mission Board (NAMB) has classified the religious world in this comparison chart into three major categories. These classifications are based on theological concepts that provide a practical framework for the team's work.

1. The first category is major world religions. Obviously, this designation encompasses a broad spectrum of religious beliefs and organizations. These world faiths include Judaism, Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, Sikhism, and Baha'i. These world faiths claim millions of adherents in many nations that are not Christian in orientation or worldview (though some may refer to Jesus as a prophet or leader). Also, in recent decades, North Americans have witnessed the growth of world religions in their midst—especially Islam and eastern mysticism, as expressed in the New Age Movement. IE's goal is to develop methods and strategies for reaching these adherents with the unique gospel of Jesus Christ

2. The second category is that of Christian sects and non-Christian cults. These groups usually claim to be Christian, yet they have deviated in their theological system at one or more

points from historic biblical doctrine. They may also exert abusive control over their members or proclaim themselves to be the one and only true church. A cult group may deny the trinitarian doctrine of God, state that God is an exalted man, claim that Jesus was a created being, or hold other unorthodox positions. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormons), Jehovah's Witnesses, The Way International, The International (Boston) Church of Christ, and the Church of Scientology are a few of the growing numbers of these heretical cult movements. IE provides resources to prevent Baptists' conversions to these groups and to reach their adherents with the truth of the Christian gospel.

Thus, IE has an enormous assignment. The great diversity and increasing numbers of religions in North America and around the world require the department to remain current in its endeavors.

Principles in Interfaith Evangelism

Truth: Know what you believe. Without a basic and accurate knowledge of the Christian faith, there is nothing to witness or evangelize to or for. Biblical concepts of God, Jesus, the Holy Spirit, the reliability of Scripture, and the plan of salvation are essential.

Discernment: Know what others believe. A quick study of this chart can equip the Christian to learn the essentials of other faiths. As well, ask the person to whom you are witnessing to explain their beliefs. Be aware that many cult groups use Christian terminology, but their definitions and meanings are completely different. Ask for explanations of words and concepts you don't understand or which seem similar. Be alert in order to find ways to relate Christian truth.

Love: Be patient, but steadfast; firm, but gentle; loving and gracious, but confident. The goal of interfaith evangelism is

not just to win arguments, but to convince people of their need for Jesus Christ and to bring them into a personal/saving relationship with Him. Therefore, we must love them with the love that comes from God's Spirit. At the same time, love does not necessitate compromising your own faith to please others. Rather, the Bible says, "Love . . . rejoices with the truth" (1 Cor. 13:6, NIV).

Boldness: The Holy Spirit is noted in Scripture as the Spirit who gives courage and boldness. In every Christian there should be not only a willingness, but a vibrancy to share the good news of Jesus Christ. Such an attitude is not the same as abrasiveness, insensitivity, or rudeness. It is a spiritually-based courage to say the right things at the right time to point men and women, boys and girls, to the Savior. Pray for the Holy Spirit to guide you as you speak of the one who is "the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6, NKJV)—Jesus Christ.

IE Personnel

1. Staff: IE staff members based in Alpharetta, Ga., specialize in understanding and interpreting the North American religious scene. They travel throughout the United States and Canada conducting research and leading conferences to equip Southern Baptists in interfaith evangelism.

2. National Missionaries: These are appointed home missionaries who live and work in different multi-state regions, with responsibilities for promotion, teaching, and research.

IE's most important resource is its staff and missionaries.

Materials Produced

The Interfaith Evangelism (IE) staff spends many hours each year reviewing literature and conducting research on current religious activities. A significant result of this research is the creation of an assortment of written literature and audiovisual materials for distribution to the public via the IE Web site at www.namb.net/interfaith.

The most basic piece is the "Belief Bulletin," a series of publications, each profiling one of various religious groups. The series, "A Closer Look at..." deals with specific aspects

of various religious groups, such as an evaluation of the Book of Mormon or a Christian perspective on occultic games.

NAMB markets videotapes and DVDs on Islam (*The Cross or the Crescent*), Mormonism (*The Mormon Puzzle*), and Jehovah's Witnesses (*In the Name of Jehovah*—scheduled for release fall 2004).

Check our Web site for all available videos and DVDs.

State and Local Organization

IE works with Baptist conventions of various states or regions. Individuals designated as interfaith evangelism state coordinators serve on each of the state convention staffs. The state coordinator for interfaith evangelism and the IE manager of State Coordinator Relationships jointly plan and promote interfaith evangelism activities.

IE maintains a network of trained Mission Service Corps (MSC) Volunteers and Interfaith Evangelism Volunteer Partners who lead conferences on various subjects. These partners are encouraged

to be active in their associations and may serve on associational or church evangelism committees. MSCs and partners often speak in associations or churches when state coordinators receive requests for such engagements.

People who apply to become certified as bronze, silver, gold, or platinum partners must meet several requirements.

Please call our office at (770) 410-6331, or e-mail us at interfaith@namb.net to obtain partner requirements.

Strategies and Events

The primary strategy is the IE Partnership Program. Through this program, a person can advance through four levels of increasing expertise (bronze, silver, gold, and platinum) in a specific religion. Each level consists of a workshop that is eight to ten hours in duration, and is designed to train a partner in the history and doctrines of the faith group. The workshop also provides practical witnessing strategies and pedagogical instruction to equip the partner to teach others at his or her level of expertise. Advanced partner levels also include an IE outreach event (practicum). For more information, interested parties can contact their IE state coordinator, call the office of Interfaith Evangelism at (770) 410-6331, or e-mail us at interfaith@namb.net.

Another significant strategy of IE is the interfaith evangelism Awareness Conference. This conference, usually from a half hour to two hours in length, provides a concise overview of a religious group. Awareness conferences are usually led by IE staff, MSCs, or certified partners and are supported by state conventions,

associations, or individual churches. IE staff members and MSCs also conduct awareness conferences at churches, state conventions, collegiate ministry conferences, or evangelism conferences when invited. Awareness conferences conducted by IE staff, MSCs, or selected partners are popular optional seminars at various summer conferences at Ridgecrest and Glorieta LifeWay Conference Centers.

Another important function of IE involves answering e-mail and phone inquiries about the beliefs and practices of various religious groups. Pastors and laypeople are curious when confronted by adherents of unfamiliar religious groups. This is especially true when a family or church member becomes involved with such a group. Thus, IE serves as a resource to provide accurate information to the public about the current religious scene. It has files and resources for quick reference about more than 2,000 subjects and organizations. IE receives numerous e-mails and phone calls requesting information or literature.

Strengths of the IE Team

The SBC is unique among mainline denominations for its work in interfaith evangelism. The depth of knowledge and expertise each IE staff and missionary possesses in varying areas of study makes for a balanced, scholarly approach to religious research. All IE staff and missionaries are skilled researchers, teachers, and preachers who have pastoral ministry experience. They are acquainted with the practical needs in churches.

Another strong point in the IE is its creative use of volunteers. The ministry's growth and its impact for reaching adherents of non-Christian faiths will continue as this team of trained volunteer partners expands.

IE also maintains good relationships with other agencies in the SBC. The team is regularly requested to write and provide conference leaders for other NAMB groups, various departments of LifeWay Christian Resources, Woman's Missionary Union, the International Mission Board, and other SBC entities. IE staff are frequently asked to teach or conduct workshops at the SBC seminaries and other educational institutions in the United States and Canada.

Conclusion

IE is on the cutting edge of evangelism for the 21st century. The United States and Canada have grown more religiously pluralistic in recent decades as new religious movements have appeared. This trend shows no sign of decelerating. The IE staff and missionaries have the imposing task of staying abreast of the latest religious trends. They must provide current, accurate, and

creative methods to Southern Baptists for witness in this religiously diverse environment. IE thus considers itself a crucial component in the Continental strategy and ministry of the North American Mission Board.

Visit Interfaith Evangelism's Web site at

www.namb.net/interfaith

Contact us at interfaith@namb.net



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INTERFAITH EVANGELISM COMPARATIVE BELIEF CHART

"As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith, as you have been taught, abounding in it with thanksgiving" (Col. 2:6-7, NKJV).

The apostle Paul instructed the believers at Colossae to be "established in the faith." To know what a Christian is to believe and why one should believe certain doctrines and truths of the faith is vital for spiritual growth. Additionally, however, to know what others believe and in what ways their beliefs deviate and differ from Christianity can be just as vital.

The purpose of this comparative belief chart is to provide a ready reference for growing, discerning Christians. The chart examines 20 different belief systems including Roman Catholicism, Secular Humanism, Islam, the New Age Movement, Mormonism, and Native American religions. Ten essential doctrines, including views on the Supreme Being, the person of Jesus, and salvation are compared. This overview gives the reader quick and accurate answers to where and how various religions agree and differ with biblical Christianity.

This chart should be read and studied by every believer. With careful reading of it, one can gain a vital understanding and orientation of many non-Christian or pseudo-Christian faith groups present in our world today. Additionally, its contents reveal the distinctive nature of

the Christian gospel as disclosed in John 3:16 (KJV), "For God [one eternal infinite Creator God, existent in three Persons] so loved [He is personal and has great love for the human race, both corporate and individual] the world [all things were made by Him—the Word of God], that he gave his only begotten Son [Jesus was uniquely God in the flesh, born supernaturally of a virgin; who died on the cross for the sins of the world and was raised on the third day], that whosoever [anyone and everyone] believes in him [biblical belief encompasses total trust and faith in Christ as one's personal Savior] should not perish [all of us have sinned and fallen short of God's glory and purpose for our lives], but have everlasting life [heaven is a gift, not to be earned by works or righteous deeds—it is acquired when we believe in Jesus Christ as our personal Savior and Lord]." (See John 1:12).

So, read, appreciate, and grow in your faith in Christ and be as the sons of Issachar were "that had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do" (1 Chron. 12:32).

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Comparing Christianity and Other World Religions										
Elements of Faith	Historic Christianity	Judaism	Islam	Hinduism	Buddhism	Sikhism	Baha'i World Faith	Native American Religions	Secular Humanism	New Age Movement
Supreme Being	One personal/supreme God who is Creator & Lord of everything that exists. He eternally exists as Triune God: Father, Son, Holy Spirit. Gen. 1; Deut. 6:4; Matt. 28:19.	There is one God who is Creator, Deliverer, and Lord of history. He exists in absolute singularity and thus, is somewhat more impersonal and abstract.	God (Allah) is one. Strict monotheism—"There is no God but Allah."	Impersonal Ultimate Reality; or "The absolute" Major Triad: Brahma, Shiva, Vishnu.	Southern Buddhism: irrelevant. Northern Buddhism: Buddhahood.	One God, called Sat Guru ("true name"), who cannot be known by the human mind.	One God who is unknowable except through Manifestations (Messengers).	Personal Supreme Being and Creator, who is generally beneficent; empowers lesser spiritual beings.	Secular Humanists are atheists. They do not believe in the existence of a supernatural Supreme Being.	God (Ultimate Reality) is an impersonal power, often spoken of as energy, consciousness, mind, or truth. God is everything; everything is God.
Key Figures in History	Jesus, the Christ, eternally one with the Father and incarnated supernaturally through the Virgin Mary. John 1:1-12; Matt. 1:18-25.	Rabbi Hillel, Yochanan ben Zakkai, Akiba ben Joseph, Yehuda HaNasi, Sa'adiah Ga'on, Maimonides, Rashi, Joseph Karo, Shabbetai Zevi, Ba'al Shem Tov, Vilna Ga'on, Moses Mendelssohn, Martin Buber	The Prophet Muhammad (or Mohammed) (A.D. 570-632)	Avatars (deities in various form). Gurus are spiritual teachers.	Siddhartha Gautama (who became Buddha, the Enlightened One) 563-483 B.C.	Guru Nanak (A.D. 1469-1539)	Minza Husayn Ali (A.D. 1817-1892), known as Baha'u'llah.	None	While Secular Humanism has no authoritative key figures in history, there have been several influential Humanists. Examples of influential Humanists are such people as: John Dewey, Bertrand Russell, Joseph Fletcher, Margaret Sanger, and Stephen Jay Gould.	None
Person of Jesus Christ	One divine Person, eternal, with two natures—human & divine. Born on earth as a fully human being. Supreme example of God's character & His love for humanity. Full and final revelation of God and His love. John 1:1-13.	A humble and insignificant prophet, but certainly neither the Messiah nor God. Orthodox Judaism considers Him less favorably than Reform Judaism.	A major prophet, spirit of Allah (or God), without sin, but not divine; His miracles are signs that He came from God.	For some Hindus, Jesus was an Avatar or incarnation of God—one among many Avatars; a great spiritual teacher, a guru.	A teacher who may possess Buddhahood or Enlightenment. One among many, not unique.	Not a divine Person, but a man through whom God worked & revealed Himself.	Son of God, but not divine. One of God's Manifestations, who include Krishna, Buddha, Abraham, Moses, Muhammad, Baha'u'llah.	Originally, no reference to Person or work of Jesus Christ.	Secular Humanists view Jesus as just another human teacher. They deny that Jesus is divine.	Jesus was one of many appearances of God throughout the ages, one of many people who were fully aware of their true divinity.
Work of Jesus Christ	Jesus was born, lived, & died in a given time & place, as a unique historical event. He lived a sinless life, died on the cross, arose from the dead, and ascended into heaven. He is the Messiah (Christ), Lord, and Savior, who forgives sin and will come again in glory and power. John 1:14-18; 3:16.	The opinion is somewhat divided. Jesus is seen as a reformer who performed good deeds. However, He also led people astray by claiming to be God. His death did not provide atonement for sin.	Jesus was sent to the children of Israel & faithfully showed the signs of Allah, taught prayer, & brought the gospel (Injil). He did not die on a cross, but Allah took Him into heaven.	Jesus was a great religious teacher whose teachings can be valuable today.	Jesus was a great religious teacher whose teachings can be valuable today.	Taught humans the Golden Rule; His death was not vicarious.	A great prophet-educator for his age; gave divine teachings.	Currently, occasional reference to Jesus as a religious leader who lived a long time ago.	According to Secular Humanists, the death of Jesus Christ has no impact on anyone living today.	Christ is separate from Jesus, the way-shower. Christ is the perfect God idea—the awareness of divinity within each person.
Sources of Authority	Bible (Old & New Testaments). Unique, revealed, factual, accurate, & inspired Word of God. Sole authority for faith & practice. 2 Tim. 3:16-17.	The Hebrew Bible (Tanakh, or the Old Testament), as interpreted by rabbinic tradition found in the Talmud and in the works of medieval commentators. In reality, rabbinic tradition is more authoritative than Scripture.	Qur'an (Koran).	Vedas, Upanishads, Epics, Puranas, and a host of other sacred writings.	Sutras; Tripitaka (The Three Baskets).	Adi Granth (Guru Granth Sahib) considered inspired & authoritative; other sacred writings.	Most Holy Book (Kitab-i-Aqdas).	Oral & written tradition, folklore; accumulated wisdom of the tribe.	Humanists reject supernatural beliefs and doctrines. There are no holy writings in Secular Humanism.	There is no objective source of authority. Sacred writings & devotional material from many traditions have spiritual value.
Doctrine of Humanity	Humanity is part of creation, but distinct from the rest of creation & from God. Human beings are created in God's image. Every person is a unique, precious being of dignity & worth. Gen. 1:26-28.	Man is created in the image of God and does not inherit original sin. Humanity is basically good, free, and self-determining.	Humans are basically pure, but fallible and need guidance. Created by Allah with ability to follow his will; human beings must give account of their conduct on the day of judgment.	Divine eternal soul part of God or Ultimate Reality. Physical body has little worth.	One lifetime for each person, composed of skanda (parts), but many lives for the parts. Concept of anatta (no self) denies existence of a self beyond mental & physical attributes.	Each person is a soul (& part of Universal soul) who has been reborn in this present life.	The human soul, created by God, is basically good. Men & women of all races are equal & responsible.	Human beings are subordinate to supernatural forces & spirit-beings.	Man is a part of nature. Humanity controls its own destiny since there is no God.	Humanity is not distinct from God. Human beings are essentially divine; God is within each person. Everyone has the "Christ spirit"; everyone is potentially good.
The Basic Human Problem	Sin: By their free will, human beings have chosen to sin against God, rejecting His nature, & pursuing a course of life that is opposed to His essential character & revealed law. Gen. 3; Rom. 3:23.	Ignorance of God's law or disinterest in keeping it in accordance with rabbinic tradition. Sin is viewed as virtually criminal behavior, thus most do not see themselves as sinners.	Sin: disobedience of responsible human beings to the law of Allah. Sin is caused by human weakness, forgetfulness, & a spirit of rebellion.	The human condition is suffering, caused by the flow of reality in which souls are continually dying & being reborn). The present existence is an illusion; people are unaware of their oneness with God.	The human condition is suffering, caused by things & the craving (desire) accompanying this attachment.	Sin: choosing to live in self-centeredness; sensual desires preferred to ego-abandoning submission to God.	Sin: lack of knowledge & people's failure to develop their spiritual natures bring disobedience to divine commands taught by Baha'u'llah.	Human beings act in ways that upset the harmony of nature and/or disrupt well-being of the community.	Humanists believe that many of humanity's problems are caused by ignorance, lack of education, and outdated beliefs in the supernatural.	Illusion, ignorance, or lack of perception. People are unaware of their true identity as divine, as one with God. They need to be "enlightened," to find ultimate spiritual knowledge & liberation from the cycle of reincarnation. Their primary need is for holism, to be integrated with the whole.
Solution to the Basic Human Problem	Salvation—release from the guilt & power of sin—is God's gift of grace through Christ's atonement, received through personal faith in Christ. Eph. 2:8-9.	The solutions to the basic human problem are education and greater effort applied to living moral and disciplined lives. Repentance, prayer, and good deeds take the place of sacrifice.	Allah (The Merciful One) acts in mercy. A person's salvation depends largely upon personal observance of the Pillars of the Faith & submission to Allah.	Goal of life is to gain release (liberation) from the cycle of reincarnation & to pass beyond illusion to become one with the divine (Ultimate Reality) by following the proper yoga (path or discipline).	Goal of life is nirvana to eliminate all desire of attachment, particularly by following the Eight-fold Path.	Attaining liberation (release) from the cycle of life, death, & rebirth through repeating the name of God & following the path of devotion.	People attain present & future blessings through faith in God & Baha'u'llah & by performing good works that advance civilization & contribute to world unity & peace.	Well-being of individual & tribe; gained by prayer, pledges, & sacrifice that win attention & help of supernatural forces & departed elders.	Many Humanists believe that the human condition can be improved by using science and its methods of criticism to understand the universe.	People overcome lack of perception by using techniques to change (transform) consciousness. They can attain enlightenment when they step outside ordinary modes of perception into altered states of consciousness that dispel illusory boundaries of individual existence.
Ethics (Value System)	Ultimate values for humanity are based on God's character and His Ten Commandments. Human beings are potentially good, but not inevitably good. They always need God's grace to renew their characters. Ex. 20; 2 Cor. 5:14-21.	Ultimate values for humanity are based on God's character. The 613 commands of the Torah, and their expansion in rabbinic literature, form the ethical guidelines for the Jewish community.	Allah judges human beings for their actions in submitting to Allah, obeying the Shari'ah (holy law), & advancing the Ummah (people of Islam).	Deeds are right if they produce good conditions; deeds are wrong if they produce harm to one's self or to the world in general.	The Eight-fold Path stresses moral virtue, including right action & right working. Right conduct includes loving-kindness, selfless giving to others, & efforts to alleviate human hurts.	Work, worship, & charity should dominate one's life. Sikhs try to conquer & attain rebirth over anger, pride, desire, greed, & ignorance.	Baha'is value the virtues of love, justice, trustworthiness, honesty, humility, & courtesy. They expect every believer to engage in useful work.	Based on well-being of the tribe; individuals expected to fulfill their social roles in the tribe & follow the traditions.	Ethics is autonomous and situational, needing no supernatural sanction.	No moral absolutes. Individual self-rule should be the norm as people follow their own intuition. Root causes of evil are selfish living habits.
Life After Death	Eternal communion with God (heaven) or eternal separation from God (hell). Heb. 9:27; Rev. 20—22.	Range of views: Orthodox—reward or punishment in heaven (Garden of Eden) or hell (Gehinnom). Conservative—vague. Reform—denial of after-life.	Paradise (heaven) for faithful believers & hell (punishment) for nonbelievers & those who commit shirk (apostasy).	Cycles of reincarnation until union with or reabsorption into Ultimate Reality. The desired ultimate state of existence is moksha ("final release").	Possible attainment of nirvana (negation of suffering), a state of being that is realized through eliminating desire.	Reincarnation (transmigration of souls) until one attains absorption into God & the extinguishing of individuality.	Individual (an immortal soul) retains identity, progresses to presence of God. Heaven: rapid progression to God; Hell: slow progression.	Existence in a life patterned after this world, but free of pain & suffering. Wicked are forgotten or annihilated.	Secular Humanists believe that there is no life after death. They deny that there is a soul or spirit that survives death.	Souls are evolving toward union with God & will eventually find spiritual knowledge & liberation from the cycle of rebirth.

Comparing Christianity, Christian Sects, and Non-Christian Cults										
Elements of Faith	Historic Christianity	Roman Catholicism	Seventh-Day Adventist Church	Jehovah's Witnesses	The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormons)	Church of Christ, Scientist	Unity School of Christianity	Church of Scientology*	Unification Church	The Way International
Supreme Being	One personal/supreme God who is Creator & Lord of everything that exists. He eternally exists as Triune God: Father, Son, Holy Spirit. Gen. 1; Deut. 6:4; Matt. 28:19.	There is only one God. God has revealed Himself as three Persons: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. He is Creator and Lord of everything that exists. Gen. 1.	Same as historic Christianity.	One God, properly called Jehovah. His Holy Spirit is an impersonal force. Reject the doctrine of Trinity.	God, (Heavenly Father) is an exalted man with a physical body of flesh & bone. Was a man in a preexistence.	An impersonal but omnipotent being who is Principle, Life, Truth, Love, & Mind.	Impersonal principle, universal intelligence, & Love.	A Supreme Being, but his exact nature is determined by each person.	One person only, with dual characteristics (positive/negative, male/female).	God is one eternal spirit. There is no Trinity. Holy Spirit is a designation for God; "holy spirit" is the power conferred at Pentecost.
Key Figures in History	Jesus, the Christ, eternally one with the Father and incarnated supernaturally through the Virgin Mary. John 1:1-12; Matt. 1:18-25.	Jesus, the Christ, eternally one with God and incarnated supernaturally through the perpetual Virgin Mary, the Mother of God; the Popes and ecumenical church councils have also had great historical significance.	Ellen G. White, who possessed a modern "spirit of prophecy" (1827-1915)	Charles Taze Russell (1852-1916)	Joseph Smith Jr. (1805-1844)	Mary Baker Eddy (1821-1910)	Charles (1854-1948) & Myrtle (1845-1931) Fillmore	L. Ron Hubbard (1911-1986)	Sun Myung Moon (b. Jan. 6, 1920)	Victor Paul Wierwille (1916-1985)
Person of Jesus Christ	One divine Person, eternal, with two natures—human & divine. Born on earth as a fully human being. Supreme example of God's character & His love for humanity. Full and final revelation of God and His love. John 1:1-13.	One divine Person, eternal—fully human & divine. Supreme example of God's character & His love for humanity, full and final revelation of God and His Love. John 1:1-13.	Same as historic Christianity.	A created being with stages of existence: 1. Archangel Michael or the World 2. Jesus, perfect man, became Messiah at His baptism; 3. After His spiritual resurrection, became Michael again but retains the name Jesus.	Jesus is the spiritual & physical offspring of God by procreation. Had a preexistence as God's spirit child and brother of Lucifer.	Jesus, separate from Christ, a human being who more than any other shows the "Christ-ideal."	Jesus was a man inhabited by the Christ-principle spirit.	A great teacher who fully realized his personal divinity as a "clear."	A perfect man who was faithful to God & attained deity; not equal to God.	Not coequal with God; did not preexist before his earthly life. Son of God, but not God the Son. A perfect man, but not divine.
Work of Jesus Christ	Jesus was born, lived, & died in a given time & place, as a unique historical event. He lived a sinless life, died on the cross, arose from the dead, and ascended into heaven. He is the Messiah (Christ), Lord, and Savior, who forgives sin and will come again in glory and power. John 1:14-18; 3:16.	Jesus was born, lived, & died in a given time & place, as a unique historical event. He lived a sinless life, died on the cross, arose from the dead & ascended into heaven. He is the Messiah (Christ), Lord, and Savior, who forgives sin and will come again in glory & power. John 1:14-18; 3:16.	Lived a sinless life, died on the cross as atonement, & rose again. Entered "heavenly sanctuary" in 1844 to initiate "investigative judgment" of those claiming to be Christians.	Christ's ransom sacrifice on a "stake" made salvation possible.	His death guarantees immortality to all regardless of their faith, but one's exaltation must be completed by works. Suffered in Gethsemane for Adam's original sin.	Jesus is a "Way-shower" & Healer.	Jesus was a way-shower whose crucifixion was not sacrificial, but released grace (inspiration).	One Savior among many who teaches people how to be "clear" of engrams (impressions of past experiences).	He was to restore original relationship between God & humanity by marriage. His mission was incomplete because he was crucified before marriage. He is a spiritual, not physical savior.	His ransom death was a legal transaction making salvation possible.
Sources of Authority	Bible (Old & New Testaments). Unique, revealed, factual, accurate, & inspired Word of God. Sole authority for faith & practice. 2 Tim. 3:16-17.	Catholics accept the Bible (OT, Apocrypha, & NT) as the inspired revelation of God. They also accept church tradition and the magisterium (the teaching authority of the Church) as sources of authority.	The Bible as explained to White in her visions & interpreted in her books.	Bible (New World Translation of Holy Scriptures) as interpreted by Watchtower Bible and Tract Society.	Bible (except the "errors"); The Book of Mormon; Doctrine and Covenants; Pearl of Great Price; revelations of the Mormon prophets.	Bible, as interpreted metaphysically by Mary Baker Eddy in Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures.	Bible as interpreted by the Fillmores. It has an outer (literal) meaning & an inner (metaphysical) meaning. Other sacred writings also valued.	Selected writings of Hubbard, particularly Dianetics; The Modern Science of Mental Health.	Bible, as interpreted in Divine Principle (Moon's basic teachings).	Bible (King James Version) as "writings" (studied & explained) by writings of Wierwille (the "keys" to the Bible).
Doctrine of Humanity	Humanity is part of creation, but distinct from the rest of creation & from God. Human beings are created in God's image. Every person is a unique, precious being of dignity & worth. Gen. 1:26-28.	Humanity is part of creation, but distinct from the rest of creation & from God. Human beings are created in God's image. Every person is a unique, precious being of dignity & worth. Gen. 1:26-28.	Same as historic Christianity.	Created in Jehovah's image; a soul, not immortal; capable of responding to Jehovah.	Preexistent spiritual offspring of God; basically good; gods in embryo.	People exist in God's image & likeness, therefore are divine. People are spirit, not matter (which is unreal).	All people possess the Christ-spirit within.	Each person is an immortal, divine soul, basically good, in three parts: soul (thetan), mind (the accumulation of all past experiences), & body (physical).	Created in the image of God (duality: male & female).	Each person is body, soul, & spirit, but not immortal.
The Basic Human Problem	Sin: By their free will, human beings have chosen to sin against God, rejecting His nature, & pursuing a course of life that is opposed to His essential character & revealed law. Gen. 3; Rom. 3:23.	Sin: By their free will, human beings have chosen to sin against God, rejecting His nature & pursuing a course of life that is opposed to His essential character & revealed law. Catholics distinguish between venial sins and mortal sins. Gen. 3; Rom. 3:23.	Sin: People willingly reject commandments of God such as the Ten Commandments, especially violation of eternal seventh-day Sabbath law.	Sin: willful rebellion against Jehovah.	Sin: disobedience to God's laws. Adam's fall, in God's plan, caused loss of immortality. Each person responsible for his or her own sin.	The illusion that matter is real. (Matter, sin, evil, sickness, & death are not real.)	Failure to realize & live up to one's divine potential.	Engrams (learned behavior or conflicts from one's past, including previous lifetimes & pre-natal experiences) prevent individuals from realizing their own divinity.	Human beings broke relationship with God through disobedience & misuse of love & are now related to Satan as result of sexual sin in the Fall.	Adam's fall caused loss of human spirit & broken relationship with God. Little emphasis on individual sins.
Solution to the Basic Human Problem	Salvation—release from the guilt & power of sin—is God's gift of grace through Christ's atonement, received through personal faith in Christ. Eph. 2:8-9.	Salvation is an infused process of grace gained over one's lifetime through faith plus observance of Church sacraments and rituals.	Repentance, faith in Christ as Savior, baptism by immersion, & keeping of commandments.	Allegiance to Jehovah plus works (baptism, faithfulness in Kingdom Hall work; those ignorant of Jehovah given a chance to believe during millennium).	Exaltation or godhood through obedience to Mormon teachings: repentance, faith, baptism, endowments, celestial marriage, tithing. Baptism for the dead saves some non-Mormons posthumously.	Casting out illusions of reality of death in favor of the "all-reality" of spirit.	Through conscious union with Jesus, people can overcome lower human impulses & transform their bodies to make them perpetually healthy, therefore immortal, attaining eternal life (unity with God).	Dianetic counseling (auditing) leads a person to become "clear" of engrams, attain full human potential, & become fully aware of personal divinity.	Accept Jesus Christ for spiritual salvation & the Lord of the Second Advent (Moon) for physical salvation. Pay personal indemnity (works) for self, ancestors, & the world.	Human spirit regained through faith in Jesus Christ. Spiritual maturity, manifested in tongue-speaking, comes through renewed mind. Sinless perfection attainable in this life.
Ethics (Value System)	Ultimate values for humanity are based on God's character and His Ten Commandments. Human beings are potentially good, but not inevitably good. They always need God's grace to renew their characters. Ex. 20; 2 Cor. 5:14-21.	Ultimate values for humanity are based on God's character and His Ten Commandments. Human beings are potentially good, but not inevitably good. They always need God's grace to renew their characters. Ex. 20; 2 Cor. 5:14-21.	Christians expected to keep specific commandments of God, avoid unhealthy foods & lifestyles, & keep seventh-day Sabbath.	Those not loyal to Jehovah are unrighteous; all earthly organizations controlled by Satan; Jehovah's Witnesses required to obey Jehovah's laws as explained by Watchtower Bible and Tract Society.	People are to obey the laws of God; Mormons expected to observe the "Word of Wisdom" (rules for conduct).	Christian Scientists "solemnly promise" to watch & pray for "the mind of Christ," to obey the Golden Rule, & to be merciful, just, & pure.	The kingdom of heaven or harmony is within people, who are to establish the law & order existing in Divine Mind (God). The Golden Rule should be the standard of action among people.	Individuals must be able to put knowledge to use to help themselves & others. The final test: "Did the data and the use of it in life actually improve conditions or didn't it?"	Good society can be achieved only through a peaceful revolution of the heart. People must be transformed from selfishness to unselfishness, centered on the love of God.	The soul/mind (sinful nature) that controls each person can only be "renewed" by proper study. The sign of a renewed mind is speaking in tongues—a sign of sinless perfection.
Life After Death	Eternal communion with God (heaven) or eternal separation from God (hell). Heb. 9:27; Rev. 20—22.	Agree with historic Christianity on heaven and hell. However, Catholics also believe in purgatory, a temporary state where those who die in a state of grace are purified of their sins over time.	Eternal communion is heaven for faithful remnant or annihilation for wicked (no eternal hell).	144,000 "elect" to reign with Christ in Kingdom of God (heaven). Other Jehovah's Witnesses to live on glorified paradise earth. Annihilation for all who reject Jehovah.	One of three kingdoms: 1. Celestial-renewed earth, where men become gods or angels; 2. Terrestrial-planet for righteous non-Mormons; 3. Terrestrial-planet for the wicked. Perdition is reserved for Satan and most wicked.	Since there is no death, individuals move into another plane toward fulfillment in love, light, & truth.	If people live well in this present life, they will also live well in whatever life will follow. People progress through many lifetimes (reincarnation) to ultimate union (unity) with an impersonal God.	Reincarnation of soul (thetan) until it attains the state of spiritual awareness & liberation from matter, energy, space, & time (MEST).	All humans will become divine in an earthly kingdom of God & a perfect relationship with God will be restored.	Soul sleep for all between death & resurrection; finally, heaven (for those whose minds are renewed) or hell (for all others).

* Scientology is not strictly a Christian deviation because it does not claim to be a Christian system, though it claims to be compatible with Christianity and all religions. Scientology can be appropriately classified as a Western-oriented New Consciousness group.