

Comparing Christianity with Sects and Cults

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Elements of Faith	Historic Christianity	Jehovah's Witnesses	Mormons	Church of Christ, Scientist	Unity School of Christianity	Church of Scientology	Unification Church	The Way International	International Church of Christ	Seventh-Day Adventist Church
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.	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.	One God, who reveals Himself as Person; as Father, Son, Holy Spirit. (This group minimizes the role of the Holy Spirit.	Same as historic Christianity
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	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)	Kip McKean (b. May 13, 1954)	Ellen G. White, who possessed a modern "spirit of prophecy" (1827-1915)
Person of Jesus	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 created being with stages of existence: 1. Archangel Michael or the Word. 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.	Same as historic Christianity.	Same as historic Christianity.
Work of Jesus Christ	Jesus was born, lived, & died in a given time & place as a unique historical event. He lived a sinless life & willingly died on the cross as a sacrifice for the sins of humanity. He is Messiah (Christ), Lord and Savior. John 1:14-18; 3:16	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 teach people how to be "clear" of engrams (empressions 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.	Same as historic Christianity.	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
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.	Bible (<i>New World Translation of Holy Scriptures</i>) as interpreted by Watchtower Bible and Tract Society.	Bible (except the "errors"); <i>The Book of Mormon; Doctrine and Covenants; Pearl of Great Price</i> ; revelations of the Mormon prophets.	Bible, as interpreted metaphysically by Mary Baker Eddy in <i>Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures</i>	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 <i>Dianetics: The Modern Science of Mental Health</i> .	Bible, as interpreted in Divine Principle (Moon's basic teachings).	Bible (King James Version) as "worked" (studied & explained) by writings of Wierwille (the "keys" to the Bible).	The Bible as interpreted by elders & evangelists & taught in "Bible talk" sessions.	The Bible as explained to White in her visions & interpreted in her books.

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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.	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.	Human beings are created in the image of God. Every person is born innocent.	Same as historic Christianity.
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: 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 & prenatal 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.	Sin: By their free will, human beings have chosen to sin against God, rejecting His nature & disobeying His laws.	Sin: People willingly reject commandments of God such as the Ten Commandments, especially violation of eternal seventh-day Sabbath law.
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	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 matter, sin, evil sickness, & 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.	Admittance of sin, repentance, becoming a disciple, & baptism by immersion in water for remission of sin by the ICOC.	Repentance, faith in Christ as Savior, baptism by immersion, & keeping of commandments.
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.	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.	Jesus commanded total obedience to a discipler. Not to have such a partner is "to be rebellious to God."	Christians expected to keep specific commandments of God, avoid unhealthy foods & lifestyles, & keep seventh-day Sabbath.
Life After Death	Eternal communion with God (heaven) or eternal separation from God (hell). Heb. 9:27; Rev. 20-22	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. Telesstial-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).	Eternal communion with God (heaven) for faithful disciples or eternal separation from God (hell) for those unfaithful.	Eternal communion is heaven for faithful remnant or annihilation for wicked (no eternal hell).

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