



UNDERSTANDING CHRISTIANITY

A monthly forum on the third *Saturday* of each month from 6:30 to 7:30 or 8 P.M. following Evening Prayer at 6
 Forums usually with Canon Richard T. Nolan
retired philosophy & religion professor, editor of www.philosophy-religion.org
Saturday, January 19, 2008

TOPIC:

COMPARATIVE CHRISTIANITIES

an exploration of some traditions self-designated as "Christian" to see what beliefs and practices they might have in common and where they might be incompatible

A Prayer To Be Said In Unison

**Almighty God, who has committed to your holy Church
 the care and nurture of all the faithful;
 Enlighten with your wisdom those who teach and those who learn,
 that, rejoicing in the knowledge of your truth,
 they may worship and serve you from generation to generation;
 through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

[February 16 Forum Topic: Reincarnation, Immortality, Resurrection, or Oblivion? - What They Are and Which is Credible?]

PRELIMINARY CONSIDERATIONS

When religions [even “religions” or denominations within a religion (such as, Lutheranism within Christianity)] are studied within their own contexts, students will discover two significant features:

- (1) each religion, at all levels, focus on the same issues –
 - a. the nature of ultimate reality or God
 - b. the nature of the universe
 - c. human nature and destiny
 - d. religious knowledge (via revelation and/or enlightenment)
 - e. consequences for living (including ethics/morality)

- (2) a scholarly comparison of these issues among religions will often yield significantly different and even incompatible understandings.

“Interfaith” dialogue and carefully prepared Services might take place honestly and with mutual respect - when the differences are acknowledged. The tendency among some “interfaith” efforts is such that they become exercises in sentimental piety at best. At worst, they inadvertently dishonor the religious traditions involved and compromise the participants’ integrity.

Unfortunately, superficial approaches declare that all religions are fundamentally the same, in that they share the same context with identical ultimate realities or God. Many observers, even dabbling scholars, insist that all religions are manifestations of a shared “mystical religion” or “perennial philosophy.” Such individuals claim, for example, that a shared notion of “love” is a common feature among religions. Incorrect! Although the word “love” may appear globally, the actual meanings and practical applications of “love” vary enormously, even to the point of incompatibility.

See subsites of www.philosophy-religion.org for scholarly explorations of: Biblical Thought, Perennial Philosophy, and many items in World Religions and All Handouts.

Comparison of Christian Denominations' Beliefs

The following chart compares the similarities and differences between the beliefs, doctrine and theology of major Christian denominations. Please note that the brief summaries and excerpts provided here do not reflect all individuals or churches in each denomination, but they are believed to represent the majority view and taken from official statements where available.

Religious Authority	<u>Catholic</u>	<u>Orthodox</u>	<u>Lutheran</u>	<u>Reformed/ Presbyterian</u>	<u>Anglican/ Episcopalian</u>	Methodist/ Wesleyan	<u>Baptist</u>
Creeds & Confessions	Many, but special focus on Apostles' Creed and Nicene Creed (<u>Catechism, 2nd ed.</u>)	Nicene Creed is "the authoritative expression of the fundamental beliefs of the Orthodox Church." (<u>GOAA</u>)	Apostles' Creed, Nicene Creed, Athanasian Creed, Augsburg Confession, Formula of Concord (<u>ELCA</u>) (<u>LCMS</u>)	Apostles' Creed, Nicene Creed, Westminster Confession	"We understand the Apostles' creed as the baptismal symbol, and the Nicene creed as the sufficient statement of the	Nicene and Apostles' (<u>UMC</u>)	"We have tended to avoid embracing prepared creeds or other statements that might compromise our obligation to interpret

					Christian faith." (CofE; Art. 7)		Scripture as individuals within the community of faith under the guidance of the Holy Spirit." (ABC)
Sacred Text	Bible w/ <u>Apocrypha</u>	Bible w/ <u>Apocrypha</u>	Bible - Apocryphal books can be "useful" reading and can help to increase one's faith. (ELCA)	Bible (PCUSA)	Bible. Apocrypha used only for edification (Art. 7). Tradition and reason assist interpretation. (ECUSA)	Bible	Bible
Inspiration & Inerrancy of the Bible	"The books of Scripture firmly, faithfully, and without error teach that truth which God, for the sake of our salvation, wished to see confided to the Sacred Scriptures." (Catechism, 2nd ed.)	"God's inspiration is confined to the original languages and utterances, not the many translations." (GOAA) "While the Bible is treasured as a valuable written record of God's revelation, it does not contain wholly that revelation." (GOAA)	Inspired and inerrant. (LCMS) Inspired but not inerrant. (ELCA)	The Bible is inspired. "For some, that means the Bible is inerrant. For others, it means that even though the Bible is culturally conditioned and not necessarily factual or even always true, it breathes with the life of God." (PCUSA)	The OT and NT contain all things necessary for salvation. (CofE)	Inspired and inerrant in original manuscripts, "and have been transmitted to the present without corruption of any essential doctrine." (WC)	"written by men and divinely inspired. It has God for its author, salvation for its end, and truth, without any mixture of error, for its matter." (SBC) "the final authority and trustworthy for faith and practice." (ABC) Inspired by God, written by humans (MB)
Sources of Doctrine	Bible, church fathers, popes, bishops; Seven Ecumenical Councils; Trent, Vatican, and other Catholic councils	"The Scriptures, both the Old and New Testaments, along with Sacred Apostolic Tradition." Seven Ecumenical Councils. (GOAA)	Bible alone	"Our standards of belief are to be found in the Bible and in the Church's historic Confession of Faith." (CofS)	"The Scriptures and the Gospels, the Apostolic Church and the early Church Fathers, are the foundation of Anglican faith and worship."	"The Holy Scripture contains all things necessary to salvation." (UMC)	"We hold the Scriptures, the Old and New Testaments, as our final authority. We accept no humanly devised confession or creed as binding." (ABC)
God & Spirits	<u>Catholic</u>	<u>Orthodox</u>	<u>Lutheran</u>	<u>Reformed/ Presbyterian</u>	<u>Anglican/ Episcopalian</u>	<u>Methodist/ Wesleyan</u>	<u>Baptist</u>
<u>The Trinity</u>	"The mystery of the Most Holy Trinity is the central mystery of the Christian faith and of Christian life." (Catechism, 261)	"The fundamental truth of the Orthodox Church is the faith revealed in the True God: the Holy Trinity of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost." (GOAA)	"We teach that the one true God. is the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost, three distinct persons, but of one and the same divine essence, equal in power, equal in eternity, equal in majesty, because each person possesses the one divine essence." (LCMS)	"We trust in the one triune God." (PCUSA)	"There is only one God, the Creator of the universe, who has three 'persons' or aspects, inseparable yet unique parts of the whole." (ECUSA)	"With Christians of other communions we confess belief in the triune God— Father, Son, and Holy Spirit." (UMC) "We believe in the one living and true God... Within this unity there are three persons of one essential nature, power and eternity--	"The eternal triune God reveals Himself to us as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, with distinct personal attributes, but without division of nature, essence, or being." (SBC)

						the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit." (<u>WC</u>)	
<u>Nature of Christ</u>	"The Son is consubstantial with the Father, which means that, in the Father and with the Father the Son is one and the same God." (<u>Catechism, 262</u>)	"Christ was born with two perfect natures, the divine and human, as God-man." (<u>GOAA</u>)	"True God, begotten of the Father from eternity, and also true man, born of the Virgin Mary, [and] Lord." (<u>Sm. Catech.</u>)	Christ is "fully human, fully God." (<u>PCUSA</u>)	"Jesus is the complete revelation of God to us, and as such, Jesus, although fully human with us, is also fully God—fully divine." (<u>ECUSA</u>)	"The Son, who is the ... very and eternal God, of one substance with the Father, took man's nature... so that two whole and perfect natures... were joined together in one person, never to be divided; whereof is one Christ, very God and very Man." (<u>UMC, Art. 2</u>)	Christ "is the One Mediator, fully God, fully man, in whose Person is effected the reconciliation between God and man." (<u>SBC</u>)
<u>Resurrection of Christ</u>	"The mystery of Christ's resurrection is a real event, with manifestations that were historically verified." (<u>Catechism, 639</u>)	"The Resurrection of Christ is considered by the Church to be the supreme declaration of faith." (<u>GOAA</u>)	"ELCA Lutherans believe that what history does is to demonstrate the disciples' faith in the resurrection. Their witness and testimony to Jesus' post-death appearances make it abundantly clear that the resurrection was a primary object of the apostolic proclamation from Christianity's very beginning." (<u>ELCA</u>)	Christ "died, was buried, and was resurrected by God. For Christians, this resurrection is God's most amazing miracle and proof that Jesus was indeed divine." (<u>PCUSA</u>)	"We believe that as a fully human person, Jesus died on the cross at Jerusalem, just as all humans die, yet death could not keep him, and so he was raised from the dead to life again." (<u>ECUSA</u>)	"Christ did truly rise again from the dead, and took again his body, with all things appertaining to the perfection of man's nature, wherewith he ascended into heaven." (<u>UMC, Art. 3</u>)	
<u>Holy Spirit</u>	The Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and from the Son (<u>Catechism, 264</u>)	"The Holy Spirit is the Third Person of the Holy Trinity, Who proceeds from the Father only." (<u>GOAA</u>)	"The Holy Spirit - as person - might be said to be one of God's 'three faces'.. In carrying on Jesus' earthly ministry, the Spirit's ongoing work is to reveal truth, give life and strengthen faith." (<u>ELCA</u>)	"We trust in God the Holy Spirit, everywhere the giver and renewer of life." (<u>PCUSA</u>)	"This is the aspect of God that is at work in the world, that inspires us, that speaks to us and strengthens us to do the often difficult work that our faith demands of us." (<u>ECUSA</u>)	"The Holy Ghost, proceeding from the Father and the Son, is of one substance, majesty, and glory with the Father and the Son, very and eternal God." (<u>UMC Art. 4</u>) "We believe in the Holy Spirit who proceeds from the Father and the Son, and is... truly and eternally God." (<u>WC</u>)	"The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of God, fully divine. He inspired holy men of old to write the Scriptures. Through illumination He enables men to understand truth." (<u>SBC</u>)
<u>Angels</u>	"The existence of the spiritual, non-corporeal beings that Sacred Scripture usually calls "angels" is a truth of faith.		"Most ELCA Lutherans will agree that belief in angels is a non-issue. We simply accept that they are in the	"Angelology has not traditionally been emphasized in the Reformed churches...."			

	The witness of Scripture is as clear as the unanimity of Tradition... They are personal and immortal creatures, surpassing in perfection all visible creatures." (<u>Catechism 328-330</u>)		Bible and may well be part of the realities of heaven that we will not fully understand in this life." (<u>ELCA</u>)	Calvin affirmed their existence as "celestial spirits," but doubted idea of personal guardian angels. (<u>PCUSA</u>)			
Satan and Demons	Demons are fallen angels who can never repent. Satan is a pure spirit, powerful and evil, but limited by God's providence. (<u>Catechism 391-95</u>)		Some ELCA Lutherans understand Satan to be a very real being, others view Satan metaphorically. (<u>ELCA</u>)				Historic Baptists believe in the literal reality and actual personality of Satan... though they certainly do not perceive him as the caricatured red figure with horns, a long tail, and a pitchfork. (<u>BaptistPillar.com</u>)
<u>Mary</u>	Mary had no original sin, remained free of sin throughout her life, is "Mother of God" and the new Eve. (<u>Catechism, 508-10</u>) Bodily assumption into heaven instead of death. (<u>Catechism, 966</u>)	Theotokos ("God-Bearer"). Honored highly, but no immaculate conception or bodily assumption into the heavens. (<u>GOAA</u>)		Mary should not be regarded as a mediator between man and God, but she should be honored as "God-bearer" and a model for Christians. (<u>PCUSA</u>)		Mary was the mother of Jesus and one of his disciples. (<u>UMC</u>) Virgin birth affirmed, immaculate conception denied. (<u>UMC</u>)	
Sin & Salvation	<u>Catholic</u>	<u>Orthodox</u>	<u>Lutheran</u>	<u>Reformed/ Presbyterian</u>	<u>Anglican/ Episcopalian</u>	<u>Methodist/ Wesleyan</u>	<u>Baptist</u>
<u>Human Nature</u>	"Being in the image of God the human individual possesses the dignity of a person, who is ... capable of self-knowledge, of self-possession and of freely giving himself and entering into communion with other persons. And he is called by grace to a covenant with his Creator, to offer him a response of faith and love that no other creature can give." (<u>Catech 357</u>)	Humanity was created in the image and likeness of God. "'Image' is... intellect, emotion, ethical judgment, and self-determination. ... The 'likeness' is the human potential to become like God." (<u>GOAA</u>)	"The first man was not brutelike nor merely capable of intellectual development, but ... God created man in His own image." (<u>LCMS</u>)		"We are part of God's creation, made in the image of God... [which] means that we are free to make choices: to love, to create, to reason, and to live in harmony with creation and with God." (<u>BCP 845</u>)		
Body & Soul	"The unity of soul and body is so profound that one has to consider the soul to be the	Material and spiritual realities are "closely bound together. The icon	Soul is not an independent entity but the "life principle" of the self, which is a psycho-				

	"form" of the body...; spirit and matter, in man, are not two natures united, but rather their union forms a single nature." (<u>Catech 365</u>)	is an example of this belief... Human life and human fulfillment are inextricably bound to both the physical and the spiritual dimensions of human existence." (<u>GOAA</u>)	physical organism. (<u>ELCA</u>)				
<u>Original Sin</u>	Only a tendency to sin. "Luther and Calvin taught as their fundamental error that no free will properly so called remained in man after the fall of our first parents... and that man in all his actions sins." (<u>CE</u>)	"In fallen humanity [the image of God] remains part of human nature, albeit darkened, wounded, and weakened." (<u>GOAA</u>) An unnatural condition of human life that ends in death. (<u>EB</u>)	Adam's offspring "have lost the original knowledge, righteousness, and holiness, and thus all men are sinners already by birth, dead in sins, inclined to all evil, and subject to the wrath of God." (<u>LCMS</u>)	"No one of us is good enough on our own--we are all dependent upon God's goodness and mercy... from the kindest, most devoted churchgoer to the most blatant sinner." (<u>PCUSA</u>)		"Man is very far gone from original righteousness, and of his own nature inclined to evil, and that continually." (<u>UMC</u>) "Humans are very far gone from original righteousness, and by nature are continually inclined to evil." (<u>WC</u>)	
Free will	Free to do good or evil. "God has endowed us with reason and free-will, and a sense of responsibility." (<u>CE</u>)	"Man is truly free only when he is in communion with God; otherwise he is only a slave to his body or to the world." (<u>Encyc. Britannica</u>) At the Fall, "man's will became blurred, but did not disappear." (<u>GOAA</u>)	Free only to do evil	Free only to do evil Presbyterians believe it is through the action of God working in us that we become aware of our sinfulness and our need for God's mercy and forgiveness." (<u>PCUSA</u>)		"We have no power to do good works, pleasant and acceptable to God, without the grace of God by Christ preventing us." (<u>UMC</u>)	"The freedom to respond to the Lordship of Christ in all circumstances is fundamental to the Christian gospel and to human dignity." (<u>ABC</u>)
Atonement (Purpose of Christ's Death)	"By his death and Resurrection, Jesus Christ has "opened" heaven to us." (<u>Catech 1026</u>) Also created merit that is shared with sinners through sacraments.	"Christ enlightens the minds of the people, purifies their hearts and frees their wills from the bondage of the devil. Christ became flesh to make reconciliation for the sins of the people." (<u>GOAA</u>)	"The purpose of this miraculous incarnation of the Son of God was that He might become the Mediator between God and men, both fulfilling the divine Law and suffering and dying in the place of mankind. In this manner God reconciled the whole sinful world unto Himself." (<u>LCMS</u>)	"Through Jesus' death and resurrection God triumphed over sin." (<u>PCUSA</u>)		Christ " truly suffered, was crucified, dead, and buried, to reconcile his Father to us, and to be a sacrifice, not only for original guilt, but also for actual sins of men. " (<u>UMC</u>) "Christ's offering of himself... through His sufferings and meritorious death on the cross, provides the perfect redemption and atonement for the sins of the	Christ "honored the divine law by His personal obedience, and in His substitutionary death on the cross He made provision for the redemption of men from sin." (<u>SBC</u>)

						whole world." (<u>WC</u>)	
Means of Salvation	Received at baptism; may be lost by mortal sin; regained by penance	"The acceptance of Christ as the Savior through confession in Christ as the True God is the highest gift given to the believer by the Holy Spirit. ...acceptance is his own choice through his own free will. This is why one is responsible for his own fate." (<u>GOAA</u>)	"Faith in Christ is the only way for men to obtain personal reconciliation with God, that is, forgiveness of sins" (<u>LCMS</u>)	"We are able to choose God because God first chose us." (<u>PCUSA</u>)	"We are accounted righteous before God, only for the merit of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ by Faith, and not for our own works or deservings." (<u>Art. XI</u>)	"We are accounted righteous before God only for the merit of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, by faith, and not for our own works or deservings." (<u>UMC</u>) "The final destiny of each person is determined by God's grace and that person's response, evidenced inevitably by a moral character which results from that individual's personal and volitional choices." (<u>WC</u>)	"Salvation involves the redemption of the whole man, and is offered freely to all who accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour." (<u>SBC</u>)
Grace	Prevenient grace helps one believe; efficacious grace cooperates with the human will to do good		Common grace enabling good works given to all; sufficient grace for salvation given to elect only				
Predestination	Predestination to heaven only, and related to God's foreknowledge. "God predestines no one to go to hell." (<u>Catech 1037</u>)	Seeks a middle ground between Pelagianism and Augustinian predestination. (<u>GOAA</u>)	Predestination to heaven only. "There is no... predestination to damnation." (<u>LCMS</u>)	"We are able to choose God because God first chose us." (<u>PCUSA</u>) Some modern Presbyterians are "very concerned about the few statements in the confessions" suggesting predestination to hell. (<u>PCUSA</u>)	"Predestination to Life is the everlasting purpose of God... to deliver from curse and damnation those whom he hath chosen in Christ out of mankind, and to bring them by Christ to everlasting salvation, as vessels made to honour." (<u>Art. 17</u>)	Affirmed, but understood in terms of God choosing those he knew would freely believe	Affirmed - "Election is the gracious purpose of God, according to which He regenerates, justifies, sanctifies, and glorifies sinners. It is consistent with the free agency of man." (<u>SBC</u>)
Perseverance Once Saved	Can lose salvation. "Mortal sin cuts us off entirely from our true last end." (<u>CE</u>) Perseverance to the end is a gift of God, but we must cooperate with God's gift. (<u>CE</u>)					"Sanctification is that renewal of our fallen nature... whereby we are... enabled, through grace, to love God with all our hearts and to walk in his holy commandments blameless." (<u>UMC</u>)	Salvation cannot be lost. "Those whom God has accepted in Christ, and sanctified by His Spirit, will never fall away from the state of grace, but shall persevere to the end." (<u>SBC</u>)

						Possible to lose salvation if fall into sin without repentance. (WC)	
Good works	Meritorious		Good works in the eyes of God "are done for the glory of God and the good of man, according to the rule of divine Law." True good works cannot be done until saved without works. (LCMS)	Good works not sufficient for avoiding God's judgment, but follow after salvation. Good works done without faith are not pleasant to God. (Arts. 12-13)		"Although good works, which are the fruits of faith, and follow after justification, cannot put away our sins, and endure the severity of God's judgment; yet are they pleasing and acceptable to God in Christ, and spring out of a true and lively faith." (UMC)	"Those who truly have faith in Christ necessarily live out that faith expressing compassion for others for whom He died." (ABC)
End Times	"At the end of time, the Kingdom of God will come in its fullness. After the universal judgment, the righteous will reign for ever with Christ, glorified in body and soul. The universe itself will be renewed." (Catech 1042)		"We reject every type of millennialism, or Chiliasm, the opinions that Christ will return visibly to this earth a thousand years before the end of the world." (LCMS)	When and how the end will come are open questions, but "the cosmos will be renewed, perfected, purged of impurities, and subjected to the rule of God." (PCUSA) "There is considerable latitude for variations in eschatological position within the Reformed Tradition." (PCUSA)		"The resurrection of the righteous dead will occur at Christ's Second Coming, and the resurrection of the wicked will occur at a later time." (WC)	"God, in His own time and in His own way, will bring the world to its appropriate end. According to His promise, Jesus Christ will return personally and visibly in glory to the earth; the dead will be raised; and Christ will judge all men in righteousness."
Judgment						God's "judgment will culminate in the final meeting of all persons before His throne of great majesty and power, where records will be examined and final rewards and punishments will be administered." (WC)	
Heaven	Heaven is "blessed communion with God and all who are in Christ" (Catech			"In their spiritual bodies the saints will live forever in rapt		"Heaven with its eternal glory and the blessedness of Christ's presence is the final	

	1027) and "the ultimate end and fulfillment of the deepest human longings, the state of supreme, definitive happiness." (<u>Catech 1024</u>)			adoration of God." (<u>PCUSA</u>)		abode of those who choose the salvation which God provides through Jesus Christ." (<u>WC</u>)	
<u>Purgatory</u>	Affirmed - " All who die in God's grace and friendship, but still imperfectly purified, after death they undergo purification, so as to achieve the holiness necessary to enter the joy of heaven." (<u>Catech 1030</u>)	Denied (<u>GOAA</u>)	Denied.	Denied.	Denied.	Denied. Purgatory is "vainly invented and grounded upon no warrant of Scripture, but repugnant to the Word of God." (<u>UMC</u>)	Denied.
<u>Eternal Hell</u>	Affirmed. "The chief punishment of hell is eternal separation from God." (<u>Catech 1030</u>)	Affirmed. (<u>GOAA</u>)	Affirmed.	Affirmed by some. "In a 1996 Presbyterian Panel survey only 51 percent of members and 46 percent of pastors said they believed in hell." (<u>PCUSA</u>)	Affirmed.	Affirmed. "Hell with its everlasting misery and separation from God is the final abode of those who neglect [God's] great salvation." (<u>WC</u>)	Affirmed.
Miscellaneous	<u>Catholic</u>	<u>Orthodox</u>	<u>Lutheran</u>	<u>Reformed/ Presbyterian</u>	<u>Anglican/ Episcopalian</u>	Methodist/ Wesleyan	<u>Baptist</u>
<u>The Church</u>	"The sole Church of Christ which in the Creed we profess to be one, holy, catholic, and apostolic, subsists in the Catholic Church, which is governed by the successor of Peter and by the bishops in communion with him." (<u>Catech 870</u>)		Church consists of baptized people who have received Christ as the Son of God and Savior of the world. (<u>ELCA</u>) Church made of "all those who have despaired of their own righteousness before God and believe that God forgives their sins for Christ's sake." (<u>LCMS</u>)		"The visible Church of Christ is a congregation of faithful men, in which the pure Word of God is preached, and the Sacraments be duly ministered according to Christ's ordinance, in all those things that of necessity are requisite to the same." (Article 19)	"The visible church of Christ is a congregation of faithful men in which the pure Word of God is preached, and the Sacraments duly administered." (<u>UMC</u>) "The church includes both those believers who have gone to be with the Lord and those who remain on the earth." (<u>WC 240</u>)	"A New Testament church is. an autonomous local congregation of baptized believers." (<u>SBC</u>) "The Church is a gathered fellowship of regenerated believers, a sign of the coming universal reign of God." (<u>ABC</u>)
<u>Other Denominations</u>	"The sole Church of Christ which in the Creed we profess to be one, holy, catholic, and apostolic, subsists in the Catholic Church... Nevertheless, many elements of sanctification and of truth	"The Orthodox Church continuously and without interruption is the true keeper of the truths of the Undivided Church, without omissions or additions." (<u>GOAA</u>)	"The invisible communion of all believers" includes visible church communions where, "along with error, so much of the Word of God still remains that men may be brought to the knowledge of	"The Church of Scotland... recognises the obligation to seek and promote union with other Churches in which it finds the Word to be purely preached, the	"The Church of England is committed to working towards the goal of full visible unity within the Christian Church." (<u>CofE</u>)	"The branches of Christ's church have developed diverse traditions that enlarge our store of shared understandings. Our avowed ecumenical commitment as United	"Cooperation is desirable between the various Christian denominations, when the end to be attained is itself justified, and when such cooperation involves no violation of conscience or

	are found outside its visible confines." (<u>Catech 870</u>) Those "who believe in Christ and have been properly baptized are put in a certain, although imperfect, communion with the Catholic Church." (<u>Catech 838</u>)	Orthodox do not seek to proselytize non-Orthodox Christians, but Orthodox who join a different Christian church are apostates. (<u>GOAA</u>)	their sins and to faith in the forgiveness of sins, which Christ has gained for all men." (<u>LCMS</u>) Warn against Unitarianism. (<u>LCMS, 1932</u>)	sacraments administered according to Christ's ordinance, and discipline rightly exercised." (<u>CofS</u>)		Methodists is to gather our own doctrinal emphases into the larger Christian unity, there to be made more meaningful in a richer whole." (<u>UMC</u>)	compromise of loyalty to Christ and His Word as revealed in the New Testament." (<u>SBC</u>) "American Baptist Churches USA respects the variety of theological understandings that its members, and other Christians, have embraced." (<u>ABC</u>)
Other Religions	"Many elements of sanctification and of truth are found outside [the Catholic Church's] visible confines." (<u>Catech 870</u>)	"The majority of Orthodox scholars would accept inclusivism... This view holds firmly to the centrality of Christ... yet acknowledges that salvation can be found outside Christianity." (<u>GOAA</u>)	"Faith in Christ is the only way for men to obtain personal reconciliation with God." (<u>LCMS</u>) "There is a large hope for salvation, for all people whenever or wherever they might have lived and no matter how religious or irreligious they may have proved to be themselves." (<u>ELCA</u>)		"The Church of England... seeks to build up good relations with people of other faith traditions, and to cooperate with them where possible in service to society." (<u>CofE</u>)		"There is no salvation apart from personal faith in Jesus Christ as Lord." (<u>SBC</u>) "Cherishing our own God-given gift of freedom has motivated us to support religious freedom for all to seek God's will." (<u>ABC</u>)
	<u>Catholic</u>	<u>Orthodox</u>	<u>Lutheran</u>	<u>Reformed/ Presbyterian</u>	<u>Anglican/ Episcopalian</u>	Methodist/ Wesleyan	<u>Baptist</u>

Comparison of Mormonism and Mainstream Christianity

Whether Mormons should be considered "Christians" is a controversial and rather complicated issue. Many Catholics and Protestants do not consider Mormons to be Christians because they believe the differences in doctrines are more dramatic and more fundamental than those between Christian denominations.

On other hand, religious studies books tend to group Mormons in with Christians because Mormons regard themselves as Christians, Mormonism emerged in a Christian context, and Mormonism shares much in common with other forms of Christianity.

Mormons also consider themselves Christians for much the same reasons as listed above. However, they consider themselves to be significantly different from other branches of Christianity. Mormons regard themselves as neither Catholic nor Protestant, viewing both of those faiths as corruptions of true Christianity, which has been restored by Mormonism. 1

The following chart provides a quick-reference guide to the major similarities and differences between the beliefs and practices of Mormonism and mainstream Protestant Christianity. As is always the case with charts, the information is simplified for brevity and should be used alongside more complete explanations. The beliefs listed for both Mormons and Protestant Christians represent those of most, but not all, churches or individuals within each tradition.

	<u>Mormonism</u>	<u>Mainstream Christianity</u>
Religious Authority	All sacred texts equally, continuing revelations	Bible (all), ecumenical councils and creeds (Catholic and Orthodox), official papal pronouncements (Catholic), continuing revelations (Pentecostal)
Sacred Texts	Bible, Book of Mormon, Doctrine and Covenants, Pearl of Great Price	<u>Bible</u> (some include <u>Apocrypha</u>)
Trinity	Rejected - Father, Son and Holy Spirit are three distinct beings who are "one in purpose"	<u>Affirmed</u> - Father, Son and Holy Spirit are of the "same substance"; three persons in one being
God	<u>Heavenly Father</u> , who has a physical body	<u>Trinitarian God</u> , who does not have a body
Jesus Christ	Son of God, Savior, originally one of the spirit beings that all humans used to be (see <u>Jesus Christ</u>). Has a physical body.	Son of God, Word of God, God, second Person of the Trinity (see <u>Christology</u>)
Holy Spirit	A spirit being who is a separate being from God and Jesus.	God, Third Person of the Trinity
Original sin	Denied (see <u>Human Nature</u>)	Affirmed (by most denominations)
Free will	Free to do good or evil	Free will to do good is seriously impaired
Purpose of Christ's Incarnation	Teach about God, provide a model for right living, die <u>sacrificially</u> for human sin (see <u>Jesus Christ</u>)	Teach about God, provide a model for right living, <u>die sacrificially</u> for human sin, reveal God directly to humanity
Resurrection of Christ?	Yes	Yes
Salvation	Both faith and works; <u>works emphasized</u> .	Both faith and works; <u>faith emphasized (in most denominations)</u>
Second chance after death?	Yes, during a period of "learning and preparation" after death	No
Afterlife	Spirits go to the spirit world, undergo preparation, then rejoined with bodies in the resurrection (see <u>Afterlife</u>)	Souls of wicked sent to Hell, believers go to Heaven for eternity (see <u>Afterlife</u>)
Hell	Place (or state of being) of torment and distance from God. It can be temporary if repent, otherwise is eternal.	Place (or state of being) of eternal torment and distance from God.

Place of Worship	<u>Chapel or Temple</u>	Church
Meaning of Sacraments	Means of grace (see Salvation)	Symbolic acts commanded by Christ (some Protestant); means of grace if received with faith (Catholic, Orthodox, and some Protestant).
Number of Sacraments	Four "principles and ordinances": faith, repentance, baptism, and laying on of hands	Two: Baptism and Lord's Supper (seven in Catholicism)
Symbols	Beehive	<u>Cross</u> , <u>fish & others</u>
Holidays	Easter, Christmas, national and local holidays, birthdays, celebrations of events in Mormon history	<u>Easter</u> , <u>Christmas</u> , saint's days, several others
	<u>Mormonism</u>	<u>Mainstream Christianity</u>

THE PLURALISM PROJECT
AT HARVARD UNIVERSITY

The Pluralism Project at Harvard University

SELECTED LINKS *Updated on December 14, 2007*

Christianity

African Methodist Episcopal Church

The oldest African-American Christian denomination in the United States.

www.ame-today.com

The Alliance of Baptists

An alliance of individuals and churches that works to preserve Baptist traditions and principles through relationships with Baptists bodies and the larger Christian community.

www.allianceofbaptists.org

American Baptist Churches USA

History, ministry, and mission of the American Baptist Churches.

www.abc-usa.org

Assemblies of God

The world's largest Pentecostal denomination; emphasizes baptism in the Holy Spirit, salvation, divine healing, and the second coming of Christ.

www.ag.org

The Christian Century

An ecumenical weekly focusing on Christian faith, theology, and practice in response to the challenges of our time.

www.christiancentury.org

Christian Churches, Churches of Christ

The fastest growing Protestant denomination in the US; an undenominational church with no central headquarters.

church-of-christ.org

Christianity Today

A monthly evangelical Christian magazine covering contemporary events, opinions, theology, and practice.

www.christianitytoday.com

Church of God in Christ

The oldest Pentecostal denomination in the United States.

www.cogic.org

Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

The history, beliefs, and resources of the community commonly known as Mormons.

www.lds.org

Commonweal

A bi-weekly lay Catholic review of public affairs, religion, literature, and the arts.

www.commonwealmagazine.org

Ecumenical Women 2000+

An ecumenical coalition of organizations at the United Nations that focus on religion, human rights, and gender in order to raise the status of women and human rights.

www.ecumenicalwomenun.org

Episcopal Church, USA

Beliefs, programs, and commitments of the Episcopal Church USA, part of the worldwide Anglican communion.

www.dfms.org

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

History, organizational structure, beliefs and social commitments of the ELCA.

www.elca.org

Justice for Women Working Group, National Council of Churches of Christ

An ecumenical working group of the NCCC that helps member communions in their work toward justice for women in church and society.

www.ncccusa.org/nmu/jw.html

The Lutheran

The monthly magazine of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

www.thelutheran.org

National Association of Evangelicals

Values, mission, and manifesto of the 43,000 member churches of the NAE.

www.nae.net

National Baptist Convention, USA

The largest African American Christian denomination and the nation's largest African American organization.

www.nationalbaptist.org

National Conference of Catholic Bishops (NCCB)

A professional organization for Catholic bishops addressing issues of Catholic doctrine and education.

www.nccbuscc.org

National Council of Churches of Christ

A broad ecumenical coalition of Christian churches, engaging 36 Protestant, Anglican, Orthodox, historic African-American and Living Peace denominations, and speaking to the critical issues of the world. (For a list of member communions and denominations, see:

www.ncccusa.org/members/index.html)

www.ncccusa.org

NETWORK: A National Catholic Social Justice Lobby

A progressive lobby that works to influence Congress on issues of peace and justice based on Catholic Social Teaching.

www.networklobby.org

Orthodox Church in America

An English-speaking Orthodox Church with roots in Russian Orthodoxy which seeks to include a wide range of American Orthodox Christians.

www.oca.org

Presbyterian Church, USA

Beliefs and programs of America's largest Presbyterian denomination; addresses the political, social, and ethical issues of today.

www.pcusa.org

Response

A bi-monthly publication by United Methodist Women on issues of mission work.

gbgm-umc.org/Response

Sojourners: Faith, Politics, and Culture

A monthly magazine of the socially committed Evangelical movement.

www.sojo.net

Southern Baptist Convention

America's largest Protestant denomination, a largely conservative Baptist consortium with over 42,000 member churches.

www.sbc.net

Tirzah: Young Adult Ecumenical Women

An ecumenical coalition of young women that grew out of the work of the Justice for Women Working Group of the National Council of Churches of Christ.

www.tirzahwomen.net

Unitarian Universalist Association

The principles and purposes of the Unitarian Universalist Association, a history of the Unitarian Universalist movement, and a directory of UUA fellowships.

www.uua.org

United Methodist Church

The mission, beliefs, history, policies, and social creed of the United Methodist Church, America's third largest Christian denomination.

www.umc.org

United Methodist Women

One of the largest Protestant women's organizations in the United States; offers programs, advocacy, mission work, and outreach.

www.gbgm-umc.org/umw

Women of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

A women's organization of 500,000 plus members; provides resources, programs, publications, events, and outreach.

www.womenoftheelca.org

Women's Alliance for Theology, Ethics, and Ritual (WATER)

A feminist educational center which offers programs, publications, and workshops in order to promote social change.

www.hers.com/water

World Council of Churches

A Geneva-based fellowship of over 340 member churches in 120 countries, representing the entire spectrum of Protestant and Orthodox churches.

www.wcc-coe.org