

An Annotated Comparison of Biblical Christianity with Selected Other Belief Systems

James R. Hughes (updated: 2017-10-31¹)

A question often asked is, “Do Christians, Muslims, and Jews worship the same God?” (e.g., Jeffrey Weiss, [CNN](#), 2013-09-01). If it is true that there is not a significant difference among the world’s religions and that all their adherents worship the same God, then why is there so much sectarian violence—particularly that perpetrated in the name of the divinity? Many people claim that all religions are essentially the same but that they differ only in their practices and traditions (e.g., holy days, rituals, scared writings, and rules). However, this claim is mistaken and illustrates the ignorance these people have about the belief systems of the different religions. It also demonstrates the importance of having clear definitions—e.g., for terms such as ‘god’, ‘worship’, ‘sin’, and ‘salvation’. When we compare belief systems, religions, or worldviews there only three possible options:

- 1. *All belief systems are the same.* However, since there are *significant* differences among the various major belief systems (e.g., their definition of God or his role in creation and salvation from sin), they cannot all be the same or the concept of ‘sameness’ has no coherent meaning.
- 2. *All belief systems are wrong.* This is a logical impossibility, since the statement ‘all belief systems are wrong’ would have to include the very belief system that claims that all belief systems are wrong. The statement is self-contradictory and therefore an impossibility.
- 3. *One belief system is right and all the rest are wrong.* Christians claim that their belief system is the only correct one, and that all others are mistaken. Muslims claim the same thing. A professed agnostic or atheist might, along with John Lennon in his song *Imagine*, make the claim that all *religions* are wrong. However, in making such a claim, he ignores the implied fact that he is claiming that his *belief system* is the only right one. And, since he is making claims about religions and offering alternatives, his belief system is in fact a *religion* (“an organized collection of beliefs, cultural systems, and world views that relate humanity to an order of existence” [\[A\]](#)).

If we apply the law of non-contradiction, the *only* logical possibility is that only one belief system (religion, or worldview) can be true, and all the rest must be wrong. Some people attempt to get around this logic by suggesting that there is a bit of truth in every belief system and no belief system has the monopoly on truth. They claim that all we need to do is to cooperate and coexist (as espoused by the [Coexist Foundation](#)) to come to a common core of truth. This view is in fact no different from the third position stated above (i.e., one belief system is right and the rest are wrong). In this case the ‘right’ belief system is a syncretistic amalgam of beliefs from various belief systems. And, in fact, as the following comparisons demonstrate, there is nothing on which all belief systems (or the major world religions) agree, so there is be nothing left that can be a common belief.

The tables below compares Biblical Christianity with a sample from the many belief systems existing today. The tables include selected key belief factors (categories of belief) which highlight differences among the belief systems. Where possible, the summary statements for each belief factor are documented with a web-link to an official source (or a widely viewed public source, such as Wikipedia) which provides a statement of that belief system’s position. However, in many cases, official positions for particular belief factors are not available, since a spectrum of specific beliefs may be included within a belief system. In these cases example, representative statements are included, with an associated reference.

- [Table 1 – Christian Denominations](#): compares Biblical Christianity to major divisions within the Christian family of religion—those which accept the essence of Biblical truth as summarized in the historic creeds such as the [Apostles’ Creed](#) and the [Chalcedon Creed](#) (Evangelical Protestant, Orthodox Christianity, Roman Catholicism, and Seventh Day Adventism). Although many Christians consider Seventh Day Adventism to be a cult [\[B, C, D, E\]](#) it is included in this table, rather than in the second table, since its current *publicly stated* official views about the nature of God and Jesus (Rom 10.9) are consistent with the historic creeds, placing it “*within* the bounds of Christian orthodoxy” [\[F\]](#). Regardless of which table it is placed in, its views should be compared with those in the Biblical Christianity column. Bible references are supplied, as footnotes, to document each of the statements which summarize the Biblical Christianity belief system.
- [Table 2 – Cults](#): compares Biblical Christianity with two major cults (Mormonism and Jehovah’s Witnesses), which claim to be Christian denominations. In spite of the claims of the adherents of these religions, they are not Christian denominations since they reject the essential truths summarized in the historic creeds which identify God as a Trinity and Jesus as the God-man. Other cults could have been included, but they have considerably fewer adherents than the two included.
- [Table 3 – World Religions](#): compares Biblical Christianity with religions (Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism) which have significant numbers of adherents in many countries. Orthodox Judaism is included as representative of Judaism since, as with Christianity, there are a number of ‘streams’ or movements within that religion. No distinction is made between the ‘denominations’ or movements within Islam (e.g., Sunni, Shia, Sufism). Buddhism is included in this table, although it could have been included with the materialistic religions. Some religions, not included in the tables, have more adherents [\[G, H, I\]](#) than those included in this table. However, a number of these religions are localized (e.g., to areas of China, Japan, Korea, or Africa) or are syncretistic versions of other religions (e.g., Sikhism, Jainism, or Bahá’í).
- [Table 4 – Materialistic Religion](#): compares Biblical Christianity with religions or belief systems (Liberal ‘Christianity’, Unitarianism (Deism), Atheistic Naturalism) which are non-theistic or claim that God is nothing more than an abstract force or disinterested observer of unfolding events within the universe.
- [Table 5 – Summary Spectrum of Beliefs](#): provides a summary comparison of Biblical Christianity with a spectrum of views from the various belief systems presented in the preceding four tables.

The comparisons provided in these tables include belief factors which fall into three of the fundamental categories of philosophy: metaphysics and ontology (the nature of reality and existence), epistemology (what we know and how we come to know it), and ethics (values and how individuals should act). The belief factors are organized *roughly* into these three categories. For example, the existence of God and the existence of a spiritual realm fall into the first category (metaphysics), the nature of Scripture falls into the second category (epistemology), and adherence to God’s Law falls into the third category (Ethics). However, some factors (e.g., Free Will) could be catalogued under different categories of philosophy, depending on the perspective from which they are being considered. Regardless of how one organizes the belief factors, a mapping of different belief systems against the selected factors indicates that there are significant differences among the world’s dominant belief systems.

Table 1 – Christian Denominations					
	Biblical Christianity	Evangelical Protestantism	Orthodox Christianity	Roman Catholicism	Seventh Day Adventism
1. God	One spirit; a trinity or persons; eternally existing; co-equal; infinite, all-powerful, holy; and good persons ²	One spirit; a trinity or persons; eternally existing; co-equal; infinite, all-powerful, holy; and good persons	One spirit; a trinity or persons; eternally existing; co-equal; infinite, all-powerful, holy; and good persons	One spirit; a trinity or persons; eternally existing; co-equal; infinite, all-powerful, holy; and good persons	One spirit; a trinity or persons; eternally existing; co-equal; infinite, all-powerful, holy; and good persons
2. Reality	Spirit and material realms created ³	Spirit and material realms created	Spirit and material realms created	Spirit and material realms created	Spirit and material realms created
3. Creation	Out of no pre-existing matter; in six twenty-four hour days; about 6,000 years ago ⁴	God created the Heavens and the earth out of nothing by his spoken word, and for his own glory; some believe universe created millions of years before man; others accept Biblical teaching	Orthodox scholars have attempted to reconcile and react to both the Creationist interpretation of Genesis 1-2 and a strict Darwinist theory of human evolution	Accept evolution, theistic evolution and ancient creation as possible means that God used to create out of nothing	Out of nothing; in six twenty-four hour days; about 6,000 years ago
4. Jesus Christ	One person with two natures, human and divine; conceived by a virgin; sinless; died on the cross for the sins of his people,	One person with two natures, human and divine; conceived by a virgin; sinless; died on the cross for the sins of his/all people,	One person with two natures, human and divine; conceived by a virgin; sinless; died on the cross for the sins of his/all people,	One person with two natures, human and divine; conceived by a virgin; sinless; died on the cross for the sins of his/all people,	Forever truly God, became man, was conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary; experienced temptation as a human, but

¹ 2015-09-07: updated approximately 25 links (URLs) which were no longer active; wording changed in some instances to reflect new links. 2017-10-31: updated approximately 10 links (URLs) which were no longer active; wording changed in some instances to reflect new links.
² Dt 6.4; Jn 17.11; Jn 4.24 | Mt 18.19; 2 Cor 13.14 | Isa 57.15; 1 Tim 1.17 | Jn 10.30 | 1 Sam 2.2; Isa 57.15; Jer 23.24; 1 Pet 1.15-16 | Ps 69.16; Mk 10.18
³ Gen 1.1; Col 1.16
⁴ Gen 1 | Gen 1.1-2.3 | Gen 5; 11; 12.4 with Acts 7.4; Ex 12.40 with Gal 3.17; 1 Ki 6.1; 1 Ki 6.1, 37, 38; 11.42; Ezk 4.4-6

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	buried, rose the third day; ascended into heaven ⁵	buried, rose the third day; ascended into heaven	buried, rose the third day; ascended into heaven	buried, rose the third day; ascended into heaven	perfectly exemplified the righteousness and love of God; died voluntarily on the cross for our sins and in our place, was raised from the dead, ascended to minister in the heavenly sanctuary
5. Man	Unique creation; in the image of God; body and immortal spirit; originally without sin ⁶	Adam and Eve, the historical parents of the entire human race directly created; in God’s image; distinct from all other living creatures; in a state of original righteousness	Creation result of Trinitarian act; made in the image and likeness of God; combines material and spiritual elements; differentiated from non-human creation qualitatively	Every person made in the image of God; allows for the possibility that man's body developed from previous biological forms, under God's guidance, insists on special creation of the soul	Man is an indivisible unity of body, mind and spirit, no immortal soul
6. Man’s Purpose	Man's primary purpose is to glorify God; and enjoy him forever ⁷	To glorify God and live in a joyful and loving relationship with God and with others	Theosis: the Creator, God by nature, calls man to become a god by grace, through humility, asceticism, holy mysteries and prayer	To praise, reverence, and serve God our Lord, and by doing so, to save his or her soul	By the grace of God, to order life in harmony with the fundamental Bible principles as taught by the Seventh-day Adventist Church
7. Angeles and Demons	Created spiritual beings, separate kind from man; God’s servants; demons are fallen angels; Satan led the rebellion ⁸	No distinctive doctrine of angels, angels are God's created, spiritual and invisible agents; Satan is a real, created, being given to evil; involved in history in varying degrees; some virtually ignore Satan and others revel in speculation about spiritual warfare against that personal power of darkness	Created spiritual beings, separate kind from man but also in the image of God; created long before man; God’s servants; demons are fallen angels who participated in a rebellion	Created spiritual beings, separate kind from man; God’s servants; demons are fallen angels; Lucifer led the rebellion	Created spiritual beings, separate kind from man; God’s servants; demons are fallen angels; Satan led the rebellion
8. Miracles	God acts directly and through secondary means; ‘laws’ of nature are descriptive not prescriptive; ‘miracles’ limited since Bible completed ⁹	Miracles reasonable and plausible; something that comes totally out of the blue; miracle reports are prevalent in Pentecostal or Charismatic churches	Many miracles have been reported throughout history since Biblical times connected with saints' relics, often including healing from disease and injury	Events above native powers and forces in nature, apart from the ordinary course of things, the effect implies supernatural agency; may be worked by/through saints	Holy Spirit gives spiritual gifts for use within Christ’s body, including prophesying, healing, miracles, distinguishing of spirits, speaking in tongues (or foreign languages)
9. Providence	God predestined by decree those who would be saved and damned; continuously upholds the universe ¹⁰	God made and governs the universe; he has a personal investment in it in the person of Jesus; through him he deals redemptively with the world through all ages; he has formulated a benevolent, comprehensive plan which should not evoke curiosity or speculation, but faith, praise, and submission	God sees all going on, was, and will, as though it is the present; divine will which maintains everything and wisely rules over everything; God knows all things beforehand, but does not predetermine them	Universe directed and preserved by God, his concurrence necessary for all natural operations; every decree from his infallible prescience of the future; has appointed and ordained from eternity all events occurring in time, especially those influenced by man's free will; no one predestined to hell	Predestination consists in the effective purpose of God that all who choose to believe in Christ shall be saved
10. Free Will	Men cannot act contrary to God’s eternal decrees; or to their sinful nature and choose to believe and repent ¹¹	Self-determination; free to do good or evil, assisted by grace	Synergy of man’s freedom to choose and accept, and work with, the grace of God; man is free because he was created in the image of God	A person is capable of directing himself toward true good; man endowed with freedom, an outstanding manifestation of the divine image	Foreknowledge looks into the future without altering it. The foreknowledge of the Godhead never violates human freedom
11. Physical Death	Curse resulting from Adam’s sin; affects all living creatures; separation of body and spirit; last enemy, to be destroyed on basis of Christ’s death and resurrection; includes spiritual and eternal death if sins are unforgiven ¹²	Not originally built into human constitution, people created for life, not death; result of eating forbidden fruit with full awareness of consequences; death in plant and animal kingdom before Adam’s sin, observed by Adam and Eve so knew what death was	Consequence of first sin, not part of God’s original design for mankind, touches all humanity, always tragedy distorting goodness of God’s creation; Jesus came into the world to conquer death; pray for the dead, that Lord will have mercy and grant them eternal rest	God did not make death, does not delight in death of living, death entered world through the devil's envy; pray for the dead, that Lord will have mercy and grant them eternal rest	Adam and Eve disobeyed God, became subject to death; unconscious state after death
12. Heaven and Hell	Real places with some physical attributes; at death, man’s spirit departs to one or the other place ¹³	Generally have accepted the view of Biblical Christianity; however, some individuals regarded within evangelical camp abandoning doctrine of conscious, everlasting punishment for various "annihilation" scenarios	Heaven and hell are being in God's presence, this is punishment and paradise depending on the person's spiritual state; real places	Undetermined if places or states; Purgatory: state or place of purification or temporary punishment	Christ’s 1000-year reign with saints in heaven, then Holy City will descend from heaven to earth; no Hell due to annihilation of wicked
13. General Resurrection	At final judgement, when Christ returns at the end of time, all men will be raised from the dead and dwell bodily in Heaven (in eternal	Bodily resurrection of the just and unjust, the everlasting punishment of the lost, and the everlasting blessedness of the saved	When the soul shall be united with the body, with which it had behaved itself well or ill, each shall receive the completion of either	Resurrection of all dead will precede the Last Judgment at which all will be gathered before Jesus; those who have done good, to eternal	When Christ returns the resurrected righteous and the living righteous will be glorified and caught up to meet the Lord; resurrection

⁵ Mt 1.18-21; Jn 1.1; 20.28 | Mt 1.20; Lk 1.34 | Jn 8.46; 2 Cor 5.21; 1 Pet 2.22; 1 Jn 3.5 | 1 Cor 15.3-4 | Acts 1.9-11

⁶ Gen 1.26; 2.7 | Gen 1.26-27 | Gen 2.7; Eccl 12.7; Zec 12.1; Acts 7.59; Heb 12.23 | Gen 1.31; 3

⁷ Ps 86.9; Is 60.21; Rom 11.36; 1 Cor 6.20; 10.31; Rev 4.11 | Ps 16.5-11; 73.25-28; 144.15; Is 12.2; Lk 2.10; Phil 4.4; Rev 21.3-4

⁸ Ps 148.2; Col 1.16 | Dan 9.21-23; Lk 1.26-27; Heb 1.13-14 | Rev 12.9 | Rev 12.7-9

⁹ Gen 1; Ex 14.21; Jn 2.7-9; Acts 17.28; Col 1.17 | Lk 5.23-26 | Heb 1.1,2

¹⁰ Rom 8.29-30 | Acts 17.28; Col 1.17

¹¹ Acts 2.23; 4.27-28 | Jn 8.34; Rom 6.16-18; Rom 7.14, 25

¹² Gen 1.31; 2.17; Rom 5.12; 1 Cor 15.26 | Gen 3.17; Rom 8.22; Heb 9.27 | Ps 104.29; Eccl 12.7 | 1 Cor 15.23-25 | Mt 10.28; Eph 2.1, 5; Col 2.13; Rev 20.14

¹³ Mt 5.22, 29, 30; 11.23; Acts 1.9-10 | Lk 16.22-24; 23.43

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	Biblical Christianity	Evangelical Protestantism	Orthodox Christianity	Roman Catholicism	Seventh Day Adventism
	bliss) or Hell (in eternal suffering) ¹⁴		enjoyment or of condemnation	life; those who have done evil, to everlasting punishment	of unrighteous, a thousand years later, and annihilated
14. Eschatology and Rapture	Christ will return; without warning, at an unexpected time; after 1,000 years, the <i>last days</i> (between his first and second coming); during which the Church will grow; but there will be periods of great decline; with a final, undeterminable, falling away before Christ returns; at which time the dead will be raised; there will be a general judgement; and the heavens and earth cleansed with fire, all creation restored, the New Heavens and Earth established, and Heaven extended to Earth¹⁵	Jesus Christ will soon return to this earth, personally, visibly, and unexpectedly, in power and great glory, to gather his elect, to raise the dead, to judge the nations, and to bring his Kingdom to fulfillment; Premillennialism (Jesus will return, the righteous will be raised to meet him in the air and taken into heaven where they will share in his millennium reign) or Dispensationalism most commonly believed	Amillennialism has been widely held in the Eastern and Oriental Orthodox Churches	Roman Catholic teachers generally follow the teachings of Augustine and the Protestant reformers, and accept Amillennialism	Investigative Judgment, a divine judgment of professed Christians has been in progress since 1844; at the end of Investigative Judgment the destiny of all will have been decided for life or death, there will be no further opportunity for unbelievers to repent and be saved; a time of trouble and intense persecution will follow; then Christ will return in glory and raise the righteous dead who will be taken to heaven together with the righteous living to share his millennial reign
15. Scriptures / Bible	God’s inerrant word; self-authenticating; ultimate authority; consists of 39 OT and 27 NT books; Bible revelation complete, no additional revelation being given¹⁶	Scriptures (66 books) of the Old and New Testaments are verbally inspired by God and inerrant in the original writing, so that they are fully trustworthy and of supreme and final authority in all they say	Supreme expression of God’s revelation to man, <i>not</i> something set over Church, but living and understood within the Church, cannot be separated from Holy Tradition; officially use the Septuagint, containing the Canonical Books and the "worthy to be read" (Apocrypha); include Apocryphal books not in Roman Catholic canon	Sacred Tradition and Sacred Scripture make up a single sacred deposit of the Word of God; interpreting Word of God authentically entrusted solely to the Magisterium (Pope and bishops); include Apocrypha, 46 books in OT	God’s inerrant word; self-authenticating; ultimate authority; consists of 39 OT and 27 NT books; subordinate authoritative revelation continues today
16. God’s Law	Principles apply to all men, in all times; innate knowledge suppressed; summarized in Ten Commandments¹⁷	God is the source of moral and natural law; view of many: old Covenant laws (including Ten Commandments) have been abrogated, replaced by ethical expectations in NT, particularly as taught by Jesus	Moral truth chiefly contained in the Ten Commandments	Christians freed from Jewish religious law, not from obligation to keep Ten Commandments; essential for spiritual growth; serves as the basis for social justice	Law of God is "embodied in the Ten Commandments", which continue to be binding upon Christians; OT ceremonial food laws (e.g., prohibition on eating pork) continue to apply
17. Sin	All men are born with the guilt of Adam’s sin, are unable not to sin, and commit sin; sin is breaking God’s law in thought or action; results in death¹⁸	Our first parents sinned by rebelling against God’s revealed will and thereby incurred both physical and spiritual death; as a result, all human beings are born with a sinful nature that leads them to sin in thought, word, and deed	Human nature is depraved, but not totally, avoid calling it "depraved" preferring "fallen"; sin as a disease of the soul, in which it is lacking in God's grace; humanity inherited the consequences of Adam’ sin, not the guilt	An offense against reason, truth, right conscience and God; arises from the free will of man; a failure in genuine love for God and neighbor caused by a perverse attachment to certain goods; can be divided into spiritual and carnal, thought or deed, mortal or venial; original sin is not a personal fault in any of Adam's descendants	Adam and Eve disobeyed God, denied dependence on him; descendants share fallen nature and results, born with weakness and tendency to evil
18. Sexual Ethics and Marriage	Sexual intercourse to be confined to lifetime marriage between one man and one unrelated woman¹⁹	Scripture condemns sexual immorality, such as the use of pornography, pre-marital sex, adultery, homosexual behavior and all other sexual relations outside the bounds of marriage between a man and woman	Sexual intercourse to be confined to lifetime marriage between one man and one unrelated woman	Sexual intercourse to be confined to lifetime marriage between one man and one unrelated woman	Sexual intercourse to be confined to lifetime marriage between one man and one unrelated woman
19. Salvation	By eternal election; in unconditional divine grace; through faith in Jesus; which cannot be revoked²⁰	The Lord Jesus Christ died for our sins, as a representative and substitutionary sacrifice, triumphing over all evil; all who believe in him are justified by his shed blood and forgiven of all their sins; all who receive the Lord Jesus Christ by faith are born again of the Holy Spirit; mixed views on the nature of election	A divine gift by which a person is delivered from sin and death, united to Christ, and brought into his eternal Kingdom; justification is being forgiven and actually made righteous, <i>not</i> a once-for-all, instantaneous pronouncement guaranteeing eternal salvation, no matter how wickedly a person may live from that point on, it is a living, dynamic, day-to-day reality for the one who follows Christ	Justification unmerited gift of grace, is conferred in Baptism; establishes cooperation between God's grace and man's freedom; those who, by sin, have fallen from the received grace of Justification, may be again justified through the sacrament of Penance; any who, through no fault of their own, do not know the Gospel of Christ or his Church, but who seek God with a sincere heart may achieve eternal salvation;	Holy Spirit leads men to sense their need, acknowledge sinfulness, repent, and exercise faith in Jesus as Lord and Christ; faith comes as the gift of God’s grace

¹⁴ Mt 13.49, 50; 25.30; Lk 19.15-27; Jn 5.28, 29; 1 Cor 15.20-23; 1 Thes 4.15-17; 2 Thes 1.6-10; 2 Tim 4.1; Rev 7.15-17; 20.11-15; 21.4

¹⁵ 1 Thes 4.15, 16; Acts 1.11 | Mt 24.36-44; 25.1-13; Rom 13.11-12; 1 Thes 5.1-3; Heb 10.37; 2 Pet 3.8-10 | Acts 2.17; Heb 1.2; 1 Jn 2.18; Rev 20.6, 7 | Mt 13.31-32; Mt 28.19; Rev 7.9 | 1 Tim 4.1; 2 Tim 3.1-5; 2 Pet 3.3-4; 1 Jn 2.18; 4.3; Jude 18 | Lk 18.8; 2 Thes 2.3, 7, 8; Rev 20.7, 8 | 1 Cor 15.20-23; 1 Thes 4.15-17 | Mt 13.49, 50; 16.27; 25.14-46; Lk 19.15-27; Jn 5.28, 29; 1 Cor 4.5; 2 Thes 1.6-10; Jude 14, 15; Rev 20.11-1 | Is 65.17-25; Rom 8.19-22; 2 Pet 3.10-13; Rev 21.1, 2-4

¹⁶ Mt 4.4; Jn 10.35; 17.17; 2 Tim 3.16; 2 Pet 1.20-21; Tit 1.2 | Dan 9.2; Jn 10.35; 2 Pet 3.16 | Ps 119.160; Mt 4.4; 2 Tim 3.16-17 | Mt 7.12; Lk 24.44; Rom 3.21; Jn 14.26; 2 Pet 3.16 | 1 Cor 13.8; Jn 15.27; Acts 1.8, 21-22; Eph 2.20; Heb 1.2

¹⁷ Lev 24.22; Neh 13.20-21; Ps 2.1-7, 10-12; Jonah 3.1-1; Mt 14.3-5; 1 Tim 1.8-11 | Rom 1.18-23 | Ex 20.3-17; Mt 5.17-20

¹⁸ Rom 5.12; 7.18; 8.7, 8; Eph 2.3 | Ps 51.4; Mt 5.21-48; 1 Jn 3.4 | Gen 2.17; Ezk 18.4; Rom 6.23

¹⁹ Ex 20.14; Lev 18. 6-18, 20, 22; 20.13; Mt 5.27-30; 19.8-9; Mk 10.5-12; Acts 15.20; Rom 1. 24-27; 13.9; 1 Cor 6.9; 1Thes 4.3-5; 1 Tim 1.10; Heb 13.4

²⁰ Rom 9.11; Eph 1.4 | Rom 3.24; Eph 2.8-9 | Jn 3.16, 18; Eph 2.8 | Jn 10.28-29; Phil 1.6; 2 Thes 3.3; 2 Tim 1.12

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	Biblical Christianity	Evangelical Protestantism	Orthodox Christianity	Roman Catholicism	Seventh Day Adventism
				God’s plan of salvation includes Jews and Muslims, without belief in Jesus	
20. Good Works	Result of divine grace; unworthy of merit ²¹	All evangelicals agree that salvation is God’s work and not ours. Our good works, even our free decisions are signs of grace and amount to nothing when compared with God’s electing grace and power	Man cannot fulfill any commandment perfectly; no merit; important to try to keep commands to see picture of self in state of “original damage” inherited from Adam to lead us to true faith in Christ	Made possible by grace, contribute to growth in grace; righteousness that comes from God preserved and communion with Christ is deepened; meritorious, a reward in heaven is promised to these works	Not saving, but the effect of knowing you are saved
21. Worship	True worship consists of reverential acts (i.e., prayer, a capella singing of Psalms, reading Scripture, sermon, observance of sacraments); authorized by God; directed to him; performed to honour him or his name ²²	Must be pleasing to God, unfeigned and transparent, offered with humble and pure heart; the NT church included breaking of bread, singing of psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, prayer; almsgiving, reading and teaching of OT and apostolic doctrine, manifestations of variety of spiritual gifts; corporate worship must balance form and freedom and has a prophetic function; contemporary: informal setting; congregational singing emphasized, other elements of liturgy minimized; band worship music; often includes drama, and dance	Main elements of liturgy include hymns, reading and proclamation of the Gospel, prayers, and the Eucharist; prayer to the saints is encouraged; icons (images of Christ, angels, saints, events) provide an experience of the prototype, and use of them reveals the reality they express; traditionally does not use instruments in liturgy, relies on choral music and chanting	Worship practices include making the sign of the cross, kneeling, bowing, and receiving the Eucharist; approves of all forms of true art having the needed qualities, and admits them into divine worship; veneration of images not contrary to commandment which proscribes idols, honor rendered to an image passes to its prototype, whoever venerates an image venerates the person portrayed in it; devotion to the Virgin Mary and the saints is part of worship; Mary is considered to be preserved free from original sin and the Mediatrix	Sermon, Scripture reading, prayer, offering, corporate singing of hymns (traditional or contemporary) with instrumental accompaniment
22. Sacraments	Two, ordained by Christ, Lord’s Supper and Baptism; (of adults and infants); signs and seals of the covenant of grace which represent Christ and his benefits confirming a believer’s interest in him; to demarcate a visible difference between those who belong to Church and the world; each sacramental sign has a spiritual relation, or sacramental union, with the thing signified; grace conferred, not by power in the elements, but by the Holy Spirit ²³	Baptism and Lord’s Supper; baptism symbolizes sinner’s entrance into the Church through faith identified with death and resurrection of Jesus; most reject infant baptism; Lord’s Supper (communion, breaking bread), instituted by Christ, commemorates his redemptive death, symbolizes his spiritual nourishment of his church, involves participation in his salvation, anticipates his return and the heavenly messianic banquet of the kingdom of God	Not limited to the seven of Roman Catholicism, anything the Church does is in some sense sacramental, including prayers, hymns, scripture lessons, gestures and processions; baptism by three-fold immersion publicly incorporates believers and infants into the Church; Eucharist expresses fellowship with one another and unity with the Father, for practicing members of the Orthodox Church	Seven: baptism, confirmation, Eucharist, penance, anointing of sick, holy orders, matrimony; efficacious signs of grace which convey grace; necessary for salvation; baptism takes away sin inherited from Adam (and sins committed before baptism); consecration of bread and wine changes them into the substance of the body of Christ (transubstantiation); Mass perpetuates the sacrifice of the cross throughout the ages	Believer’s baptism by immersion; Lord’s Supper four times a year, commences with gender-separated foot washing
23. Holy Days	Sabbath to be kept holy by all men in all nations; the first day of the week, the Lord’s Day, which commemorates the resurrection, is the Christian Sabbath; no other days are to be set aside or observed as holy ²⁴	Celebration of Christmas widely practiced; observance of Easter almost universal; observance of Advent and Lent becoming common; for many the Lord’s Day is not the continuation of the Sabbath and keeping one day per week holy to the Lord is optional	Distinguish between Sabbath (Saturday) and ‘Lord’s Day’ (Sunday), both play a role for faithful, many parishes serve Divine Liturgy on both days; observe many feasts and holy days, e.g.,: exaltation of the Cross presentation of the Theotokos; Christmas; Epiphany; presentation of Christ; Annunciation, Easter, Ascension, Pentecost, Transfiguration; Dormition of the Theotokos	Sunday ceremonial observance replaces and fulfills the spiritual truth of the Jewish Sabbath and announces man’s eternal rest in God; on Sunday refrain from work or activities that hinder the worship owed to God; numerous obligatory feasts and holy days	Sabbath observed Saturday; do not celebrate Christmas or other religious festivals
24. Church	Universal; invisible: all the elect; visible: all who profess the true religion; and their children; particular congregations may be more or less pure as they preach the Gospel, administer sacraments, and perform public worship more or less purely; whose only head is the Lord Jesus Christ ²⁵	Applies to: local assembly who profess faith in and allegiance to Christ, the universal Church; and God’s congregation (bride and body of Christ); Church and Israel in continuous relationship, Church is eschatological Israel incorporated in Messiah, but progression beyond historical Israel; related to kingdom of God, but not equal	The one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church founded by Jesus and his apostles, begun at the day of Pentecost; recognize Ecumenical councils as the highest authority on matters of faith, worship, organization; Eastern Orthodox Church recognizes seven councils, Oriental Orthodoxy recognizes only the first three	The holy people of God, called ‘saints’; sole Church of Christ subsists in the Catholic Church, which is governed by the successor of Peter and bishops in communion with him; any who believe in Christ and have been properly baptized are in a certain, although imperfect, communion with the Catholic Church	Community of believers who confess Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour, called out from the world and join together for worship and fellowship
25. Organizational Structure	Rule by spiritually mature and chaste male officers: pastor and elders, who must be able to teach; deacons to	Mixed: Presbyterian, Episcopal, Congregational forms; more than half of protestant denominations	Episcopal; twenty churches, each with own Patriarch as “first among equals”; only baptized man may be	Episcopal, Pope supreme pontiff; only baptized men may be ordained as priests, in general, only unmarried	Modified Presbyterian; pastors appointed by conference; debating ordination of women to

²¹ Eph 2.9-10 | Isa 64.6; Rom 3.10; 2 Tim 1.9

²² Jn 4.23, 24 | Dt 12.1-4; 31; Is 29.13; Mt 6.1; Mk 7.6-13; Col 2.18-23; | Ps 96.9 | Prov 15.8, 29; Jn 4.24

²³ Mt 28.19; 1 Cor 11.20, 23 | Gen 17.7; Mk 10.13-16; 16.15; Lk 18.15; Acts 2.38, 39; 8.37; Rom 4.11, 12; 1 Cor 7.14; Gal 3.9, 14 | Rom 4.11; Mt 28.19; Rom 6.3, 4; 1 Cor 10.16; 1 Cor 11.25, 26 | Mt 18.15-18; 1 Cor 10.16; 1 Cor 5; 2 Cor 2.5–11; Tit 3.10 | Mt 26.27, 28; Tit 3.5 | Rom 2.28, 29; 1 Cor 12.13 1 Pet 3.21

²⁴ Gen 2.3; Ex 20.8-11, Dt 5.12-15; Neh 13.15-22; Is 56.1-8; Jer 17.19-27; Mk 2.23-28; Heb 4.1-11 | Lk 24.1-12; Lk 24.40, 50-51; Jn 20.19-23, 26, 28; 21.12; Acts 1.2-11; 2.1; 20.7; 1 Cor 16.1-2; Rev 1.10 | 1 Ki 12.33-13.3; Is 1.13, 14; Gal 4.9-11

²⁵ Eph 1.10, 22-23 | Eph 5.23-27 | Rom 15.9-12; 1 Cor 1.2; 12.12-13; Rev 7.9 | 1 Cor 7.14 | 1 Cor 5.6; Rev 2-3 | Eph 1.22; Col 1.18

Table 1 – Christian Denominations					
	Biblical Christianity	Evangelical Protestantism	Orthodox Christianity	Roman Catholicism	Seventh Day Adventism
	oversee fabric of congregation and ministration to the poor; officers to be called by congregation with pastors/elders aligned in presbyteries and assemblies ²⁶ [Sect. D]	ordain women to pastoral office	ordained as priest	men are to be ordained to the priesthood	pastoral office

Questions addressed to an adherent of the most widely accepted **Evangelical Protestant** teachings:

- How do you explain the presence of death in the good creation (Gen 1.31) if it existed for millions of years before man was created? How can death and decay be the result of Adam’s sin, and a curse on the entire creation (Rom 8.21; 1 Cor 15.26), if it existed before Adam’s sin?
- Do you commit sin? If you have free will (self-determination to do good or evil), then why do you sin?
- Do the Ten Commandments continue to apply to man today? If not, on what basis do you reject them? If so, on what basis do you reject the principle that keeping the Lord’s Day holy, as the Christian Sabbath and a memorial of Christ’s resurrection, is a standing requirement (Mt 5.17-19)? Why do you not honour God by abstaining from activities which require others to work (Ex 20.8-10) and from watching professional sports on the Christian Sabbath (Is 58.13)? Why do you reject the Lord’s Day as holy but introduce holy days not required in Scripture and rejected by the Protestant Reformers (e.g., Christmas, Advent, Lent, etc.)?
- Since you believe that worship must be pleasing to God, unfeigned and transparent, offered with humble and pure heart, why do you bring blemished offerings (e.g., human composed hymns) and reject the signing of his holy word (the Psalms) which speak of Christ (Lk 24.44)? Why do you revert to using Old Covenant Temple practices (e.g., instrumental music that accompanied the bloody sacrifices; 2 Ch 29.25-28; 30.15, 21, 24) which were types pointing to the perfect sacrifice of Christ?
- Why do you reject the baptism of infants, when male infants were included under the sign of the Old Covenant (Gen 17.11-12), and the new Covenant, and its sign, baptism, is more inclusive (e.g., including women and Gentiles; Acts 2.39; 8.12)?
- Why do you believe that we can find signs of the end of the age in Scripture (e.g., Revelation), when Jesus and the Apostles taught that no man could know the day of Christ’s second coming (Mt 24.36; 25.13; Acts 1.7; 1 Thes 5.2)?
- Why does your denomination ordain women to the eldership when Paul is explicit that women are not to have a ruling or teaching function in the Church (1 Cor 14.34; 1 Tim 2.12)? What Biblical evidence shows that Paul’s instruction was for his own time and culture and not a permanent, universal prohibition?

Questions addressed to an adherent of **Orthodox Christian** teaching:

- Why do you accept Jewish Greek writings (such as the *Apocrypha*) to be part of Scripture when believing Jews, Jesus, and the Apostles did not receive them as Scripture? How do you reconcile the fact that different churches within the Orthodox family of churches accept different apocryphal books? Which ones are the word of God?
- Which takes precedent if there is a disagreement: the seven ecumenical councils “as the highest authority on matters of faith, worship, and organization”; Holy Tradition; or the Bible, the “supreme expression of God’s revelation to man”?
- How do you explain the presence of death in the good creation (Gen 1.31) if it existed before man took on something that made him different from the animals, and became a rational being? How can death and decay be the result of Adam’s sin and a curse on the entire creation (Rom 8.21; 1 Cor 15.26), if it existed before Adam’s sin?
- How can man be a special creation, of a different kind and created in the image of God (Gen 1.26-27; 1 Cor 15.39), if he is the product of divinely guided evolution?
- How can salvation be a free gift, not based on works (Eph 2.8-11) and irrevocable (Jn 10.28-29; Rom 8.1, 31-39), and yet *depend* on the living, dynamic, day-to-day reality of following Christ?
- Why is prayer to the saints encouraged, when Jesus and the Apostles teach that prayer is to be offered only to the Father (Mt 6.9; Jn 16.23; Eph 2.18), in the name of Jesus Christ (Jn 16.23-24)?
- How can the veneration of images, even as *aids* to worship, be considered part of the legitimate worship of God, when God explicitly proscribes such action (Ex 20.4, 5)?

Questions addressed to an adherent of **Roman Catholicism**:

- How can Jesus be physically present, when the consecration of the bread and wine changes them into the substance his body (transubstantiation), and thus be sacrificed in the Mass throughout the ages, when the Bible teaches that Christ was sacrificed *once* for sin, for all time (Heb 7.27; 9.12, 28; 10.10)?
- Why do you accept Jewish Greek writings (specifically, the *Apocrypha*) to be part of Scripture when believing Jews, Jesus, and the Apostles did not receive them as Scripture?
- How can the veneration of images, even as *aids* to worship, be considered part of the legitimate worship of God, when God explicitly proscribes such action (Ex 20.4, 5)?
- Why would Mary need a saviour (Lk 1.47; see also, Rom 3.23) if she was without original sin? How can she be a mediatrix when there is only one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus (1 Tim 2.5)?
- Why do you believe in Purgatory, to purify the elect dying in grace, when the Bible teaches that a recently repentant criminal could immediately enter Paradise (Lk 23.43)?
- How can salvation be a free gift, not based on works (Eph 2.8-11) and irrevocable (Jn 10.28-29; Rom 8.1, 31-39), and yet be dependent on your works and retained by your continued faithfulness?
- How can God’s plan of salvation include Jews and Muslims who reject Jesus as the Messiah and do not receive him in faith as Lord (Jn 14.6; Acts 4.12; Rom 10.9)? If they can be saved without Christ, then why does the Gospel have to be preached to them (Mt 28.19, 20)?

Questions addressed to an adherent of **Seventh Day Adventist** teaching:

- How do you explain human soul sleep, in an unconscious state at death, and at the same time man’s not having an immortal soul?
- How could Jesus say to the thief on the cross that he would be with him in Paradise, if man is an indivisible unity of body, mind and spirit?
- How can there be meaning in the concept of rewards or punishment after death, if there is no immortal soul that passes from this life into the next?
- What Biblical evidence is available to support the Investigative Judgment, and that it began in 1844?
- Why should a person worry about what will happen in eternity when there is no Hell and no everlasting punishment?
- How do you reconcile your teaching with the Apostolic understanding²⁷ that the Christian Sabbath is to be observed on Sunday (Jn 20.19, 26; Acts 20.7; 1 Cor

²⁶ 1 Cor 14.33b-35; 1 Tim 2.11-14; 3.2-7; 2 Tim 2.24-25 Tit 1.6-9 | Acts 6.1-6; 1 Tim 3.8-13 | Acts 1.23; 6.3 | Acts 15.2, 4, 6; 1 Tim 4.14

²⁷ Ignatius, Bishop of Antioch, who knew a number of the Apostles personally, said: ‘If, therefore, those who were brought up in the ancient order of things have come to the possession of a new hope, no longer observing the Sabbath, but living in the observance of the Lord’s Day ... let every friend of Christ keep the Lord’s Day as a festival, the resurrection-day, the queen and chief of all the

- 16.2), the Lord’s Day (Rev 1.10), in commemoration of the resurrection?
7. Why do the OT ceremonial food laws (e.g., the prohibition against eating pork) continue to apply, when the NT makes it clear that the *form* of the ceremonial laws (relating to such things as sacrifices, cleansing rituals, and holiness-separation) have been fulfilled in Christ (Acts 10:9-28; Gal 5.2-4; Eph 2.15; Heb 7. 18, 19; 8.13; 10.1)?

Table 2 – Cults			
	Biblical Christianity	Mormonism	Jehovah’s Witnesses
1. God	One spirit; a trinity or persons; eternally existing; co-equal; infinite, all-powerful, holy; and good persons	Three distinct gods make up godhead; men become gods	Reject trinity; strictly singular, creator, sustainer, ordainer
2. Reality	Spirit and material realms created	Matter eternal, human and angelic spirits born of God	God created universe, including spirit persons and all kinds of life on earth
3. Creation	Out of no pre-existing matter; in six twenty-four hour days; about 6,000 years ago	Reject creation <i>ex nihilo</i>, matter eternal, God organized existing matter as the act of ‘creation’	God created; reject young earth view
4. Jesus Christ	One person with two natures, human and divine; conceived by a virgin; sinless; died on the cross for the sins of his people, buried, rose the third day; ascended into heaven	Jesus Christ is the literal Son of God; a god	The son of God, <i>a</i> god, but not <i>the</i> God, the archangel Michael
5. Man	Unique creation; in the image of God; body and immortal spirit; originally without sin	All people existed as spirits or ‘intelligences’ in presence of God; given bodies to experience sin and suffering and advance to be gods	Unique creation; in image of God
6. Man’s Purpose	Man's primary purpose is to glorify God; and enjoy him forever	To keep the commandments so that we can be worthy to return to live with Father in Heaven again after death; to prepare to meet God	Adam, Eve, and their descendants were to extend Paradise to all parts of the globe
7. Angeles and Demons	Created spiritual beings, separate kind from man; God’s servants; demons are fallen angels; Satan led the rebellion	Jesus and Lucifer two oldest sons of God; angels and men (as pre-mortal spirits) of same kind; Lucifer led rebellion of a third of his brothers and sisters	Created beings; fallen angels are demons, may pretend to be spirits of dead
8. Miracles	God acts directly and through secondary means; ‘laws’ of nature are <i>descriptive</i> not <i>prescriptive</i> ; ‘miracles’ limited since Bible completed	Extraordinary events by power of God; part of the gospel of Jesus Christ; faith necessary for miracles to be manifested	Effects in the physical world that surpass all known human or natural powers and are therefore attributed to supernatural agency; do not occur today
9. Providence	God predestined by decree those who would be saved and damned; continuously upholds the universe	Reject concept of predestination	Reject concept of predestination
10. Free Will	Men cannot act contrary to God’s eternal decrees; or to their sinful nature and choose to believe and repent	God gave man a gift of moral agency which includes free will; proper exercise of choice leads to return to God's presence	All intelligent creatures are endowed with free will
11. Physical Death	Curse resulting from Adam’s sin; affects all living creatures; separation of body and spirit; last enemy, to be destroyed on basis of Christ’s death and resurrection; includes spiritual and eternal death if sins are unforgiven	Spirit separated from mortal body; essential part Heavenly Father's plan of salvation; to become like Father, must experience death and receive perfect, resurrected bodies	State of non-existence; soul is mortal, does not continue to live after a person dies
12. Heaven and Hell	Real places with some physical attributes; at death, man’s spirit departs to one or the other place	Heaven: where God lives, ultimate home of faithful; Hell: temporary place of dead without knowledge of truth or disobedient in life, permanent location of Satan and sons of perdition	Exactly 144,000 will be in Heaven, other believers will dwell in a paradise on earth; Reject existence of Hell and hellfire as not representing divine justice from a loving God
13. General Resurrection	At final judgement, when Christ returns at the end of time, all men will be raised from the dead and dwell bodily in Heaven (in eternal bliss) or Hell (in eternal suffering)	All people will be resurrected; spirit reunited with body in immortal state, no longer subject to disease or death	Only hope for life after death, re-creation of individual in new body; 144,000 resurrected as spirit creatures in heaven, rest to physical life on earth
14. Eschatology and Rapture	Christ will return; without warning, at an unexpected time; after 1,000 years, the <i>last days</i> (between his first and second coming); during which the Church will grow; but there will be periods of great decline; with a final, undeterminable, falling away	Reject the rapture; at the return of Christ, God will return the earth to a state like the Garden of Eden by fire, from which the righteous will be spared	Jesus has been ruling in heaven as king since 1914; the end of the current world society ("system of things") is imminent, by God's judgment, beginning with all false religions, culminating in Armageddon; the saved will be delivered; after

Table 2 – Cults			
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	before Christ returns; at which time the dead will be raised; there will be a general judgement; and the heavens and earth cleansed with fire, all creation restored, the New Heavens and Earth established, and Heaven extended to Earth		Armageddon, God will extend his heavenly kingdom to include earth, and the dead will gradually be resurrected to a "day of judgment" lasting for a thousand years; the end result will be a fully tested, glorified human race
15. Scriptures / Bible	God’s inerrant word; self-authenticating; ultimate authority; consists of 39 OT and 27 NT books; Bible revelation complete, no additional revelation being given	Protestant canon used, but viewed as incomplete; lost truths restored in divine <i>Book of Mormon</i> (and other sacred writings; Book of Mormon translated from Reformed Egyptian on golden plates; revelation continues	Protestant canon of scripture viewed as the inspired, inerrant word of God; use own <i>New World Translation</i>
16. God’s Law	Principles apply to all men, in all times; innate knowledge suppressed; summarized in Ten Commandments	Ten Commandments still standard today; repeated in the <i>Book of Mormon</i> , etc.	Jehovah is the fundamental Lawgiver of the universe; death of Jesus on the stake freed those under the Law (including the basic Ten Words or Commandments)
17. Sin	All men are born with the guilt of Adam’s sin, are unable not to sin, and commit sin; sin is breaking God’s law in thought or action; results in death	Willfully disobeying God's commands or not acting righteously despite a knowledge of truth; every person has sinned	All men commit sin; sin is breaking God’s law in thought or action; results in death; Adam introduced human sin into the world
18. Sexual Ethics and Marriage	Sexual intercourse to be confined to lifetime marriage between one man and one unrelated woman	Marriage between a man and a woman is ordained by God, the family is central to the Creator's plan for the eternal destiny of his children; temple marriages are eternal; polygamy officially rejected	Sexual intercourse to be confined to lifetime marriage; between one man and one unrelated woman
19. Salvation	By eternal election; in unconditional divine grace; through faith in Jesus; which cannot be revoked	Faith in Jesus Christ, repentance, baptism, and receipt of gift of the Holy Ghost; conditional on continued faithfulness	Dependent on God's undeserved kindness; requires faith in God and ransom sacrifice of Jesus
20. Good Works	Result of divine grace; unworthy of merit	Works (what people have to do themselves) are necessary to obtain salvation	Salvation contingent on baptism, accurate knowledge of Bible, adherence to God's moral standards, etc.
21. Worship	True worship consists of reverential acts (i.e., prayer, <i>a capella</i> singing of Psalms, reading Scripture, sermon, observance of sacraments); authorized by God; directed to him; performed to honour him or his name	Giving God love, reverence, service, and devotion; prayer, join in fellowship, participation in priesthood ordinances	Rendering reverent honor or homage to God in a way he accepts; true worship of the Creator embraces every aspect of an individual’s life
22. Sacraments	Two, ordained by Christ, Lord’s Supper and Baptism; (of adults and infants); signs and seals of the covenant of grace which represent Christ and his benefits confirming a believer’s interest in him; to demarcate a visible difference between those who belong to Church and the world; each sacramental sign has a spiritual relation, or sacramental union, with the thing signified; grace conferred, not by power in the elements, but by the Holy Spirit	Weekly sacrament of bread and water; proxy baptism, performed in temples, by immersion of a living person acting on behalf of one who is dead, offers deceased ancestors an opportunity, in the spirit world, to accept or reject the saviour	Members of the 144,000 receive communion once a year; practice only adult baptism
23. Holy Days	Sabbath to be kept holy by all men in all nations; the first day of the week, the Lord’s Day, which commemorates the resurrection, is the Christian Sabbath; no other days are to be set aside or observed as holy	Observe a Sunday Sabbath, observe Christmas and Easter	Do not observe a Sunday Sabbath; meet twice per week; do not observe ‘holy days’
24. Church	Universal; invisible: all the elect; visible: all who profess the true religion; and their children; particular congregations may be more or less pure as they preach the Gospel, administer sacraments, and perform public worship more or less	Believe in same organization that existed in the primitive Church, namely, apostles, prophets, pastors, teachers, evangelists; central purpose of the Church is to help all people come to Christ, that they might receive salvation	Reserve the word ‘church’ for Christian denominations; translate Greek <i>ecclesia</i> as congregation, founded on Christ as its head, with 144,000 firstborn, members are selected by Jehovah; meetings for worship of Jehovah and study of

Table 2 – Cults			
	Biblical Christianity	Mormonism	Jehovah’s Witnesses
	purely; whose only head is the Lord Jesus Christ		Scriptures are an essential feature of the congregation
25. Organizational Structure	Rule by spiritually mature and chaste male officers: pastor and elders, who must be able to teach; deacons to oversee fabric of congregation and ministration to the poor; officers to be called by congregation with pastors/elders aligned in presbyteries and assemblies	Governed by a president (a prophet), two counsellors and twelve apostles; only baptized men may be ordained to office of bishop	Hierarchical "theocracy", with central governing body, elders appointed by branches; baptized men or women may be ordained

Questions addressed to an adherent of **Mormonism**:

- How can there be multiple gods in the godhead, when the Bible speaks of there being only one God (Is 41.4; 43.10; 44.6; 45.5-6; Rom 3.30; Eph 4.6; 1 Tim 2.5)?
- How can created (or generated) beings become gods, when they are not infinite, eternal, unchanging, or all-powerful?
- How can the universe be eternal when God created space, time, energy, matter and all living beings (Gen 1)?
- What do you mean when you say that “Jesus is the Son of God”? Do you mean that he is the infinite and eternal God (Jn 1.1; Jn 20.28), the second person of the Trinity, who took upon himself a human nature and was born of the virgin Mary (Mt 1.18-21; Lk 1.34)?
- There are numerous ancient manuscripts of the OT (including the Dead Sea Scrolls) and NT which allow us to determine the original words of the prophets and apostles with near certainty. What evidence supports the *Book of Mormon* and Joseph Smith’s translation?
- Can you provide [historical evidence](#) which supports the claims of the *Book of Mormon* with respect to the purported journeys and settlement locations of the Israelite tribes in Mesoamerica?
- How can salvation be a free gift, not based on works (Eph 2.8-11) and irrevocable (Rom 8.1, 31-39), and yet be dependent on your works and retained by your continued faithfulness?

Questions addressed to an adherent of the **Jehovah’s Witnesses’** teaching:

- What do you mean when you say that “Jesus is the Son of God”? Do you mean that he is the infinite and eternal God (Jn 1.1; Jn 20.28), the second person of the Trinity, who took upon himself a human nature and was born of the virgin Mary (Mt 1.18-21; Lk 1.34)?
- Why does Thomas refer to Jesus as “*the* God of me” (Gk: ὁ θεός μου; Jn 20.28), and why does Jesus accept worship (Mt 28.9, 17), which is reserved for God alone (Rev 22.9), if he is not God?
- How can there be meaning in the concept of rewards or punishment after death, if there is no immortal soul that passes from this life into the next?
- Why should anyone adhere to your beliefs, when in the end everyone will eventually be raised to live in a restored paradise?
- Why should we accept your belief that the heavenly reign of Jesus began in 1914 (and not in 33 AD), when Jesus and the Apostles taught that no man could know the day of Christ’s second coming (Mt 24.36; 25.13; Acts 1.7; 1 Thes 5.2)?
- If Jesus’ death on the cross (‘stake’) freed men from the law (including the Ten Commandments) what divine law are men to follow? Why?
- If God asks you why you should be admitted into his heavenly kingdom, what will be your answer? Will you be good enough?

Table 3 – World Religions					
	Biblical Christianity	Orthodox Judaism	Islam	Hinduism	Buddhism
1. God	One spirit; a trinity or persons; eternally existing; co-equal; infinite, all-powerful, holy; and good persons	Reject trinity; strictly singular, creator, sustainer, ordainer	Reject trinity; strictly singular, creator, sustainer, ordainer	Polytheistic manifestations of impersonal absolute	Reject existence of a creator deity; no personal God
2. Reality	Spirit and material realms created	Spirit and material realms created out of nothing	Spirit and material realms created	Universe originated from potentialities; a pantheistic form	Ultimate Reality is a transcendent truth
3. Creation	Out of no pre-existing matter; in six twenty-four hour days; about 6,000 years ago	Most rabbis believe in old earth and accept evolution	Ancient earth, evolutionary creationism	Universe eternal; cycle of repeated births and deaths	Universe eternal; cycle of repeated births and deaths
4. Jesus Christ	One person with two natures, human and divine; conceived by a virgin; sinless; died on the cross for the sins of his people, buried, rose the third day; ascended into heaven	False messiah, could be considered a rabbi; messiah still expected to come	Mere man, prophet; Muhammad final true prophet of God	Jesus is an avatar; some view as saint	No official position
5. Man	Unique creation; in the image of God; body and immortal spirit; originally without sin	Divine guidance of evolution led to emergence of man	Man the product of evolutionary creationism	Man the product of evolution	Man the product of evolution; no immortal soul
6. Man’s Purpose	Man's primary purpose is to glorify God; and enjoy him forever	To elevate the physical world ('Olam HaZeh') and prepare it for the world to come ('Olam HaBa'), the messianic era	Man was created to be Allah’s trustee on earth, with a basic trust or responsibility to believe in and worship Allah	To understand eternal spiritual truth, called <i>Brahman</i>, from whom [which] all existence comes and to understand one’s eternal identity as the <i>atma</i>, or soul; to obtain enlightenment (<i>moksha</i>), obtained by realizing that the observable world is unreal and impermanent	To end suffering by embracing (not suppressing or denying) cravings and conceptual attachments, to attain a perfect dispassion, ultimately leading to the state of Nirvana
7. Angeles and Demons	Created spiritual beings, separate kind from man; God’s servants; demons are fallen angels; Satan led the rebellion	Messengers of God; Satan may be an evil inclination that lies in everyone	Angels made of light; messengers of God, no free will so cannot sin; Jinn have free will and are evil	Angels minor gods; demons are forces that fight against the gods	Angels celestial emanations of enlightened beings; demons forces that inhibit man from achieving Nirvana
8. Miracles	God acts directly and through secondary means;	God limits himself behind fixed rules of nature to hide	A supernatural intervention in man’s life; laws of nature	Wondrous acts performed for the purpose of bringing	Merely imaginations and hallucinations due to a lack

Table 3 – World Religions					
	Biblical Christianity	Orthodox Judaism	Islam	Hinduism	Buddhism
	‘laws’ of nature are <i>descriptive</i> not <i>prescriptive</i> ; ‘miracles’ limited since Bible completed	his identity	customary sequence of apparent causes	spiritual liberation to those who witness or read about them	of understanding; or expression of mind over matter
9. Providence	God predestined by decree those who would be saved and damned; continuously upholds the universe	Everything is foreseen, yet free will is given	Everything is preordained, nothing happens unless permitted by God; man possesses free will, can choose between right and wrong, and is responsible for his actions	Both free will and fate have a place, fate is the result of a person’s karma; whatever happens is the result of the past	Karma an impersonal, natural law that operates in accord with man’s actions; not determinism imposed by mysterious, unknown forces to which men helplessly submit
10. Free Will	Men cannot act contrary to God’s eternal decrees; or to their sinful nature and choose to believe and repent	Everything is foreseen, yet free will is given; God exists outside of time, he knows the future as the past	Allah creates the possibility of a human action, humans follow through, acquire the act, make it theirs and take responsibility	Two ‘schools’: a fate-based approach or proponents of free will	Both free will and determinism, but rejects the idea of an agent behind determinism
11. Physical Death	Curse resulting from Adam’s sin; affects all living creatures; separation of body and spirit; last enemy, to be destroyed on basis of Christ’s death and resurrection; includes spiritual and eternal death if sins are unforgiven	Not a tragedy, even when it occurs early; a natural process	Termination of life, rather the continuation of life in another form; this worldly life is a test and a preparation ground for the afterlife	Not a calamity; a release from physical life	Part of the process of life to be contemplated
12. Heaven and Hell	Real places with some physical attributes; at death, man’s spirit departs to one or the other place	Those who do not "pass the test" go to a purifying place to "learn their lesson"; no eternal damnation	Non-Muslims attain heaven after a purification in fires of a purgatory	Heaven ephemeral and related to physical body; Hell temporary place of punishment until reincarnated	Unreasonable to condemn a man to eternal hell for human weakness; neither is eternal
13. General Resurrection	At final judgement, when Christ returns at the end of time, all men will be raised from the dead and dwell bodily in Heaven (in eternal bliss) or Hell (in eternal suffering)	There will be a revival of the dead when God pleases	Soul sleep until Judgment Day, when all judged according to life deeds	Reincarnation; ultimate goal of a religious life is to escape cycle of death and rebirth	Reincarnation; ultimate goal of a religious life is to escape cycle of death and rebirth
14. Eschatology and Rapture	Christ will return; without warning, at an unexpected time; after 1,000 years, the <i>last days</i> (between his first and second coming); during which the Church will grow; but there will be periods of great decline; with a final, undeterminable, falling away before Christ returns; at which time the dead will be raised; there will be a general judgement; and the heavens and earth cleansed with fire, all creation restored, the New Heavens and Earth established, and Heaven extended to Earth	Jewish eschatology includes the ingathering of the exiled diaspora; the coming of Jewish Messiah (not Jesus), descended from the Davidic line, who will rule and unite the people of Israel and will usher in the messianic age of global and universal peace; and the bodily resurrection of the dead; many believe it will occur 6000 years from creation (i.e., about 300 years from now)	The end of days will begin with the appearance of the <i>Mahdi</i> ('guided one'), whose appearance will be the first sign of the third and final period of history; the third period will end with the final assessment of humanity by Allah: annihilation of all life, resurrection, and judgment, with the eternal division of the righteous (rewarded with the pleasures of <i>Jannah</i>) and wicked (tortured in <i>Jahannam</i>)	Kalki, the tenth avatar of Vishnu, will appear on a white horse before the current age (lasting 432,000 years) ruled by the demon Kali and foretold to be characterized by impiety, violence, and decay draws to a close; Kalki will amass an army of pious who, with all incarnations of god (avatars) in human history, will destroy all demons and sins; Shiva will dissolve and regenerate the universe; the next epoch will begin, everyone will be righteous, reestablishment of <i>dharma</i> and piety	Buddha’s teachings to disappear 5,000 years after he preached (in 4600 AD); knowledge of <i>dharma</i> lost; a new era of the next Buddha, Maitreya, begins; preceded by societal collapse; Maitreya will attain <i>bodhi</i> in seven days, by virtue of his lives of preparation, and rule over earthly paradise, he will teach humanity the abandonment of killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, lying, impious speech, covetousness, etc.; ultimately earth destroyed by appearance of 7 suns, causing progressive ruin
15. Scriptures / Bible	God’s inerrant word; self-authenticating; ultimate authority; consists of 39 OT and 27 NT books; Bible revelation complete, no additional revelation being given	Law, Prophets, Writings (i.e., the 39 books of the Protestant OT) source of Jewish law; augmented with Mishnah and Talmud	Qur’an only authentic and complete book of Allah; Bible corrupted before the revelation at the time of Muhammad	Absolute truth contained in <i>Vedas</i>; <i>Bhagavad Gita</i>, conversation between Pandava and Krishna	Have a collection of <i>Buddhavacana</i> (words of the Buddha)
16. God’s Law	Principles apply to all men, in all times; innate knowledge suppressed; summarized in Ten Commandments	Laws as interpreted are to be adhered to in explicit detail	Many of Ten Commandments alluded to in <i>Qur’an</i>; Five Pillars of Islam essential	Have five principles for living and five guides for social behavior (<i>dharma</i>)	No moral absolutes; ethical decisions involve a complex nexus of causes and conditions
17. Sin	All men are born with the guilt of Adam’s sin, are unable not to sin, and commit sin; sin is breaking God’s law in thought or action; results in death	Individuals are born innocent; sin is doing something wrong	Anything against commands of Allah, a breach of the laws and norms laid down by religion	Actions that violate moral and ethical codes, negative consequences, create negative <i>karma</i>	No concept of sin, ethics not based upon duty towards any deity
18. Sexual Ethics and Marriage	Sexual intercourse to be confined to lifetime marriage between one man and one unrelated woman	Marriage is a contract between a man and a woman primarily for procreation; divorce permitted	Marriage is a contract between a man and a woman; divorce, fixed-term marriages, and polygamy permitted	Sexual intercourse should be confined to marriage between one man (some Hindu countries permit same-sex ‘marriage’); polygamy practiced in fringe, officially considered immoral	Marriage to follow local custom or law, culturally defined sexual misconduct discouraged
19. Salvation	By eternal election; in unconditional divine grace; through faith in Jesus; which cannot be revoked	Men can keep the law and be justified by works; salvation is by merit	Qur’an teaches the necessity of both faith and good works for salvation; people who die disbelieving in God do not receive salvation; non-Muslims who die believing in God, but disbelieving in Islam, are left to his will; those who die	Men are freed from a cycle of death and reincarnation, come to a state of completeness, and become one with god	Discipline of giving up on desires; this quest relies on oneself, not on gods or priests; a person can work himself upward by making use of acquired merit

Table 3 – World Religions					
	Biblical Christianity	Orthodox Judaism	Islam	Hinduism	Buddhism
			believing in the “One God” and Islam receive salvation		
20. Good Works	Result of divine grace; unworthy of merit	Self-righteousness achieved through works	Qur’an teaches salvation based on belief and good deeds	Impersonal karma law ensures that all good or bad deeds eventually return as rewards or punishment	Impersonal karma law ensures that all good or bad deeds eventually return as rewards or punishment
21. Worship	True worship consists of reverential acts (i.e., prayer, <i>a capella</i> singing of Psalms, reading Scripture, sermon, observance of sacraments); authorized by God; directed to him; performed to honour him or his name	Synagogue and holy day rituals based on centuries of tradition	Included in the Five Pillars of Islam (see ‘Sacraments’ below), primarily ritual prayer five times per day	Invoking higher forces to assist in spiritual / material progress; a sense of loving object or focus of devotion	Forms: guru yoga, <i>mandala</i>, <i>thangka</i>, yantra yoga, <i>panchamrita</i>, mantra recitation, tea ceremony, etc.
22. Sacraments	Two, ordained by Christ, Lord’s Supper and Baptism; (of adults and infants); signs and seals of the covenant of grace which represent Christ and his benefits confirming a believer’s interest in him; to demarcate a visible difference between those who belong to Church and the world; each sacramental sign has a spiritual relation, or sacramental union, with the thing signified; grace conferred, not by power in the elements, but by the Holy Spirit	Male circumcision into the covenant on eighth day, Bar mitzvah and Bat mitzvah, marriage, death mourning; animal sacrifices would be performed if the temple still existed (or was rebuilt) and will be reinstated when the Messiah comes	Saying the creed, daily prayers, almsgiving, fasting during Ramadan, pilgrimage to Mecca at least once in lifetime	Sacrifices and rituals at life events (rites of passage)	Meditation, mantra recitation with prayer wheel, mudras (symbolic hand gestures), pilgrimage
23. Holy Days	Sabbath to be kept holy by all men in all nations; the first day of the week, the Lord’s Day, which commemorates the resurrection, is the Christian Sabbath; no other days are to be set aside or observed as holy	Sabbath, Passover, Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement), Feast of Weeks, Shavuot (Pentecost) Tabernacles, Festival of Booths, Rosh Hashanah, Purim, Hanukkah	Friday congregational prayer and sermon; <i>Eid al-Fitr</i> (end of Ramadan fasting month) <i>Eid al-Adha</i> (coincides with pilgrimage to Mecca)	Numerous holy days, e.g., Diwali (festival of lights), Krishna’s birth, avatar of Vishnu, forms of Shakti	Numerous holy days, e.g., Buddha’s birthday, Buddha’s enlightenment
24. Church	Universal; invisible: all the elect; visible: all who profess the true religion; and their children; particular congregations may be more or less pure as they preach the Gospel, administer sacraments, and perform public worship more or less purely; whose only head is the Lord Jesus Christ	No direct equivalent; Jews believe that they are the chosen people, in a covenant with God, chosen by God for a purpose; no single rabbinical body to which all rabbis expected to belong, no organization representing member congregations	No direct equivalent; Mankind is divided into two classes: Muslim and non-Muslim; <i>ummah</i>, "the people", Muslim people with a common ideology and culture, the unity of Muslims all over the world, responsible for upholding the religion and therefore benefiting the community (including all mankind)	No direct equivalent; decentralized religion, paths to God many, whatever way men worship him; no particular authority except ancient texts; temples bring people together, create a sense of oneness, but have no control over religious lives of Hindus; <i>sects</i>, headed by a religious leader, have no general authority or influence	No direct equivalent; <i>Sangha</i>, "association", "assembly", "company" or "community" the monastic community of ordained Buddhist monks and nuns; also includes lay persons personally dedicated to Buddhist principles; on the ideal level, denotes all of Buddha’s followers who have attained a level of enlightenment
25. Organizational Structure	Rule by spiritually mature and chaste male officers: pastor and elders, who must be able to teach; deacons to oversee fabric of congregation and ministration to the poor; officers to be called by congregation with pastors/elders aligned in presbyteries and assemblies	Synagogues are generally independent; do not answer to a central authority; only men can become rabbis	No formal organizational structure; do not formally ordain, only men can hold office of imam	No formal organizational structure; both men and women are ordained as priests	No formal organizational structure; both men and women are ordained as priests

Questions addressed to an adherent of Orthodox Judaism:

- Do infants sin? When do people become sinners, and why?
- If God asks you why you should be admitted into Heaven, what will be your answer? Will you be good enough?
- About whom do the following portions of Scripture speak? [Genesis 49.10; Deuteronomy 18.15-19; Psalms 2; 16; 22; 24; 40; 41; 45; 69; 72; 89; 102; 110; 118; Isaiah 7.14; 9.6-7; 52.13-53.12; Daniel 9.24-27; Micah 5.2; Zechariah 9.9]
- How could a future expected Messiah demonstrate that he is the true Messiah in a way that Jesus could not?
- What was the purpose of animal sacrifices?
- If animal sacrifices were essential during the time before Jesus, why are Jews not insistent that they be performed today? Why are Jews not required to go up to Jerusalem once a year and offer sacrifices? How does the fact that the temple was destroyed free them from that obligation?
- What will happen in the messianic age to pagans, Moslems, Hindus, and Christians who died before the Messiah arrived?

Questions addressed to an adherent of Islam:

- Does Allah have the attributes of love and mercy? How are these attributes to be displayed by Muslims?
- How do you explain Allah’s requirement that Muslims send their sons to die for him ([Qur'an 4:74](#); [9:111](#); [61:10-12](#)), when God says that love is displayed by his sending his son Jesus to die for men (1 Jn 4.10)?
- Do you commit sin? If you have free will, then why do you sin?
- If God asks you why you should be admitted into Heaven, what will be your answer? Will your observance of the Five Pillars be good enough?
- What is untrue in the Bible? When was it corrupted, and by whom?
- Do non-Muslims attain heaven after a purification in the fires of a purgatory, are they annihilated, or are they tortured in *Jahannam* eternally?
- How can the Qur’an speak of Jesus as a mere man, but prophet of Allah, when he claimed to be God? Isn’t his claim to be God blasphemy, if it isn’t true?

Questions addressed to an adherent of **Hinduism**:

- 1. How can, or does, personality and intelligence arise from the ultimate impersonal, non-physical absolute?
- 2. Why does the spatial-temporal realm exist, if ultimate reality is an impersonal, non-physical absolute?
- 3. If the spatial-temporal realm (i.e., the universe) is eternal, then how can ultimate existence be only the non-physical *Brahman*?
- 4. If the universe is eternal (i.e., has always existed), and is therefore infinitely old, then why has it not already reached a state of absorption into *Brahman*?
- 5. Since true enlightenment is obtained by realizing that the observable world is unreal and impermanent, then why have you not been absorbed into *Brahman*, since you declare that the observable world is unreal and impermanent?
- 6. Is your *karma* the result of fate, or of your own efforts?
- 7. How do you know what actions and attitudes will produce good or bad *karma*?

Questions addressed to adherent of **Buddhism**:

- 1. What is the cause of human suffering?
- 2. Why is suffering bad and why is it necessary to eliminate it?
- 3. If there is no Divine moral standard, and morality is self-established, why are killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, lying, impious speech, and covetousness to be eliminated by the Buddha’s next incarnation, Maitreya?
- 4. What makes an action bad or good—resulting in bad or good *karma*?
- 5. How can there be an ongoing role for *karma* if there is no supernatural and no eternal soul that passes from incarnation to incarnation?
- 6. Why should we accept the *Buddhavacana* (the words of the Buddha) as authoritative when it teaches that our own experience is authoritative?
- 7. Do logical constructs have meaning—such as identity (anything is identical to itself and different from everything else; i.e., ‘A’ is ‘A’ and not ‘not-A’), non-contradiction (a statement cannot be true and not-true at the same time), excluded middle (an entity is either ‘A’ or ‘not-A’ and nothing else), and truthfulness (a statement is either true or it is false)?

Table 4 – Materialistic Religions				
	Biblical Christianity	Liberal ‘Christianity’	Unitarianism (Deism)	Atheistic Naturalism
1. God	One spirit; a trinity or persons; eternally existing; co-equal; infinite, all-powerful, holy; and good persons	Stress a basic continuity between man and God, emphasizing the immanence of God rather than his transcendence; tend to be Unitarian rather than Trinitarian, recognizing only the deity of the Father	A universal creative force greater than that demonstrated by mankind	Reject existence of a creator deity
2. Reality	Spirit and material realms created	No distinction between natural and supernatural	Reject notion that creation can be divided into natural and supernatural realms	Existence is restricted solely to what is physical or has a direct basis in it (e.g., as how thoughts operate in the brain)
3. Creation	Out of no pre-existing matter; in six twenty-four hour days; about 6,000 years ago	Bible's account is symbolic; God created and controls the processes that account for the universe and life (e.g. evolution), as continually revealed by modern science	Forces create and uphold life; more complex life forms evolved from less complex life forms	Universe self-caused, not created; out of nothing on its own; the universe is one of a multiverse
4. Jesus Christ	One person with two natures, human and divine; conceived by a virgin; sinless; died on the cross for the sins of his people, buried, rose the third day; ascended into heaven	Mixed: literal to the symbolic belief in Jesus Christ as God's incarnation; some believe we are all sons and daughters of God and that Christ was exemplary, but not God; did not rise from the grave bodily; was a good moral teacher, but his followers took liberties with his history	Reject the divinity or deity of Jesus; Jesus was a great man and a prophet of God, perhaps even a supranatural being, but not God himself; do not believe Jesus was born of a virgin, performed miracles or was resurrected from death	Rebelled against many aspects of Yahweh's vengeful nastiness, publicly advocated niceness; based on a real person, someone with incredible charisma, and who was probably a good magician
5. Man	Unique creation; in the image of God; body and immortal spirit; originally without sin	Do not accept the view that Adam & Eve are historical; embraces the evolutionary paradigm	More complex life forms evolved from less complex life forms	Man does not have a soul, he is merely the product of dumb luck; integral part of nature, result of unguided evolutionary change
6. Man’s Purpose	Man's primary purpose is to glorify God; and enjoy him forever	A free and responsible search for truth and meaning	To participate in the ongoing search for meaning, purpose, value and spiritual depth in one's life	To lead ethical lives of personal fulfillment that aspire to the greater good of humanity; or the question of purpose is meaningless
7. Angeles and Demons	Created spiritual beings, separate kind from man; God’s servants; demons are fallen angels; Satan led the rebellion	Do not believe in the existence of angels and demons with magical powers to control events in individual lives and in the movements of nations; view Devil metaphorically, a designation for evil	Do not believe in the existence of spiritual beings, in the sense of something that is disembodied; there is a spiritual dimension of life that is connected to the physical, mental, emotional, and psychological	Don’t believe in the supernatural, including any gods, angels, devils, or demons
8. Miracles	God acts directly and through secondary means; ‘laws’ of nature are descriptive not <i>prescriptive</i> ; ‘miracles’ limited since Bible completed	Myths with natural explanations	Myths with natural explanations; God governs the Universe via natural laws, and does not therefore perform miracles	Myths about things not yet understood; statistically one-in-a-million events
9. Providence	God predestined by decree those who would be saved and damned; continuously upholds the universe	Predestination considered obsolete by the liberal mainline	Protest against Calvinist doctrine of predestination (the doctrine of the elect--the belief that God has determined whether a person will go to Heaven even before he is born)	Most sciences today operate under the assumption of causality and determinism, with quantum physics being the exception; determinism seems to prevail at the macro level

Table 4 – Materialistic Religions				
	Biblical Christianity	Liberal ‘Christianity’	Unitarianism (Deism)	Atheistic Naturalism
10. Free Will	Men cannot act contrary to God’s eternal decrees; or to their sinful nature and choose to believe and repent	God made people inherently good, but also with free will and an imperfect nature which leads some to immoral behavior	Humans have the ability to exercise free will in a responsible, constructive and ethical manner with the assistance of religion	While the universe may be determined, the human brain has volition in the areas that matter, we have “any freedom worth having”
11. Physical Death	Curse resulting from Adam’s sin; affects all living creatures; separation of body and spirit; last enemy, to be destroyed on basis of Christ’s death and resurrection; includes spiritual and eternal death if sins are unforgiven	Do not spend a lot of time thinking about death; believe that Christians need to be carrying out God's work here on earth among the oppressed	Dual reality of being alive, and having to die; death is the final and total end of existence; finality of death not a morbid or despairing thought, but a compelling reason to live life as fully as possible; men live on in the minds and hearts of those persons whose lives they have enriched during their earthly life	When we die, everything pretty much goes on as before, except without us; do not believe that a soul survives beyond the moment of death
12. Heaven and Hell	Real places with some physical attributes; at death, man’s spirit departs to one or the other place	Goodness will somehow be rewarded, and evil punished after death, but what is most important is faith and conduct on earth; if they believe in a heaven, believe that at death everyone gets to go there	Divine reward, punishment in the afterlife, befitting the actions in this life; reject idea of God punishing men infinitely for finite acts; no hell	Do not believe that Heaven or Hell exist as actual (literal) places; the idea of their existence is preposterous
13. General Resurrection	At final judgement, when Christ returns at the end of time, all men will be raised from the dead and dwell bodily in Heaven (in eternal bliss) or Hell (in eternal suffering)	Reject the traditional conception of the Last Judgment as inconsistent with an all-just and loving God, in favor of some form of universal salvation	No continuing individualized existence after physical death; immortality manifests itself in the lives of those people affect during their lifetime and in the legacy they leave when they die	A meaningless construct in a worldview that believes that man is soul-less and nothing more than the molecules making up a body, does not believe in the existence of God, or existence beyond the moment of death
14. Eschatology and Rapture	Christ will return; without warning, at an unexpected time; after 1,000 years, the <i>last days</i> (between his first and second coming); during which the Church will grow; but there will be periods of great decline; with a final, undeterminable, falling away before Christ returns; at which time the dead will be raised; there will be a general judgement; and the heavens and earth cleansed with fire, all creation restored, the New Heavens and Earth established, and Heaven extended to Earth	Christ will personally return; the Kingdom will come to earth as a result of universal moral development; everyone will be saved in the end; do not have expectation that a Rapture will occur	Do not believe in a continuing, individualized existence after physical death; immortality manifests itself in the lives of those people affect during their lifetime and in the legacy they leave when they die	A meaningless construct in a worldview that believes that man is soul-less and nothing more than the molecules making up a body, and does not believe in the existence of God or existence beyond the moment of death
15. Scriptures / Bible	God’s inerrant word; self-authenticating; ultimate authority; consists of 39 OT and 27 NT books; Bible revelation complete, no additional revelation being given	Not propositional truth but religious models and concepts that reflect the class, gender, social, and political contexts from which they emerge; not inerrant, but ‘inspired’ in the sense as a poem; man’s reason is stressed and is treated as the final authority	Although the authors of the Bible were inspired by God, they were humans and therefore subject to human error; historical document, rather than a communiqué from God	Do not regard as historically reliable; may view the moral advice in the Bible as good, as they may believe there is good moral advice in many religious tracts or texts; subscribe to documents such as the <i>Humanist Manifesto</i> as authoritative
16. God’s Law	Principles apply to all men, in all times; innate knowledge suppressed; summarized in Ten Commandments	Jews may keep the Law of Moses, because of the "everlasting covenant" between Abraham and God, Gentiles not required to keep the OT laws; oppose public displays of the Ten Commandments	Reason can produce a practical morality without resorting to revelation or dogma	Ethical values derived from human need and interest as tested by experience; values based on human welfare shaped by circumstances, interests, and concerns and extend to the global ecosystem and beyond
17. Sin	All men are born with the guilt of Adam’s sin, are unable not to sin, and commit sin; sin is breaking God’s law in thought or action; results in death	Man is not innately sinful but possesses a universal religious sentiment; denies the Fall (of Adam and Eve) and original sin	Do not believe that a person is born enslaved by original sin; people are punished by their sins, not for them, and that the evil people do lives with them	There is no moral difference between right and wrong, good and bad; anything goes: abortion, euthanasia, suicide, etc.
18. Sexual Ethics and Marriage	Sexual intercourse to be confined to lifetime marriage between one man and one unrelated woman	Marriage ordained by God, divorce not an issue; premarital sex endorsed; do not view monogamous same-sex relationships as sinful or immoral, and may bless such unions and consider them marriages	Affirm the inherent dignity and worth of persons of any sexual orientation; support homosexual ‘marriage’, and some support polyamory	Do not do to others as you would not have others do to you; operationalize sexual ethics as: consent, honesty, responsibility
19. Salvation	By eternal election; in unconditional divine grace; through faith in Jesus; which cannot be revoked	Some believe all go to heaven, since God is loving and forgiving; others salvation based on works	No original sin or hell, nothing to be saved from	There is no such thing as sin and no Heaven or Hell, so no need for salvation
20. Good Works	Result of divine grace; unworthy of merit	Salvation lies in doing good works and no harm to others, regardless of faith	The good people do lives with them and helps make the world better	Be moral because it makes you feel better than being immoral
21. Worship	True worship consists of	A glad response of	A celebration of life; each	Do not worship any god;

Table 4 – Materialistic Religions				
	Biblical Christianity	Liberal ‘Christianity’	Unitarianism (Deism)	Atheistic Naturalism
	reverential acts (i.e., prayer, <i>a capella</i> singing of Psalms, reading Scripture, sermon, observance of sacraments); authorized by God; directed to him; performed to honour him or his name	individuals, a communal and personal celebration of God's love for creation and every human being; more than a passive response to God's revelation, a Pentecostal proclamation, announcing the good news of God's love for all the world which invites all people to share God's saving embrace; all that Christians are and do, corporately and individually, is worship, liturgy, the work of praise and thanksgiving	congregation at liberty to devise own form; many light a chalice (symbol of faith), have a story for all ages, and include sermons, prayers, hymns and songs; attendees publicly share joys and concerns; in theistic congregations prayers are addressed to a deity; in humanist congregations, prayers are personal reflection and meditation	some have Sunday assemblies
22. Sacraments	Two, ordained by Christ, Lord’s Supper and Baptism; (of adults and infants); signs and seals of the covenant of grace which represent Christ and his benefits confirming a believer’s interest in him; to demarcate a visible difference between those who belong to Church and the world; each sacramental sign has a spiritual relation, or sacramental union, with the thing signified; grace conferred, not by power in the elements, but by the Holy Spirit	Baptism during worship, when the community is present, includes the community's promise of 'love, support and care'; which won't be taken back – no matter where a person’s journey leads; all people of faith invited to join Christ at the sacrament of Communion; breaking of bread and pouring of wine reminds us of the costliness of Christ's sacrifice, the discipleship to which we are called; and we remember and celebrate Christ's presence among us	Have appropriate ceremonies for important life events, do not consider them sacraments	Some have naming, marriage, or death ceremonies; some atheist organizations offer ceremonies and certificates of “debaptism” which churches refuse to take action or treat as a renunciation of the faith
23. Holy Days	Sabbath to be kept holy by all men in all nations; the first day of the week, the Lord’s Day, which commemorates the resurrection, is the Christian Sabbath; no other days are to be set aside or observed as holy	Observe a liturgical calendar, with Advent, Christmas, Epiphany, Lent, Ash Wednesday, Holy Week, Easter, Pentecost, Reformation Day, and All Saints Day; use coloured vestments including: violet, white, black, red, green, blue and gold to represent the season of the Church year	Celebrate Christmas and Easter; honored as celebrations of the winter solstice and spring equinox, holidays to the changing seasons, the hope and promise symbolized by the lengthening of daylight and renewal of life; traditional accounts of the birth of Jesus and Resurrection are at times included, cited as myths containing a positive message about human life	Celebrate every holiday, but not as Holy Days; any event which sees friends or family together for companionship, happiness, food and drink can be observed, a decided advantage over folks moored to a single religious or cultural tradition; some observe Darwin Day, Pi Day and other events
24. Church	Universal; invisible: all the elect; visible: all who profess the true religion; and their children; particular congregations may be more or less pure as they preach the Gospel, administer sacraments, and perform public worship more or less purely; whose only head is the Lord Jesus Christ	Many people, no matter race, gender, sexual orientation, class or creed belong to God and to one worldwide community of faith; a united and uniting church; "In essentials–unity, in nonessentials–diversity, in all things–charity”; God calls the Church to speak truth to power, liberate the oppressed, care for the poor and comfort the afflicted	Stated bonds: Principles and Purposes of the organization which are supported individually and collectively; unstated bonds: mutual respect for one another, appreciation of religious, philosophical and spiritual paths which members pursue; mutual concern for another's well-being, and willingness to aid another in time of need	No direct equivalent; a number of representative organizations , such as: Freedom From Religion Foundation , American Atheists , Atheist Alliance International
25. Organizational Structure	Rule by spiritually mature and chaste male officers: pastor and elders, who must be able to teach; deacons to oversee fabric of congregation and ministration to the poor; officers to be called by congregation with pastors/elders aligned in presbyteries and assemblies	Mixed: Presbyterian, Episcopal, Congregational forms; most ordain women to pastoral office; most ordain practicing homosexuals	Congregational model, each church governs itself independent of hierarchical authority; congregations belong to associations; accredited ministers, man or woman, must be approved by the Ministerial Fellowship Committee; ordain homosexual clergy	No formal organizational structure, although have authoritative bodies such as the National Academy of Sciences ; a number of representative organizations , such as: Freedom From Religion Foundation , American Atheists , Atheist Alliance International

Questions addressed to a **Liberal ‘Christian’**:

- Do you accept the existence of *any* ultimate authorities? If not, how do you validate the application of logic? If so, why do you consider your self-attesting authority superior to the self-attesting authority of the Bible?
- Does God communicate to mankind? How do you know that he does or does not?
- If God created the universe, why do you consider it beyond his capabilities to foretell the precise future hundreds of years before it arrives?
- You claim that portions of the Bible are non-historical. How do you know that the extra-Biblical account against which you evaluate the Bible’s account is historical?
- On what basis do you define moral behaviour? Is your definition of moral behaviour normative for other people?
- Since Jesus declares himself to be God, if his claim is not true, why do you consider him to be an exemplary man and a good moral teacher?
- If God asks you why you should be admitted into Heaven, what will be your answer? Will you be good enough?

Questions addressed to an adherent of **Unitarian Deism**:

- How can, or does, personality and intelligence arise from an impersonal creative divine force?
- How can human responsibility exist if we live in a deterministic (closed cause-and-effects system) universe?

3. Since Jesus declares himself to be God, if his claim is not true, why do you consider him to be a great man and a prophet of God?
4. Does God communicate to mankind? How do you know that he does or does not?
5. Do infants sin? When do people become sinners, and why?
6. On what basis do you define moral behaviour? Is your definition of moral behaviour normative for other people?
7. If there is no Hell, can a person do whatever he wishes without any fear of eternal consequences?

Questions addressed to a professed **Atheistic Naturalist**:

1. How can an absolute nothing produce anything? Alternatively, If the universe is eternal (i.e., has always existed), and is therefore infinitely old, then why is it that thermodynamic equilibrium has not already been reached?
2. How can you prove that there is no God? How do you avoid making a logical [category mistake](#) by requiring material evidence for the immaterial God?
3. How do infants know how to process language if they do not have an innate knowledge of how to parse and process language? How did that ability originate?
4. How can human responsibility exist if we live in a deterministic (closed, cause-and-effect system) universe?
5. If man is nothing more than the molecules which make up his body, then how can truth, logic, mathematics, love, beauty, etc. exist?
6. Do you believe that there is anything that is evil? If so, what, and why?
7. If humans are autonomous moral agents, can any behaviour be normative for other people? If there are moral absolutes, what are they?

Table 5 – Summary Spectrum of Beliefs				
	Biblical Christianity	Other Beliefs		
1. God	One spirit; a trinity or persons; eternally existing; co-equal; infinite, all-powerful, holy; and good persons	Consists of a single person; may or may not be all knowing and all-powerful	A universal creative force greater than that demonstrated by mankind	No god (creator-deity) exists
2. Reality	Spirit and material realms created	Universe originated from potentialities; a pantheistic form	Nothing physical exists, all is merely a ‘dream’ of an abstract entity	Existence is restricted solely to what is physical or has a direct basis in it
3. Creation	Out of no pre-existing matter; in six twenty-four hour days; about 6,000 years ago	God created the universe billions of years ago; he intervened at various points to guide unfolding events	God created the ‘seed’ of universe billions of years ago and left it to unfold through natural laws	The universe is eternal or self-creating and one of a multiverse
4. Jesus Christ	One person with two natures, human and divine; conceived by a virgin; sinless; died on the cross for the sins of his people, buried, rose the third day; ascended into heaven	Jesus is a created being elevated to the level of a god	Jesus was a mere man who lived a good life and taught us how to live wisely	Jesus is an myth or false messiah invented by a group of anti-Roman Jews
5. Man	Unique creation; in the image of God; body and immortal spirit; originally without sin	Divine guidance of evolution led to emergence of man	Adam & Eve non-historical; man, the product of evolutionary creationism	Man does not have a soul, he is merely the product of dumb luck; integral part of nature, result of unguided evolutionary change
6. Man’s Purpose	Man's primary purpose is to glorify God; and enjoy him forever	To keep the commandments, so that he can be worthy to return to live with his Father in Heaven again after death; to prepare to meet God	To end suffering by embracing (not suppressing or denying) cravings and conceptual attachments, to attain a perfect dispassion, ultimately leading to state of Nirvana	To lead ethical lives of personal fulfillment that aspire to the greater good of humanity; or, the question of purpose is meaningless
7. Angeles and Demons	Created spiritual beings, separate kind from man; God’s servants; demons are fallen angels; Satan led the rebellion	Angels minor gods; demons are forces that fight against the gods	No existence of angels and demons with magical powers to control events in individual lives; devil a metaphor for evil	No existence of spiritual, disembodied, beings; the spiritual dimension of life connected to the physical, mental, emotional, and psychological
8. Miracles	God acts directly and through secondary means; ‘laws’ of nature are <i>descriptive</i> not <i>prescriptive</i> ; ‘miracles’ limited since Bible completed	Miracles reported throughout history since Biblical times; connected with saints, often including healing from disease and injury	Effects in the physical world that surpass all known human or natural powers and are therefore attributed to supernatural agency; do not occur today	Merely imaginations and hallucinations due to a lack of understanding; or, expression of mind over matter
9. Providence	God predestined by decree those who would be saved and damned; continuously upholds the universe	Everything is foreseen, yet free will is given; God exists outside of time, he knows the future as the past	Both free will and fate have a place, fate is the result of a person’s <i>karma</i> ; whatever happens is the result of the past	Science operates under the assumption of causality and determinism, with quantum physics being the exception; determinism seems to prevail at the macro level
10. Free Will	Men cannot act contrary to God’s eternal decrees; or to their sinful nature and choose to believe and repent	God creates the possibility of a human action, humans follow through, acquire the act, make it theirs and take responsibility	God gave man a gift of moral agency which includes free will; proper exercise of choice leads to return to God's presence	The universe may be determined, but the human brain has volition in the areas that matter, we have “any freedom worth having”
11. Physical Death	Curse resulting from Adam’s sin; affects all living creatures; separation of body and spirit; last enemy, to be destroyed on basis of Christ’s death and resurrection; includes spiritual and eternal death if sins are unforgiven	Not a calamity; a release from physical life	Not a tragedy, even when it occurs early; a natural process to be contemplated	When we die, everything pretty much goes on as before, except without us; no soul survives beyond the moment of death
12. Heaven and Hell	Real places with some physical attributes; at death, man’s spirit departs to one or the other place	Heaven and hell are being in God's presence, this is punishment and paradise depending on the person's spiritual state	Those who do not "pass the test" go to a purifying place to "learn their lesson”; no eternal damnation	There is no such places or are a state of mind, Heaven and Hell are here on Earth
13. General Resurrection	At final judgement, when Christ returns at the end of	There is no Last Judgment, it is inconsistent with an all-	Reincarnation; ultimate goal of a religious life is to escape	No continuing individualized existence after physical

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	time, all men will be raised from the dead and dwell bodily in Heaven (in eternal bliss) or Hell (in eternal suffering)	just and loving God; favour some form of universal salvation	cycle of death and rebirth	death; immortality manifests itself in the lives of those people affect during their lifetime and in the legacy they leave when they die
14. Eschatology and Rapture	Christ will return; without warning, at an unexpected time; after 1,000 years, the <i>last days</i> (between his first and second coming); during which the Church will grow; but there will be periods of great decline; with a final, undeterminable, falling away before Christ returns; at which time the dead will be raised; there will be a general judgement; and the heavens and earth cleansed with fire, all creation restored, the New Heavens and Earth established, and Heaven extended to Earth	Jesus Christ will soon return to this earth, personally, visibly, and unexpectedly, in power and great glory, to gather his elect, to raise the dead, to judge the nations, and to bring his Kingdom to fulfillment; Premillennialism (Jesus will return, the righteous will be raised to meet him in the air and taken into heaven where they will share in his millennium reign) or Dispensationalism most commonly believed	Reject the rapture; a prophet (Christ, <i>Mahdi</i> , Kalki, Maitreya) will appear and set up an earthly paradise	A meaningless construct; man is soul-less and nothing more than the molecules making up a body, no existence beyond the moment of death
15. Scriptures / Bible	God’s inerrant word; self-authenticating; ultimate authority; consists of 39 OT and 27 NT books; Bible revelation complete, no additional revelation being given	The Bible is God’s word, other writings are also God’s word for man	The Bible contains truth that God wishes mankind to know	The Bible is fiction invented by men who wished to oppress others
16. God’s Law	Principles apply to all men, in all times; innate knowledge suppressed; summarized in Ten Commandments	God has different laws for different people at different times (e.g., OT Jews vs NT Christians vs other people)	Law is convention based on reason and current prevailing public opinion	There is no absolute law, each person can do as he pleases (or as the majority agrees)
17. Sin	All men are born with the guilt of Adam’s sin, are unable not to sin, and commit sin; sin is breaking God’s law in thought or action; results in death	Man is born innocent but free to sin or not to sin, <i>all</i> people chose to sin because of the tendency to sin in human nature	Man is born innocent and free to sin or not to sin, <i>most</i> people chose to sin	There is no moral difference between right and wrong, good and bad; anything goes: abortion, euthanasia, suicide, etc.
18. Sexual Ethics and Marriage	Sexual intercourse to be confined to lifetime marriage between one man and one unrelated woman	Marriage a contract between a man and a woman primarily for procreation; divorce permitted	Do not do to others as you would not have others do to you; operationalize sexual ethics as: consent, honesty, responsibility	There are no objective rules governing sexual ethics; each person can do as he pleases
19. Salvation	By eternal election; in unconditional divine grace; through faith in Jesus; which cannot be revoked	Men can keep the law and be justified by works; salvation is by merit	Men are freed from a cycle of death and reincarnation, come to a state of completeness, and become one with god	There is no such thing as sin and no Heaven or Hell, so no need for salvation
20. Good Works	Result of divine grace; unworthy of merit	Self-righteousness achieved through works	Be moral because it makes you feel better than being immoral	‘Good’ is merely definitional and changes with culture
21. Worship	True worship consists of reverential acts (i.e., prayer, <i>a capella</i> singing of Psalms, reading Scripture, sermon, observance of sacraments); authorized by God; directed to him; performed to honour him or his name	Must be pleasing to God and offered with humble and pure heart; a balance of form and freedom; exercise of a variety of spiritual gifts; NT forms augmented with band worship music, drama, and dance	Invoking higher forces to assist in spiritual / material progress; a sense of loving object or focus of devotion	A celebration of life; attendees publicly share joys, concerns; prayers are personal reflection and meditation
22. Sacraments	Two, ordained by Christ, Lord’s Supper and Baptism; (of adults and infants); signs and seals of the covenant of grace which represent Christ and his benefits confirming a believer’s interest in him; to demarcate a visible difference between those who belong to Church and the world; each sacramental sign has a spiritual relation, or sacramental union, with the thing signified; grace conferred, not by power in the elements, but by the Holy Spirit	Multiple, including baptism, confirmation, Eucharist, penance, anointing of sick, holy orders, matrimony; efficacious, convey grace; necessary for salvation; baptism takes away sin inherited from Adam (and sins committed before baptism; consecration of bread and wine changes them into the substance of the body of Christ (transubstantiation); Mass perpetuates the sacrifice of the cross through the ages	Meditation, mantra recitation with prayer wheel, mudras (symbolic hand gestures), pilgrimage	Appropriate ceremonies for important life events, do not consider them sacraments
23. Holy Days	Sabbath to be kept holy by all men in all nations; the first day of the week, the Lord’s Day, which commemorates the resurrection, is the Christian Sabbath; no other days are to be set aside or observed as holy	Celebrate Christmas and Easter; for many the Lord’s Day is not the continuation of the Sabbath and keeping one day per week holy to the Lord is optional	Sunday ceremonial observance replaces and fulfills the spiritual truth of the Jewish Sabbath and announces man's eternal rest in God; numerous obligatory feasts and holy days	Celebrate holidays, not as Holy Days; any event which sees friends or family together for companionship, happiness, food and drink observed
24. Church	Universal; invisible: all the elect; visible: all who profess	Applies to: local assembly who profess faith in and	The holy people of God, called ‘saints’; sole Church	Many people, no matter race, gender, sexual

Table 5 – Summary Spectrum of Beliefs				
	Biblical Christianity	Other Beliefs		
	the true religion; and their children; particular congregations may be more or less pure as they preach the Gospel, administer sacraments, and perform public worship more or less purely; whose only head is the Lord Jesus Christ	allegiance to Christ, the universal church; and God's congregation (bride and body of Christ); church is eschatological Israel incorporated in Messiah, but progression beyond historical Israel; related to kingdom of God, but not equal	of Christ subsists in the Catholic Church, which is governed by the successor of Peter and bishops in communion with him; any who believe in Christ and have been properly baptized are in a certain, although imperfect, communion with the Catholic Church	orientation, class or creed belong to God and to one worldwide community of faith; a united and uniting church; "In essentials—unity, in nonessentials—diversity, in all things—charity"; God calls the church to speak truth to power, liberate the oppressed, care for the poor and comfort the afflicted
25. Organizational Structure	Rule by spiritually mature and chaste male officers: pastor and elders, who must be able to teach; deacons to oversee fabric of congregation and ministration to the poor; officers to be called by congregation with pastors/elders aligned in presbyteries and assemblies	Episcopal, with a Pope or other supreme pontiff; only baptized men may be ordained as priests	Congregational model, each church governs itself independent of hierarchical authority; congregations belong to associations; accredited ministers, man or woman, must be approved by a committee; ordain homosexual clergy	No formal organizational structure; both men and women are ordained as priests

What a person believes must begin at the foundation of all truth—the nature of God (Is 45.5) and of reality (Col 1.16), God’s role in creation (Gen 1.1), the person and nature of Jesus Christ (Mt 22.42), and the origin and purpose of man in relation to God (Gen 1.26-27). Since it is impossible to provide deductive proofs for these foundational beliefs, every person’s belief system includes, explicitly or implicitly, presuppositions about these foundational beliefs. At root, a person either accepts God’s word—as given in the Bible—as absolute truth and the ultimate source of all belief (2 Tim 3.16-17) or he declares his own mind and word to be the final arbiter of truth. Also, what a person believes to be correct moral behaviour can only be derived from one of two possible sources, the Word of God (i.e., the Bible) or his own opinion. Thus, the various belief systems presented in these tables rest on two distinct, and diametrically opposed, ultimate sources of truth—either, God and his Word are the only truth, or every man and his own opinions are true.