

TABLE I: Comparison of Other World Religions and Two Major Branches of Buddhism

| | WORLD RELIGION | BUDDHISM | BUDDHISM |
|-------------|--|---|---|
| | Initial Stage | Theravada Stage | Mahayana Stage (open & secret) |
| GOAL | To stop non-meritorious (evil) behavior and practice good behavior to accumulate necessary merit so as to gain high status and a favorable rebirth in the future. In Buddhism this is seen only as a provisional goal and not as an end in itself. However, mastery of this stage is necessary to progress to higher levels. | To escape suffering of samsara (cycle of birth and death). This includes Sravakas or Arhats (Lo-hans) as well as the Pratyekabuddhas who obtain liberation on their own without a teacher in their current lifetime. This is also seen as a provisional goal or respite on the way to Buddhahood whereby the conflicting emotions are eliminated but the goal of ultimate nirvana has not been reached. | The superior goal of the Bodhisattva to bring all beings to complete enlightenment or ultimate nirvana before gaining the goal of Buddhahood for one's self. Here the double veils of conflicting emotions and primitive beliefs about reality have both been lifted and one achieves complete enlightenment. |