

15. *The Imminent Coming and Millennial Reign of Jesus.* The premillennial and imminent coming of the Lord to gather his people unto himself, and to judge the world in righteousness while reigning on the earth for a thousand years is the expectation of the true church of Christ.
16. *The Lake of Fire.* The devil and his angles, the beast and false prophet, and whosoever is not found written in the book of Life, the fearful and unbelieving, and abominable, and murderers and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolators and all liars shall be consigned to everlasting punishment in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.
17. *The New Heavens and New Earth.* We look for new heaven and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness. 2 Pet. 3:13; Rev. 1 and 22.

Source: "A Statement of Fundamental Truths," General Council of the Assemblies of God, October 2-7, 1916.

RECENT SECTARIAN MOVEMENTS

UNITARIANISM: WILLIAM ELLERY CHANNING

Denominations emerging from the Protestant Reformation initially shared basic theological assumptions with the older Catholic and Orthodox traditions. Foremost among these were the notion of the Trinity and the idea that the Bible was the unique word of God. Growing political freedom in Europe and America permitted some Christian groups to step outside these traditional theological boundaries. One of the first such groups was the Unitarians, who, as their name implies, denied the Trinity in favor of a unified conception of God. Jesus, in their view, was a divinely appointed prophet and teacher, but not God himself. In America, Unitarianism became more formally organized through the efforts of William Ellery Channing (1780-1842), a former Congregationalist pastor. Though denying the Trinity, Channing remained committed to other tenets of Christianity. Some later Unitarians departed not only from Christian theology, but from all traditional religion, adopting instead a scientific humanism. The following selections are from Channing's seminal sermon Unitarian Christianity, delivered in 1819 at an ordination ceremony in Baltimore, Maryland.

I. We regard the Scriptures as the records of God's successive revelations to mankind, and particularly of the last and most perfect revelation of his will by Jesus Christ. Whatever doctrines seem to us to be clearly taught in the Scriptures, we receive without reserve or exception. We do not, however, attach equal importance to all the books in this collection. Our religion, we believe, lies chiefly in the New Testament. The dispensation of Moses, compared with that of Jesus, we consider as adapted to the childhood of the human race, a preparation for a nobler system, and chiefly useful now as serving to confirm and illustrate the Christian Scriptures. Jesus Christ is the only master of Christians, and whatever he taught, either during his personal ministry, or by his inspired Apostles, we regard as of divine authority, and profess to make the rule of our lives.

This authority, which we give to the Scriptures, is a reason, we conceive, for studying them with peculiar care, and for inquiring anxiously into the principles of interpretation, by which their true meaning may be ascertained. The principles adopted by the class of Christians in whose name I speak, need to be explained, because they are often misunderstood. We are particularly accused of making an unwarrantable use of reason in the interpretation of Scripture. We are said to exalt reason above revelation, to prefer our own wisdom to God's. Loose and undefined charges of this kind are circulated so freely, that we think it due to ourselves, and to the cause of truth, to express our views with some particularity.

Our leading principle in interpreting Scripture is this, that the Bible is a book written for men, in the language of men, and that its meaning is to be sought in the same manner as that of other books. We believe that God, when he speaks to the human race, conforms, if we may also say, to the established rules of speaking and writing. How else would the Scriptures avail us more, than if communicated in an unknown tongue? . . .

II. Having thus stated the principles according to which we interpret Scripture, I now proceed to the second great head of this discourse, which is, to state some of the views which we derive from that sacred book, particularly those which distinguish us from other Christians.

1. In the first place, we believe in the doctrine of God's *unity*, or that there is one God, and one only. To this truth we give infinite importance, and we feel ourselves bound to take heed, lest any man spoil us of it by vain philosophy. The proposition, that there is one God, seems to us exceedingly plain. We understand by it, that there is one being, one mind, one person, one intelligent agent, and one only, to whom underived and infinite perfection and dominion belong. We conceive, that these words could have conveyed no other meaning to the simple and uncultivated people who were set apart to be the depositaries of this great truth, and who were utterly incapable of understanding those hair-breadth distinctions between being and person, which the sagacity of later ages has discovered. We find to intimation, that this language was to be taken in an unusual sense, or that God's unity was a quite different thing from the oneness of other intelligent beings.

We object to the doctrine of the Trinity, that, whilst acknowledging in words, it subverts in effect, the unity of God. According to this doctrine, there are three infinite and equal persons, possessing supreme divinity, called the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Each of these persons, as described by theologians, has his own particular consciousness, will, and perceptions. They love each other, converse with each other, and delight in each other's society. They perform different parts in man's redemption, each having his appropriate office, and neither doing the work of the other. The Son is mediator and not the Father. The Father sends the Son, and is not himself sent; nor is he conscious, like the Son, of taking flesh. Here, then, we have three intelligent agents, possessed of different consciousness, different wills, and different perceptions, performing different acts, and sustaining different relations; and if these things do not imply

and constitute three minds or beings, we are utterly at a loss to know how minds or beings are to be formed. It is difference of properties, and acts, and consciousness, which leads us to the belief of different intelligent beings, and, if this mark fails us, our whole knowledge fall; we have no proof, that all the agents and persons in the universe are not one and the same mind. When we attempt to conceive of three Gods, we can do nothing more than represent to ourselves three agents, distinguished from each other by similar marks and peculiarities to those which separate the persons of the Trinity; and when common Christians hear these persons spoken of as conversing with each other, loving each other, and performing different acts, how can they help regarding them as different beings, different minds? . . .

Source: William Ellery Channing, *Unitarian Christianity*, in *The Works of William E. Channing* (Boston: American Unitarian Association, 1882).

MORMONISM: JOSEPH SMITH

Mormonism encompasses a few historically related denominations, the largest of which is the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints. Mormon belief is founded on the work of Joseph Smith (1805–1844), who maintained that an angelic vision revealed to him the location of gold plates buried during a previous age. Smith's translation of these plates comprises the Book of Mormon, first published in 1830. The work chronicles the history and religious practices of a band of Israelites who migrated to America in 600 B.C.E. Under two leaders, two distinct conflicting cultures emerged: the civilized Nephites, and the nomadic and warring Lamanites. Ostensibly the forefathers of the native Americans, the Lamanites exterminated the Nephites. Anticipating their demise, Moroni, a Nephite chronicler, buried a golden copy of the Book of Mormon to preserve their story. A twenty-page section of the Book of Mormon describes how Jesus visited the Nephites and gave them Christian doctrine, much of which is paraphrased from the Gospels. Selections from this are given below.

11. . . . And it came to pass, as they understood they cast their eyes up again towards heaven; and behold, they saw a Man descending out of heaven; and he was clothed in a white robe; and he came down and stood in the midst of them; and the eyes of the whole multitude were turned upon him, and they durst not open their mouths, even one to another and wist not what it meant, for they thought it was an angel that had appeared unto them. And it came to pass that he stretched forth his hand and spake unto the people, saying:

Behold, I am Jesus Christ, whom the prophets testified shall come into the world. . . .

Behold, verily, verily, I say unto you, I will declare unto you my doctrine. And this is my doctrine, and it is the doctrine which the Father hath given unto me; and I bear record of the Father, and the Father beareth record of me, and the Holy Ghost beareth record of

the Father and me; and I bear record that the Father commandeth all men, everywhere, to repent and believe in me. And whoso believeth in me, and is baptized, the same shall be saved; and they are they who shall inherit the kingdom of God. And whoso believeth not in me, and is not baptized, shall be damned.

Verily, verily, I say unto you, that this is my doctrine, and I bear record of it from the Father; and whoso believeth in me believeth in the Father also; and unto him will the Father bear record of me, for he will visit him with fire and with the Holy Ghost. And thus will the Father bear record of me, and the Holy Ghost will bear record unto him of the Father and me; for the Father, and I, and the Holy Ghost are one.

And again I say unto you, ye must repent, and become as a little child, and be baptized in my name, or ye can in nowise receive these things. And again I say unto you, ye must repent, and be baptized in my name, and become as a little child, or ye can in nowise inherit the kingdom of God. Verily, verily, I say unto you, that this is my doctrine, and whoso buildeth upon this buildeth upon my rock, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against them. And whoso shall declare more or less than this, and establish it for my doctrine, the same cometh of evil, and is not built upon my rock; but he buildeth upon a sandy foundation, and the gates of hell stand open to receive such when the floods come and the winds beat upon them. Therefore, go forth unto this people, and declare the words which I have spoken, unto the ends of the earth. . . .

17. Behold, now it came to pass that when Jesus had spoken these words he looked round about again on the multitude, and he said unto them: Behold, my time is at hand. I perceive that ye are weak, that ye cannot understand all my words which I am commanded of the Father to speak unto you at this time. Therefore, go ye unto your homes, and ponder upon the things which I have said, and ask of the Father, in my name, that ye may understand, and prepare your minds for the morrow, and I come unto you again. But now I go unto the Father, and also to show myself unto the lost tribes of Israel, for they are not lost unto the Father, for he knoweth whither he hath taken them.

And it came to pass that when Jesus had thus spoken, he cast his eyes round about again on the multitude, and beheld they were in tears, and did look steadfastly upon him as if they would ask him to tarry a little longer with them. And he said unto them: Behold my bowels are filled with compassion towards you. Have ye any that are sick among you? Bring them hither. Have ye any that are lame, or blind, or halt, or maimed, or leprous, or that are withered, or that are deaf, or that are afflicted in any manner? Bring them hither and I will heal them, for I have compassion upon you; my bowels are filled with mercy. . . .

18. . . . Therefore, keep these sayings which I have commanded you that ye come not under condemnation; for woe unto him whom the Father condemneth. And I give you these commandments because of the

disputations which have been among you. And blessed are ye if ye have no disputations among you. And now I go unto the Father, because it is expedient that I should go unto the Father for your sakes.

And it came to pass that when Jesus had made an end of these sayings, he touched with his hand the disciples whom he had chosen, one by one, even until he had touched them all, and spake unto them as he touched them. And the multitude heard not the words which he spake, therefore they did not bear record; but the disciples bare record that he gave them power to give the Holy Ghost. And I will show unto you hereafter that this record is true. And it came to pass that when Jesus had touched them all, there came a cloud and overshadowed the multitude that they could not see Jesus. And while they were overshadowed he departed from them, and ascended into heaven. And the disciples saw and did bear record that he ascended again into heaven.

Source: *Book of Mormon*, Third Nephi 11:8–10, 31–41; 17:1–7; 18:33–39.

JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES: CHARLES TAZE RUSSELL

The Jehovah's Witnesses denomination is based on the views of Charles Taze Russell (1852–1916), who, though not ordained, spent his life preaching about the second coming of Jesus. Russell believed that the Bible provided clues for the end times, and based on this belief he made an unsuccessful prediction of Jesus' return. Attracting many followers, he formed an independent church in 1878 and the following year founded a periodical called *The Watchtower*, which became a major outlet for his theological views. Since 1931, the movement he started has gone by the name Jehovah's Witnesses. In this selection, Russell emphasizes Jesus' messianic role and the ability of the church to partake in the divine nature.

The word Christ or *Kristos* is a Greek word, introduced into our English language, but not translated into it. Its translation is, ANOINTED.

"Unto us a child is born," etc., and "they shall call his name Jesus." The name Jesus means Deliverer or Savior, and the child was named in view of a work he was to do; for we are told, "he shall save his people from their sins." Jesus was always his name, but from the time of his baptism, when the Holy Ghost descended upon him and anointed him as the High Priest preparatory to his making "the sin offering" on the cross, and thus accomplishing what is indicated by his name, his title has been "The Anointed,"—Jesus "the Christ (anointed) of God."—Lu 9:20. Jesus was frequently called by this title instead of by his name; as English people oftenest speak of their sovereign as "the Queen," instead of calling her by her name—*Victoria*.

But, as Jesus was in God's plan as the *anointed one*, before the foundation of the world, so too THE CHURCH of Christ, was recognized in the same plan; that is, God purposed to take out of the world a "little flock," whom he purposed raising above the condition of the *perfect human* nature to make them "partakers of the *Divine nature*." The relationship of Jesus toward these, is that of "Head overall, God blessed forever," "for he hath

given him to head over *the church* (of the first-born) which is his body." As Jesus was foreordained to be *the anointed one*, so we, also, were chosen to the same anointing of the Spirit, as members in his body and under him as our head. And so we read (Eph 1:3:) "God hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in Christ according as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love; having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself . . . wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved." (See also vs. 20–23.) Again, (Ro 8:29) "Whom he did foreknow he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he (head and body) might be the *first-born* (heir) among many brethren."

God's plan of saving *the world* by a "restitution of all things," waits until first, this bride of Jesus—these members of the Spirit-anointed body, shall be gathered out from the world according to his purpose. . . .

Source: Charles Taze Russell, "The Christ of God," *Food for Thinking Christians*, part 5, in *Zion's Watchtower*, 1881.

CHRISTIAN SCIENCE: MARY BAKER EDDY

The Christian Science movement was founded by Mary Baker Eddy (1821–1910), who believed that the central message of Christianity is healing. In her most influential work, *Science and Health* (1875), she argues that the material world and all illness associated with it are unreal and illusory. Healing comes after prayer when God simply removes the afflicted person's false belief in the illusion.

Chapter 2. *Healing Primary*. First in the list of Christian duties, he [i.e., Jesus] taught his followers the healing power of Truth and Love. He attached no importance to dead ceremonies. It is the living Christ, the practical Truth, which makes Jesus "the resurrection and the life" to all who follow him in deed. Obeying his precious precepts—following his demonstration so far as we apprehend it—we drink of his cup, partake of his bread, are baptized with his purity; and at last we shall rest, sit down with him, in a full understanding of the divine Principle which triumphs over death. For what says Paul? "As often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till he come."

Healing Early Lost. The proofs of Truth, Life, and Love, which Jesus gave by casting out error and healing the sick, completed his earthly mission; but in the Christian Church this demonstration of healing was early lost, about three centuries after the crucifixion. No ancient school of philosophy, *materia media*, or scholastic theology ever taught or demonstrated the divine healing of absolute Science.

Chapter 4. *Real and Unreal Identity*. The divine Mind maintains all identities, from a blade of grass to a star, as distinct and eternal. The questions are: What are God's identities? What is Soul? Does life or soul exist in the thing formed? Nothing is real and eternal—nothing is Spirit—but

God and His idea. Evil has no reality. It is neither person, place, nor thing, but is simply a belief, an illusion of material sense.

The identity, or idea, of all reality continues forever; but Spirit, or the divine Principle of all, is not in Spirit's formations. Soul is synonymous with Spirit, God, the creative, governing, infinite Principle outside of finite form, which forms only reflect.

Real Life Is God. When being is understood, Life will be recognized as neither material nor finite, but as infinite—as God, universal good; and the belief that life, or mind, was ever in a finite form, or good in evil, will be destroyed. Then it will be understood that Spirit never entered matter and was therefore never raised from matter. When advanced to spiritual being and the understanding of God, man can no longer commune with matter; neither can he return to it, any more than a tree can return to its seed. Neither will man seem to be corporeal, but he will be an individual consciousness, characterized by the divine Spirit as idea, not matter. Suffering, sinning, dying beliefs are unreal. When divine Science is universally understood, they will have no power over man, for man is immortal and lives by divine authority.

Chapter 6. *Christian Science Discovered.* In the year 1866, I discovered the Christ Science or divine laws of Life, Truth, and Love, and named my discovery Christian Science. God had been graciously preparing me during many years for the reception of this final revelation of the absolute divine Principle of scientific mental healing.

Causation Mental. Christian Science explains all cause and effect as mental, not physical. It lifts the veil of mystery from Soul and body. It shows the Scientific relation of man to God, disentangles the interlaced ambiguities of being, and sets free the imprisoned thought. In divine Science, the universe, including man, is spiritual, harmonious, and eternal. Science shows that what is termed *matter* is but the subjective state of what is termed by the author *mortal mind*.

Mind the Only Healer. Science not only reveals the origin of all disease as mental, but it also declares that all disease is cured by divine Mind. There can be no healing except by this Mind, however much we trust a drug or any other means towards which human faith or endeavor is directed. It is mortal mind, not matter, which brings to the sick whatever good they may seem to receive from materiality. But the sick are never really healed except by means of the divine power. Only the action of Truth, Life, and Love can give harmony.

Source: Mary Baker Eddy, *Science and Health*, from chs. 2, 4, and 6 (Boston: Christian Science Publishing Company, 1875).

NEW AGE CHRISTIANITY: LEVI H. DOWLING

The New Age religious movement is based on the astrological concept that the current Piscean age is closing and will be followed by a new age of Aquarius. With the coming of this new age, a new conception of the world and religious truth will also

take hold, emphasizing the unity of all things, individual freedom, and the relativity of truth. New Age religion intentionally lacks the formal institutional and doctrinal structure of the major world religions and draws liberally from many religious sources—including astrology, Wicca, and paganism, as well as the major religions themselves. Among the influential New Age writings distinctly in the Christian tradition is the Aquarian Gospel of Jesus the Christ, which first appeared in 1907. Its author, Levi H. Dowling (1844–1911), was a pastor and physician who claimed to have transcribed this book from the universal Akashic records. The work amplifies the account of Jesus' life and teachings in the New Testament, describing Jesus' childhood and trips to the Far East. Like the New Age movement itself, the religious views expressed here are highly eclectic, influenced particularly by Hinduism, Buddhism, Taoism, Gnosticism, and Zoroastrianism. The New Testament book of Matthew states that Joseph fled to Egypt with Mary and the infant Jesus, thereby avoiding Herod's efforts to kill the newborn king of the Jews. Developing this plot, Dowling describes Jesus' early childhood in Egypt under the tutelage of Elihu and Salome. Although the Elihu character does not appear in the New Testament, the book of Mark mentions a woman named Salome who was present at Jesus' crucifixion. In the selection below, Elihu lectures Mary and Jesus about the unity of all things, the higher and lower human selves, and the nature of God.

Chapter 8. Again Elihu met his pupils in the sacred grove and said, No man lives unto himself; for every living thing is bound by cords to every other living thing. Blest are the pure in heart; for they will love and not demand love in return. They will not do to other men what they would not have other men do unto them. There are two selves; the higher and the lower self. The higher self is human spirit clothed with soul, made in the form of God. The lower self, the carnal self, the body of desires, is a reflection of the higher self, distorted by the murky ethers of the flesh. The lower self is an illusion, and will pass away; the higher self is God in man, and will not pass away. The higher self is the embodiment of truth; the lower self is truth reversed, and so is falsehood manifest. The higher self is justice, mercy, love and right; the lower self is what the higher self is not. The lower self breeds hatred, slander, lewdness, murders, theft, and everything that harms; the higher self is mother of the virtues and the harmonies of life. The lower self is rich in promises, but poor in blessedness and peace; it offers pleasure, joy and satisfying gains, but gives unrest and misery and death. It gives men apples that are lovely to the eye and pleasant to the smell; their cores are full of bitterness and gall. If you would ask me what to study I would say, your self; and when you well had studied them, and then would ask me what to study next, I would reply, your self. He who knows well his lower self, knows the illusions of the world, knows of the things that pass away; and he who knows his higher self, knows God; knows well the things that cannot pass away. Thrice blessed is the man who has made purity and love his very own; he has been ransomed from the perils of the lower self and is himself his higher self. Men seek salvation from an evil that they deem a living monster of the nether world; and they have gods that are but demons in disguise; all powerful,

yet full of jealousy and hate and lust; whose favors must be bought with costly sacrifice of fruits, and of the lives of birds, and animals, and human kind. And yet these gods possess no ears to hear, no eyes to see, no heart to sympathize, no power to save. This evil is myth; these gods are made of air, and clothed with shadows of a thought. The only devil from whom men must be redeemed is self, the lower self. If man would find his deliverer he must look within; his name is self. If man would find his savior he must look within; and when the demon self has been dethroned the savior, Love, will be exalted to the throne of power. The David of the light, Purity, who slays the strong Goliath of the dark, and seats the savior, Love, upon the throne.

Source: Levi H. Dowling, *The Aquarian Gospel of Jesus the Christ*, ch. 8 (Los Angeles: Cazenove, 1908).

Islam

INTRODUCTION

Islam's basic tenets are expressed in its most holy creed: "There is no God but Allah, and Muhammad is his messenger." *Islam* means surrender, and adherents to the religion are called *Muslims*, meaning those who surrender. Staunchly monotheistic, Islam sees Allah as the omnipotent creator God who, through a series of prophets, has called people to obedience. At the end of time, Allah will resurrect the dead, condemn the wicked to hell, and entrust believers to eternal peace in his garden. Following prophets such as Moses and Jesus, Muhammad is the final and greatest prophet, who delivered the definitive expression of Allah's voice in the Qur'an, Islam's holiest book. Drawing on Jewish narratives, Muslims trace their religious heritage from Adam to Noah to Abraham and, finally, to Ishmael, Abraham's first son. Muslim faith is embodied not only in religious practice but in a social order governed by Islamic law.

Time of Ingratitude

The cradle of Islam was the Arabian Peninsula, during a period Muslims contemptuously refer to as the *time of ingratitude* (*al-jahiliyyah*), that is, ingratitude toward God. Economically, desert conditions of the peninsula did not allow for widespread agriculture, so inhabitants depended on trade with the surrounding empires. When the Arabs later lost their spice monopoly, trading cities such as Petra died. As a convenient stopping place on well-traveled trade routes, though, Mecca survived as the prosperous center of trading in the Arab world. Politically, Mecca was plagued by warring factions involving its two main tribes, the Quraysh and the Khuza'a, each with divisive clans.

Religiously, inhabitants believed in a range of spiritual forces and deities. Belief in polydemonism prevailed, involving supernatural *jinn*, sprites, and demons—some good and others evil—that inhabited special objects or locations. Tapping into their ancient Semitic heritage, the people set up shrines to various nature gods and goddesses. Hubal, god of the moon, was the principal deity of the Meccans, and before his idol people would cast lots and divining arrows. Three chief goddesses of Mecca—Al-Lat, Al-Manat, and Al-Uzza—were worshiped. There was widespread belief in a creator deity, named Allah, who was high god of the regional pantheon. Sacred shrines with carved and uncarved stones were thought to be the dwelling places of these spirits and deities, and