

Although millenarianism remained popular in Britain during the reigns of Charles II (1660–85) and James II (1685–88), it declined after the Protestant settlement following the Glorious Revolution of 1688.²⁸ In addition, the decline may be attributed in part to the teachings of the English theologian, Daniel Whitby (1638–1727), who introduced a postmillennial belief that the earth would be Christianized prior to Christ’s second advent.²⁹ While various continental Protestants rejected Whitby’s ideas,³⁰ in Great Britain and its American colonies they were generally accepted until the early nineteenth century.³¹ The French Revolution brought about a revival of millenarianism. Concerning this matter, Ernest Sandeen states: Thus we sense the special significance of the French Revolution to the student of prophecy. That cataclysm undermined the progressive and rationalist cosmology of the eighteenth century, but its most important contribution to the millenarian revival was the spur it provided to further prophetic study. *The identification of the events of the 1790s with those prophesied in Daniel 7 and Revelation 13 provided biblical commentators with a prophetic Rosetta stone.* At last a key had been found with which to crack the code. There could now be a general agreement upon one fixed point of correlation between prophecy and history. After 1790, in Egyptology as in prophecy, it seemed as though there were no limits to the possibility of discovery.³² *The fixed point of correlation came to be 1798 when French General Louis Alexandre Berthier seized Rome, took the pope captive, and replaced the Papal States with a Roman Republic.* Protestant biblical interpreters had long held that the little horn of Daniel 7:8, 11, 24–26 was the papacy, the dominion of which was to be taken away after “a time, two times, and a half a time.” In order to calculate how long that period was, Protestant prophetic speculators resorted to a long-standing tradition involving a complicated method. Sandeen explains: *The chronological estimate was based upon what was known as the year-day theory.* The prophetic secrets of the Scripture could be unlocked, it was argued, by substituting “year” wherever “day” was mentioned in prophetic chronology. When weeks were described (as in Daniel 9), they were interpreted as periods of seven years, and when months were mentioned, as periods of thirty years. *Using this mode of calculation, commentators arrived at the figure 1,260 years for the duration of papal hegemony. Forty-two months (Revelation 13:5) was quite easily figured out as 1,260 years (when the month was calculated to be worth thirty years), and only a little more ingenuity was necessary to correlate times, times, and a half (Daniel 12:7) with three and one half years or forty-two months.* The influential commentator Joseph Mede had come to that conclusion as early as 1631, and many others had followed him.³³ **What this meant to those who accepted these ideas was that mankind was living in the time of “the end” of the present world or dispensation, that the “kingdoms” of the world were soon to be destroyed and replaced by Christ’s thousand-year reign on the earth. Based on earlier seventeenth- and eighteenth-century concepts, there was a major outbreak of millenarian speculation in Great Britain, largely among upper-class Anglican clergy and laymen and to a lesser extent among nonconformist clerics.** Eventually, this resulted in the famous **Albury Park conferences** that were held from 1826 to 1830 near Guildford in Surrey.³⁴ Hosted by Henry Drummond (1786–1860),³⁵ formerly a member of Parliament and a wealthy banker, its most outstanding members were Drummond himself; Edward Irving (1792–1834), a minister of the Church of Scotland; James Hartley Frere (1779–1866) who, as a major student of biblical prophesies, had a strong influence on Irving; and Lewis Way (1772–1840), a barrister and Anglican cleric who had long been the driving

spirit in the London Society for Promoting Christianity among the Jews, commonly called the Jews Society. While it is impossible to give a detailed account of these conferences, or a series of similar conferences at Powerscourt in Ireland that were influenced by Albury Park,³⁶ suffice it to say that they were to have a major impact on both British and American millenarianism of many different types. **That Charles Russell was indirectly indebted to Albury Park for much of his theology is therefore certain.** Note, for example, that Henry Drummond gave a synopsis of the general conclusions of the Albury conferences up to 1829, all of which came to be accepted by Russell with only the slightest changes. These were: **1.** This “dispensation” or age will not end “insensibly” but cataclysmically in judgment and destruction of the church in the same manner in which the Jewish dispensation ended. **2.** The Jews will be restored to Palestine during the time of judgment. **3.** The judgment to come will fall principally upon Christendom. **4.** When the judgment is past, the millennium will begin. **5.** The second advent of Christ will occur before the millennium. **6.** *The 1260 years of Daniel 7 and Revelation 13 ought to be measured from the reign of Justinian to the French Revolution. The vials of wrath (Revelation 16) are now being poured out and the second advent is imminent.*³⁷ Besides the above, the Albury Park conferences popularized three additional concepts that came to be central to Russell’s teachings. *These were that Christ’s second advent would be marked by two stages, that there would be a pre-tribulation rapture before the destruction of the governments of the world, and that Christ’s coming would be invisible. What was the origin, then, of these doctrines?* The first two seem to have come from a rather peculiar source from the standpoint of most Protestants, for they originated from the pen of a Chilean Jesuit priest named Manuel Lacunza y Díaz (1731–1801). Lacunza, to use his paternal surname only, had been exiled from his native Chile in 1767, when the entire Jesuit order was expelled from the Spanish Empire. As a result, he ended up in Italy at a place called Imola. Since he could not serve as a priest, he eventually became a hermit and turned his attention to the study of both the Scriptures and the fathers of the church. Ultimately, by 1791, he produced a manuscript entitled *La venida del Mesías en gloria y majestad* (The Coming of the Messiah in Glory and Majesty) that was published in Spanish in 1812 under the pseudonym of Juan Josef Ben-Ezra, a supposed Jewish convert to Christianity.³⁸ Lacunza insisted on a literal reading of the Scriptures wherever possible, disagreed openly with Augustine’s concept of the millennium, stoutly defended millenarianism, asserted that the Catholic priesthood constituted a collective antichrist, and argued for the conversion and restoration of the Jews.³⁹ Furthermore, **he was the first to develop what is commonly called the two-stage doctrine of Christ’s second coming or advent.** Regarding that doctrine, Lacunza wrote: JESUS CHRIST will return from heaven to earth, when his time is come, when those times and seasons are arrived, which the Father hath put in his own power, Acts I.7. He will come not only accompanied by his angels, but likewise by his saints, now raised from the dead: by this I mean, which shall be accompanied worthy to obtain that world and the resurrection from the dead, Luke XX.35. Behold! The Lord cometh with ten thousand of his saints, Jude 14. His visit will not be so short, but with more leisure than is thought. He will not come to judge the dead alone; but likewise and in the first place, the living. And consequently this judgment of the quick and the dead cannot be one and the same, but two judgments, widely differing not only in substance and manner, but also in time. Whence it follows (which is the principal matter to be attended to) that there must be a considerable space of time between the coming of the Lord

which we expect, and the judgment of the dead, or the universal resurrection.⁴⁰ But in what way did Lacunza's work and ideas come to be known by members of the Albury Park conferences? Simply stated, Edward Irving became aware of *La venida del Mesías en gloria y majestad*, devoted the summer of 1826 to learning Spanish and translating the work into English, and presented his translation to his associates at Albury Park.⁴¹ Naturally, much of what Lacunza had written was received positively; many of his ideas resonated with those of Evangelical, millenarian Protestantism. *Certainly, his millenarianism was in itself most welcome, as was his assertion that the Catholic priesthood was the antichrist.* And since Lewis Way had long pressed the idea that the Jews would be converted, Lacunza's thesis that they would ultimately accept Christianity and be saved during the millennium was hailed. So Lacunza's idea of the two-stage advent was easy for them to accept, and it was passed on to the Powerscourt conferences, where it was **picked up by John Nelson Darby and the Plymouth Brethren**. As Sandeen tells it, slightly erroneously, "There were, in effect, two 'second comings' in Darby's eschatology."⁴² Later, as will be shown below, the two-stage advent doctrine spread far and wide. In addition to the two-stage advent doctrine, **Lacunza also believed in what is now called the "pre-tribulation rapture,"** the idea that the saints sleeping in death and the living saints would be taken to meet the returning Christ in the air prior to a great tribulation and the destruction of the present world, Lacunza wrote: In a moment, in a twinkling of an eye, this first resurrection of the saints of the first order having taken place, the few worthy of that name who shall still be found on earth, for their uncorrupted faith and righteousness, shall be caught up along with the dead saints who are just raised, and shall ascend along with them "to meet the Lord in the air." ... Things being then in this state, and the Lord having nothing in the whole orb of the earth to contemplate, save only a certain solitary woman [a reference to the "woman" of Revelation 12 whom Lacunza had earlier identified as fleshly Israel or the Jews] who is deploring in the desert her past blindness and iniquities, and whom he shall save in that day, according to his promises (though for this end some great miracles will be necessary), there shall forthwith begin to be accomplished over the orb of the earth all those great and horrible things which are announced for that day.⁴³ As **Carl Olof Jonsson shows, however, Henry Drummond had already come up with an identical millenarian, pre-tribulation rapture schedule for the second advent.**⁴⁴ It was Drummond, not Lacunza, who was to add another seemingly peculiar second advent doctrine that was taken up by many nineteenth-century millenarians and was eventually passed on to Charles Russell. That was the teaching that Christ's coming in glory and majesty would be invisible to all but the resurrected and changed living saints.⁴⁵ Nevertheless, it seems certain that Drummond and other members of the Albury Park conferences were greatly influenced by Lacunza. The following quotation from a work by Drummond indicates that influence clearly, since it amounts to an acceptance of Lacunza's two-stage second coming doctrine: "The day of the Lord" consists of many parts, like every other day, and different acts are to be performed in different parts of it. The morning is that which is fixed for the resurrection, as Bishop Horsley has well shown on Psal. XXX.3, 5. The restoration of the Jews from all lands, and establishment in their own, is not an act that can take place in the twinkling of an eye, but must be gradual and progressive; the resurrection of the dead saints, and the changing of the living, is not a gradual and progressive, but a sudden and instantaneous act; consequently the latter must take place at some moment of the progress of the former ... During the war, then, which succeeds the changing of the elect, the

only witnesses for Jehovah which will be left upon the earth, will be the Jews, and a promise is still to them that they shall be brought out of all trouble, and re-established in their own land: and that at the very moment of their greatest strait, the Lord shall manifest himself on their behalf. Thus the appearance of the Lord is to raise his saints, and his manifestation again, in order to save his nation Israel, seem to be distant from each other by all that period occupied by the war of Armageddon, during which time the Lord may be, though on earth, yet invisible to all but his risen saints.⁴⁶ Sandeen makes much of the fact that John Nelson Darby and the Plymouth Brethren spread many ideas such as the two-stage advent doctrine and the teaching that Christ would come invisibly.⁴⁷ **It seems this was true, and it seems reasonable to suppose that Darby's futurism, with respect to events described in the book of Revelation, may have come from Lacunza by way of Albury Park**⁴⁸ – something that Sandeen does not discuss. But there were other millenarian sources for the ideas that spread from the Albury Park conferences, many of which continued to take a historicist rather than a futurist position on the book of Revelation. The Dispersion and Development of Albury Park Eschatology As Carl Olof Jonsson points out, *the most influential early nineteenth-century British spokesman for the invisible presence doctrine that Charles Russell embraced in his early ministry was the Reverend Robert Govett. Govett began his ecclesiastical career as an Anglican priest but left the Church of England over the issue of believers' baptism to serve an independent congregation in Norwich. He also argued that the Greek word parousia, usually translated "coming" in English translations of the Bible, should be understood to mean "presence."* Thus he held that *after Christ came to resurrect his sleeping saints and meet them in the air, he would be present invisibly in the last days of the ungodly world.*⁴⁹ Russell was to accept the idea that parousia meant presence rather than coming, something believed by his successors to this day. All of the concepts espoused by the Albury Park conferences by way of the Powerscourt conferences – John Nelson Darby and the Plymouth Brethren on one hand and Henry Drummond and clerics and laymen of various denominations on the other – were taken up by two important British journals. These were The Quarterly Journal of Prophecy and The Rainbow. The Quarterly Journal of Prophecy was published from 1849 to 1873 and The Rainbow from 1864 to 1887. Concerning The Rainbow, Carl Olof Jonsson states: “the most heated battles on the secret rapture question were fought in The Rainbow magazine which was launched in London in 1864. Its editor was the Rev. Dr William Leask, an Anglican, who edited The Rainbow for some twenty years and was also a minister of Maberly Chapel in London. For the last two years of its existence (1885–87), The Rainbow was edited by the well-known Bible translator, Joseph B. Rotherham.”⁵⁰ Jonsson then goes on to point out: “*The Rainbow is important for our discussion because of its influence on Charles T. Russell ... and his early contacts and associates. Those associates, George Storrs, George Stetson, Miles Grant, Joseph A. Seiss and Nelson Barbour, were all subscribers to it, as Russell himself likely was, although this cannot definitely be established. In any case, many of the ideas repeatedly advocated in The Rainbow repeatedly appeared in Russell's writings.*”⁵¹ Dr Joseph A. Seiss Although Russell did not ordinarily credit him as the source for many of his teachings, there can be no doubt that Joseph A. Seiss (1823–1904) was a major, direct source for Russell's earliest eschatological ideas. Born in the state of Maryland to parents who belonged to the Moravian Church, he early converted to Lutheranism and studied to become a Lutheran minister. As Sandeen notes, he became “one of the most remarkable figures in the history of

American Lutheranism.”⁵² In addition to authoring numerous books and articles, in 1863 he became an editor of the *Prophetic Times and Quarterly Journal of Prophecy*, an ecumenical, millenarian publication.⁵³ In its first issue he published a statement of beliefs that was later to reflect almost all of Russell’s basic eschatological doctrines except for any reference to Christ’s invisible presence⁵⁴ and what would become Russell’s Adventist date-setting schedule for end times. That Russell was well aware of Seiss’s works and teachings is shown by the fact that he quoted in some detail from Seiss’s 1856 book, *The Day of the Lord*, in the work Russell published on 1 July 1879, *A Supplement to Zion’s Watch Tower and Herald of Christ’s Presence*. Significantly, Russell described four of his beliefs by directly quoting *The Day of the Lord*. These beliefs concerned the upcoming and destructive “Day of the Lord,” the “Restoration of the Jews,” the “Office of the Glorified Church,” and “Spiritual Bodies.” His doctrine of the glorified church and its role during the millennium seems to have been taken directly from Seiss, although Russell failed to admit it. Russell and the Object and Manner of Christ’s Return With knowledge of many of the ideas common to nineteenth-century Evangelical Protestantism, and having accepted certain Adventist ideas from Dr Nelson Barbour who will be discussed below, in 1877 Charles Russell produced a small booklet titled *The Object and Manner of Our Lord’s Return*. Therein, he drew directly on the biblical commentaries of Adam Clarke and Sir Isaac Newton from which he took a standard historicist interpretation of the book of Revelation. Many of his concepts, as stated in the pamphlet, appear to have been obtained directly from George Storrs and Adventism. But certain primary ideas in *The Object and Manner* did not come from the sources cited by Russell above. For Russell taught a two-stage advent doctrine that virtually echoes the proposition stated by Manuel Lacunza in *The Coming of the Messiah in Glory and Majesty*. In fact, on page 43 of *The Object and Manner*, Russell stated: “The second advent, like the first, covers a period of time, and is not the event of a moment. The first lasted nearly thirty-four years; and the events connected with it – His birth, baptism, sorrow[,] death, resurrection, etc., as mentioned by prophets, all took place at the first advent. The second advent, as we have seen, lasts much longer. It includes the millennial reign, and prophecy covers all the prominent features of that reign. He comes to Reign – must reign until He has put down all enemies; the last being death. (1 Cor. 15:35).” In addition, he promoted the doctrine of the pre-tribulation rapture taught by both Drummond and Lacunza, Drummond’s idea that Christ would come invisibly, and the Reverend Robert Govett’s argument that parousia must be understood to mean presence rather than coming. Of course, Russell probably did not know the origins of many of these teachings. It seems that they came to him through the publications of the Reverend Dr Seiss. Carl Olof Jonsson remarks: “Russell most probably borrowed the central ideas which appear in *The Object and Manner of Our Lord’s Return* from ... millenarian predecessors and, in particular, from Seiss.” Jonsson states further: “It is quite obvious that Russell did not originate his view of Christ’s invisible coming and presence himself, but took it from others, and although it cannot be established with absolute certainty, the available evidence strongly indicates that he adopted the views of Dr Seiss on this matter.”⁵⁵

Penton, M. James. *Apocalypse Delayed: The Story of Jehovah's Witnesses*, Third Edition (pp. 19-27). University of Toronto Press, Scholarly Publishing Division. Kindle Edition.