

Invisible Presence

Zion's Watchtower and Herald of Christ's Presence "Harvest Gatherings and Siftings." *Watchtower*. New York: Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, July 15, 1906, 230. accessed June 21, 2018. <http://mostholyyfaith.com/Beta/Bible/Reprints/Z1906JUL.asp>.

But judge my surprise and gratification, when I learned from its contents that the Editor was beginning to get his eyes open on the subjects that for some years had so greatly rejoiced our hearts here in Allegheny—that the object of our Lord's return is not to destroy, but to bless all the families of the earth, and that his coming would be thief-like, and not in flesh, but as a spirit-being, invisible to men; and that the gathering of his church and the separation of the "wheat" from the "tares" would progress in the end of this age without the world being aware of it.

I rejoiced to find others coming to the same advanced position, but was astonished to find the statement very cautiously set forth, that the Editor believed the prophecies to indicate that the Lord was already present in the world (unseen and invisible), and that the harvest work of gathering the wheat was already due, —and that this view was warranted by the time— prophecies which but a few months before he supposed had failed.

Here was a new thought: Could it be that the time prophecies which I had so long despised, because of their misuse by Adventists, were really meant to indicate when the Lord would be invisibly present to set up his kingdom—a thing which I clearly saw could be known in no other way! It seemed, to say the least, a reasonable, a very reasonable thing, to expect that the Lord would inform his people on the subject—especially as he had promised that the faithful should not be left in darkness with the world, and that though the day of the Lord would come upon all others as a thief in the night (stealthily, unawares), it should not be so to the watching, earnest saints. —1 Thessalonians 5:4.

Ken Raines, "Jehovah's Witnesses: An Adventist and Russellite Offshoot" 2. accessed March 13, 2021, <https://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.1043.5208&rep=rep1&type=pdf> "In October of 1874, The Midnight Cry ceased publication. In 1875 the magazine was restarted as Herald of the Morning. After receiving a copy of the Herald magazine in about 1876, Russell was impressed with Barbour's "invisible presence" views on Christ's coming (which Russell apparently came to believe independently from Barbour) and he accepted much of his chronological views."

Ibid., 4 "Penton stated Carl Olof Jonsson demonstrated that Henry Drumond in 1828 first advocated the idea of an invisible second presence of Christ with his "two-stage coming doctrine." This was picked up later by Seiss and Jonsson concludes Russell probably "plagiarized" the works of Seiss in his "invisible presence" doctrine in his *Object and Manner of Our Lord's Return* booklet."

Ibid., However, Crompton noted a similar view held in 1815: Of particular note...was James Hately Frere who, in 1815, had published A Combined View of the Prophecies of Daniel, Esdras, and St. John, in which he expressed the belief that the second coming would be not a

literal event but a spiritual one and would take place in 1822-3....it was a similar view to that of Frere that was to become an important part of Russell's belief system later in the century.

Ibid., "A doctrinal dispute between Russell and Barbour over the atonement resulted in Russell ending his partnership with Barbour and publishing his own magazine, *Zion's Watch Tower and Herald of Christ's Presence* in 1879. When Russell left, he took many of Barbour's readers with him, including J.H. Paton, the Herald magazine's other assistant editor. He continued with Barbour's chronology of 1874 being the date of Christ's invisible return, 1799 as the start of the time of the end and 1914 as the "end of the Gentile Times" as well as the numerous Adventist Millennial teachings discussed above. Paton contributed many articles to *The Watch Tower* for several years. Some of these were still from a Trinitarian perspective, stating for example that Jesus was not Michael the Archangel but "God manifest in the flesh."

Edmond Charles Gruss, "Apostles of Denial: An Examination and Expose' Of The History, Doctrine And Claims Of The Jehovah's Witnesses" (Phillipsburg, New Jersey: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1970), 15. A Christadelphian, Benjamin Wilson, is mentioned in connection with the Emphatic Diaglott which he published and from which the "light" on the invisible "second presence" of Christ came. How much else was borrowed from the Christadelphians only Russell knows, but it is certain that this group is a definite source of Russellite theology.