

**ECCE VENIT
BEHOLD
HE COMETH**

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Ecce Venit Behold He Cometh by A. J. Gordon

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A. J. GORDON

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ECCE VENIT

Behold He Cometh

BY

A. J. GORDON, D. D.

AUTHOR OF "IN CHRIST," "THE TWOFOLD LIFE," ETC.

Ecce venit cum nubibus
Ἰσὸς ἔρχεται μετὰ τῶν νεφελῶν
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PREFACE.

THE importance of a doctrine may be judged somewhat by the proportionate space and prominence given to it in the New Testament. Measured by this standard, the theme of Christ's coming in glory is second to none in Scripture, not even to the atonement itself, in the claim which it makes upon our consideration. "*A real pearl of Christian truth and knowledge,*" a great expositor calls it. And since the merchantmen who seek this goodly pearl are too few, it becomes those who have proved it, both by spiritual experience and scriptural study, to be indeed a "pearl of great price," to do their utmost to set forth its excellency. If, therefore, in what we have written we have reflected one "purest ray serene" from this precious doctrine and glorious hope of the Church, we shall count it a high honor from the Lord.

Would that such a theme might be divested of all controversial aspects! But here, as everywhere, there are schools of interpretation between which one finds himself obliged, whether he will or not, to choose. Pre-millennial or post-millennial advent—Christ's coming before the millennium or after the millennium—is the issue which divides two great parties of biblical students. We humbly but firmly hold with the first school on this question. If we admit, with the eminent theologian Van Oosterzee, — to whom we ac-

knowledge great indebtedness, — that “some courage is required to range one’s self among the defenders of Chiliasm,” with him we profess that “we do so nevertheless in obedience to faith in the Word, without which we know nothing of the future.” And yet here the courage of conviction need not be greatly taxed considering these two facts, viz., that the concession of Church historians, led by such masters as Neander and Harnack, is that pre-millennialism was the orthodox and accepted faith of the Church in the primitive and purest ages; and that the opinion of the most eminent exegetes of our time, that this is the true doctrine of Scripture, so strongly preponderates as to give promise of an early practical *consensus*.

Pre-millenarians, again, are divided into two schools, the Futurist and the Historical; the former of whom hold that Antichrist is yet to appear, and that the larger part of the Apocalypse remains to be fulfilled; while the latter maintains, with the reformers and the expositors of the early post-Reformation era, that Antichrist has already come in the bloody and blasphemous system of the papacy, and that the Apocalypse has been continuously fulfilling from our Lord’s ascension to the present time. If we turn away from the Futurist interpretation — in which we were “nourished and brought up” so far as our prophetic studies are concerned — and express our firm adherence to the Historical, it is because we believe that the latter is more scriptural, and rests upon the more obvious and simple interpretation of the Word; and also because we find that it has such verifications in fulfilled history and chronology as to compel even some of its strongest opponents to concede that it is a true interpreta-

tion if not the complete and final one. But we deprecate controversy between these schools, since both hold strongly to the hope of the Lord's imminent return, and are vying with each other in earnest endeavor to restore the doctrine to its true place in the creed and in the consciousness of the Church. It certainly becomes us all, while rejoicing in the light we have, humbly to wait for greater light, assured that, in the foregleams of the approaching advent, contradictions will more and more vanish, till in our gathering together unto Him "the watchmen shall lift up the voice, with the voice together shall they sing, for they shall see eye to eye when the Lord shall bring again Zion."

When Samuel Taylor Coleridge had finished reading that remarkable book, Ben Ezra's "Coming of Messiah in Glory and Majesty," he indited the following prayer. With its devout aspirations in our hearts and on our lips, let us come to the study of the exalted theme.

"O Almighty God, Absolute Good, Eternal I Am! Ground of my being, Author of my existence, and its ultimate end! mercifully cleanse my heart, enlighten my understanding, and strengthen my will; that if it be needful or furtherant to the preparation of my soul, and of Thy Church, for the advent of Thy kingdom, that I should be led into the right belief respecting the second coming of the Son of man into the world, the eye of my mind may be quickened into quietness and singleness of sight. Amen."

CLARENDON STREET CHURCH, BOSTON,
September 1, 1889.

