

of the Lord to judgment is one that does not suggest itself very readily to the ordinary Christian of the present day. He rather feels like praying that it may be delayed as long as possible. The assurance of His speedy coming brings no joy. The fear is rather that He will come too soon, and any suggestion of the approaching end of the world is apt to fill him with anxiety, or even dismay. There is hardly any point on which the modern Church has shifted further from the attitude of the early Christians than on this. The change is all the more remarkable when we consider the very prominent place which the subject holds in the New Testament. Apart from the eschatological discourses of Christ Himself, which are pretty fully reported in the Gospels, there are frequent references to it in the Acts and in the Epistles. The discussion of it forms the main purpose of Paul's two letters to the Thessalonians, and it is almost the sole theme of the Apocalypse. It seems to have been proclaimed constantly by the Apostles as the great hope of the Church, and though they were confessedly ignorant of the time, the attention of believers was kept persistently fixed on it as an event that might happen in the immediate future. Needless to say, this is no longer the case. Apart from a limited circle holding a special view regarding the time and manner of it, the subject is seldom referred to by the modern preacher, and when he does refer to it, the subject awakens little interest beyond curiosity as to the side he will take in the discussion.

It is not enough to say by way of explaining this changed attitude, that the lapse of so many centuries has naturally blunted the keenness of the Church's expectation, and led men to regard it as indefinitely postponed. That is no doubt true, but we are at least nineteen centuries nearer it than they were. On the other hand, it would probably be going too far to say that the modern Christian is more in sympathy with the divine for-

bearance towards evil-doers than his early co-religionist. The reason for the altered sentiment is to be found more in the essential change of the situation. The Church of the first century was a small minority exposed to persecution in all its forms, compelled to submit to wrong without any hope of redress, save by the direct intervention of God on their behalf. To-day, Christianity is the ruling faith of the world. If it does not lead in numbers, it at least leads in prestige, influence and real power. Individuals may still suffer wrongfully and not find redress, but there is at least hope of obtaining it from earthly powers as well as from heaven. It were unreasonable to expect that even earnest believers should long for a radical change with the same eagerness under such circumstances. The world is still full of evil, but it is no longer hopeless evil. There is always the chance of betterment by educating public opinion, by improved legislative enactments, or by other methods equally effective for attaining the practical application of Christian principles. Wherever the cry for justice is heard, even from the heart of distant continents, it finds an echo in an increasingly large number of earnest hearts, and it keeps on echoing until a remedy is found somehow. Rarely does such an appeal prove altogether vain.

Now, it is useless to seek the restoration of the early eagerness of expectation as to the second advent, by presenting, as some do, a pessimistic view of the world's progress, asserting that it is ever growing worse, and bewailing its evil as hopeless. It is perfectly true there is a sense in which it may be said the world is ever growing worse, but paradoxical as it may seem, it is equally true that just because of that the world is ever growing better. Special wrongs and forms of iniquity have their day during which they flourish more and more, ever becoming more bold and virulent, until they mature and are ripe for judgment. But sooner or later the judg-