

Approaching Judgments.

Paper 2 of 20 'Plain Papers on Prophetic and Other Subjects'.

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It is possible, that a few years ago these words would have secured more instant and earnest attention than at present. When famine was stalking through the sister kingdom, and pestilence following at its heels — when, even in this country, the trading part of the community were beset with embarrassments, and the working classes suffering from want — when, on the continent, thrones were overturned and sceptres broken, more rapidly almost than the intelligence could be conveyed — when all who had any stake in society were trembling to think what the end of these disasters and commotions might be; then, to have written of "approaching judgments" would have been to secure the terrified attention of many, whose "hearts were failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which" seemed to be "coming upon the earth." The voice of warning would have had many an echo then, from the depths of troubled and trembling hearts. But now* that the storm seems to have past by, and the elements are hushed to rest; now, that plenty smiles, and prosperity abounds on every hand; now, that order seems everywhere the more firmly established for the temporary anarchy by which it was threatened, while mines of untold wealth are opening golden prospects to the myriads who resort thither in pursuit of gain; now, to lift the warning voice, and speak of judgments at the door, will seem to many a strange and uncalled-for thing. I can well imagine many a one exclaiming, "Judgments! Approaching Judgments! Why, when did there seem less occasion for fear? When was the air so calm? the horizon so clear? the prospect so enchanting?" Dear reader, it is not by appearances we have to judge, but by the word of God. And know you not what that word records in the history of the past, as well as what it foretells of the history of the future? The antediluvians thought Noah mad to predict a deluge and prepare an ark. "They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark" — and what then? "The flood came and destroyed them all." So it was, too, with the cities of the plain: "they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded." And nature seemed to smile on their pursuits. The sun rose as usual on the morning of their overthrow. Scripture notes this: "The sun was risen upon the earth when Lot entered into Zoar." What ensued? "Then the Lord rained upon Sodom and Gomorrah, brimstone and fire from the Lord out of heaven; and he overthrew those cities, and all the plain, and all the inhabitants of the cities, and that which grew upon the ground." "But what is all this to us?" you perhaps inquire. Let our Lord Himself reply: "*Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed.*" (Luke 17: 30.) Ah yes, peace and plenty, order and tranquillity, the advance of science, and the growth of intelligence, are no signs that judgment is far off! "When they shall say peace and safety, then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child, and they shall not escape." And while it is quite true that they who only regard appearances *on earth* may suppose that everything bespeaks the continuance of peace and prosperity, there are those who know that God's word is "settled for ever *in heaven*:" and who will, through His grace, listen to what that word proclaims, of approaching judgment, desolation, and woe. Then, besides, whether men will hear, or whether they will forbear, they to whom the knowledge of these things has been confided, must, to deliver their own souls, lift up their voices, and cry aloud, and spare not.

*The above was written in January, 1853, and is left exactly as it appeared in the first edition. The events which have filled the interval have been such as to demonstrate, to the most sanguine, the deceitful character of the lull, which, for a passing moment, seemed to promise to the nations a period of repose. Scarcely had the congratulations of the multitude, who crowded to the world's Great Exhibition, in 1851, passed between them — a long reign of universal peace being the almost universal anticipation — when the first murmurs of war with Russia began to be heard. Its history of blood is too deeply written on many a bereaved heart to need further allusion to it here; but the rejoicings at its close were quickly followed by the outburst in the East of that dreadful rebellion, which, for a time, so threatened the whole fabric of British rule in India. Then came the war of liberation in Italy; and now, as these words are being penned, the Northern and Southern States of the once gigantic American Union are waging deadly strife with one another; while, from every quarter of the globe, tidings are heard of restlessness, discontent, and fear. "Wars, and rumours of wars," have truly, almost ever since our first edition was printed, justified our warnings, notwithstanding the hopeful appearance of everything at the moment when they were written.

There may be some, however, who read these pages, who are not so blinded by appearances as to suppose that the present lull will continue, who yet have no adequate conception of the nature and extent of the solemn changes which are at hand. You see, dear reader, that no dependence is to be placed on the sort of quiet which at this moment exists. You know well that the atmosphere is never so still as just before the bursting forth of a wild and desolating storm; and seeing, probably in Scripture, that there are great convulsions to take place, ere the world is subdued to the sceptre of Immanuel, you may be looking for these as near at hand. But then your expectations of these convulsions, and of the woes and calamities inseparable from such events, is associated in your mind with the idea that, after all, the world is to be converted, and the Millennium introduced, by agencies and influences of a kind already at work for this end. You see, indeed, that at the slow rate at which Christianity has progressed. even where it has achieved its greatest victories, it can only be after the lapse of almost interminable ages, that it becomes universal among mankind. Its forces seem so feeble and so few, and the opposition they encounter is so formidable, that there appears no prospect of universal triumph within any period that the mind can span. But judgment, you think, is to aid in accelerating the work. And all that you anticipate in the way of judgment is, that national convulsions and political overturnings, accompanied perhaps by providential scourges, such as famine, pestilence, and the like, will open the way for the wider, more rapid, and more effectual spread of the Gospel. The Papacy will, as you suppose, be overthrown; Mahommedanism be deprived of political power; governments, hostile to the spread of truth, give place to others, who will be its nursing fathers: China, Japan, and Tartary, be opened to christian missionaries; while in these and other ways, the God of providence will interpose to accomplish the final, universal triumphs of the Gospel of His grace. Such are the thoughts cherished by numbers of Christians at the present moment.

Two points in view of these things forcibly occur to one's mind. First, this anticipation of providential interpositions and mighty national convulsions, is itself an advance on the thoughts generally entertained by Christians thirty or forty years ago. We heard of nothing then but the power of the truth, the effusion of the Spirit, the spread of the Gospel, the speedy and universal triumph of missions, with all kindred institutions and efforts for the conversion of the world. The

experience of the last half century has so far sobered the expectations of many that they do now admit the necessity of some grand providential interposition, to remove obstacles otherwise insuperable, and to secure thus the end, which once they expected to be attained by the blessing of God on philanthropic efforts and evangelic labours alone. This is, of itself, progress towards the truth. But then, and this is the second point referred to, if it be necessary that God should interpose, and if it be revealed in His word that He will do so, where are we to learn the nature and extent of this interposition? Where, but in the same "sure word of prophecy," which makes known to us that such interposition will take place? If, as many still think, the conversion of the world is left in human hands, dependent upon human diligence and the progress of human affairs, then speculation and calculation may both be of service in determining the probable aspect of the future and all one can say in this case is, if the past is to afford a presage of the future, alas, for us! alas, for the Church! alas, for the world!* But if it be admitted that God must in some extraordinary way interfere; and if it be further admitted that Scripture foretells that He will interfere; then, where, I ask, are we to learn the manner, the mode, the magnitude of such interference, but in those Scriptures which warn us of its approach? Speculation has no place here. Calculation of the future from the past is utterly out of the question. Nothing will serve but simple subjection to God's word; a child-like, docile reception of whatever God's word declares. God grant us such a spirit, in inquiring what the testimony of Scripture is, on the solemn subject at present before us.

*Let not these words be supposed to express any want of confidence in the Gospel, or in the power of the Spirit to make it efficient in made conversion. It is from no lack of suitability in the one, or power in the other, that the world is not yet converted. The question before us is simply a question of facts. What progress has been made, in eighteen hundred years, towards the conversion of the whole human race? This is the first question: and the second, supposing matters are to be left as at present, when may we anticipate the world's conversion? "Yes," it may be replied, "if matters are to be left as at present. But we do not suppose matters are to be so left. God can, and doubtless will, interpose in much greater power than heretofore." Exactly; but this entirely changes the ground taken by objectors. It admits that for which we contend, that God must interpose; and if God is to interpose, it is He only who can instruct as to *how* and *when* he will interpose. The Scripture answer to these inquiries is what we are seeking to ascertain.

Before producing, however, the direct testimony of Scripture on this subject, I would make this one remark; viz., that it is taken for granted here, that there is to be a Millennium. Proofs of this from Scripture may occupy our attention hereafter, as well as much that relates to the nature of millennial blessedness. For the present, I would assume, that my readers concur in the belief, all but universal among Christians, that there is to be a long period of universal peace and righteousness on the earth. This is not our present question. The question before us is, *First, Whether judgments do not introduce this period of universal blessing? Secondly, What is the nature and what the extent of these judgments?* Not only shall we find that the Millennium is introduced by judgments, but that these judgments are of a character perfectly unparalleled. National convulsions there will be, no doubt, and political overturnings, such as this earth has never witnessed. Providential scourges too, famine, pestilence, earthquakes, hurricanes, and every kind of terrific deviation from the usual course of things. But all these, so far from being subsidiary interventions, designed to hasten the triumph and secure the success of benevolent agencies already at work, are themselves either the precursors or attendants of an event, which

closes the present, and introduces a new, dispensation; an event with which no other (save one) in the whole history of this world, past, present, or future, can for a moment compare. *That event is the second coming, the appearing in glory, of our Lord Jesus Christ.* The one exception, His own first coming in humiliation, was indeed more wondrous still. Into its marvels the angels desire to look; but Christ's second coming is the grand event which is before us; an event to which the Christian indeed and the Church may look forward with intense desire and expectation; but which, in its bearing on the world, is connected with those terrible judgments which shall prostrate the pride of man, rebuke for ever the swellings and vauntings of iniquity, purge the earth of its corrupters and destroyers, and usher in the blissful period of the reign of Christ with His glorified saints, over the spared, and pardoned, and renewed inhabitants of the millennial earth.

First, let us glance through the Scriptures, and seek to gather their general voice, their concurrent testimony. Enoch, the seventh from Adam, is the first whose voice we hear. True, that it is Jude, not Moses, who records his prophecy; and he records it as yet to be fulfilled. But what does this prove, save that the Spirit of prophecy in Enoch looked beyond the deluge, beyond the judgments on Sodom and Gomorrah, beyond all intermediate ages and events, to that stupendous one which is before us? Hear his words, "Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints, *to execute judgment upon all*; and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him." To what else does the Midianitish seer refer, when he says, "I shall see him, but not now: I shall behold him, but not nigh: there shall come a Star out of Jacob, and a Sceptre shall rise out of Israel, and shall smite the corners of Moab, and destroy all the children of Sheth?" He says, further, "Out of Jacob shall come he that shall have dominion, and shall destroy him that remaineth of the city." Nor is it of mere local circumstances, that this extraordinary man is inspired of God to treat. The prophetic Spirit looks far and wide, and speaks not only of Moab and Sheth, of Israel and its glorious Star, but of Edom and Amalek, the Kenites and Asshur, Eber, and the ships from the coast of Chittim. It is in reference to all these, and to the utter destruction of the wicked from among them, that this grand intervention of God's power takes place. And in view of all this, what does Balaam exclaim? "And he took up his parable, and said, *Alas! who shall live when God doeth this?*" (Num. 24: 23.) Thus early in Scripture have we the prophetic anticipation of God's doing a work of judgment, so terrific, as to awaken the inquiry, "Who shall live when God doeth this?"

But my immediate object is not in the first place to discuss individual passages, so much as rapidly to glance along the current of Scripture testimony and prophetic instruction, that we may have some idea of its general burden and tone. Hear we then a Moses, who recites to us the words of the Almighty: "For I lift up my hand to heaven, and say, I live for ever. If I whet my glittering sword, and mine hand take hold on judgment, I will render vengeance to mine enemies, and will reward them that hate me. I will make mine arrows drunk with blood, and my sword shall devour flesh; and that with the blood of the slain and of the captives, from the beginning of revenges upon the enemy." (Deut. 32: 40-42.) Listen to a Hannah, who sings, "The adversaries of the Lord shall be broken to pieces, out of heaven shall he thunder upon them: the Lord shall judge the ends of the earth; and he shall give strength unto his king, and exalt the horn of his Anointed." (1 Sam. 2: 10.) Hear, too, for a moment, the son of Jesse, the anointed of the God of Jacob, the sweet psalmist of Israel. They are his "last words" I am about to quote — words

uttered amid the sad fruit of his own sin, and in the deep consciousness of his having been himself unable to cope with the enemies which his sin had raised up around him. But it is no mere effusion of his own which his pen records or his lips utter. "The Spirit of the Lord spake by me, and his word was in my tongue. The God of Israel said, the Rock of Israel spake to me, He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God." Alas! he himself had failed in this. But he anticipates the coming of One who should not fail, and who should be "as the light of the morning when the sun riseth, even a morning without clouds." I need not say to whom this refers. But what is there here of judgments? Nothing, as yet; but read what follows. "But the sons of Belial shall be all of them as thorns thrust away, because they cannot be taken with hands; but the man that shall touch them must be fenced with iron, and the staff of a spear; and they shall be utterly burned with fire in the same place." (2 Sam. 23: 6, 7.)

But David's testimony cannot be so summarily dismissed. I am not about to analyze the different passages in the Psalms which treat of approaching judgments. To do this would require a volume, and a large one, instead of a few pages such as these. But look through the Book of Psalms, leave aside every passage which admits of a question as to its bearing on our present subject, and what have we still remaining? Why the occurrence at almost every turn of anticipations or predictions such as the following? "Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession. Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces as a potter's vessel." (Ps. 2: 8, 9.) "The heathen are sunk down in the net that they made: in the net which they hid is their own foot taken. The Lord is known by the judgment which he executeth; the wicked is snared in the work of his own hands." (Ps. 9: 5.) "Upon the wicked he shall rain snares, fire and brimstone, and an horrible tempest: this shall be the portion of their cup." (Ps. 11: 6.) "Thine hand shall find out thine enemies; thy right hand shall find out those that hate thee. Thou shalt make them as a fiery oven in the time of thine anger: the Lord shall swallow them up in his wrath, and the fire shall devour them." (Ps. 21: 8, 9.) "Come, behold the works of the Lord, what desolations he hath made in the earth." (Ps. 46: 8.) "The mighty God, even the Lord, hath spoken, and called the earth from the rising of the sun unto the going down thereof Our God shall come, and shall not keep silence; a fire shall devour before him, and it shall be very tempestuous round about him." (Ps. 50: 1-3.) "The righteous shall rejoice when he seeth the vengeance: he shall wash his feet in the blood of the wicked. So that a man shall say, Verily there is a reward for the righteous: verily he is a God that judgeth in the earth." (Ps. 58: 10, 11) "Say unto God, How terrible art thou in thy works! through the greatness of thy power shall thine enemies submit themselves unto thee. All the earth shall worship thee, and shall sing unto thee; they shall sing to thy name. Come and see the works of God: he is terrible in his doing toward the children of men." (Ps. 66: 3-5.) "Thou didst cause judgment to be heard from heaven: the earth feared, and was still, when God arose to judgment, to save all the meek of the earth." (Ps. 76: 8, 9.) "The Lord at thy right hand shall strike through kings in the day of his wrath. He shall judge among the heathen; he shall fill the places with the dead bodies; he shall wound the heads over many countries." (Ps. 110: 5, 6.) These are but a few out of a whole class of passages running through the whole Book of Psalms. How manifestly they point onward to an intervention of God's power in judgment, *such as earth has never yet witnessed.*

The Law, the Prophets, and the Psalms, were the three great divisions of the Old Testament, according to the words of our Lord Himself. (Luke 24: 44.) The testimony of two of

these, the Law and the Psalms, we have already heard. In turning to the Prophets, what do we find at the very beginning? "Therefore saith the Lord, the Lord of hosts, the mighty one of Israel, Ah! I will ease me of mine adversaries, and avenge me of mine enemies Zion shall be redeemed with judgment, and her converts with righteousness. And the destruction of the transgressors and of the sinners shall be together, and they that forsake the Lord shall be "consumed." (Isa. 1: 24-28.) In the very next chapter we have the day of the Lord foretold — a day the power and terror of which shall "be upon every one that is proud and lofty, and upon every one that is lifted up, and he," says the prophet, "shall be brought low." "In that day a man shall cast his idols of silver, and his idols of gold, which they made each one for himself to worship, to the moles, and to the bats, to go into the clefts of the rocks, and into the tops of the ragged rocks, for fear of the Lord, and for the glory of his majesty, when he ariseth to shake terribly the earth." Such is the testimony with which the First Book of the Prophets opens.

Such a testimony is sustained throughout. We read of the Lord standing up to plead, and standing to judge the people. Mention is made of "the day of visitation, and the desolation which shall come from far." We read of the world being punished for their evil, and the wicked for their iniquity — of a man being more precious than gold, even a man than the golden wedge of Ophir. We are told of "a purpose that is purposed upon *the whole earth*;" and that "this is the hand that is stretched out upon *all the nations*." It is the Lord of hosts who hath purposed, and who shall disannul it? His hand is stretched out, and who shall turn it back? All the inhabitants of the world and dwellers on the earth are called upon to see an ensign which is to be lifted up, and to hear a trumpet which is to be blown: and this call for universal attention is connected with a rushing of the nations, and of the multitudes of many people, like the rushing of mighty waters. The nations are thus to rush: but God, we are told, shall rebuke them, and they shall flee far off, and be chased like chaff before the wind, and thistle-down before the whirlwind. (See Isaiah 17 and 18) We read, moreover, of the Lord's purpose, "to stain the pride of *all glory*, and to bring into contempt *all the honourable of the earth*." We read of *the Lord making the earth empty and making it waste*; of the inhabitants being burned and few men left; so few as to be compared, at least in the centre and special scene of these judgments, to the shaking of an olive tree, and the gleaning grapes when the vintage is done. The earth is spoken of as being utterly broken down, clean dissolved, and moved exceedingly. We hear an invitation to God's people to enter into their chambers, and hide themselves, as it were, for a little moment, till the indignation be overpast, *for the Lord cometh out of His place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity*: the earth also is to disclose her blood, and no more cover her slain. An overflowing scourge is to pass through; judgment is to be laid to the line, and righteousness to the plummet: the hail is to sweep away the refuge of lies, and the waters to overflow the hiding-place. From the time that the scourge goes forth, it is to pass over, morning after morning, by day and by night; so that it shall be a vexation merely to understand the report. The Lord is to rise up as in Mount Perazim, to be wroth as in the valley of Gibeon, that He may do His work, His strange work; that He may bring to pass His act, His strange act. Men are warned not to mock, lest their bands be made strong: "for I have heard," says the prophet, "from the Lord God of Hosts, a consumption, even determined *upon the whole earth*." (Isaiah 28: 22.) We read of the name of the Lord coming from far, burning with His anger, and the burden thereof being heavy: His lips full of indignation, and His tongue as a devouring fire. We are told that the Lord shall cause His glorious voice to be heard, and shall show the lighting down of His arm, with the indignation of His anger, and with the flame of a devouring fire, with scattering, and tempest, and hailstones. No mere national

convulsion this! No mere political overturning. No; "Now will I rise, saith the Lord; now will I be exalted I now will I lift up myself." (Isaiah 33: 10.) The nations are again invited to hear, the people to hearken; the earth, and all that is therein; the world, and all things that come forth of it. And why? "For the indignation of the Lord is upon *all nations*, and his fury upon all their armies: he hath utterly destroyed them, he hath delivered them to the slaughter. Their slain also shall be cast out, and their stink shall come up out of their carcasses, and the mountains shall be melted with their blood. And all the host of heaven shall be dissolved, and the heavens shall be rolled together as a scroll: and all their host shall fall down, as the leaf falleth off from the vine, and as a falling fig from the fig-tree." (Isaiah 34: 2-4.) Such is the doctrine of the prophet Isaiah: such are the approaching judgments to which he bears testimony. He speaks of One who is to tread the wine-press alone: who will tread the people in His anger, and trample them in His fury, sprinkling their blood upon His garments, and staining all His raiment. He is to tread down the people in His anger, to make them drunk in His fury, and to bring down their strength to the earth. The Lord is to "come with fire, and with his chariots like a whirlwind, to render his anger with fury, and his rebuke with flames of fire. For by fire and by his sword will the Lord plead with all flesh; and the slain of the Lord shall be many."

It may be said by some, "These are undoubtedly predictions of terrible judgments; but what warrant have we for concluding that they are future and universal? May they not have been already accomplished in calamities of a local character, which are now matters of history? How shall we distinguish those judgments which are local, partial, and accomplished, from those which are future and universal?" To these questions I would reply, that many of the passages quoted or referred to, bear the evidence of their futurity and universality on the surface. Has God ever yet arisen to shake terribly the earth, so as to cause men to cast their idols to the moles and bats, He alone being exalted, as the result? Has the world ever yet been punished for its iniquity, so as to make a man more precious than gold — than the golden wedge of Ophir? — precious, not in intrinsic value, which of course is always the case, *but in respect to scarceness*, as the passage evidently implies? Has the consumption determined upon the whole earth ever as yet taken place? Has the passage in Isaiah 63: 1-6, ever been accomplished? The prophet beholds in vision a mighty warrior, returning victorious from the slaughter of his enemies, his garments red with their blood, and, astonished at the sight, he asks, "Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? This that is glorious in his apparel, travelling in the greatness of his strength?" What is the reply? "*I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save.*" Can this be any but Jesus, the Lion of the tribe of Judah? Could any but He use such language and not blaspheme? Hear Him further: "I have trodden the winepress alone: and of the people there was none with me: for I will tread them in mine anger, and trample them in my fury, and their blood shall be sprinkled upon my garments, and I will stain all my raiment." Some, indeed, interpret this of the sufferings which Christ endured when He was here eighteen hundred years ago. But what more than the simple reading of the passage is requisite to show that it is not with His own blood that His garments are stained, but with that of His adversaries? "For I will tread *them* in mine anger, and trample *them* in my fury; and *their* blood shall be sprinkled upon my garments, and I will stain all my raiment." Further, He says, "I will tread down *the people* in mine anger, and *make them* drunk in my fury, and I will bring down *their* strength to the earth." Is this a character of action that has ever yet appertained to the meek, the lowly Sufferer, who said, describing the object of His mission, "The Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them?"

How evident that this passage, *and the whole class of passages to which it belongs*, point out an interposition of Christ in destroying judgment, which is yet future!

Jeremiah, the weeping prophet, takes up the sorrowful strain, and adds his testimony to all that has been now rehearsed. How his tears remind one, that the spirit in which a poor sinner saved by grace should warn his fellow-sinners of approaching judgments, is that of weeping entreaty, rather than of stern, harsh denunciation and rebuke. "My bowels, my bowels! I am pained at my very heart; my heart maketh a noise in me: I cannot hold my peace, because thou hast heard, O my soul, the sound of trumpet, the alarm of war." And what was it that had stirred thus his heart to its inmost depths? "I beheld the earth, and, lo, it was without form and void; and the heavens, and they had no light. I beheld the mountains, and, lo, they trembled, and all the hills moved lightly. I beheld, and, lo, there was no man, and all the birds of the heaven were fled. I beheld, and, lo, the fruitful place was a wilderness, and all the cities thereof were broken down at the presence of the Lord, and by his fierce anger." (Jer. 4: 19, 23-26.) True, indeed, that Jeremiah's prophecies in general relate chiefly, or even exclusively, to his beloved nation, and the city of his heart, Jerusalem, which, in his day, began to be a prey to the destroyer of the Gentiles. But this is not always the case. "Behold, the whirlwind of the Lord goeth forth with fury, a continuing whirlwind; it shall fall with pain upon the head of the wicked. The fierce anger of the Lord shall not return, until he have done it, and until he have performed the intents of his heart: in the latter days ye shall consider it." (Jer. 30: 23, 24.) Dear reader, this is a different vision of futurity from that which is before most men's minds. But this is what is really coming. Observe these last words: "*in the latter days ye shall consider it.*" Whatever foreshadowings there may have been of this terrible intervention of God's power in judgment, the fact itself has its accomplishment "*in the latter days.*" Would that even now, in these latter days, men might be warned, and led to consider these solemn and impending visitations of God's wrath.

Ezekiel had a roll presented to him, by a hand which spread it before him. What were its contents? "It was written within and without; and there was written therein lamentations, and mourning, and woe." (Ezek. 2: 10.) Fit emblem of the testimony he was called to bear! True, indeed, that like that of Jeremiah it was addressed very chiefly to the nation of Israel, and a great part of it in reference to circumstances at that time transpiring, or calamities at that time about to visit them. But in the latter part of the book, he looks out beyond Israel, and beyond any circumstances either passing or impending at the time he wrote. He prophesies of judgments upon all the surrounding, and even all the more distant, nations: not only Ammon, and Moab, and Edom, and the Philistines, but Tyre, Sidon, Egypt, the isles of Chittim, Persia, Lud, and Phut, Javan, Tubal, and Meshech, and numbers more — too many to enumerate. It is in Ezekiel we read of a huge assembly of God's adversaries, whose overthrow is to be so terrible, that their weapons are to furnish fuel to a whole nation for seven years; and seven months are to be employed in burying the dead. The fowls of heaven are invited that they may eat flesh and drink blood. They are to eat the flesh of the mighty, and to drink the blood of the princes of the earth. "And ye shall eat fat till ye be full, and drink blood till ye be drunken, of my sacrifice which I have sacrificed for you. Thus ye shall be filled at my table with horses and chariots, with mighty men, and with all men of war, saith the Lord God. And I will set my glory among the heathen, and all the heathen shall see my judgment that I have executed, and my hand that I have laid upon them." (Ezek. 39: 19-21.) Who anticipates such an interposition of divine power and righteousness as this?

The minor prophets do not contradict, but corroborate, the testimony of the others. Daniel prophesies of a mighty image, emblem of the great monarchies of this world, and of a destruction overtaking it, in which "the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold, are broken to pieces together, and become like the chaff of the summer threshing-floors; and the wind carries them away, so that no place is found for them." He sets forth the same great monarchies, in another chapter, by the symbol of four great beasts, the last of the four being most terrible of all. He beholds, till the thrones are set, and the Ancient of days sits, a fiery stream issuing from before Him, while thousands minister to Him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stand before Him; the judgment is set, and the books are opened. He still beholds, till the beast is slain and his body destroyed, and given to the burning flame. (See Dan. 7) I need not stop to discuss the meaning of these symbols. As far as our present subject is concerned, their language is sufficiently clear. It speaks of judgments yet to come, such as we have found foretold by all the prophets to whose predictions we have as yet referred.

Joel testifies of a day of darkness and of gloominess, a day of cloud. and of thick darkness; a day ushered in by wonders in the heavens and in the earth, blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke, the sun turned into darkness, and the moon into blood. He speaks of God sitting in the valley of Jehoshaphat to judge all the heathen round about. "Multitudes," he says, "multitudes in the valley of decision; for the day of the Lord is near in the valley of decision." In Micah's prophecy we hear God saying, "I will execute vengeance in anger and fury upon the heathen, *such as they have not heard.*" Zephaniah witnesses of the great day of the Lord: "A day of wrath, a day of trouble and distress, a day of wasteness and desolation, a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness." He speaks of God bringing distress upon men, so "that they shall walk like blind men, and their blood be poured out as dust, and their flesh as the dung." Haggai's voice to us is, "For thus saith the Lord of hosts, Yet once, it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land; and I will shake *all nations.*" And again, "I will shake the heavens and the earth; and I will overthrow the throne of kingdoms, and I will destroy the strength of the kingdoms of the heathen; and I will overthrow the chariots, and those that ride in them; and the horses and their riders shall come down, every one by the sword of his brother." Passing over Zechariah, who nevertheless does testify most distinctly to these approaching judgments, we come to Malachi, the last of the prophets of the Old Testament. And what is the message he bears? "Behold, the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble; and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the Lord of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch." "And ye shall tread down the wicked; for they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet in the day that I shall do this, saith the Lord of hosts." With such anticipations of "the great and dreadful day of the Lord," does the Old Testament close. Its very earliest intimations of that future which awaits this poor, giddy, thoughtless, proud, and boasting world, are in perfect and solemn harmony with the warnings which terminate the book. God grant, that this passing glance at the solemn depositions, made by these many witnesses, at various times during a period of thousands of years, may not be lost upon the consciences of those who read these pages.

In turning to the New Testament, we must bear in mind that its grand subject is not judgment, but grace. "The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." "God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them." Nor is the testimony of mere prophets to which we listen in the New Testament. "God who at

sundry times and in divers manners, spake in times past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son." But while the grace of the message, and the divine dignity of the messenger, thus wondrously comport with each other, what shall be said of the guilt of those who reject the message, and despise the messenger? *And this is the guilt under which the world lies.* A few in each successive generation have had their hearts opened by almighty grace, to receive the one and welcome the other. These, if left to their own inclinations would, like all the rest, have continued to reject both. But as to the mass of mankind, yea, even in those countries where Christ is nominally owned, they join with one consent to slight, to neglect, to despise God's embassy of peace. Nay, worse than this, in nominally Christian countries, the name, and the ostensible authority of Christ, are used to consecrate the sins from which He came to deliver us, — to bind more firmly on men's souls, the chains and shackles from which He came to release us. *Christianity, instead of converting the world, as is the boast of our day, has itself been corrupted, and is the means, in this corrupted state, of plunging men (with fairer appearances) into deeper moral debasement than that in which it found them.* * It is for this, that judgment is at the door. God has long patience, and we know that His long-suffering is salvation. He is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. But ere long, He who once came in humiliation will come in glory. He who once came to suffer and to save will come to judge. First, must the co-heirs of His glory be quickened to know and to confess Him; and when these have all been brought in by grace, the One who has been owned by them in His rejection, will come, as we saw in a previous paper, to receive them to Himself. This is the first stage in His return to the earth. But when He has thus taken away the true Church, wickedness on the earth will come to its full head, and He will descend, accompanied or followed by His glorified saints, to execute the judgments of which we have been hearing in the Old Testament, and of which we have abundant warning in the numerous and explicit predictions of the New Testament as well. I do not now refer to them as proofs of Christ's speedy coming. We shall, if the Lord will, consider them thus ere long. I now adduce them as following on in the train of those already cited from the Old Testament, as premonitory of those approaching judgments, which will shortly burst upon an astonished and affrighted world.

*Be it remembered, that Romanism and the Greek Church form the greater part, by far, of what bears the name of Christianity. And who that is acquainted with the history of either can deem the above statement too strong? Even as to Protestant countries, it is well known that the greatest obstacles our missionaries meet with, in evangelizing the heathen, are produced by the ungodly habits of so-called Christians, with whom they have come in contact.

What can be more solemn than the testimony of our Lord Himself? Does He not tell us of tares mingled with the wheat, and continuing till the time of harvest? Does He not declare that at the time of harvest the tares shall be gathered into bundles to be burned, and the wheat gathered into the barn And does He not in explanation of this parable assure us, that at the end of the age (*sunteleia tou aionos*) "the Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity, and shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth?" Does He not apply to Himself the Psalmist's words as to the rejected stone becoming the head of the corner? And while He intimates that any, during this whole period, who fall on this stone or stumble over it, shall be broken, does He not also warn us, that the stone itself is yet to fall, and that on whomsoever it does fall it will grind him to powder? Does He not tell us of a time of tribulation to which there has been, and shall be,

no parallel, and which is immediately succeeded by signs in the heavens, the sun darkened, the moon not giving her light, the stars falling, and the powers of the heavens being shaken? "And then," He adds, "shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory." Does not our Lord, in another gospel, utter the words quoted at the commencement of this paper? "And as it was in the days of Noe, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man. They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, and the flood came, and destroyed them all. Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot; they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded; but the same day that Lot went out of Sodom, it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all. *Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed.*" Does He not set forth to us the whole subject of His rejection, and absence, and return, in the parable of the nobleman, who went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return? "His citizens hated him, and sent a message after him, saying, We will not have this man to reign over us." His servants were left to occupy in his absence. Among these, when he returns, he distributes the tokens of his approval or displeasure; but what becomes of the citizens who hated him, and would not submit to his reign? "But those mine enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay them before me." Such are the words of Jesus. And, still further, He speaks of days of vengeance on the Jews, that all things which are written may be fulfilled. But are approaching judgments confined to them? Nay, far from it. "There shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken." True, the word to the remnant is, "And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh." That which fills the world with forebodings, inspires with stronger hopes those who have hearkened to the Lord's voice. But even to these, He says, "Take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares. *For as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth.*" How awful are these words! Are any of those quoted from the Old Testament more pregnant with solemn warning and admonition? But how is this? How can men's hearts be failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth, and yet this terrible day come as a snare on all them that dwell on the earth? Ah, there is no contradiction here. The premonitory calamities will awaken men's fears, and cause their hearts to fail, just as many hearts did fail amid the convulsions of a few years ago. But we have evidence all around us of how soon men's fears may be allayed; how a temporary lull soothes all to deeper slumber; slumber, not disturbed, but made still more fatally sweet, by dreams of safety, and prosperity, and peace, and plenty, and all that the heart of man desires to form a paradise here below. It will be at such a time, that as a snare the day of the Lord will at once enclose them in the grasp of those terrific judgments, from which there is no escape. As Paul witnesses, "For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child. and they shall not escape."

How sad to think that the mistakes of the Lord's own people — their perversion, through mistake, of His greatest mercies — may contribute to this false peace. To what use is "the revival" of the last three years being turned by numbers? It is being employed as an

unanswerable proof that the Millennium is fast approaching, and that it is by "revivals," and not by judgments, or the coming of Christ, that it will be introduced. But have our brethren, who draw such inferences from God's present gracious dealings with us, forgotten that all God's Israel had to be put under the shelter of the paschal blood, before the destroying angel went through the land of Egypt? Of what was the revival in Josiah's day the precursor? No such revival had occurred in Israel's history; but how soon was it followed by deeper declension than ever, and by the judgments of which the Chaldeans were the executioners! So, in apostolic times, when three thousand were converted in a day, and the faithful soon after numbered five thousand, and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith, of what was all this prosperity the prelude? Was it Jerusalem's *conversion* or Jerusalem's *overthrow*? Already have we seen the blessing in America succeeded by the scourge of war; and we have need to lay the warning to heart. The more rapid and mighty the work of conversion since the spring of 1859, the more loudly does it proclaim in the instructed ear, that the day of the Lord draweth nigh. We have heard of a "short work" of judgment that the Lord will make upon the earth; and it would seem that a short work of grace is to precede this short work of judgment. Depend upon it, God is gathering out His own from the scene of judgment, that they may be in safety with Himself when the judgments come upon the earth.

Want of space compels me to pass over all intermediate testimonies, that we may listen for a moment to the beloved disciple, the prophet of Patmos, and to those wondrous revelations he was privileged to receive and to communicate. What have we as one of the earliest anticipations in his prophecy? "Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and *all kindreds of the earth* shall wail because of him." Visions of judgment, one after another, are beheld by the apostle. Seals are opened, trumpets are sounded, vials of wrath are poured out. War, famine, pestilence, persecution of the saints; earthquakes, judgments upon natural objects, judgments upon commerce, and judgments upon all the sources of moral influence by which men are affected; a withholding of the light which had been previously vouchsafed, the letting loose of one horde after another of infernal enemies and tormentors, till men shall seek death and not find it, shall desire to die while death flees from them: these are some of the woes pronounced in this book upon the world of the ungodly. The final crisis of human iniquity is portrayed, and the principles marked out of which this crisis will be the full development. Then we are told of worse judgments still. The vials of God's wrath are to be poured out — poured upon the earth, and the sea, and the rivers and fountains of waters; on the sun, on the seat of the beast, on the great river; then, last of all, upon the air. "And the seventh angel poured out his vial into the air; and there came a great voice out of the temple of heaven, from the throne, saying, It is done. And there were voices, and thunders, and lightnings: and there was a great earthquake, such as was not since men were upon the earth, so mighty an earthquake, and so great." Then we are told of a plague of hail, every stone about the weight of a talent. We have further details of instruction as to the ecclesiastical apostacy, and the revolt from God of the imperial power of the earth. We have the doom of Babylon, with all its luxuries, delicacies, and refinements, and heaven rejoicing at her fall. A mighty angel, taking up a stone like a great millstone, and casting it into the sea, says, "Thus with violence shall that great city Babylon be thrown down, *and shall be found no more at all*. And the voice of harpers, and musicians, and of pipers, and trumpeters, *shall be heard no more at all in thee*; and no craftsman, of whatsoever craft he be, *shall be found any more in thee*; and the sound of a millstone *shall be heard no more at all in thee*; and the light of a candle *shall shine no more at all in thee*; and the

voice of the bridegroom and of the bride *shall be heard no more at all in thee*, for thy merchants were the great men of the earth; for by thy sorceries were all nations deceived." Then, finally, heaven opens; a white horse comes forth, and He that sat upon him called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war. He is clothed in a vesture dipped in blood. He has on His vesture and on His thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS. The armies which were in heaven (previously caught up there, as we saw in our last number) follow him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean. Out of the mouth of the glorious One goes a sharp sword with which to smite the nations: he is to rule them with a rod of iron: he treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. The beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gather together to make war against Him that sits on the horse, and against His army. The beast and the false prophet are taken, and cast alive into the lake of fire burning with brimstone, and their followers are slain with the sword of Him that sits upon the horse.

Such is the end of the course of this age! Its commerce and its pleasures, its politics and its religion, its philanthropy and its misanthropy, its hypocrisy and its blasphemy, its morality and its open wickedness, all find their termination here. Reader, whoever thou art, if thou hast not been separated from this present evil world, by God's revelation to thy heart of His Son Jesus Christ, this is the end toward which thou art hastening. Thou art unconscious of it, it is true, but this makes thy situation not one whit the safer. Thou art like a man in a boat drifting down a rapid stream, with his back to the danger, and entertaining himself, as he looks up the river, with all the gay, pleasant objects which are flitting past him. But as each moment bears him onward to the falls, where he must ere long be dashed to pieces; so, my reader, thou art, with the poor world, gliding down to destruction. There is no hope of stopping the vessel, it must perish. God can snatch thee out of it, and rescue thee from the overthrow; and this is the only hope one can have concerning thee. God grant that these pages may be used to this end!

Christian readers, what shall *we* say to these things? The detailed proof that the judgments we have been hearing of precede and introduce millennial blessing, and that it is the personal return of Christ which brings these judgments, is purposely reserved for another occasion. But can we think of such a doom awaiting the world in which we sojourn, and not weep over its guilty, condemned inhabitants? Did Jesus weep over one city, and say, "If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes," and shall not our hearts melt — shall not our tears flow — for a whole world that lieth in wickedness, and daily ripens for destruction! And shall we be content, my brethren, with shedding tears? The hour of judgment, near as it may be, has not yet come. The door of mercy still stands open: yea, as yet it opens into the scene of those heavenly delights and bridal glories which Christ and the Church shall share, ere He comes forth from the wedding to execute vengeance on His foes. And shall we not use the opportunity to sound forth the gospel of God's grace? If it be true that judgment is at the door, instead of the gradual peaceful introduction of millennial blessedness, shall we on that account be less urgent in our entreaties, less zealous in our labours, less instant and earnest in our prayers? God forbid! Knowing the judgments which await the world around us, knowing that grace has rescued us from those judgments, and that when they are executed, we ourselves shall be with Him who executes them, is it possible that we can selfishly enjoy the thought of our own security, and leave the poor world unwarned, the grace of Christ and the Father's love unproclaimed, or poor sinners uninvited — unurged —

UNINTREATED to flee to the shelter of His open arms? O for more earnest love to Christ, and deeper compassion for poor souls! Brethren, the time is short. The moments glide rapidly away. Soon will the only opportunity be gone that we shall ever have of confessing our Master and seeking His glory, in the midst of a world which either rejects Him openly, or the more decidedly rejects Him in reality for owning Him in appearance and in word. May His own Spirit animate us! May communion with Him cause the fountains of compassion for those around us to gush forth! May souls be gathered to His arms of mercy! May His people be stirred up to pray, and watch, and labour! May we humble ourselves, and stir up and exhort one another, and so much the more as we see the day approaching!