

at 2 Timothy 3, 2-5; Romans 1, 29-31, of their opposites?" And yet this is only a part of the truth. Multitudes of obscene and profane words, current in the mouths of the vulgar wicked, but excluded from dictionaries, declare that languages are ashamed to have all their deformity brought to light. But if there is so much immorality even under the gospel, what must have been the condition of mankind under the best forms of heathenism. It must have been such as to show that when man is left to himself, he must soon sink into barbarism, and that we are indebted to christianity not only for morality and good order, but even for civilization itself. Thus, has christianity revolutionised society, even where it has failed to renew the heart, and it can be easily proved from an enumeration of particulars which might be indefinitely extended, that the gospel is the source whence all our civil and political as well as our religious privileges are drawn. And but for the vices and follies of mankind, it would confer still greater blessings. "If all," says Rousseau, "were perfect christians, individuals would do their duty; the people would be obedient to the laws, the magistrates incorrupt, and there would be neither vanity nor luxury in such a state."

TRANSLATION OF CALVIN'S COMMENTARY ON I. PETER

CHAPTER I.

VERSE 11. *Searching what, or what manner of time the spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow.*

12. *Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you, by them that have preached the gospel unto you, with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look into.*

Verse 11. *The spirit of Christ which was in them.* By this phrase the apostle means, that the prophets were endowed, and indeed in no ordinary degree, with the spirit of understanding; since they were its possessors and its witnesses to us. Yet they were not partakers of that light which has been revealed to us. Now it is the highest of all praise of their teaching, to call it the testimony of the Holy Spirit. For although men are the heralds and ministers of the truth, yet the spirit alone is its Author. Nor does he affirm, without sufficient reason, that the spirit of Christ then held away; but he declares that the spirit sent from heaven presided over the teachers of the gospel. For he means that the gospel went out from God, and that the ancient prophecies were spoken by Christ.

The suffering of Christ; or, the suffering about to come on account of Christ. That Christians may bear their afflictions with a more even mind, the apostle reminds them that they had been long ago foretold by the spirit. But there is much more embraced in these words. For he teaches that this government of the christian church had been from the beginning of divine appointment—that the cross should be the preparation for triumph, that death should be the passage to life—and that of this the clearest testimony had been given. Wherefore there is no reason why afflictions should beyond measure depress us, as if we were wretched under them, when the Spirit of God has pronounced us blessed. The order of things should be here observed, to wit, that he places suffering in the first place, and afterwards adds the glory that should follow. For he means that this arrangement cannot be changed or disturbed; but that afflictions must precede glory. Thus there is a twofold meaning in these words—that Christians must be weighed down by many afflictions before they enter into glory; and, that their afflictions are not wretched since they have glory most intimately connected with them; and since God has appointed this connection, it does not belong to us to snap asunder either part from the other. And it is a source of unwonted consolation, that our condition, such as we find it, was foretold many ages before. For we gather from this that its happy issue is not promised to us in vain. And further we know that our afflictions came not by chance, but by the sure providence of God. And finally, the prophecies are like a mirror, to set before us, in our tribulation, the image of heavenly glory. Peter indeed says, that the spirit has testified concerning the afflictions *about to come upon Christ*; but he includes Christ along with his body the Church. Wherefore this ought not to be restricted to the person of Christ; but we should understand that a commencement is

made with the head, that the members may follow in their order; as Paul teaches (Rom. viii. 29) that we ought to be conformed unto him who is the first-born among many brethren. Finally, Peter does not discuss what is peculiar to Christ, but treats of the general state of the Church. And it is much more fitted to establish our faith, that he sets forth our afflictions to be viewed in Christ; because we therein the better perceive the connection of death and life between us and him. And certainly this is the rule and reason of holy unity, that he suffered daily in his members; so that when his sufferings have been fulfilled in us his glory may in turn have its fulfilment.

12. *It was revealed that not unto themselves.* Some fanatics unwarrantably lay hold of this passage, in order to exclude the fathers who lived under the law, from the hope of salvation. But he does not absolutely deny, that in their own age the prophets performed a useful ministry and edified the church; but he would teach us that their ministry is more useful still to us, because our lot is cast in the last times. We see how magnificently they extol the kingdom of Christ, how uniform they are in praising it, and how eagerly they urge all to seek admission into it. But its present appearance they are prevented by death from beholding. And what also was it which they did, than to spread a table, that others after them might eat the food placed thereon. By faith indeed they tasted what the Lord by their hand transmitted to us for our enjoyment; nay even in regard to the solid food of the soul they were partakers of Christ. But now it is of the revelation of this that the apostle treats. We know indeed that the prophetic office was confined as it were within these limits; that, with the hope of Christ as about to come, the prophets might support themselves and others. There they possessed him only concealed and, as it were absent. I say absent,—not in his power and grace, but because he was not yet made manifest in the flesh; so that even his kingdom as yet lay hid under a covering. At length descending to earth, he in some measure opened heaven to us, that we might have a near view of those spiritual riches, which formerly were exhibited only afar off under figures. This, therefore,—the fruit of Christ made manifest,—shows the difference between the prophets and us. Whence we gather how they ministered to us rather than to themselves. But when the prophets were informed of God, that the grace which they preached was reserved for another age; they were nevertheless not the less zealous in its preaching, so far were they from being overcome by the delay. For if their patience was great, assuredly we are twice, yea thrice more ungrateful than they; unless the enjoyment of that grace which was denied to them uphold us under all the afflictions we have to bear.

Which are now reported unto you. Again we make the difference between the ancient doctrine and the preaching of the gospel. For as the righteousness of God is revealed in the gospel, being witnessed by the law and the prophets, so also the heavenly glory of Christ, concerning which the spirit of old bore witness, is now openly proclaimed. At the same time he thence establishes the certainty of the gospel, because it contains nothing which was not before testified by the spirit of God. Then he reminds them that they proclaimed the gospel by the command of the same spirit, and therefore by his dictation and direction, lest in regard to it they should contrive any thing human.

Which things the angels desire to look into. It is indeed the highest encomium of the gospel, that it contains a fund of wisdom hitherto shut up and concealed from angels. But some one will object, that it is not at all consistent that those things should be revealed and known to us, which are concealed from angels, who always behold the face of God, and who are His ministers in the government of the church and in the administration of all his blessings. I answer that they are revealed to us in as far as we behold them in the glass of the word. Nor indeed is our knowledge declared higher than that of angels; only Peter means that those things are promised to us, the fulfilment of which the angels desire to behold. Wherefore, Paul says (Eph. iii. 8, 10.) that, in the calling of the Gentiles, the manifold wisdom of God was made known to the angels. For it was to them a new spectacle, that Christ allied to his body a world that was lost and for so many ages estranged from the hope of life. Thus daily they behold with admiration the magnificent works of God in the government of the church; but how much more astonished will they be, at that highest of all specimens of the righteousness, goodness, and wisdom of God—the completed kingdom of Christ! That is therefore a mystery, whose revelation they yet wait and anxiously