

served the purpose for which it was intended, the rod is no longer necessary, and it is consequently removed. The only way, therefore, that could be devised for the deliverance of Israel was, by executing vengeance on their heathen oppressors, by breaking the rod of the oppressor, and hence David prays for the destruction, not of all the heathen nations, but only those who had risen up against Israel. "Pour out thy wrath," says he, "upon the heathen that have not known thee, and upon the kingdoms that have not called upon thy name. For they have devoured Jacob, and laid waste his dwelling place." Such was also the spirit in which our covenanting forefathers prayed for the conversion or the destruction of their enemies; not from the spirit of private revenge, which is equally condemned by both the Old and New Testaments; but because they wasted the Lord's heritage. The same principle is applicable to individuals as it is to nations and communities. It is fully recognised in the 109th Psalm. It was probably written when David fled from the inveterate malice of Saul, and in it he describes the desperate wickedness of his enemy, his intense hatred, and the cunning and deceitful course which he pursued to ensure his destruction. The Psalmist evidently regards himself as the representative of suffering innocence, as persecuted for righteousness' sake, and he views his enemy as the personification of wickedness. He, therefore, prays with intense earnestness that God, as an act of retributive justice, would execute his sovereign vengeance on his implacable enemy—that a curse may descend on himself and on his family, on his goods and honour. Now David does not view either himself or his enemy as individuals, but as the representatives of their respective classes; and he only prays for the destruction of the wicked as this is the way in which the righteous can be delivered. "The mouth of the wicked and the mouth of the deceitful are opened against me: they have spoken against me with a lying tongue. They compassed me about, also, with words of hatred, and fought against me without a cause."

3. David prayed for vengeance on his enemies because such a righteous retribution would serve as a check to wickedness, and an encouragement to holiness. The prosperity of the wicked and the adversity of the righteous has frequently been a stumbling-block to the pious in all ages. Jeremiah asks, "Wherefore doth the way of the wicked prosper;" and the Psalmist remembers that they are not humbled as other men. The wicked not only sometimes prosper in spite of their wickedness, but in consequence of it; and the righteous frequently suffer in consequence of their righteousness. We know, indeed, that it shall ultimately be well with the righteous and ill with the wicked; but in order to strengthen faith and to repress wickedness, we must see God vindicating the rectitude of his administration, even in this life. Those, therefore, who object to the sentiment contained in the 109th Psalm, "rob the suffering righteous of one of the chief fountains of consolation, and take away from wickedness the bit and the bridle."

Now, when David prays for vengeance on his enemies, he uniformly describes their desperate and incurable wickedness, and that it is necessary that God, for the vindication of his character, should weigh to them in equal scales, "indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish." They are convinced of his personal innocence. His holiness feeds their malice, and his returning good for evil, love for hatred, only gives point and potency to their bitter mockings. Thus, in the 35th Psalm, his enemies are spoken of as mocking with the bitterness of implacable hatred, in order to procure for themselves the favour of a superior; and they consequently take this method in opposition to their convictions, of showing their devotion to their prince, and their hatred of his enemies. "With hypocritical mockers in feasts," or, according to the correct rendering, "The evil, who mock for cake, gnash against me with their teeth."—"The Psalmist," says Hengstenberg, "in order to bring out more pointedly the worthlessness of his enemies, describes them as persons who only aimed, through their bitter hostilities, to ingratiate themselves with a great personage, the centre of their whole opposition, in order to obtain from him the means of allaying their hunger, of prolonging their miserable existence. With such creatures David may have had enough to do in the time of the Sauline persecution." On this ground he founds his prayer for the destruction of his enemies as the only means of accomplishing his own deliverance. "Stir up thyself," says he, "and awake to my judgment." The righteousness of the Psalmist's cause, the

rectitude of the divine government, and the interests of truth and holiness, demanded that a palpable distinction should be made between the righteous and the wicked. It was in this spirit that the Covenanters prayed for vengeance on their enemies. Claverhouse and Dalziel hunted them like beasts of prey, shed their blood like water, inflicted upon them every species of torture which their brutal minds could devise; and so wide-spread and cruel was the slaughter, that 1686 was called "the killing year," as if murder had been its chief characteristic. They feared for the Church of God—they felt the bitterness of the storm that was directed against them—and persecuted on every side, they cried with intense earnestness, "Lord, how long wilt thou look on I—rescue my soul from their destructions."

4. The Psalmist perceived that it was just in God to punish the wicked. While he does not indulge in the spirit of revenge, he prays that God would recompense the wicked. The divine justice must render to every one according to his works—to the wicked tribulation, as well as to the righteous peace. Hence Paul reminds his converts, "It is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you." The human mind, from a spirit of justice, naturally feels a satisfaction in seeing aggravated wickedness punished. When we read of thousands of Protestants being perfidiously slain in France, at the instigation of her king, and of his fiend-like mother; of 40,000 Protestants being slain in Ireland, in the reign of Charles I.; and of the persecutions to which the Scottish Presbyterians were subjected by men who have been correctly described as "fleshly devils," we are ready to say from the very heart, "Thou art righteous, O Lord, which art, and wast, and shalt be, because thou hast judged thus: for they have shed the blood of thy saints and prophets, and thou hast given them blood to drink, for they are worthy." When we contemplate desperate wickedness in connexion with suffering innocence, we acknowledge the appropriateness of the Imprecatory Psalms, and we feel, from the inmost depths of our moral consciousness, that God is righteous who taketh vengeance. The subject is well stated by Calvin, the prince of commentators.—"Now David," says he, "did not speak except by the impulse of the Spirit; these imprecations are to be considered as if they were spoken by the voice of God from heaven. Thus, on the one hand, in denouncing vengeance, he wounds and restrains all our wicked desires of injuring others, and on the other, moderates our grief by administering that consolation which will enable us to bear injuries. And because it is not yet given us to distinguish between the elect and the reprobate, let us learn to pray for all who trouble us, to wish salvation to the whole human race, anxious even for individuals. Meanwhile this need not hinder us, provided our minds are pure and calm, from freely appealing to the judgments of God; in order that all the desperate may be destroyed." II.

[FOR THE CANADIAN PRESBYTERIAN MAGAZINE.]

#### TRANSLATION OF CALVIN'S COMMENTARY ON I. PETER.

##### CHAPTER I.

1. Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia

2. Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience, and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied.

Peter an Apostle.—So far as this salutation has anything in common with those of Paul, it needs no new exposition. When Paul prays for grace and peace, the verb is understood, but Peter adds, though in the same sense, that it may be multiplied. For Paul desires for the faithful not merely the beginning of grace and peace, but also its enlargement until God perfects what He has begun in them.

To the Strangers.—Those who think that the Apostle thus metaphorically designates all the pious, because they are strangers in the world, and travelling to a heavenly country, are greatly mistaken; and their mistake is sufficiently refuted by the phrase, scattered throughout, which immediately follows. For to the Jews alone does the term strangers apply; not only because being scattered hither and thither, they lived in exile from their native country; but also because they had been driven from that land which God had promised them for an everlasting inheritance. All the faithful, indeed, he afterwards (chap. ii. 11) calls strangers, because they are pilgrims in the earth, but this is not the reason of the designation here. On the contrary, they are here styled strangers, because some were scattered into Pontus, some into Galatia, and some into Bithynia. Nor is it strange, that to the Jews especially he sends this epistle; for he knew, as Paul teaches in Gal. ii. 8, that he had been expressly appointed the apostle unto them. Under the provinces