

to be the last earthly characteristic of the spiritual character, "Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness sake, for theirs is the kingdom of Heaven. Blessed are ye when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake rejoice, and be exceeding glad; for great is your reward in Heaven; for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.

When an individual has attained to this characteristic, he is ready for translation to the upper sphere. And many of men's sons have exhibited this readiness and manifested character. Whenever and wherever, the Gospel has had its due effect, upon the heart and life of the believer, he has always been ready to be led to the stake. Multitudes have sealed their profession of christian character with their blood. It is an attainment to which, let us be thankful we have not been called. The offence of the cross has ceased. It is now an honored institution, and men are honored in its mere profession, without having displayed the inner characteristics which it is calculated to generate. Still this characteristic must not be a wanting in any one of us. We have not yet attained, neither are we already perfect. The religious life is a progression. We are being saved. Paul says, Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect.

In every age men have been persecuted for their righteous doing. It seems as if it were an untailing concomitant of the manifested divine life of the Master in the heart and life of the believer. Though the offence of the Cross has ceased, still there is a vast amount of quiet obloquy for Christ and the Gospels sake. Men are still esteemed righteous overmuch, when religious views are carried out into active practice. The world loves its own and hates the things of the Lord Jesus. There is a wonderful antagonism between classes. Perhaps it was not in any past age so apparent as in the present. The contention between light and darkness is still emblematic between the enmity that has always subsisted between the seed of the serpent, and the seed of the woman.

Those persecuted for their righteous doing are children of the Gospel dispensation. They may well rejoice and be exceeding glad. Great is their reward in heaven. Here and hereafter they will be rewarded. Their reward follows as a consequence,—it is a result of spiritual manifestation. The crown of life has to be gained, the cross borne, the crown worn. Here is the summation of the christian character. Let us attain to the same thing.

Let our ministry, to which we have been called, be not a ministry whose function we esteem it to be, to present something from the people to God as satisfaction for sin, but to present something from God to the people as motives to holiness. May our desire be ourselves to catch the inspirations of infinite love, the grand spirit of the Master teaching,—and breathe them life-wide through the world—be it ours to reach the ideas of the great Father of Spirits and to bring them down with fire and force upon the moral consciousness of his children.

"The thoughts that wake the life of souls, the truths for whose sweet sake to ourselves, and to our God are dear. We as religious teachers, ought never to forget, that the spiritual life of a rational and responsible being is his presiding sentiment or disposition—the chief inspiration of the soul—that which gives motion and character to all. True religion "is the life of God" the life of Christ manifested in the mortal body." The same master disposition—Love—which moves the Infinite, and was embodied in Christ, is the presiding element of every holy mind; God is its spring, rule and end. Its instinct is an everlasting "thirst after the living God."

Such, then, is religious life. It is not a mere sentiment in the heart, or an idea of the intellect, it is a veritable force—a manifestation—an embodiment of the characteristics of the christian character. As religious teachers, we have not been equipped to preach a ready-made human creed, but rather first to learn and love universal truth and then to inculcate it.

Less learning and less intellect are not wanted in our day, even although the principles of our holy faith are be-