

those people to be so hardhearted; how wicked it was not only for the common people but for the rulers of the Jews, for the members of the Senate, for the doctors of the law, for the lights of the generation, the leading men of the period in which they lived that they should be guilty of such inhuman, such unnatural, such unjust conduct as to persecute men against whom no charge in truth and in verity could be found except it was that they were pleased to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, to announce unto the world of mankind that a dispensation of divine providence had been ushered in, wherein a change should take place over the minds of the people; wherein a new order of things should be developed, and wherein the Mosaic law with all its sacerdotal rites and ceremonies were to be consummated and brought to a termination in the fulfillment of the prophecies, and in the introduction of a higher and a purer law." These are their feelings; the ministers preach to the people after this fashion, and read to them such passages as these:

"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 exceedingly glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you."

This language, my beloved friends, is of a very forcible character. Probably a few reflections upon the sentiments incorporated in these declarations of uninspired men may not be altogether uninformative or unprofitable unto us at this time.

We learn from these declarations that Jesus Christ and his followers had their names cast out as evil. If these historians record veritable facts—and we have no right to question the historical verity of these statements, because they are established and verified by secular history: if then, they are true it becomes every thinking student of history, every earnest and avowed student of natural theology or sectarian lore, to understand what it was that constituted the essence of the disagreement, what constituted the gist, the kernel, if you please, the special reason why the existing spirit, faith and teachings of the Jewish people, and of the Roman people, in the commencement of the Christian era, were so opposed to the doctrines of Jesus Christ and His apostles. I have already referred to the general recognition by the Christian world of the doctrines of Christ and His apostles as being the foundation of the hope of all enlightened nations for salvation before God; for salvation in eternity, for the redemption of the human race. What, then, was it that was the cause of the opposition which was so pronounced, so persistent and so prolonged against Jesus Christ and His followers. This opposition was not confined to a narrow region. It was an opposition that was not limited within any special circle; for we read of one inquirer who appears to be a man of very general information addressing himself, in the term of an inquiry in his own behalf, and in behalf of those whom he represented, to the Apostles, saying:

"We desire to hear of thee what thou thinkest: for as concerning this sect, we know that everywhere it is spoken against."

It was not a matter of conjecture