

made their ministry a blessing to others. In this comprehensive reference to a former state of things, a flash of divine light is thrown upon the lives of a class of faithful witnesses of whom nothing is known. In these far-off times, there were among the priests and Levites brave and saintly souls, unknown to earthly fame, who "served their generation by the will of God," and whose unrecorded labors "turned many away from iniquity." This teaches us that it is not right to base large conclusions on the silence of brief and fragmentary records of distant ages.

There is in these words a lesson for all times. The true minister of Christ is to walk with God in the uprightness of a holy life, and to teach the people, not his own thoughts, but "the law of truth," in which God has made known His will concerning the children of men. Only where these features characterize the ministry of the Word will the result be "to turn many away from iniquity." There is something eminently instructive in the thought that the teacher of the people should be what is here described, because "he is the messenger of the Lord of hosts." The thought here suggests the words of St. Paul to the Corinthians: "Therefore, seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not; but have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the Word of God deceitfully, but by manifestation of the truth, commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God" (2 Cor. iv. 1, 2). This implies, not merely that the messenger of the Lord should be a good man, but that his character and testimony should be so blended that the truths he preaches to others shall be minted in the experience of his own heart. This was the secret of the power of the early Methodist preachers, and of all who have preached with spiritual power. What they preached was not abstract theological dogmas, but the living truths of a personal experience. It has been well said: "Doctrine incarnated in character is the most effective way of teaching."