

Because the priests, the religious teachers and guides of the people, were also guilty of this faithless ingratitude and disobedience, made it the more heinous and inexcusable in God's sight. Those who stood as watchmen and shepherds of the people, not only neglected their duty, but went with the multitude to do evil; therefore, their prayers were not accepted, and the threatening is pronounced, that if they do not hearken to the divine commandment to reform, He would curse their blessings. It is suggestive that in the prophetic announcements of the great reforms to be wrought by the manifestation of the Angel of the Covenant, it is said: "He shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver; and they shall offer unto the Lord offerings in righteousness"—indicating that judgment would begin at the house of God. This is not the only place in which the priests are blamed for the sins of the people. Jeremiah represents God as saying, "My people hath been lost sheep; their shepherds have caused them to go astray." In all periods of the history of the Church, unfaithfulness in doctrine and life, on the part of the ministry, has been accompanied by a low religious condition of the people.

THE CHARACTER OF TRUE MINISTERS DESCRIBED.

In striking contrast to the faithless and corrupt priests who had polluted the sacrificial service, and by their false teaching "caused many to stumble in the law," there is a characterization of the true priest, which presents a beautiful picture of what the faithful ambassador of God and teacher of the people should be. Speaking of a time when the priests and Levites did what was right in His sight, it is said:

"My covenant was with him of life and peace; and I gave them to him for the fear wherewith he feared me, and was afraid before my name. The law of truth was in his mouth, and iniquity was not found in his lips: he walked with me in peace and equity, and did turn many away from iniquity. For the priest's lips should keep knowledge, and they should seek the law at his mouth: for he is the messenger of the Lord of hosts" (ch. ii. 5, 6, 7).

Here it is declared that, in the time when the priests lived in the fear of the Lord and faithfully declared his statutes, God fulfilled His covenant and gave them "life and peace," and