

## THE MINISTER'S TRUE LIFE AND WALK.

The *true* minister must be a *true* Christian. He must be called by God, before he can call others to God. The apostle Paul thus states the matter: "God hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation." They were first reconciled, and then they had given to them the ministry of reconciliation. Are we reconciled! It is but reasonable that a man who is to act as a spiritual guide to others, should himself know the way of salvation. It has been frequently said that "the way to heaven is blocked up with dead professors;" but it is not also true that the melancholy obstruction is not composed of *members* of churches only. Let us take heed unto ourselves!

As "the minister's life is," in more than one respect, "the life of a ministry," let us speak a few words on "ministerial holiness."

Let us seek the Lord *early*—"If my heart be early seasoned with His presence, it will savour of Him all day after," (Bishop Hall; Psa. v. 3, *vide* Hebrew).—Let us see God before man every day—"I ought to pray before seeing any one. Often when I sleep long, or meet with others early, and then have family-prayer, and breakfast, and forenoon ealers, often it is eleven or twelve o'clock before I begin secret prayer. This is a wretched system. It is unscriptural. Christ rose before day, and went into a solitary place. . . . Family-prayer loses much of its power and sweetness; and I can do no good to those who come to seek for me. The conscience feels guilty, the soul unfed, the lamp not trimmed. Then, when secret prayer comes, the soul is often out of tune. I feel it far better to begin with God—to see His face first—to get my soul near Him before it is near another. . . . It is best to have at least one hour *alone with God*, before engaging in anything else. At the same time, I must be careful not to reckon communion with God by minutes, or hours, or by solitude." (McCheyne.)

Hear this true servant of Christ exhorting a beloved brother—"Take heed to *thyself*. Your own soul is your first and

greatest care. You know a sound body alone can work with power, much more a *healthy soul*. Keep a clear conscience through the blood of the Lamb. Keep up close communion with God. Study likeness to Him in all things. Read the Bible for your own growth first, then for your people."

"With him," says his biographer, "the commencement of all labor invariably consisted in the preparation of his own soul. The forerunner of each day's visitations was a calm season of private devotion during morning hours. The walls of his chamber were witnesses of his prayerfulness—I believe of his tears as well as of his cries. The pleasant sound of psalms, often issued from his room at an early hour. Then followed the reading of the Word for his own sanctification; and few have so fully realised the blessing of the first psalm." Would that it were so with us all! "Devotion is the life of religion—the very soul of piety—the highest employment of grace," (Bishop Hall). It is much to be feared that "we are weak in the closet," (James).

Let us see communion with God as manifested in a youth of about twenty.—James Janeway writes of his brother John: "I once hid myself that I might take the more exact notice of the intercourse that I judged was kept up between him and God. But O what a spectacle did I see! Surely a man walking with God, conversing intimately with his Maker, and maintaining a holy familiarity with the great Jehovah. Methought I saw one talking with God. Methought I saw a spiritual merchant in a heavenly exchange, driving a rich trade for the treasures of another world. O what a glorious sight it was!—Methinks I see him still. How sweetly did his face shine! O with what a lovely countenance did he walk up and down—his lips going, his body oft reaching up, as if he would have taken his flight into heaven! His looks, smiles, and every motion, spake him to be on the very confines of glory. O had one but known what he was then feeding on! Surely he had meat to eat which the world knew not of!" This is to live indeed. What a rebuke to our cold devotions! This is walking with God.

The biographer of the Rev. W. H.