

mitted that these should always bear the stamp of our religion, for then only can they be right and pleasing in the sight of God. Religion is the supreme love and habitual reverence of God and our Lord Jesus Christ, implanted in the soul by the grace of his own spirit, constantly nourished by his word and ordinances, and bringing forth the fruits of righteousness which are through Jesus Christ to the praise and glory of God. Prayer is its breath; grateful praise the throbbing of its heart; the divine word its sustenance; doing good its motion; the light of the divine countenance its joy; heaven the attracting centre of its hopes and aspirations; its refined and genial glow rises with the first thoughts of morning; its benignant influence is diffused around the circle of our peculiar attachments; it preserves integrity spotless in the transactions of the world, and enables conscience to whisper peace to us in the review of the day. Though some of the rubbish of the old nature remain, the new rises up in beauty above it, and proclaims whose workmanship it is, and by what power it continues to live and grow. Enquire, reader, with the most earnest solicitude, whether, and to what extent, these religious affections have prevailed, and these pursuits have been followed, in the year that has now passed. For unless these have predominated you have sustained a loss that you cannot estimate, and incurred a guilt that you cannot by any future conduct remove or cancel. If the past year has not been a period of advancement in your religious course you have sustained other detriment besides the loss of a large fraction of your mortal being. Is it a small evil that you have suffered habits of thoughtlessness and inattention to sacred things to become more inveterate by another year's continuance?—that you were found in the house of God and on the last Sabbath of the year more indifferent to spiritual exercises, and less moved with the prospect of a coming eternity, than you were when the year began? If the Christian, who is simply not conscious that he has made any perceptible progress in the life of God, is filled with bitter and penitential thoughts, what should be your state of mind who are conscious that you have made a backward movement, and that the year by which your coming span of life is abridged has involved you more deeply in the meshes of the world! Oh that the dirge of the departed year might arouse you to reflection, and persuade you to enter on a course of life, that shall be, in all its parts, a preparation for eternity.

To render more impressive the voice of warning that the departed year is uttering, be persuaded to look back on it with narrower inspection. You have enjoyed its 52 Sabbaths—days separated by

the express command of God from the cares and duties of ordinary life, and specially devoted to your spiritual improvement. What report have they carried to the throne of God? What impression have they left behind upon your own character?

'Tis greatly wise to talk with our past hours;
And ask them what report they bore to heaven;
And how they might have borne more welcome news.

Between their report to God and their impression upon yourselves there is an exact correspondence. The Sabbath profaned, or in any way unimproved, is not simply a sin in the sight of God, but it is a moral injury inflicted on yourselves. Who can tell how great that injury may be? When you are able to estimate the benefit of a single impression of divine truth upon the heart—its all-enduring effects upon the character and happiness of him who is blessed to receive it—then, and only then, will you be able to judge what has been lost. The Sabbath is the season when such impressions are in a peculiar sense promised to us; but the profanation of the day nullifies the promise, or rather presents a condition in which its fulfilment becomes impossible—for God will not bless any of his creatures while they are acting in open contempt of his authority. It is not beyond the reach of possibility that these remarks may be perused by one individual whose eternal well-being has been periled and lost on the Sabbaths of the departed year! At its commencement some concern for his spiritual improvement subsisted in his heart—feeble indeed as the smoking flax, but properly fanned might have risen into a flame. Had the ordinances of the sacred day been duly regarded, a converting energy might have been communicated through them. What a momentous change might have been wrought—a change from death to life—a transition—the most important that an immortal being can ever make—from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of God's dear Son. But Sabbath institutions being neglected his original character has undergone no change. Nay, the general respect for religion that he seemed to entertain at the commencement of the year has become much less distinct; his spiritual unconcern has become more inveterate; his moral nature, grown more hardened, presents fewer points on which remedial means might operate; enveloped in thicker mists of prejudice and error he is less accessible to persuasion and argument; united to ungodly connections in closer intimacy, and enthralled to the pleasures and pursuits of the world by heavier chains, he is more hopelessly the captive of Satan than ever he was before. He has reached the point where the means of religion cease to affect him, at which alienation