

lant; because your adversary the Devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour." Now, it is manifest that, together with the decay of "the spirit of grace and supplication," the spirit of sobriety and vigilance will decline; there is a beautiful and lasting union between them by which they are strengthened, and form an efficient means of guarding the believer; they co-operate in his preservation, and they cannot be disunited, nor can the one be maintained in its power if the other is left to disuse.

It is not surprising that the Christian should be overcome when he lays aside his armour, and goes into the presence of the foe without precaution, or trusting in his own strength. He thus exposes himself to the shafts of the enemy; he falls into sin; his own strength is weakened; his religious profession is dishonored; and the cause of Christ is wounded. Thus it has happened to multitudes of Christian professors, whose lives and deportment testify that they have yielded to the tempter, and wandered far from the fold of the good Shepherd.

3. The neglect of the Word of God may be mentioned as another cause of that spiritual declension which we deplore.

How seldom do the disciples of Christ "search the Scriptures" with diligence, and with an earnest desire to derive the benefit which they are designed to convey to the soul! How few study them, in order to imbibe the sanctifying influence of the truth, to understand their obligations, and to grow wise unto salvation. Beyond the occasional task of reading a brief chapter of Holy Writ, as a customary preface to family prayer, it is to be feared that the Bible is, even in families professedly religious, a neglected book. Many seem to regard their own feelings, and the impulses of their own minds, as a better rule of life than the doctrines and precepts of Christ, forgetting the language of the Apostle, that all Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." They forget also the precepts which enjoins them to "receive with meekness the engrafted word which is able to save their souls;" nor do they remember that the sons of God are said to "be born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth forever;" nor that the Saviour's memorable prayer for his Church contains this prominent petition, "Sanctify them through the truth: thy word is truth."

That there is a lamentable ignorance of Scriptural truth in our Churches, and a corresponding contempt of its most sacred obligations in practice, is painfully obvious. Were the inspired oracles studied as they ought to be, with meditation and prayer, there could not be an open and repeated violation of the holy commands of Him who gave us his word as the transcript of his divine perfections, and the revelation of his will. Were they thus studied, believers would not "forget the assembling of themselves together" for holy worship, nor "be carried about with every wind of doctrine," nor act according to the suggestions of an ill-regulated imagination, and the caprices of variable feelings.

4. The last cause of the decline of piety which we shall mention, is the unholy fellowship which Christians have formed with the world.

There is a real and manifest "difference between the righteous and the wicked—between him that serveth God, and him that serveth him not;" and much of the worldly-mindedness, conspicuous amongst the professed followers of Christ, has undoubtedly arisen from their not having been careful to preserve this distinction. The servant of God should be known by the contrast which his spirit, his pursuits, his character, present to those of the servants of sin. And so long as he continues to serve God faithfully, he will be recognized as belonging to Christ, as being his living epistle read and known of all men. He will not be "conformed to this world, but transformed by the renewing of his mind;" the moral standard by which his life is fashioned will be that which is despised and set at nought by men of corrupt minds; he will have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but reprove them both by his words and by his actions. Alas! dear brethren, how few of those who are numbered as members of our Churches present this pleasing picture of spiritual-mindedness, and of crucifixion to the world by the Cross of Christ! Have we not to mourn that many are found "walking in the counsel of the ungodly, standing in the way of sinners, and sitting in the seat of the scornful," and instead of bringing forth the fruits of righteousness, exhibit the aspect of almost perfect barrenness. How many are pursuing the paths of unholy pleasures, in companionship with those who are enemies of the Cross of Christ, and displaying great eagerness to enjoy carnal happiness. This mingling in the amusements and pursuits of the world, has benumbed conscience, destroyed communion with God, and divested Zion of that purity and glory which once made her so attractive.

Having thus briefly touched on some of the causes which have conspired to blight the growth of so considerable a portion of the Christian world, permit us, dear brethren, to urge upon you the adoption of such means as may, with the blessing of God, effect the revival of his cause amongst us.

1. It is our duty to humble ourselves before God, sincerely confess our backslidings, and to return to God.

He summons us to the performance of this duty. "Return unto me, and I will return unto you," saith the Lord. "O Israel, return unto the Lord thy God, for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity. Take with you words, and turn to the Lord: say unto him, take away all iniquity and receive us graciously." The motives by which we are urged to do this are solemn and affecting, and should be efficient. "I will go and return to my place, till they acknowledge