

count of her own relations. They are still multiplying; and new articles of faith, new parties, and new combinations of doctrine and practice spring up before our eyes in this our own day.

The contagion is not simple schism—which of itself is an evil of sufficient magnitude; but almost all sorts of doctrines, conclusions, imaginations, feelings, observances, and practices obtain currency among these diversified ranks which constitute our spiritual Babelism. Now, just here, my dear sir, allow me to develop a prominent and distinguishing feature in the reformation which the disciples plead. *We take the Bible without note, comment, or creed, and reject every species of theology saving what we find in a ‘Thus saith the Lord.’* Partyism, in all its multiplied forms, has its origin in something else than the Bible—in philosophy, in speculative theology, in some description of human authority: we pitch overboard the whole cargo of these adulterated and papalized doctrines, rituals, and bonds of union; simply accepting the creed of Jesus and his apostles in all that pertains to christianity. A human discipline, a written formula, a confession of faith, prescribed by the clergy, we have not, and dare not have, so long as we have the divine Book. Against all such we solemnly and loudly protest. We are, on this point, essentially and most decidedly *protestant*.

While, then, we discard and disown all human creeds, we are, you perceive, not without a creed. The difference between us and our cotemporary professors, of whatever name, consists in this: our creed is inspired, while theirs can only claim a distant relation to inspiration—a relation so distant that division instead of union is the legitimate and never-failing result.

Meantime, in accepting and rallying round the Bible, instead of making a new creed, we regard it primarily as a Book of facts, and not a document of abstract texts for generating opinions or inferences. Now I take for granted that you are familiar with the grand distinction between a fact and an opinion; the one having reference to something that has taken place, for which there is evidence, and the other a mere impression of the mind, for which no real evidence can be adduced. A fact is something done, and is therefore susceptible of proof equal to the strength or truthfulness of the testimony that reports or speaks of it; an opinion ranks no higher in the scale of certainty than an inference or a think-so, and is therefore devoid of that element which makes evident, reliable, or certain. Hence, in this view, while a fact is indisputable and morally demonstrable, an opinion