

very rocks and eternal hills were not safe. Then, while a deadly rationalism has utterly destroyed the faith of many, it has in great measure eaten out the life of many more, and diffused throughout the world of thought a certain uneasiness or vague anxiety, that extends far beyond the sphere of its direct influence. The very wildness and ferocity of the revolutionary spirit is itself startling. Even the sacred name of Jesus—that divine image of incarnate grace and truth, which shines out from the breathing canvas of the evangelic history, and which is itself an infinitely greater miracle than any other which that history records—has not been safe from its impious hand; and at its touch the imperishable annals of the Truth itself have been transmuted into a legendary fable. The serpent, indeed, has been destroyed,—destroyed almost as soon as hatched; and yet, doubtless, it has left some traces of its foul slime on some once untainted hearts, as well as in the general thoughts of the reading, thinking world. The total result is, that there are in our day, and have been for some time past, a considerable number of minds in some sort earnest and religious, who yet have not, and never have had, any sure grounding on the rock of truth; to whom the authority and infallibility of the eternal Word has been a matter merely of opinion or traditional belief, more or less firmly held, rather than a strong, deep, personal, unshakable conviction. It is a tenet merely, a persuasion,—not a divine, home-felt certainty. How much all this must tend to weaken the life of Protestantism,—to weaken it at the very heart,—is sufficiently manifest. Men, and especially in an age like this, must have something firm to lean on. The human soul, like nature, abhors a vacuum. It cannot exist on a negation or a fiction. The weight of its infinite cares is too great for any mere theory, or opinion, or traditional creed, to sustain; and when these frail props give way, it will look eagerly round for some other and surer support. Some will look in one direction, some in another, each according to the special influence or personal bias which may otherwise determine his course. Failing the revealed Word, there are but two other stays on which faith can lean: the one is simple reason, the other is authority; the one the infallibility of the inward consciousness, the other the infallibility of the external church. Accordingly, in the general wreck of faith, some will grasp at the one phantom, and some at the other. Washed away from the rock of truth, and tossed to and fro on a sea of doubt, men will be fain to seize on every floating fragment, that may for the moment preserve them from sinking, and hold out the faintest hope of bringing them at last safe to land.

Hitherto our remarks, as regards the internal state of Protestantism, have had reference exclusively to the domain of doctrine. Let us now, however, consider it for a moment under another aspect, that of a MORAL AND SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINE, or system of church life. In estimating the vital energy of the Reformation Church, and her consequent power to withstand the antagonist system, it is obviously necessary to inquire into her capacity not only as a teacher of the truth, but as a guide and educator of souls. What means does she supply, and what scope does she afford, for the full training and maturing of the spiritual life, and the unfolding of man's whole being in the service and enjoying of God? She guides her children to the springs of truth—does she in due measure also exercise them in the discipline of holiness? She indoctrinates them with saving knowledge—does she *train* them also in self-denial, in self-sacrifice, and in all the work and warfare of the faith? She instructs—does she also lead, and in the true and full sense *educate* her children? Now, in a general view of the subject, the vast superiority of the reformed system over the old is sufficiently manifest. Romanism, throughout all her elaborate discipline, ministers to the lower principles of man's spiritual nature, to the ignoring and suppression of the higher. She puts out the eye of reason and chains the will, while she skilfully