

membered, also, that the very *spectacle* of such a unity, considered in itself, has a powerful, almost irresistible fascination for some minds. Tossed on a sea of doubt, and distracted amid the strife of conflicting parties and creeds, and with no sure personal grounding on the immutable rock of truth, men even of keen speculative intellect, but of feeble moral strength, will naturally feel powerfully the attraction of a system holding out the prospect of perfect unity and absolute certainty,—of a quiet asylum, on whose very threshold all doubt shall end, and the din of controversy die away, and may thus be willing to escape from the perplexities of their own reason in the abnegation of all reason at the foot of a blind unquestioning authority. Such has been the course of many an earnest, and in some respects gifted spirit, in our day; and such doubtless, will be the course of many another, as this great struggle proceeds.

But if there is much in the external state of Protestantism, both in this country and elsewhere, to lay it open to the assaults of Romanism, there is still more in certain internal *tendencies* of THEOLOGICAL SPECULATION which are more or less characteristic of our times. After all, the real strength of Protestantism lies in its theology. It was this alone that called it into being; and it is this too, that has sustained its existence from age to age. Its creative and constitutive principle is the Bible and Bible truth. Without this, it is nothing,—a mere *caput mortuum*, without breath or action, and doomed sooner or later to fall asunder and go to pieces of itself. What fire is to the hearth, what the life-blood is to the body, such is the living Word and truth of God to the Apostolic and Reformation Churches. It was the voice of that Word pealing through the valley of the dry bones that at the first called the great army of Reformed Christendom as from the dead; and the same Word is still the rallying cry that keeps it together. The Mediæval Church without the Word was a dark and idolatrous church,—a synagogue of Satan, and cage of every unclean bird, rather than the holy house of God, the pillar and ground of the truth; the Protestant Church without the Word and the living faith of it, is simply nothing. Here, then, is our strength. The Word is the true counterpoise of the Church,—a living biblicalism of a false ecclesiasticism. It is obvious, accordingly, that it is only in proportion as this principle is faithfully maintained and livingly held fast, that we can expect either to hold together among ourselves, or to hold our own against our adversaries. We must overcome, if we overcome at all, by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of our testimony, being found faithful therein to the death; this sacred ark alone, with its heavenly treasure, will make the enemy flee before us. In short, its plenary authority and all-sufficient completeness must be firmly believed and maintained, its saving doctrines vitally held, its holy precepts and divine spirit live within us; or we shall be weak as other men, and our congregations become but common crowds, not Churches of the saints. And yet, it is just on this very point that at present our great weakness lies. In our day the Bible itself has been put on its trial. That critical, searching age which is sifting and trying every thing else, has thrown the pure gold of the sanctuary itself into the crucible. By every conceivable test is its divine authority and infallible truth being tried anew,—the test of history, the test of science, the test of philosophy, the test of ancient monuments the test of philology and scientific criticism. It stands the test; it lives amid the flames; it will as heretofore, come forth scathless and triumphant from the fire. Yet, meanwhile, the hearts of many are more or less slaken. The very thought that the eternal Word is again on its trial,—on trial not alone among professed unbelievers, but in some respects also among professing Christians,—has necessarily an unsettling tendency. "If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?" is the confession even of faith itself; and timid hearts quiver and tremble at the very thought. When the ground quakes and heaves beneath us, it seems as if the