

a sound scriptural theology, need not be expected from Oxford. A few years ago Puseyism was in the ascendant. Church authority sought to supersede the exercise of private judgment. A very natural re-action has taken place. Excess always follows unnatural restraint. One class, the lovers of form and authority, have gone fully to Popery; another class, the more independent thinkers, in resisting the yoke of authority, have been borne on the rebounding wave to doubting scepticism. An undue importance may easily be attached to the opinions of these writers. Proficiency in one branch of knowledge, does not constitute a man a reliable guide in other things. "Great men are not always wise;" and are often in their pride of knowledge ignorant of great truths, which God has revealed to the meek and lowly of heart. Whatever these writers know, they are evidently without an experience of spiritual religion, and strangers to the transpiring power of Divine grace in the salvation of men.

No learning nor intellectual acuteness can supply this deficiency. It is hard to avoid questioning the friendship and sincerity of men, who profess to believe the interests of the church to be in danger from too much faith, at a time when the pursuit of physical science has produced a tendency to unduly exalt secondary causes, to the practical exclusion of the agency of Him who upholdeth all things by the word of His power. Indeed the claim of some of these writers to be Christians, and friends of the Bible, is worse than dubious. It rests upon the admission of some of its truths, metamorphosed into fanciful forms, to harmonize with their speculations. In vain they attempt to clear themselves of responsibility for each

other's opinions. If seven writers agree together to assault the Book of God on several points—to depreciate its influence for good—to deny the truth of its facts and doctrines—to reject its authority as a special revelation from God—to eulogize opposing systems, and magnify the indebtedness of the world to heathenism—to depreciate and traduce every form of evidence by which it is defended—and to welcome, with unmistakeable satisfaction, every theory, however unsupported, that is hostile to the authority and importance of its revelations; no professions of friendship, liberality, and love of truth will convince men of common sense and intelligence that they are not "the enemies of the cross of Christ." There is nothing new in an attempt to make a false philosophy mould and fashion Christianity to harmonize with its fantastic speculations.

Gnosticism weakened and corrupted the early Church with very similar attempts. "In all cases," says Meander, "the gnostics were for explaining outward things, from within—that is from their intuitions—which were above all doubt." It need excite no surprise that the system of the Established Church—under which men are brought up for the ministry, without reference to religious character, simply because there are rich benefices to be obtained; and the sacred office of the pastorate is bought and sold, like stocks on the exchange, should produce as legitimate fruits, ministers who are skeptics at heart, and who view religion through the distorting haze of prejudice and vain philosophy. Nor is there anything strange in the existence of a class of men, without fixed religious principles, given to speculative thought, undecided and vacillating; who feel a strong repug-