

treating of the thought of the century, even within the narrow limits which have been prescribed, I am met with similar difficulties. In the large circumference of the domain of thought I have to choose a starting-point and to construct a road which may lead to the central position, hoping there to gain a comprehensive view of the whole.

2.
Some periods of history take their name from some great event or movement.

Some periods of history are characterised by one great and central movement which absorbs all active forces and all intellectual and imaginative power, making them either subservient to one end and purpose, and helpful in the elaboration of one idea; or else forcing them into opposition, where they testify equally to the importance of this central movement. Such periods were, for instance, the long centuries of Jewish history, the early age of the Christian Church, the period of the culmination of Papal power, the Reformation, the French Revolution. In studying the thought of such ages, we are not at a loss where to find the leading idea,—we easily fix the centre of the vortex which draws into its motion all the existing forces, all genius and all talent. In an age like that of the Reformation we can speak of the Politics of the Reformation, the Religion of the Reformation, the Philosophy, Literature, and Art of the Reformation, and we are pretty sure to embrace under these various heads an account of all the mental progress and to trace all the thought of that age, be it friendly or antagonistic. It is evident that no such central event, no such all-absorbing vortex of motion, exists in the period which we have lived through. The uniting bond, if it exists, lies much deeper; the problem we have been engaged in solving, the prize we are fighting for, does not present itself on

3.
No central event in our age.