

the dripping blood. The man who professes universal love without some central affection, has a selfish heart within him. The large charities of our land—the tireless compassions which are swift in the relief of suffering—the beneficence, which, in its abandonment to generosity, would almost “coin its heart and drop its blood for drachmas,”—whence do they spring? Who are the men who sustain them? Not the loungers at the café or the club, to whom life is an endless migration, an eccentric orbit, a perpetual quarantine,—their affections are too diffuse and frittered for such practical action. No; but the men of local ties, and central attractions, and happy homes, who have learned, from the preciousness of their own family treasures the worth of such blessings to the world; and, from their own agonising anxiety in some crisis of trouble, to sympathize with the homeless and desolate around them. And so it is in the developments of the religious life. It is dangerous to loose off from quiet anchorage in matters of belief, and from the communion of saints in matters of Christian fellowship. We have seen men in our own day who have imbued themselves with the sentiment of Pope’s hackneyed and heretical couplet—

“For modes of faith let graceless zealots fight,
He can’t be wrong whose life is in the right.”

And, in their new privilege of fancied intellectual freedom, they have cast from them the restraints of creed; and they have outgrown the stature of the sects; and they have gathered round them a company of congenial spirits, as motley and equivocal as that of David in the cave of Adullam; and for a while they have leaped and shouted in the intoxication of their liberty. But we have followed those men in their melancholy progress; and, one by one, they have shifted from the foundation-truths of Christian faith and hope; and they have rushed, irreverent, into the holy place; and licence of thought has induced laxity of life, until, homeless and wild as any Bedouin of the desert, they have prowled about among the Churches—spiritual Ishmaels,—“their hands against every man—and every man’s hand against them.” It is no light thing to err from the truth; for in the heart of error there is *sin*. In this wondrous age—this age of enormous publicity, and of bold thinking, and of unbounded revelry of speculation—this danger assails all. Some, it may be, from an old-fashioned honesty of ignorance, which is unable to comprehend, (here and there one, perhaps, but very, very few,) some from intellectual pride, some from stubbornness of soul, but most from sheer love of evil, and hatred of the restraints of godliness, thus err from the truth. The chief source of infidelity is not in the head, but in the heart—not that the understanding is bewildered by the feebleness or lack of evidence, but that the heart “loves darkness rather than light, because its deeds are evil.” Reader, art thou in danger? Is there one whose eye is upon this page, on whom a cloud of doubt has darkened, or who, by the bland and jesuitical suggestions of some infidel acquaintance, has had his faith in gospel verities unsettled and shaken? My brother, haste thee to cast out the demon from thy soul. Crush it, like a serpent, for there is death in its gripe and in its fang. It behoveth us all, in the impending struggle of the times—a struggle, if we mistake not, fiercer than the world has known—to take care that, “rooted in the faith,” we, “hold fast the form of sound words.” We do not ask—the