

Portfolio of Select Literature.

DO NOT ERR FROM THE TRUTH,

There is danger lest you should. If, in the times of the apostles—in the very childhood of Christianity—the tares sown by the enemy were so rank in their luxuriant growth, that there were some who denied the Divinity of Christ, and some who allied impurity to devotion, and some who rejoiced in imagined release from all obligation to personal obedience, surely the peril is not less imminent now, when almost every man deems himself inspired, and has some formative theory of his own. When we consider the close and indissoluble connexion between faith and practice, and how a man's life is of necessity shaped and moulded by his sentiments, we cannot look upon it as a thing indifferent that he should have an orthodox creed. We cannot forget that the Moslem enters upon fierce wars of extermination; and the Japanese, amid barbarous rites, holds festival to spurn the cross; and the Thug strangles on principle, and finds his merit in the multiplication of his murders; and the Hindoo, personally merciful, defends infanticide, and mourns that widows are no longer burnt nor victims immolated, as over some lost privilege—all because of their opinions; and that, even where the sentiments have no direct, casual influence upon the practice, they are collaterally and always influential, leavening the nature and evolving the tone of the entire man. We cannot, therefore, regard it as a trifling matter to “err from the truth,” by a departure from “the faith once delivered to the saints.” By many in the present day this will be thought a scrupulous and old-world fear, altogether inconsistent with the breadth and liberality of the present times. There are those even among the teachers of religion who denounce creeds and denominations almost as vehemently as infidelity and sin; and who seem to think it their especial mission to pull down not only the “middle walls of partition,” but the ancient landmarks which guard the poor man's heritage. If, by the idolatry of creed, which they denounce, they mean a blind and traditional adhesion to a system of unfelt truth—a thing of rubrics and genuflections—something which heats the fierce feelings of the partizan, but which clasps not the truth in its affections, as the tendril clasps the tree; if, by denominationalism, they mean the churlish narrowness, which, in the time of drought, vaunts selfily of its own wringing fleece, and can see no good blessing beyond the curtains of its own tent—then have at them brave iconoclasts!—and, as things which ought to pass away, and which are unworthy of the Christianity which they disfigure, root them out of our Churches, if you can. But if creeds be, as they ought to be, but expressions of an inner life, “forms of sound words,” draping the living truth; and if denominations, careful to preserve that charity which is the “bond of perfectness,” are but, as they ought to be, towers of strength for combined resistance and aggression—then, in proportion as we value our Christianity, these, its expressions and habitations, will be regarded and sustained. We are jealous of that pantheistic benevolence to which all religions are of equal esteem, and which renders its sentimental adoration, whether the deity be libertine or holy, whether the altar be crowned with flowers, or red with