

much of
 power and richness and health of the Divine word. Men think themselves orthodox, when they are merely manipulating by a mechanical logic the several propositions of their creed. Even a sound creed adopted on trust, and repeated by rote, may be less fruitful of practical good than a defective creed which has been personally thought out, and has come to the birth after many a pang of sore intellectual and soul struggle, as a real personal possession. A sound creed may be a soulless creed. The crystalized formula must be vitalized by personal absorption and verification before it can be a living power. So long as a creed is fighting for existence it is a real thing to the minds and hearts of its adherents. But when it has passed beyond this stage the danger begins. The late John Stuart Mill, in his treatise on Liberty used language, to which thoughtful minds cannot refuse assent, however much at variance with that author on other points. Speaking of such accepted forms of doctrinal belief he says, "when it has come to be an hereditary creed, and to be received passively, not actively—when the mind is no longer compelled, in the same degree as at first, to exercise its vital powers on the questions which its belief presents to it, there is a progressive tendency to forget all of the belief, except the formularies, or to give it a dull and torpid assent, as if accepting it on trust dispensed with the necessity of realizing it in consciousness, or testing by personal experience; until it almost ceases to connect itself at all with the inner life of the human being. Then are seen the cases, so frequent in this age of the world as almost to form the majority, in which the creed remains as it were outside the mind, encrusting and petrifying it against all other influences addressed to the higher parts of our nature; manifesting its power by not suffering any fresh and living conviction to get in, but itself doing nothing for the mind and heart, except standing sentinel over them to keep them vacant." Alas, there is too much truth in this, and also in his further sneer that doctrines thus held are "chiefly - viceable to pelt adversaries with." Probably this language will recall to your minds the oft quoted lines:

"There lives more faith in honest doubt,
 Believe me, than in half the creeds."

There is truth in this. Earnest souls battling honestly with difficulties, (raised not by vanity or a spirit of intellectual sophistry seeking to cover faults of practice, but by experimental inability to harmonize the doctrines with the facts of consciousness, and the feasibilities of personal conduct,) are in a more hopeful state by far, than those who yield a lazy inoperative acceptance of the truth, which does not affect the life and character. To what a lamentable extent are accepted beliefs of truth—that has a direct and tremendous bearing on human