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ON

THE NATURE

OF

TRUE FAITH.

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ON THE NATURE OF TRUE FAITH.

THE idea of *Faith*, as generally understood, is manifestly this, that it consists in believing what the professing Christian Church teaches, and because the Church teaches it; thus in believing what *others* have declared to be true, and *because* they have declared it to be true, *without any regard to an internal acknowledgment of its truth on the part of the believer*. Agreeably, therefore, to this idea, a man is said to have faith, provided he can trust to the judgment or eyes of others respecting truth, without consulting his own judgment, or his own eyes, on the interesting subject; the consequence of which is, that his faith is not grounded in any perception of truth in his own mind, but only in the authority of those on whom he can depend, and who assure him that they have a perception of it. But how plain is it to see, that a faith of this description cannot so properly be called a faith in truth itself, as a faith in what others are pleased to call truth; neither can it be said to be derived from truth itself, but only from the opinions of others respecting truth! How plain, therefore, it is to see that such a faith is not what the Great Saviour calls "*faith in God*," (Mark xi. 22.) but what may be more fitly called the faith of man, because it is grounded not so much in the bright convincing light of the Eternal Truth, as in the documents of human opinion, tradition, and speculation!

But the above idea of faith is not more erroneous in its principles than it is mischievous in its tendencies, since it has led its adherents to conceive, that faith is an evangelical principle, not only distinct from charity, but possessing an *exclusively saving virtue*, in which charity has no share, and to which she can boast no pretensions. For such is the doctrinal tenet too often taught, that man is saved by faith *alone* in the merits and atoning blood of the Great Redeemer, and thus that charity and good works, howsoever they may follow as the *fruits* of this faith, yet do not enter at all into its composition, nor make any addition to, or even form any part of, its saving qualities. But what shall we say is all this exaltation of faith above charity, but an infraction of the marriage-covenant, by which those two heavenly graces are eternally conjoined in one? What is it, therefore, but a violent outrage against the divine command which saith, "What God hath joined together let not man put asunder." (Matt. xix. 6.) And what is its criminal and miserable effect, but to give birth to that other divorce-ment, which the Almighty disclaims, and in disclaiming disallows, in that emphatic question to the Jews of old, "Where is the bill (or book) of your mother's divorce-ment, whom I have put away?" (Isaiah l. 1.) For if charity be divorced from faith, and faith from charity, what is then left of either, but a principle of *life* without *light*, or of *light* without *life*, thus a principle either of darkness or of death? And if life be thus divorced from light, and light from life, or, what amounts to the same, if the heavenly good of Christian love and charity be divorced from the heavenly truth of faith and intelligence, and *vice versa*, what must be the necessary and fatal consequence, but the further divorce-ment of the Church, or of what is termed in prophetic language, "*your mother*," from her Divine Husband, thus the separation of mankind from the life, the love, the wisdom, and peace of their Heavenly Father?

But it is painful to the pious mind to note all those