

Scanned By Leroy Rhodes

L E T T E R S

o n

F A I T H.

ADDRESSED TO A FRIEND.

By J A M E S D O R E.

L O N D O N :

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1786.

L E T T E R I.

THE
N A T U R E
OF
F A I T H.

L E T T E R I.

DEAR SIR,

BEFORE I left Walworth I promised, in compliance with your earnest request, to embrace the leisure, which this favourite retreat affords me, to give you, in writing, my sentiments upon FAITH. To gratify your desire, and fulfil my own promise, I now sit down to write

I shall not dignify my opinion by the authority of theological writers; as you do not ask me what others think, but what are the sentiments of your friend whom you honor with your correspondence. The opinions

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of

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of others may be best seen in their own writings, which you may consult at your pleasure.

It is not necessary to make an apology to you, Sir, for the frequent use of that disagreeable letter I. Egotism is odious; but the appearance of it is rendered necessary now by your request. If at any time I may seem positive, it will only be to avoid the too frequent occurrence of such phrases as these: *I think, I apprehend, I should suppose, I humbly conceive, It appears to me.* I feel many difficulties, and therefore propose my opinion with the greatest modesty.

After these preliminary remarks, let us attend to the question you propose, '*What is faith?*' It appears to
me

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me that faith is *credit given to a report*. To believe is to credit what is affirmed. The idea we generally fix to faith, in common conversation, is that of crediting some proposition. And, if I am not mistaken, faith is sometimes to be understood in this sense in the holy scriptures, particularly in the following texts—*Who hath believed our report*? Had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me: for he wrote of me. But if ye believe not his writings, how can ye believe my words†? through sanctification of the spirit, and belief of the truth‡*. It would be easy to enlarge this catalogue, but it is not necessary; for in the mouth of two or three credible witnesses every word is established.

B 3 After

* Isai. liii. 1. † John v. 46, 47. ‡ 2 Theſſ. ii. 13.

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After all, I readily acknowledge, that the holy scriptures do not always speak of faith in this restrictive sense. As they abound with figurative language, they sometimes give an effect the name of its cause. Instances of this figure often occur. Hence Jesus Christ uses the expressions, coming to him, and believing on him, as synonymous: *He that cometh to me shall never hunger, and he that believeth on me shall never thirst** Other passages might be quoted; but you do not ask what faith means when it is used figuratively, but what it literally signifies.

Many words are used in scripture both in a literal and figurative sense. We should be careful not to confound

* John vi. 35.

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found the one with the other. For want of attending to this necessary caution, some understand almost every thing in the divine word metaphorically; others go to the opposite extreme, and take those texts literally which have only a figurative meaning. Hence, in the opinion of some, 'Hell is an eastern allegory; and, in the opinion of others, the absurd doctrine of transubstantiation is a revealed truth.

I have departed from my subject, and have not time now to return. You may expect to receive, in my next letter, some remarks upon the GROUNDS of faith.

For the present I conclude, with my warmest desires that you may
 B 4 feel

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feel much of the influence of that
faith, which is the gift of God, by
the effectual operation of his spirit,
which worketh by love, purifies the
heart, and produces obedience.

I am,

Dear Sir,

affectionately yours, &c.

ISLE OF WIGHT,
MAY 15, 1786.

L E T T E R II.

T H E
G R O U N D S
O F
F A I T H.

LETTER.