

THOUGHTS, &c.

THERE are two great principles which it is the duty of every Christian to maintain, and to preserve, if possible, in perfect harmony with each other. One of these principles is the Unity of the Church, and the other is the Truth of the Gospel. The former relates to the external communion of the visible Church of Christ, and it is violated by the act of voluntary separation from the religious society of which we are members, which, when effected without a just cause, constitutes the sin of schism. The latter relates to the purity of the doctrines taught by our Lord Jesus Christ and His inspired Apostles, which form the foundation of true religion, any departure from which is therefore an error, or, when it is an obstinate denial of some fundamental truth, amounts to a heresy. Now the great practical difficulty is to reconcile a certain class of *principles* with a certain class of *doctrines*—that is, to reconcile the perfect Unity and divine Infallibility of the Universal Church with the preservation of Scriptural and primitive Christianity in all its Evangelical purity. Both ought certainly to be held together, if that be attainable; but if not, the one must give place to the other. We ask then, in that case, which of them is to yield to the claims of the other?

It is evident that if any visible church is guilty, in her official capacity, of teaching false doctrines, and requiring all her members to believe and profess them, then they are no longer bound to remain in her communion, because the