

tells strikingly on what may be called the heresies of our times. What, then, is the basis of faith? First, then, I would remark, that reason is not the basis of faith. Reason has its legitimate province in matters of religion, but it is not to be regarded as the test of faith: we cannot properly say that we shall believe nothing but what we can comprehend. This is acknowledged to be true in the world of nature; and it is not to be expected that it should be otherwise in matters of religion. It is the province of reason to weigh and consider evidence, and when the evidence has been once produced, and it is clearly seen that God has spoken: then the fact that reason cannot fathom the depth of those announcements, should not be a bar to the reception of any truth which is involved in them. Again, I would observe, that the authority of the Church is not to be considered as the basis of our faith. There are few questions of greater moment than this. It is one of those topics on which much has been written and said in our own day; and it is of great importance that our minds should have correct ideas as to the limits of what is called the authority of the Church. That the Church has *some* authority, cannot be denied. We cannot read the Scriptures in a plain, straightforward manner; we cannot peruse the narratives that tell us of the construction of the Churches in the primitive ages; we cannot read the epistles to Timothy and Titus, without coming to the conclusion attested by the practice of every christian body, that the Church has in some sense, and to a certain extent, authority. The question, then, is,—what is the nature of that authority—what is its legitimate limit? This, I think, cannot be set before us in a more sound or Scriptural manner than in the 20th Art. of our Church. It says: "The Church hath power to decree rites or ceremonies, and authority in controversies of faith; and yet it is not lawful for the Church to ordain anything contrary to God's Word written; neither may it *so* expound one place of Scripture that it be contrary to another: wherefore, although the Church be a witness and keeper of Holy Writ, *yet, besides the same*, ought it not to enforce anything to be believed for necessity of salvation." Here we have a most important and Scriptural distinction with respect to the doctrine of Church authority; from which it appears, that the authority of the Church is to be viewed in different lights, according to the matter that comes under its cognizance. Do we speak, for instance, of things essential to salvation; do we speak of articles of faith: the Church cannot originate one single such particular; though in controversies concerning them, much deference is to be paid to her authority, so long as it is not exercised clearly in opposition to God's Word. The Church must have the express warrant and authority of the oracles of God for every article of faith which it would make known as essential to be believed for salvation. But when we come to speak, not so much of matters of