

ing-ground for him. He was driven to claim for himself freedom of opinion in the light of Scripture, as the only position on which, with any consistency, he could stand. Accordingly, when pressed to retract his views at Worms, when it was clearly made manifest that authority—Catholic and Imperial—was against him, he boldly took his ground here, in magnanimous and always memorable words. For himself, he said, "Unless I be convinced by Scripture or by reason, I can and will retract nothing; for to act against my conscience is neither safe nor honest. Here I stand." On Scripture and on reason he based his convictions, and would recognize the right of no mere external authority to control him. Not what the Emperor said, not what the Doctors said, not what the Church said,—but only what his own conscience owned to be true in the light of the Scripture would he acknowledge to be the truth. Nothing else could move him—so help him God! It is impossible to conceive a more unqualified assertion of the right of private judgement—of the indefeasible privilege of the individual reason and conscience to know and judge the truth for itself; and the Reformation would have no rational or consistent basis if it had not taken up this—if, for himself at least, Luther had not felt the force and sole conclusiveness of such a position. ¶

It is too well known, however, that neither he nor any of his fellow-reformers recognized the full meaning and bearing of this position. They knew what their own necessities demanded; but that was all. They raised the ensign of a free Bible in the face of Rome, but they speedily refused to allow others to fight under this banner as well as themselves. What Luther claimed for himself against Catholic authority, he refused to Carlstadt, and refused to Zwingli, in favor of their more liberal doctrinal views. He failed to see that their position was exactly his own, with a difference of result,—which indeed, was all the difference in the world to him. Against them he appealed, not merely to Scripture, but to his own obstinate views of certain texts of Scripture; and gradually he erected a new authority, which to him, and still more to his followers, became absolute as Scripture itself. Scripture, as a witness, disappeared behind the Ausburgh Confession as a standard; and so it hapened, more or less, with all the reformers. They were consistent in displacing the Church of Rome from its position of assumed authority over the conscience, but they were equally consistent, all of them, in raising a dogmatic authority in its stead. In favor of their own views, they asserted the right of the private judgment to interpret and decide the meaning of Scripture, but they had nevertheless no idea of a really free interpretation of Scripture. Their orthodoxy everywhere appealed to Scripture, but it rested, in reality, upon an Augustinian commentary of Scripture. They displaced the medieval schoolmen, but only to elevate Augustine; and, having done this, they had no conception of any limits attaching to this new tribunal of heresy. Freedom of opinion, in the modern sense, was utterly unknown to them. There was not merely an absolute truth in Scripture, but they had settled, by the help of Augustine, what this truth was; and any variations from this standard were not to be tolerated. The idea of a free faith holding to very different dogmatic views, and yet equally Christian,—the idea of spiritual life and goodness apart from theoretical orthodoxy,—had not dawned in the sixteenth century, nor long afterwards. Heresy was not a mere divergence of intellectual apprehension, but a moral obliquity,—a statutory offence,—to be punished by the magistrate, to be expiated by death.—*Principal Tulloch's Leaders of the Reformation.*

PRAYER IN THE HOUSEHOLD.

I was once told of a cottage patriarch who was born in those days when Scotland had a church in almost every house. There was one in his father's dwelling; and when he pitched a tent for himself he builded an altar. Round that altar a good number of olive-plants grew up; but, one by one, they were either planted out in families of their own, or God took them, till he and his old partner found themselves, just as at their first outset in life, alone. But their family worship con-