

tian may apprehend readily and immediately whatever truth is essential to salvation and to direction in the Christian life.

The perspicuity of the Scriptures is proved by various considerations. It follows from their professed design, which is to present a law to be obeyed and a revelation of truth to be believed, and to be received by us in both aspects on the penalty of eternal death. It follows from their numerous affirmations of such perspicuity. It is likewise true that all Christians promiscuously are commanded to search the Scriptures, with the implication that their teaching is intelligible. Moreover, their light-giving power has been as manifest as the illumining power of the sun, to all Christians who have humbly sought light in them. As a natural consequence there has always been, in spite of all the circumstantial differences, a substantial unity in the faith and practice of all those Christian churches in all ages and races that have drawn their views directly from the open Scriptures. The great theologians of orthodox Christendom, as well as the church creeds, have agreed in ninety-nine hundredths, if not in nine hundred and ninety-nine thousandths, of their teachings.

On these and other grounds Protestants rest their doctrine of "the right of private judgment." It is not claimed that such judgment is "infallible"; but that, as the Scriptures are a plain rule, as they are addressed to all Christians as such, as all Christians are commanded to search the Scriptures and to judge all doctrines and professed teachers by them, as the promise of illumination by the Holy Spirit is to all Christians as such, and as religion is essentially a personal matter, the decision of which is binding upon each man individually, therefore, the exercise of his private judgment by a Christian in the study of the Scriptures, in a humble, believing spirit, "always leads to a competent knowledge of essential truth."

In harmony with this view, it is held that "Scripture is the only infallible voice in the Church, and is to be interpreted, in its own light and with the gracious aid of the Holy Spirit, by each individual for himself, with the *assistance*, though not with the *authority*, of his fellow-Christians." It follows that "creeds and confessions, as to form, bind only those who voluntarily profess them, and, as to matter, they bind only so far as they affirm truly what the Bible teaches, and because the Bible does so teach."*

In fine, the position of Protestant Christendom in the past has uniformly been, that the Bible is the plain, complete and infallible rule of faith and life, and that, when once proved by the proper evidences to be the inspired word of God, there need be and can be no appeal from its clear teachings.

It is obvious that this position can be turned in either of two ways: by showing the Bible *insufficient* to meet the needs of men, as a rule

*See "Outlines of Theology," Dr. A. A. Hodge.