

the Gentiles would rather suffer severe deprivation than offend even a weak brother. And surely the language of Jesus may suffice to render our present cautionary advice worthy of notice. "Woe unto him by whom the offence cometh." Resolve then and pray that you may never violate the resolution: that you will ever *carefully avoid giving offence*.

2. Our second remark is,—*Be not hasty in taking offence*. There must always be two parties to a quarrel, and if we are resolved not to be quarreled with, the number of those who quarrel with us will become very small. If some are not sufficiently careful of the feelings of others, there are also some who are so easily offended that a word or even a look, without any intent in the subject of them, will instantly throw them off their balance. These are exceedingly sensitive plants. They tell us their feelings are keen and delicate, which just means that their tempers are yet unsubdued by the melting, mellowing spirit of the gospel. Let us beware of cherishing that microscopic, eagle-eyed censoriousness that is ever on the search for motives and intentions to give offence, where no such was ever intended to be found. If an act that does not quite please us will bear a favourable construction, by all means let us accept of it. It is better always to err on the side of charity than of censoriousness.

Now we cannot but think that if these cautionary remarks were duly weighed and carefully carried out, much, very much bad feeling might be avoided, or if generated soon dispelled, and far fewer offences would mar the harmony of the house of Christ. May the dove-imaged spirit of Jesus aid us in practically carrying them out in every day life!

We now proceed to the exposition of the verses indicated above.

The offences here meant seem to be not those which we may have given or occasioned to others, but those which we have *received* or considered to be given us by others. With regard to offences given by us, we have specific directions for their treatment in the Sermon on the Mount, in Matt. v., 23 & 24—a passage of Scripture far too much disregarded in our christian fellowship, thereby occasioning much spiritual disunion.

But besides, private personal offences, which though public are yet unpublished, may very properly be treated according to this rule. A notorious sin seems altogether beyond its application; but an evil report regarding a brother, which if true, will certainly impair, if not destroy our confidence in him, may, we think, be very wisely treated according to this rule. Our object being to get at the truth. To gain our brother, if the report be true—to vindicate him, if false.

Moreover, we are far from thinking that the application of the rule before us is to be confined within the enclosure of our own christian society or church. It may be very successfully applied to christian brethren of every branch of the Church of Christ. Even the last step might, by the exercise of a little christian prudence and judgment, be to a certain extent carried out. And while speaking of the offences which *may* come under our rule, we may add, that the spirit of it might, and we are sure with good effect, be carried out among men in general in their offences one against another. Let the men of the world try it and they will