

given? Those who take it for granted that the assembly in question is exactly what we now mean by the terms Christian Church, conclude at once that cutting off, or excommunication from the church as an obstinate and wilful offender, is intended. It may be so; but I am doubtful whether the words here used express so much. The terms employed "Let him be to THEE" would rather convey the idea that the *offender* himself was thus to regard his offending brother; and no longer to have any friendly intercourse with him while he continued in this intractable state of mind. 3. What are we to understand exactly by the treatment here prescribed? It consists of two parts: he is to be regarded, first, as a heathen man, and consequently any close or friendly intimacy with him is forbidden; and, secondly, as a publican. What particular treatment this required does not appear—probably nothing very different from the former. The publicans, or farmers of the revenue, from the extortions which they practised, would be objects of dislike and avoidance to the Jews who were oppressed by them—and so would this impracticable brother be to him whom he had offended.

The rule we have been considering refers chiefly to the reconciliation of the parties, when it can be effected, and to the behaviour of the injured to the injurer, when it cannot. The law of forgiveness, on the repentance of the offender, is laid down with the utmost clearness. "If he repent, forgive him. And if he trespass against thee seven times in a day and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent, thou shalt forgive him." From this it appears imperative upon the offended party to accord forgiveness to his brother on his profession of repentance; and lest revenge or selfishness should limit the instances of pardon to the number

first prescribed, our Lord extends it in his reply to the enquiry of Peter to seventy times seven, hereby intimating, most unequivocally, that no reservation or limit should be maintained on this subject, but that forgiveness should be absolutely commensurate with the profession of repentance. From this passage many have supposed, that, as it is the duty of the offending party to repent and seek forgiveness, the other party against whom the offence is committed has nothing to do but to wait for the penitence and confession of the offender, merely holding himself ready to accord forgiveness when it is sought for, but not as being under any obligation himself to seek reconciliation with his brother. This appears to me an erroneous and inadequate view of the subject. Every Christian, whether offending or offended, is bound to look out for and embrace every opportunity of restoring peace among brethren who ought really never to have been at variance. There is a passage which I cannot help thinking places this matter beyond dispute. It occurs in Mark xi. 25: "And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have ought against any,"—if ye remember any cause of complaint against your brother. From this injunction—from the spirit if not from the letter of it—it appears very plain to my mind that we ought to place ourselves in the way of reconciliation; not to degrade ourselves by appearing to disregard the distinction between right and wrong; but to let it be seen, on every suitable occasion, that we are not implacable, but perfectly willing to be reconciled to our brother, whenever an object so desirable can be accomplished. I am inclined to think we should carry this amicable disposition farther than is generally supposed and acted upon. A haughty, repulsive, and forbidding air should be avoided, as equally inimical to our own peace and the