

produce the intended effect. For the most part, it will be found that when the general drift or bearing of a passage fails to make an impression of the right kind, a more rigid investigation will be found to be insufficient for that purpose. Indeed, such an investigation begun in certain states of mind, will lead to an entirely opposite result—to a confirming of the person in his erroneous belief and injurious conduct.

To the view now advanced it is objected—

That God Himself does not forgive the sinner until he repents and asks forgiveness, and that we are taught to pray that "He would forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us." That is, expressed in direct and plain terms, we are at liberty virtually to put ourselves in the place of, or stand in this respect side by side with God Himself. But surely a single moment's calm reflection will serve to show to every unbiassed mind that this is a monstrous error and most mischievous assumption. The dealing of a perfect being with one who is imperfect, must ever essentially differ from the transaction of one imperfect mortal with another equally and obviously imperfect. The perfect One, in every case, is all right, but the imperfect all wrong; whereas the two imperfect beings are almost always mutually in error. Would you, then, put one who is imperfect on a footing with One who is Perfect, and invest him with the right to exact, as the condition of forgiveness, what He, as the Governor and Judge of the world, must demand from all who have broken His laws?

Besides, is it not the fact that God, for Christ's sake, pardons innumerable sins that we are never even conscious of, and of which we cannot, of course, make specific confession? Does any one fancy that

it is only those sins that he knows of and confesses which God pardons?

But, in addition to all this, the disposition even to repent of and acknowledge those sins of heart and life that we do know of is, equally with the pardon itself, the gift of God's grace. In every conceivable respect it is free and undeserved, from His offer of that pardon to our glad acceptance of that offer. Therein there can be no parallel between the principle on which He acts, as righteous Ruler and Judge, in requiring from all rebels against His authority repentance and confession, and that on which we are enjoined to act in reference to those who have wronged us—not the slightest, except in this respect, that the forgiveness we extend should be unconditional, full, and "from the heart."

It is objected also that it is expressly stated or stipulated, as the condition on which the offence can be pardoned, that the offender should repent of the offence, and ask to be pardoned. I know of no such passage as that to which reference is made in this objection; I know of no scripture in which it is expressed or implied that such condition is to be exacted. The only passages in the whole New Testament, that we can remember, which seems to countenance this heathenish notion—for purely heathenish it undoubtedly is—will be found in the gospel by Luke, chap. xvii., verse 4th. It reads thus: "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." Now, what is the meaning of this Scripture? What does it teach relative to the point under discussion? It teaches, *first*, that it is the duty of the offender to acknowledge his offence. We do not, I presume, differ as to this circumstance. But it teaches, *second*, that it is the duty of the person offended to forgive the offence when forgiveness is asked. About this, too, we