

decision. That this is a scriptural and most Christian mode of determining that which is doubtful, and one which, if more generally adopted, would prevent a large amount of mischief, cannot be denied. At the same time it seems to be optional with the contending parties themselves to receive or reject this plan of ending the dispute. The person declining, however, must be prepared to take the responsibility of not adopting a mode of healing discord and division that has the sanction and often receives the blessing of God.

The next and only other way that I know of is, by the more formal and public reference of the matter to "the Church;" that is, to those upon whom the duty of deciding such matters has been laid by the great Head of the Church Himself. If the decision, first of the lower or inferior court of that church, is reclaimed against; then that of the next higher is set aside; and finally, that of the highest of all disregarded—then I know of no other way on earth whereby it can be brought to a conclusion. The person is impracticable; his case is hopeless. His own will is his rule, and his own view of it is against that of all else besides. He must be left to time, to truth, to God, in the charitable hope and belief that he will come to clearer views and a better spirit.

The question as thus disentangled from, and disencumbered of kindred and relative truths and principles, presents itself in this naked form:—On the supposition that an offence or injury is a real, grave—not an imaginary or trivial offence or injury, as is admitted by the parties themselves, or as is declared by the competent and rightly-constituted judges; and on the supposition, moreover, that the person guilty of that offence or injury does not repent of and seek forgiveness of that offence or injury—is the injured or offended party bound to forgive him?

It will be admitted that what God requires can only be discovered from what He has revealed and recorded in His written Word. To that word we must of necessity appeal.

In answer, then, to the question as now proposed, or in its present form, I would state it as my rooted conviction, that it is the duty of Christians, under all circumstances, to forgive every offence or injury whatsoever. I shall in a very few sentences state, in general terms, the ground whereon that conviction is based, and then note some of the most common and plausible objections that are urged against this view of the subject.

It is based on those Scriptures, too numerous to quote, in which we are exhorted, in this respect especially, to be imitators of God; those also that enjoin upon us the cultivation and exercise of a spirit of forgiveness, and which contain no allusion to penitence on the part of the offender or offenders; and those, moreover, that require us rather to endure actual wrong and injustice, even when redress could be obtained, than enter upon a contest or controversy from which evil is likely to ensue; such, furthermore, as render it our imperative duty to love, and, in all possible ways, do good, even to those who are our known and avowed and bitter enemies; and, above all, such passages as hold up to our view not only the example of eminent saints, but that of our Lord and Master Himself, in exhibiting towards those whose inveterate malice and malignity brought upon Him shame and death, a spirit of tenderness and love. It would be simply impossible, in the space presently at our disposal, to examine in detail and with minuteness one or more of those passages. Nor, indeed, is it necessary, for it is not likely that such examination, if entered upon, would be of any service to those persons upon whose minds the simple reading of them does not