Ultimately referable to swearing by God) the  
rule of the Christian community, which is  
*not to swear at all*; for that every such  
means of strengthening a man’s simple  
affirmation arises out of the evil in human  
nature, is rendered requisite by the distrust that sin has induced, and is, therefore, out of the question among the just  
and true and pure of heart. See James v.  
12, and note there, as explanatory why, in  
both cases, swearing by the name of God  
is not specified as forbidden. {34} In the  
words, ‘Swear not at all,’ our Lord does  
not so much make a positive enactment by  
which all swearing is to individuals forbidden, e.g. on solemn occasions, and for the satisfaction of others, (for that would  
be a mere technical Pharisaism, wholly at  
variance with the spirit of the Gospel, and  
inconsistent with the example of *God  
himself*, Heb. vi. 13–17; vii. 21; *of the  
Lord when on earth, whose “verily verily  
I say unto you”* was a solemn asseveration, and who at once respected the solemn adjuration of Caiaphas, ch. xxvi. 63, 64;  
of *His Apostles*, writing under the guidance of His Spirit, see Gal. i. 20: 2 Cor. i. 23: Rom. i. 9: Phil. i. 8, and especially  
1 Cor. xv. 31; of *His holy angels*, Rev. x.  
6,) as declare to us, that the *proper state*  
of Christians is, to *require no oaths*; that  
when *evil* is expelled from among them,  
every *yea* and *nay* will be as decisive as an  
oath, every promise as binding as a vow.  
We observe (*a*) that these verses imply  
the unfitness of *vows* of every kind as rules  
of Christian action; (*b*) that the greatest  
regard ought to be had to the scruples of  
those, not only sects, but individuals, who  
object to taking an oath, and every facility  
given in a Christian state for their ultimate entire abolition.

**34, 35.**] Compare ch. xxiii. 16–22. Dean Trench  
observes (Serm. on Mount, p. 55), {35} ‘Men  
had learned to think that, if only God’s  
name were avoided, there was no irreverence in the frequent oaths by heaven, by the earth, by Jerusalem, by their own  
heads, and these brought in on the  
slightest need, or on no need at all; just -  
as now-a-days the same lingering half-respect for the Holy Name will often  
cause men, who would not be wholly profane, to substitute for that name sounds that nearly resemble, but are not exactly  
it, or the name, it may be, of some heathen deity.’

**36.**] Thou hast no control  
over the appearance of grey hairs on thy  
head—thy head is not thine own;—thou  
swearest then by a creature of God, whose  
destinies and changes are in God’s hand;  
so that *every oath is an appeal to God*.  
And, indeed, men generally regard it as  
such now, even unconsciously.

**Yea, yea; Nay, nay**] The similar place,  
James v. 12, admirably illustrates this—  
“*let your yea be yea, and your nay nay:*”  
—let these only be used, and they in simplicity and unreservedness.

**cometh of evil**] The gender of evil is ambiguous,  
as it may be also in the Lord’s prayer, ch.  
vi, 13: but see note there. It is quite  
immaterial to the *sense*, in which gender  
we understand it; for the evil of man’s  
corrupt nature is in Scripture spoken of as  
the *work of “the evil One,”* and is *itself  
“that which is evil.”* See John viii. 44:  
1 John iii. 8.

**38—41.**] FIFTH EXAMPLE. *The law  
of retaliation*.

**38.**] That is, *such was the public enactment of the Mosaic  
law*, and, as such, it implied a private  
spirit of retaliation which should seek  
such redress; for the example evidently  
refers to *private* as well as public retribution. Here again our Lord appears  
to speak of the *true state and perfection  
of a Christian community*,—not to forbid,  
in those mixed and but half-Christian  
states, which have ever divided so-called  
Christendom among them, the infliction  
of judicial penalties for crime. In fact  
Scripture speaks, Rom. xiii. 4, of *the  
minister of such infliction* as the *minister*