*of God*. But as before, our Lord shews  
us the *condition to which* a Christian community should *tend*, and to further which every private Christian’s own endeavours  
should be directed. It is quite beside the  
purpose for the world to say, that these  
precepts of our Lord are too highly  
pitched for humanity, and so to find an  
excuse for violating them. If we were  
disciples of His in the true sense, these  
would, in their *spirit*, as indicative  
of frames of mind, be *strictly observed*;  
and, *as far* as we are His disciples, we  
shall *attain to such their observance*.

Here again, our Lord does not *contradict*  
the Mosaic law, but *expands* and *fulfils*  
it, declaring to us that the necessity for  
it would be altogether removed in the  
complete state of that kingdom which He  
came to establish.

Against the notion that **an eye for an eye** &c. sanctioned  
all kinds of private revenge, Augustine  
remarks that the ancient precept was  
rather intended to allay, than to stimulate  
anger; as a limit to vindictiveness, not  
a licence.

**39.**] Here again, we  
have our divine Lawgiver legislating, not  
in the bondage of the letter, so as to stultify His disciples, and in many circumstances to turn the salt of the earth into  
a means of corrupting it,—but in the  
freedom of the spirit, laying down those  
great principles which ought to regulate  
the inner purposes and consequent actions  
of His followers. Taken *slavishly* and  
*literally*, neither did our Lord Himself  
conform to this precept (John xviii. 22,  
23), nor His Apostles (Acts xxiii. 3). But  
*truly*, and in the *spirit*, our blessed Redeemer obeyed it: ‘He gave his back to  
the smiters, and his cheeks to them that  
plucked off the hair, and hid not his face  
from shame and spitting’ (Isa. 1. 6): and  
his Apostles also, see 1 Cor. iv. 9–13.

**evil**] i.e. here **the evil man**;  
‘him who injures thee.’ Or, perhaps, in  
the indefinite sense, as before, **evil**, generally, ‘when thus directed against thee.’  
Only, the other possible meaning there,  
‘*the evil One,*’ is precluded here. “*Resist  
the devil,*” James iv. 7: but not *this particular form* of his working (viz. malice  
directed against thyself) so as to revenge  
it on another.

**40, 41.**]: See note on  
ver. 39. This is of *legal contention only*,  
and is thus distinguished from the violence  
in ver. 39.

**{40} take away**, i.e. in pledge  
for a debt: see Exod. xxii. 6.

**coat**, the inner and less costly garment; **cloke**,  
the outer and more valuable, used also by  
the poor as a coverlet by night (Exod. as  
above). In Luke vi. 29 the order is inverted , and appears to be that in which the two garments would be taken from the  
body, that verse referring to abstraction  
by *violence*. See the apostolic comment  
on this precept, 1 Cor. vi. 7.

**{41} compel**]  
The original word is one derived from the  
Persian name of the post-couriers who carried  
the government despatches: and is thence  
used of any compulsory “*pressing*” to go on  
service. ‘The Jews particularly objected to  
the duty of furnishing posts for the Roman  
government; and Demetrius, wishing to  
conciliate the Jews, promised, among other  
things, that their beasts of burden should  
not be pressed for service. Hence our Saviour represents this as a burden.’ Josephus.  
The billeting of the Roman soldiers and  
their horses on the Jews was one kind of  
this compulsion.

**42.**] The proper  
understanding of the command in this verse  
may be arrived at from considering the  
way in which the Lord Himself, who declares, ‘If ye shall ask any thing in my  
name, I will do it’ (John xiv. 14), performs this promise to us. It would obviously be, not a promise of love, but a  
sentence of condemnation to us, understood in its bare literal sense; but our  
gracious Saviour, knowing what is good  
for us, so answers our prayers, that we  
never are sent empty away; not always,  
indeed, receiving *what* we ask,—but that  
which, in the very disappointment, we  
are constrained thankfully to confess is  
better than our wish. So, in his humble  
sphere, should the Christian giver act. To  
give every thing to every one—the sword  
to the madman, the alms to the impostor,  
the criminal request to the temptress—  
would be to act as the enemy of others