

Judges for the administration of Justice throughout the land were "wise men," members of the Church.

Ver. 28. *in his heart.*] Our Lord, throughout his teaching on the subject of the Commandments, strikes at the root of evil. The members of his Church must learn how to govern their interior spirit: it is on this that the Holy Spirit acts: to His secret, invisible influence they must really yield; otherwise no outward apparent conformity to any law of God will be of avail.—The public authorized teachers of the time of our Lord encouraged the idea that the Divine Laws were satisfied so long as men kept within their letter.—It is to remind us forever of our Lord's interpretations of the Divine Laws that the Church founded by him causes the Commandments to be read to us in the Public Liturgy, and teaches us to pray that our hearts may be more and more inclined to keep them—i.e. according to the interpretations given to them by Christ our Lord.

Ver. 29. *If thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out.*] In reading this passage, stress should be laid on "right eye."—"If any propensity within thee tempt thee to go wrong—let it be even as much a part of thee, and, under legitimate circumstances, as justly to be defended by thee, as thy right eye—yet nevertheless crush it down.—That gift of the Holy Spirit which is within thee, gives thee the power to do this, and thy final salvation depends upon thy earnestly endeavouring to do this. By perseverance, the difficulty will vanish,—and a way of escape will be set before thee."—"Offend" here, and often in the New Testament, means "Cause to fall into a snare," "Cause to do what is wrong."—This is the correct primary signification of the word: its sense of "to displease" is secondary.—The *right* eye is mentioned because this eye was peculiarly needed by the ancient warriors in taking aim with the bow.

Ver. 31. *Whosoever shall put away his wife.*] One crying sin of the times when our Lord appeared on the earth was the frequent and frivolous dissolution of the marriage-tie.—Advantage was taken of a permission of

divorce in the Mosaic Law under certain circumstances—the letter of which was pleaded, but the real spirit of which was wholly violated.—Our Lord in the 31st and 32nd verses confines the permission of divorce among Christians within the ancient divinely-appointed limits.

Ver. 33. *Thou shalt not forswear thyself.*] The erroneous notion aimed at was—that so long as a solemn and formal oath by the name of God was observed, all other asseverations, short of using the Divine Name, might be indulged in with impunity; and if afterwards they were not heeded, the moral guilt was not great.

Ver. 34. *I say unto you, swear not at all.*] The thing prohibited is the use of frivolous but solemn-sounding asseverations in common conversation, approaching as nearly as possible to, without actually being, the real oath by the great Name of God.—The use of the great and solemn oath for the purpose for which it was originally instituted, is not forbidden,—but enjoined by our Lord. His prohibition—according to the real sense of the words used by St. Matthew is—"Swear not—use not solemn asseverations, universally—generally—commonly."—Hence the Church founded by our Lord instructs us that "a man may swear when the magistrate requireth, in a cause of faith and charity, so it be done according to the Prophet's teaching, in justice, judgment and truth." Article xxxix in the Book of Common Prayer.

Ver. 37. *Let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay.*] i.e. "Be simple and sincere in your language—and use not extravagant, hyperbolical expressions."

—*cometh of evil.*]—"proceeds from an evil principle within us—yea from that principle of false-representation of which Satan is the impersonation."

Ver. 38. *An eye for an eye.*] In cases of wrong committed by one man against another, the Mosaic Law had enjoined that exact compensation should be made,—but it was to be after investigation before the legal tribunals,—and in accordance with a judicial sentence—"as the judges determine" Exodus xxi. 22.—The abuse aimed at by