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A SOLEMN WORD

TO

THE SAINTS OF GOD.

MATTHEW, after narrating the baptism and the temptation of Jesus, informs us (Ch. IV. Ver. 17 & 23.) that Jesus began to preach the Gospel of the Kingdom : and immediately after (Ch. V. VI. VII.) he delivers in detail the manner and order and principles of this Kingdom. "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the Prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us *BY HIS SON.*" Let us fervidly bless our God for his gift of this Great Teacher—this Speaker who spake as never man spake ; and let us, with great earnestness and prayerfulness of soul, consider what He teaches. "And seeing the multitudes, He taught them, saying, Blessed are the poor in spirit, the mourners, the meek, the hungering and thirsting after righteousness, the merciful, the pure in heart, the peacemakers, and the persecuted and reviled for righteousness-sake and for my sake : and, oh ! ye so persecuted and reviled, rejoice, I say, and be exceeding glad. Now ye—ye my disciples and followers—are the salt of the Earth : carefully then preserve your savour ; or you will be good for nothing—good only to be cast away. Ye are the light of the World : mind then that ye hide not your light—that ye shine forth and give light to all around—that ye let your light abundantly shine before men ; that they, seeing your good works, may, through you, glorify your heavenly Father. Mark accordingly and observe what I am about to command you, for whosoever shall break one of these least commandments and shall teach men so, shall be called the least in the kingdom which I am now setting up ; but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in this my kingdom. And I further declare, that except your righteousness exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall not enter into this kingdom. Now, it was said in the old time, "Thou shalt not kill." Mark, I say, "Thou shalt not be angry without cause." It was said, "Thou shalt not commit adultery." Mark I say, "Thou shalt not look

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upon a woman to lust after her." And, if it be hard for thee to keep thine eye from offending, pluck it out—out with it and away with it: or, if thy right hand or other member sin or itch to sin, cut it off—off with it and away with it. What ! wouldst thou make terms with an occasion of offence ? Wouldst thou take half-measures against Evil ? Wouldst thou be cast into Hell—eye and hand and whole body ? It was said, " Whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a bill of divorcement." Mark I say, " Thou shalt not put away thy wife at all, except for that act through which she has herself dissolved her relation unto thee of wife—the act of fornication." It was said " Thou shalt not forswear thyself." Mark I say, " Thou shalt not swear at all," Thou shalt make no manner of oath or vow or obtestation. It was said " Eye for eye, tooth for tooth." Mark I say, " Thou shalt not resist evil: thou shalt not even appeal to the law: thou shalt yield to violent assault, to compulsions, and to iniquitous demands: thou shalt do unto men as thou wouldest that men should do unto thee (See parallel in Luke VI.) : thou shalt forgive men their trespasses, and thy heavenly Father will forgive thee ; but if thou forgive not men their trespasses, neither will thy heavenly Father forgive thee thine (Matt. VI. 14, 15) : and further, thou shalt not, as it was said of old time, love thy neighbour and hate thine enemy ; but thou shalt love thine enemies, bless them that curse thee, do good to them that hate thee, and pray for them that despitefully use thee and persecute thee." It was said (See Deut. XXIV 13. Ps. CXII. 9. Dan. IV. 27. 2 Cor. IX. 9, 10.) " Thou shalt give and lend, and do certain good works, openly and publicly, and they shall be righteousness unto thee." Mark, I say, " Take heed that thou do not thy righteousness before men to be seen of them : thou shalt not let thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth : let thy righteousness be in secret : it shall be sufficient *for thee* that thy heavenly Father seeth, and that He will reward." When men pray, it is to be seen of men, or that they may be heard for their much speaking ; and when they fast, it is that they may appear unto men to fast: but *thou*, when thou prayest or fastest, hast a heavenly Father who seeth in secret: do *thou* pray and fast to Him. The Gentiles or nations of the World seek after things of food and raiment ; and they lay up treasures where moth and rust corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal. But *ye* have a heavenly Father, who knoweth what things *ye* have need of. *Ye*, therefore, take no thought about eating or drinking or raiment—take no thought for the support of your life—take no thought for the morrow. And lay not up for yourselves treasures upon Earth : but seek *ye* first the kingdom of God and his righteousness ; and trust God, O *ye* of little

faith, that He will do for *you* what He so richly doth for the fowls of the air and the grass of the field. Again I charge you to take no thought for the morrow. Judge not (See parallel in Luke VI.) and ye shall not be judged: condemn not and ye shall not be condemned: forgive and ye shall be forgiven. Ask, and it shall be given you: seek, and ye shall find. Your heavenly Father will assuredly give good things to them that ask Him. Now, hear me—all ye who would be my disciples indeed—hear these my sayings to do them. For, not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of my Father in heaven. Enter *ye* in at the strait gate; for strait is the gate, and narrow the way, which leadeth unto life: strive, yea agonize to enter in at the *strait* gate. Beware too of false teachers—of men preaching unto you soft and smooth things. Mind I have told you. Whosoever therefore heareth these sayings of mine and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, who built his house upon a rock: and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat upon that house:—but it fell not; for it was founded upon a rock. And every one that heareth these sayings of mine and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, who built his house upon the sand; and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat upon that house:—and it fell; and great was the fall of it."

When Jesus had ended these sayings, "the people were astonished at his doctrine and at his authority." Astonishing indeed are these sayings, and astonishing is the authority of the Speaker. Let not *us* rest in astonishment: let us proceed to consider and to do. And now may God grant unto us the understanding heart! First then, the Speaker addressing us, is the Word of God—the Declarer, the Revealer of the mind and will of God. Secondly, this august Speaker, introduces and closes his commands with strong emphasis and solemn injunction and admonition. Thirdly, He professedly delivers precepts and principles to a particular body—to a people distinguished from "men," from "the Scribes and Pharisees," from "publicans and sinners," from "the Heathen or Gentiles or Nations of the World," and characterized as "Salt of the Earth," "Lights of the World," "Cities set on a hill," "Subjects of the kingdom of Heaven," "Children having God for their Father," and "Children who are to be perfect even as their perfect Father." Fourthly, the precepts and principles which He delivers, and the temper and disposition and spirit which He commends and requires, are "astonishing," *amazing, absolute, uncompromising, extreme, unprecedented, unpreconceived, unearthly*. Let us go again over these particulars. Let us with aroused and earnest soul consider them.

Let us fervently seek the presence of the Spirit ; and let us with all purity and singleness of heart, receive his teaching. The Speaker then is JESUS—Jesus that died for us, and that is thus our ever adorable and blessed Master and King. This our JESUS first pronounces benedictions—and upon what ?—upon poorness of spirit, upon sorrowfulness and meekness of spirit, upon heavenly mindedness, tenderheartedness, saintliness, submissiveness, passiveness ;—upon such qualities and habitudes of spirit as had ever been opposed to those that were great and noble and glorious in the World's estimation ; and as had ever been described by such terms as meanness, baseness, tameness, lifelessness, faintheartedness, cowardliness, &c. He thus, in opening his mouth, declares the character of the Gospel-Dispensation. *Let us prayerfully study these benedictions.* (Ch. V. 3—12.) Jesus next, by employing striking designations, declares the character of the people, who, under the Gospel-Dispensation, were to be evidences and witnesses to the World of the grace and forbearance of the Father ; and, through deadness to the honors and pleasures and occupations and engagements of Earth, to be “separate unto Himself.” *Let us prayerfully study these designations.* (Ch. V. 13. 14 &c. and *Vide supra.*) Jesus next, by an authoritative, emphatic, and impressive introduction and close of his injunctions and mandates, forcibly calls our attention to matter both extraordinary and momentous. *Let us prayerfully study this introduction and close.* (Ch. V. 19. 20. & Ch. VII. 24—27.) Jesus then delivers his commands and prohibitions ; explains and applies them by exemplifications so strong and striking as to preclude the possibility of mistake (Ch. V. 29. 30. 39—42. Ch. VI. 26. 27. 28.) ; declares the principles and reasons of them (Ch. V. 45. 46. 47. 48. Ch. VI. 21—24. 26—34. Ch. VII. 3. 4. 9—11.) ; reiterates them or variously expresses them (See parallels in the other Gospels) ; and adduces the case and character of his and our heavenly Father **UNDER THE PRESENT DISPENSATION OF GRACE**, and proposes it *for our imitation.* And now, with the aid of certain other Scriptures which reveal the mind of our divine Teacher and most beloved Master, *let us prayerfully study these commands and prohibitions* (Ch. V. 21, & Ch. VI & VII). “Thou shalt not be angry without cause ;—for this is Killing : and thou shalt not look upon a woman to lust after her ;—for this is Adultery.” For ye, O my people, greatly privileged and honored, are to know yourselves as delivered from the Law, yea, as dead to it ; and as brought into the liberty of Sonship, the life of the Spirit, and all the glory and blessedness of Love. Loosed ye are and freed, absolutely and for ever, from the law of sin and death ; and quickened ye are and raised with me to righteousness unto holiness. Subjects then of Grace, Temples of the

Spirit of Life, Children and heirs, heirs of God and joint-heirs with me, live ye in the Spirit, and walk in newness of life! Speak I unto *you* of Killing and of Adultery? Nay, O beloved, be *ye* in the Spirit, and thus quell the first risings and motions of sin; through the Spirit mortify the deeds of the body; and as your old man is crucified with me that the very body of sin might be destroyed, so do ye resist, deny, subdue, crucify the flesh with all its affections and lusts. "Thou shalt not put away thy wife except for fornication." For ye, my people, are not to be indulged in the natural "hardness of your heart." Ye are called to know that man and wife are One, even as Christ and his Church are One. Ye are by this close and sweet union blessedly reminded of your absolute and everlasting Oneness with me. "Thou shalt not swear at all." Ye, my people, are to know yourselves to be nothing. Can ye make a hair of your head black or white? Swear not therefore, and vow not, and promise not; and be mindful of your impotence and vanity. Your strength, your goodness, your life is *in me*. "Thou shalt not do thy righteousness before men; nor shalt thou pray; nor shalt thou fast; to be seen of men." Ye, my people, are to make no reference to Man: *your* blessedness is to act and live unto God. Ye have a Father in Heaven, and *your* reward is with Him. "Thou shalt not lay up treasures upon Earth—thou shalt not be careful about the life of the body." Ye, my people, are the Children of God:—ye are His objects of love and delight—ye are His jewels. Mind then your high estate: walk and live by Faith: honor your great Father; and realize the blessedness which He offers. "Judge not and thou shalt not be judged: forgive and thou shalt be forgiven." (Luke VI. 37.) Ye, my people, stand acquitted, by an act of pure grace, from a debt of ten thousand talents: can ye then rigorously exact payment, from a fellow-debtor, of a hundred pence? Ye, my people, though your sins were as scarlet and as blood, have been through free love, washed and made whiter than snow: will ye then, can ye, judge a petty trespasser against yourselves? And who art thou that judgest? Doest thou not the same things—and thus condemnest thou not thyself? Canst thou, having a beam in thine own eye, see to cast out the mote from thy brother's eye? Nay, my people, judge ye not one another: ye shall all stand before my judgment-seat. (See Rom. XIV. &c.) "Ask and it shall be given thee." Yes, my people, all things which ye ask in prayer, believing, shall be given unto you. Yes, to have of your own and in yourselves *nothing*, and to have for a Father the King of Heaven, and for a possession the riches and treasures of the Universe, is the very glory unto which I call you.

Here let us pause. What is the impression made upon our minds—what is the conviction of our judgment—what the assurance of our

souls ? Is it not that a *new* Lawgiver is delivering *new* laws and precepts upon *new* principles and reasons, in order to form a *new* and singular people unto a *new* and marvellous end ?—even that the LORD from Heaven is delivering laws and principles for the separation of a people from the World, and for the transformation of this people into the Divine Likeness; in order that they may exhibit on Earth the holiness and goodness and grace of God, and obtain in Heaven the vision and fruition of God ?

Bearing in mind this *newness*, we are prepared to examine the precept which has been passed over in silence, “**RESIST NOT EVIL.**” And O Christian reader ! O sinner forgiven and saved ! O disciple and imitator of the meek and forgiving and loving Jesus ! O declarer and manifester unto a Grace-rejecting World of the riches of the goodness and forbearance and long-suffering of God ! O be prayerful—prayerfully examine this “astonishing” precept. Our adorable Lord introduces his precept with referring to the law of Retaliation or Equitable treatment of offences (Ch. V. 38); and with—abrogating it!—abrogating the law of Equity ! Strange is it, O passing strange, that this explicit declaration of the nature of the Kingdom which He was setting up, and of the spirit and temper which He was enjoining, has so extensively escaped observation ! He proceeds to state his precept broadly, absolutely, without condition or qualification ; “**RESIST NOT EVIL.**” He then in exemplification of it adduces cases so strong and bold as most indisputably to declare its meaning and power (v. 39—42). He then even *amplifies* his precept (v. 44), “not only are ye forbidden to resist evil, and enjoined to yield to and comply with all violence and all injuriousness ; but ye are, *per contra*, to love and bless and pray for and do good unto those who hate and curse and evil-entreat you.” He then (45—48. & Luke VI.) familiarly and most graciously opens out his wondrous purpose in this his injunction, “that ye, O my followers, may do more and be much greater than the Publicans and Sinners, who render love for love and return salute for salute ; and that ye may be the children of the Highest, who is merciful and kind and gracious to the unthankful and the evil, and who maketh his sun to rise and his rain to descend alike upon the evil and the good, upon the just and the unjust. Be ye then, my beloved ones, my dear children, imitators of God—be ye perfect even as your Father in Heaven is perfect.” In sweet accordance with the mind of our dear Lord and Master, the Apostles deliver and reiterate prohibitions of recompensing evil for evil ; of rendering railing for railing ; of avenging one’s self : they abound with exhortations to forgiveness and blessing and active recompensing of good : and they crown and enforce all by pointing to that Harmless One, who, when he was reviled, reviled not again ; when he suffered, threatened not ; when he was stretched upon the cross,

prayed for his murderers ;—and by requiring us to follow his example and to walk in his steps. The Apostles too follow the Lord in forbidding appeal to the law. (Matt. V. 40. & 1 Cor. VI.) For as it is *Retaliation* or *Like evil for like* which is forbidden, and not *excessiveness, rancorousness, implacableness, &c.* so all prosecution and punishment of offenders, however quiet and regular and legal, is clearly involved in the prohibition. “Dare any *of you* go to law before the unjust (the world without), and not before the saints? Is there not a wise man among you, able to judge between his brethren? But brother goeth to law with brother. Now there is utterly a fault among you, because ye go to law. Why do ye not rather take wrong? Why do ye not rather suffer yourselves to be defrauded?” In exact correspondence with these prohibitions of Vengeance or Punishment (however equitable, and however *certain* too, when the Day of Grace shall come to its end, and when that Righteous One to whom all Judgment is committed, shall appear) are our blessed Lord’s prohibitions to his followers of *power, authority, rule, office, and of dignity or rank*. “Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them; and they that are great, exercise authority upon them. But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; and whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant. Even as the Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life. Be not ye called Rabbi; for one is your Master even Christ, and all ye are brethren. Neither be ye called Master: but he that is greatest among you, shall be your servant. If any man desire to be first, he shall be last of all and servant of all,” (Matt. XX. 25—28, &c.)

This precept then of our Lord “RESIST NOT EVIL” is, however “astonishing,” novel, extreme, ultra, and notwithstanding it has been so criminally softened and sobered and accommodated, in full and glowing harmony with all the “astonishing” precepts of this “astonishing” Sermon. It is implied likewise, though the implication has been so sinfully overlooked, in that nervous and beautiful and universally extolled compendium of prayer “the Lord’s prayer.” For, when we supplicate forgiveness as (or, for) *we forgive*, what mean we—what can we mean—but that we be forgiven *wholly, absolutely, everlasting*ly, as (or, for) *we thus forgive*; or that we be forgiven with qualification or reserve—that we be punished without harshness, undue severity, passion, fury, &c.—for *we thus forgive or thus punish*? Now what wretched rebel against the King of Kings has ever meant to supplicate *equitable* and *righteous* treatment!

Leave then, beloved brethren, Vengeance with God, and with those whom God, for the preservation of His Church, and for the restraint of the wickedness of the World, ordains as Kings and Rulers and Ma-

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