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Greetings for the New Year Our Year Text for 1937

"The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all." - 2 Thess. 3:18.

AS we enter upon another year could we do so with better words than these, or words of greater promise? As the old year passes and the new is ushered in, we greet each other with good wishes. Could we do so more fittingly than in the words of our text? The fashion of this world is rapidly passing away. As we face the future and realize life's uncertainties, whether we be young or old, if we take our life thoughtfully, and in a Christian spirit, especially if we have consecrated ourselves to do the Father's will by walking in the footsteps of Jesus to the best of our ability, we feel our need of a higher wisdom, a more pure and enduring energy than our own, to guide our steps, to mould our character, to shape our lot for us; and so we look up to God and ask, both for ourselves and for the whole dear family of God, His benediction for the year which lies ahead of us, His grace upon all our days and on all our ways—grace sufficient for every time of need, teaching us how to make all things contribute to our highest welfare, thus securing alike from the bleak north winds of adversity as from the warm south winds of prosperity real and lasting benefits. - 1 Cor. 7:31; Heb. 4:16; Rom. 8:28; Song of Solomon 4:16.

"The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you." Do not these words meet your sense of need, your craving for good, your hope of a benediction which will make your new year bright with the luster of a joyous, holy living? To St. Paul they conveyed and implied so much, they were so bright with hope, that, as another has observed,* "they became his standing good wish for those whom he loved." They appear at the close of nearly all the letters he wrote, in one place reading, "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you"; in another, "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit"; and here, in our text, "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all."

*For much of the material used in this article, we gratefully acknowledge our indebtedness to Samuel Cox, an expositor of days gone by.

It is entirely possible, however, that the very frequency with which we meet these words, has served to dull their force and clearness. As another has expressed, "People, in reading the Bible, are often not conscious of the extreme listlessness with which they pass along the familiar and oft repeated words of Scripture, without the impression of their meaning being at all present with the thoughts,-and how, during the mechanical currency of the verses through their lips, the thinking power is asleep for whole passages together." Perhaps this is true in regard to our text. We may never have asked what the words meant originally, and still mean, what the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ was and is, and in what senses that grace may be with us, and be the crown and benediction of our whole life. It will be worth our while therefore, if we meditate on the text long enough to note that the phrase "grace of Christ" would convey at least three ideas to the members of the early Church, and should convey the same ideas to us; and that if the grace of Christ is to "be with us" or "with our spirit" we must in all these senses reproduce it, and make it our own.

The Gracefulness or Charm of Christ

The first thought which this phrase would suggest to St. Paul's readers, especially to his Grecian readers-and most of them were Greeks would be the gracefulness, the charm, of Christ. They would understand the Apostle to refer to that exquisite sensibility to beauty, the beauty of nature and of man, by which Christ was distinguished, that love of all that is fair and pure and good which gave a beauty, a winning charm, an attractiveness, to His person, His character, His manner and bearing, and to His words, which no heart not wholly dead to beauty and goodness was able to resist. Both the Puritan conception and the Monastic, or ascetic, conception of Christ have gone far to hide this thought from us-so far that it has been argued from such texts as "His face was more marred than that of any man" that they do greatly err who attribute any comeliness to the Man of Sorrows. It is difficult, however, to believe that One born of a pure virgin and begotten of the Holy Spirit, the spirit of goodness and beauty, could be other than the most pure, beautiful, and attractive of men. Who can believe that the one perfect Man, He whose majestic bearing was such as to elicit from Pilate the exclamation, "Behold the Man!" was destitute of any outward and visible sign of His inward perfection? A lovely spirit does, indeed, transfigure even the plainest features and lend them a charm beyond that of a simply formal "beauty; but a lovely spirit in a lovely form is a still more potent force. And hence the great painters who have invested the face and figure of our Lord with all the perfections of manly beauty, and who have added a pathetic charm to that beauty by depicting the perfect face as worn and wasted with thought, with compassion, with all the toil and burden of His great work of love, have reason on their side, and give us, we may be sure, a far truer conception of Him than either the Puritan or the Monk.

For the whole story of His life shows both that He was exquisitely sensitive to beauty in every form, and that He had the still rarer power of reproducing that beauty in His words and ways. The whole world of nature lives again in His discourses and parables, to prove how keen He was to note the loveliness of the world around Him; while these same parables and discourses are so perfect, both in substance and in expression, as to prove that He could reproduce this beauty in still more exquisite and enduring forms. And what a keen eye for beauty of character, for a latent unsuspected goodness, must He have possessed, who saw in doubting Nathanael an Israelite indeed, in fickle and impetuous Peter a steadfast rock, in timid and halting Nicodemus, and even in the wanton of Samaria, fitting recipients for the deepest truths of His Kingdom, in Mary's waste of ointment an insight which transcended that of the Apostles, and in the self-humiliation of the woman who was a sinner a love capable of transforming her into a saint! He who spoke the most beautiful words that have fallen from human lips; He who clothed perfect thoughts in forms so perfect that the noblest spirits of every subsequent age have held them to be "sweeter than

honey" and more precious than "much fine gold," and yet in forms so simple that the common people have always heard them gladly; He who was at home with all classes, learned and ignorant, rich and poor, powerful or enslaved, who saw good even in the worst, and found something to pity, something to love in even the forlornest outcast ;

He to whom little children ran for a caress, round whom wronged women and outcast men gathered as to a friend-was there no beauty, no charm, in Him? Was there not rather a charm which no open and susceptible heart could withstand?

This beauty, this charm, this gracefulness, is to be with us, is to be ours, if "the grace of Christ" is to be with us. That is to say, the wish, the benediction of our text summons us to cultivate the love of all that is fair, all that is good-all that is fair in nature, 'all that is good in men; and to reproduce it, so far as we may, in our words, in our manner, in our lives. We are not to be content with being sourly or austere good, but to aim at being winningly and attractively good. The beautiful mind, the beautiful manner, of Christ, the charm of His character, His speech, His dealings and intercourse with men, be with us all-this is part of what our new year's wish implies.

The Graciousness, the Genial Friendliness, of Christ

But graceful manners soon break down under the strain of change, familiarity, or time, unless they spring from and express a gracious heart. And hence we must be reminded of the second meaning latent in our text. For if "the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ" would suggest gracefulness to a Greek, to a Jew it would suggest graciousness, a willing, friendly, genial spirit; not righteousness simply, but a genial righteousness; not beneficence simply, but a friendly beneficence.

There are men who are weighted all their lives by an unwilling, a reluctant, an unsympathetic temperament. They do not easily consent to what is proposed to them; their first impulse is to say No rather than Yes. Not courtesy alone is difficult to them, but thoughtfulness for others, consideration for their wishes, a lenient judgment of their faults, a kindly interest in that which interests them. Their instinct is to differ rather than to concur, to wrangle rather than to assent, to criticize and condemn rather than to work with their neighbors and yield to their influence. And hence, strive as they will-and few but themselves know how hard and 'bitter the strife sometimes is-they lack the friendly tone, the genial manner, which commands confidence and love, and even when they do good are apt to do it awkwardly and in a way which hurts or offends even those whom they help. They do not give themselves with their gifts.

But we find no trace of this stiff, reluctant, self contained disposition in Jesus Christ. Little though He had to give as the world counts gifts, the world has never seen a benefactor to be compared with Him. Not only did He give Himself for us all, but He gave Himself with all His gifts, gave all He had, or all they could take, to every man or woman who approached Him. There was nothing He could do which He was not prepared to do for any who asked His help. So gracious was He, so steadfastly did His will stand at the yielding or giving point, that virtue went out of Him without any conscious exercise of will, whenever the hand of faith or need was laid upon Him. And how interested He was in all who spake with Him, however ignorant or faulty they might be! How deeply He looked into their hearts; how He drew them on, and drew them out, till they had told Him their inmost secret, till they had relieved their bosoms of the perilous stuff hidden there; and then how wisely and delicately He adapted His words and gifts to their needs; as, for example, when He talked with the woman of Samaria by the well! How ready He was to

love them, or any trace of good in them, till they rose "to match the promise in His eyes as, for instance, in the faith of the Syrophenician woman! How much good **He saw** in them which the world could not see, and of which they themselves had lost sight; as, for example, in Zaccheus, that true son of Abraham, whom the Pharisees mistook for a child of the devil, and in the woman who bathed His feet with her tears and wiped them with the hairs of her head! How quick He was to detect any moment of weakness in those who had a little faith in Him but held it with a feeble grasp, and how prompt to strengthen them against any sudden pressure of unbelief; as, for example, when He said to the faltering ruler of the synagogue, "Only believe; all things are possible to him that believeth"!

But space does not permit, -- we should have to go through the whole story of His life, -- even to allude to the innumerable proofs of His graciousness, of His willing and friendly heart; the graciousness which enabled Him to give so much, though of outward good He had so little to give, and which made His every gift a charm, an elevating and abiding power, to those who received it, or who listened to the gracious words which proceeded out of His mouth. And yet, with all this graciousness, there was no softness, no weakness, no insincerity, such as is often found associated with a kindly temperament; there was nothing inconsiderate, or indiscriminate, in His boundless charity; no yielding at a single point at which it would have been wrong to yield; no want of faithfulness, or even of severity where severity was needed. He was sincere as He was sympathetic, rare as that combination is. He who said to a sinful woman, "Neither do I condemn thee," said also, "From henceforth sin no more." And He who cured a sinful man of the paralysis induced by vice, also warned him, "Sin no more, lest a worst thing come upon thee."

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with us all in this sense also. May His graciousness, His kindly, consideration for others, His genial, warm manner, His friendly tone, be ours.

The Favor, the Redeeming Love of Christ

But perhaps one who has read thus far is saying to himself, "Well, if the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ means gracefulness and graciousness, then I am afraid it is impossible for me. For I am neither very graceful nor very gracious and while I am learning to appreciate better all that is lovely and fair, both in nature and in men, to reproduce such loveliness in my own thoughts and words and deeds is another matter, and as for being gracious, that does not come at all easily to me."

Ah! beloved reader, if the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ meant only His gracefulness or His graciousness, we would all be in great discouragement. But the word has another, a third, meaning, one with which we have long been familiar. The Apostle reminds us of this meaning in 2 Cor. 8:9 - "Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that ye through His poverty might become rich." Yes, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ means also His favor, His active, redeeming, and renewing love, freely bestowed upon us, and because of this we may entertain high hopes of having His grace, in the other two meanings of the word, fulfilled in us also.

In the New Testament, as every student of that blessed volume must know, the grace of Christ is constantly used in this third sense, far more commonly in this sense than in any other. Its most frequent use denotes a divine and loving energy or quality which not only forgives, but also cleanses us from, our iniquity; which not only pardons, but redeems us from, our faults and sins; an energy which attends us through our whole career to guard us against temptation or make us

strong enough to resist temptation; as able to change, elevate, and purify our whole character and disposition, and to recreate us in its own likeness.

And who dare say that, with this giving, and forgiving energy, this redeeming and renewing grace, ever at work upon and in him, he cannot become pure, friendly, and gracious in heart, and, therefore, simple, courteous, and even graceful in manner and in speech? Who dare despair of himself, or give up self-culture as hopeless, if the strong Son of God is ever waiting to come to his help, ever seeking to bestow His gracefulness, His graciousness, to exert His forgiving and redeeming power upon us, to recast our mind, our character, our disposition, our temperament, on the larger, fairer, lines of His own?

"The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with us all"; the grace which redeems, renews, recreates

the inward man of the heart, and so clothes even the outward man of behavior with a new and friendlier charm. Amen - so let it be.

"With What Judgment Ye Judge"

*"Judge not, that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged." -
Matthew 7:1, 2.*

THE competent judges of the Church are the Father and the Son-the latter being the Father's representative, to whom He has committed all judgment. (John 5:22, 27.) The new creatures are not competent to be judges one of another for two reasons: (1) Few of them fully comprehend and appreciate the divine Law of Love governing all. (2) Evidently few can read their own hearts unerringly; many either judge themselves too severely or too leniently, and, hence, should modestly decline to sit in judgment of the heart of another whose motives may be far from appreciated. It is because of our incompetence for judging that the Lord-while assuring us that this shall be one of our future functions in the Kingdom, after being qualified by participation in the First Resurrection-forbids all private judgment amongst His followers now; and threatens them that if they persist in judging each other they must expect no more mercy and leniency than they show to others. (Matt. 7:2; Luke 6:38.) The same thought is enforced in the sample prayer given us, "Forgive us our debts [trespasses] as we forgive our debtors." - Matt. 6:12.

This is not an arbitrary ruling by which the Lord will deal unjustly and ungenerously with us, if we deal thus with others: on the contrary, a correct principle is involved. We are "by nature children of wrath," "vessels fitted for destruction"; and although the Lord mercifully purposes to bless us and relieve us of our sins and weaknesses and to perfect us through our Redeemer, He will do this only on condition of our acceptance of His Law of Love, and our heart conformity to it. He does not propose accepting unregenerates and having "children of wrath" in His family. To befit for any place in the Father's house of many mansions (planes of 'being) (John 14:2) all must cease to be children of wrath and become children of Love;---being changed from glory to glory by the Spirit of our Lord, the spirit of Love. Whoever, therefore, refuses to develop the spirit of Love, and contrary to it, insists on uncharitably judging fellow-disciples, proves that he is not growing in knowledge and grace, not being changed from glory to glory of heart-likeness to the Lord, not a true follower of the Lord, and, hence, should not have mercy extended to him beyond what he uses properly in copying his Lord. The amount of His likeness to the Lord (in love) will be shown by his mercy, and generosity of thought, word and deed toward his fellows.

Oh, that all the Spirit-begotten ones, the "New Creation," could realize that this spirit of judging (condemning), alas! so common (indeed, almost the "besetting sin of the Lord's people) measures their lack of the spirit of Love-their lack of the spirit of Christ which, totally absent, would prove us "none of His." (Rom. 8:9.) We are persuaded that the more speedily this fact is realized the more speedily will progress the great transformation "from glory to glory," so essential to our ultimate acceptance as members of the New Creation.

But few of the Lord's people realize to what extent they judge others, and that with a 'harshness which, if applied to them by the Lord, would surely 'bar them from the Kingdom. We might have feared that, under our Lord's liberal promise that we shall be judged as leniently as we judge others, the tendency would be to too much benevolence, too much mercy, and that "thinketh no evil" might be carried to an extreme. But not All the forces of our fallen nature are firmly set in the opposite direction. It is more than eighteen centuries since our Lord made this generous proposal to judge us as leniently as we will judge others, and yet, how few could claim much mercy under that promise! It will be profitable for us to examine our proneness to judge others. Let us do so, prayerfully.

The fallen or carnal mind is selfish; and proportionately as it is for self it is against others disposed to approve or excuse self and to disapprove and condemn others. This is so thoroughly inbred as to be an unconscious habit, as when we wink or breathe. This habit is the more pronounced with advanced education. The mind recognizes higher ideals and standards and forthwith measures every one by these, and, of course, finds something at fault in all. It delights in rehearsing the errors and weaknesses of others, while ignoring its own along the same or other lines,-and sometimes, even, hypocritically denouncing the weaknesses of another for the very purpose of hiding its own or giving the impression of superior character along the line in question. Such is the mean, contemptible disposition of the old fallen nature. The new mind, begotten of the Spirit of the Lord, the holy spirit of Love, is in conflict with this old mind of selfishness from the start, under the guidance of the Word of the Lord;-under the new Law of Love, the Golden Rule, and becomes more and more so as we grow in grace and knowledge. At first all New Creatures are but "babes in Christ" and appreciate the new Law only vaguely; but unless growth is attained and the Law of Love appreciated and measured up to, the great prize will not be won. The Law of Love says: For shame that the weaknesses and shortcomings of brethren or of others should be exposed before the world; -- for shame that pity and sympathy did not at once advance to speak a word in their defense, if too late to spread over their faults a mantle of charity to hide them entirely! As our noble, loving Master declared on one occasion, when asked to condemn a sinner: "Let him that is without sin among you cast the first stone." The person without frailties of his own might be to some extent excusable for assuming unbidden of the Lord the position of executioner of Justice -- taking vengeance on wrong-doers, exposing them, etc.; but we find that our Master, who knew no sin, had so much Love in His heart that He was disposed rather to condone and forgive than to punish and expose and berate. And so it will doubtless be with all begotten of His Spirit: in proportion as they grow up into His likeness they will be the last to pray for vengeance, -- the last to execute punishments by tongue or otherwise, until so commanded by the Great Judge. He now, on the contrary, instructs us, "Judge nothing before the time," and declares, "Vengeance is Mine."

Well has the Apostle delineated the spirit of Love, saying, "Love suffereth long and is kind "to the wrong-doer. "Love envieth not" the success of others, seeks not to detract from their honor nor to pull them back from it. "Love vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up," and, consequently, never seeks to detract from the splendor of others to make self shine by contrast. It "doth not behave itself unbecomingly," immoderately,-it has no extreme and selfish desires and avoids extreme methods. Love "seeketh not that which is not her own,"-does not covet the honors or

wealth or fame of others, but delights to see them blessed, and would rather add to than detract from these blessings. Love "is not easily provoked," even to render just recompenses: remembering the present distress of the entire race through the fall, it is sympathetic rather than angry. Love "thinketh no evil"; it not only will not invent and imagine evil, but is so disposed to give the benefit of any doubt that "evil surmisings" are foreign to it. (Compare 1 Tim. 6:4.) Love "rejoiceth not with iniquity, but rejoices with the Truth [rightness]": hence, it would delight to uncover and make known noble words or acts, but would take no pleasure in, but avoid, exposing ignoble words or deeds. Love "covereth all things," as with a mantle of sympathy-for nothing and nobody is perfect, so as to stand full inspection. Love anticipates and has her mantle of benevolence always ready. Love "believes all things,"-- is not disposed to dispute claims of good intention, but rather to accept them. Love "hopes all things," disputing the thought of total depravity so long as possible. Love "endures all things"; it is impossible to fix a limit where it would refuse the truly repentant one. "Love never faileth." Other graces and gifts may serve their purposes and pass away; but Love is so elemental that, attained, it may always be ours, -- throughout eternity. Love is the principal thing. - 1 Cor. 13:4-13.

But if to tell uncomplimentary truth is to violate the Law of Love and the Golden Rule, what shall we say of the still more disreputable, still more unlovely, still more criminal habit so common, not only amongst the worldly and nominally Christian, but also among true Christians--'that of telling about others disreputable things not positively known to be the truth. Oh shame! shame! that any of the Lord's people should so overlook the Lord's instruction, "Speak evil of no man"; and that any but the merest babes and novices in the Law of Love, should so misunderstand its message;-that any without the most indubitable proofs at the mouth of two or three witnesses, and then reluctantly, should even believe evil of a brother or a neighbor, much less to repeat it to slander him upon suspicion or hearsay evidence!

We Should Judge Ourselves

"If we would judge ourselves we should not be judged [punished, corrected of the Lord]." - 1 Cor. 11:31.

The Golden Rule would surely settle this disposition to "gossip" about others 'and their affairs. What slanderer wishes to be slandered? What gossip wishes to have his matters and difficulties and weaknesses discussed either publicly or confidentially? The "world" has little else to talk about than gossip and scandal, but the new creation should preferably be dumb until the love and plan of God have furnished them with the great theme of which the angels sang-"Glory to God in the highest; on earth peace, good will toward men." Then the "words of their mouths and the meditations of their hearts" will be acceptable to the Lord and a blessing to those with whom they come in contact.

The Apostle, commenting upon the tongue, shows that this little member of our bodies has great influence. It may scatter kind words that will never die, but go on and on blessing the living and through them the yet unborn. Or, "full of deadly poison," it may scatter poisonous seeds of thoughts to embitter the lives of some, and to blight and crush the lives of others. The Apostle says,---"Therewith bless [honor] we God, even the Father; and therewith curse [injure] we men, . . . out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to be. Doth a fountain send forth at the same place sweet water and bitter?" - James 3:8-11.

"Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh ;" so that when we are gossiping about others, "busy bodying" in their affairs, it proves that a large corner of our hearts, if not more, is empty as respects the love and grace of God. This thought should lead us at once to the throne of grace and to the Word for a filling of the Spirit such as the Lord has promised to those who hunger and thirst after it. If, still worse than idle gossiping and busy bodying, we have pleasure in hearing or speaking evil of others, the heart condition is still worse; it is overflowing with bitterness, -- envy, malice, hatred, strife. And these qualities the Apostle declares are "works of the flesh and the devil." (Gal. 5:19-21.) Would that we could astound and thoroughly awaken the "New Creation" on this subject, -- for if ye do these things ye will surely fall, and no entrance will be granted such into the everlasting Kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Fitting for the Kingdom leads us in the very opposite direction, as the Apostle Peter declares, "Add to your faith patience, brotherly kindness, love; for if ye do these things ye shall never fall; but gain an abundant entrance into the Kingdom." (2 Pet. 1:5-10.) The Apostle James is very plain on the subject and says: "If ye have bitter envyings and strife in your hearts, glory not and lie not against the truth. This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish." (James 3:14, 15.) Whoever has such a slanderous and bitter spirit has the very reverse of the Spirit of Christ, the Holy Spirit, the spirit of Love: let him not lie either to 'himself or to others ; -- let him not glory in his shame;--let him not thus put darkness for light, the spirit of Satan for the Spirit of the Anointed.

Proceeding, the Apostle declares the secret of the confusion and unrest which has troubled the Lord's people at all times, to be in this unclean, only partially sanctified condition of the heart, saying, "where envying and strife is, there is confusion [disquiet, unrest] and every evil work." (James 3:16.) If these weeds of the old fallen nature are permitted to grow they will not only be noxious but will gradually crowd out and kill all the sweet and beautiful flowers and graces of the Spirit.

Proper Judging of Ourselves

The Apostle Paul refers to our proper growth as a new creation and our proper judging or criticizing of ourselves, saying, "Having, therefore, these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, -- perfecting holiness in the reverence of the Lord." (2 Cor. 7:1.) "Let a man examine himself"-let him note the weaknesses and filthinesses of his fallen fleshly nature and seek to cleanse himself, "putting off" the deeds of the "old man" and being renewed, changed from glory to glory, more and more into the image of God's dear Son, who is our Exemplar as well as our Redeemer and Lord. But the Apostle Paul urges that we cleanse not only our flesh as much as possible, but also our spirits, or minds-that the new mind, the holy resolution, or will, be given full control, and that every thought be brought into 'captivity to the will of God as expressed 'by and illustrated in Christ.

It will be in vain that we shall endeavor to cleanse the flesh and to bridle the tongue if we neglect the heart, the mind, the spirit, in which are generated the thoughts, which merely manifest 'themselves in filthiness of the flesh-by words and deeds. Only by prayer and perseverance can this cleansing necessary to a share in the Kingdom be accomplished-"perfecting holiness in the reverence of the Lord." Not that we may hope, either, to effect an absolute cleansing of the flesh. It is the absolute cleansing of the will, the heart, the spirit, that the Lord demands (implying as complete a cleansing of the flesh and tongue as we can accomplish). Where He sees the heart

pure and true to Him and His spirit and law of Love He will, in due time, give the new body suited to it. "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." - Matt. 5:8.

How appropriate here are the Apostle's words (2 Thess. 3:5): "The Lord direct your hearts into the love of God"-the love that is gentle, meek, patient,. long-suffering;-that seeketh not more than her own, and that is not puffed up, nor envious;-that thinketh and speaketh no evil, but trusteth and is kind and considerate according to the Golden Rule. We need to have our hearts directed into this love, for as a New Creation we are walking in a new way-not after the flesh but after the Spirit. And the Lord alone is our competent guide and director-though He may use various of His "members" as His mouthpieces. "Thine ears shall hear a voice behind thee [from the past], saying, This is the way, walk ye in it." -Isa. 30:21. C. T. RUSSELL.

"JUDGE NOT"

"Judge not; the workings of the brain
And of the heart thou canst not see;
What looks to thy dim eye a stain,
In God's pure light may only be
A scar, brought from some well-won field,
Where thou wouldst only faint and yield.

"The look, the air, that frets thy sight,
May be a token that below
The soul hath closed in deadly fight
With some internal, fiery foe,
Whose glance would scorch thy smiling grace,
And cast thee, shuddering, on thy face.

"And judge none lost; but wait and see,
With hopeful pity, not disdain;
The depth of the abyss may be
The measure of the height of pain
And love and glory that may raise
This soul to God in after days."

The Prayer Vision of Paul

"That ye may be filled with all the fulness of God." - Eph. 3:19.

IN THE third chapter of the Epistle to the Ephesians (verses 14-21), as some one has said, "Paul's closet door gets ajar, and all the Christian ages are thrilled with his sublime whisperings in the ear of God." And certain it is that in this prayer offered up on behalf of the brethren of Ephesus, the Apostle has prayed in the Spirit, and believing his prayer to be as inspired as his exhortations throughout this Epistle, what aspirations it may well create in our hearts. Let us then note its scope.

This prayer is divided into four petitions, of which each is the result of the preceding, and the cause of the request that follows it. First he asks, "That He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man." This is desired and necessary in order "that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, 'being rooted and grounded in love' -- the result of the first petition, and the preparation for the third, namely "That ye may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge." And these three requests lead up to that supreme attainment beyond which nothing could be asked-"that ye might be filled with all the fulness -of God. Truly this is an inspired prayer.

But let us pause for a moment to consider who are the immediate subjects of this remarkable prayer. It is we'll to remember that the believers in the Ephesian Church would be largely of the poorer class. Doubtless many of them were slaves, servants of various ranks. And as at Corinth and other places where there were those first converts to the faith of Christ, doubtless among them were those of whom Paul could write, "Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolators, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves 'with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor; extortioners, shall inherit the Kingdom of God. And such were some of you; but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." (1 Cor. 6:9-11; see also. Eph. 2:2; 4:17-19, 25, 28, 31; 5:3-8.) It would therefore be true that many of these Gentile converts were struggling against old pagan habits which they themselves were once following, and the practice - of which would be going on around them on every side. This would be true of both the Jewish and Gentile converts. Such then we may believe were the antecedent conditions of these Ephesian brethren. Yet notwithstanding this background, we have Paul praying for them in the sublime language of this prayer. Though it would seem well nigh preposterous to look for any high degree of spirituality among such a people, the Apostle visualizes the possibilities for which he prays. He grasps by faith a supernatural power which he well knows can lift these men and women up to the summit of moral and spiritual excellence he covets for them. Paul is strong in faith to believe that a Church made up of such seemingly unpromising material will, through the cleansing power of Christ, be made "holy and without blemish," and finally "a glorious Church," without "spot or wrinkle or any such thing."

According to the Riches of His Glory

What 'an unlimited source of 'supply the Apostle sees. The riches of God! how immeasurable they are! All that the boundless universe holds are His riches. "The silver is mine, the gold is mine, saith the Lord of hosts." "Every beast of the forest is mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills, . . . , the world is mine, and the fulness thereof." (Hag. 2:8; Psa. 50:10, 12.) But to the saints of God, the fact that "He holdeth the wealth of the world in His hand" is by no means the source of their greatest hope and consolation. What would all these riches mean to us if we were not also assured that He "is rich in mercy" and rich in love and power? What comfort could we find in the knowledge of His riches in created things if we were not told that He was so rich in mercy and love that He gave His only begotten Son to die for us? And when, on the basis of our acceptance of that greatest Gift -of His love, we are made possessors of the Holy Spirit, are we not seeing with Paul what really constitutes the riches of His glory? And it is "according" to this power of His grace that the believer is to be affected. Not by the magnificence of the material universe, but through "the light of the glory of God as it shines in the face of Jesus Christ."

To one who gave so much prominence to the fact that his life was lived continuously through the power of Christ, such a prayer as this would seem most consistent and practical. Thus it is that he prays for these feeble, tempted saints in Ephesus that they may be strengthened with might by the Spirit in the inner man, and to a degree commensurate with the glory surrounding the character; of God. In this he is visualizing the same ultimate attainment set forth by the Lord Jesus in His sermon on the mount "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." - Matt. 5:48.

That Christ may Dwell in the Heart

The next petition is, "that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith;" thus agreeing with one of the most precious promises made by Jesus in His farewell remarks to his disciples: "Ye shall know that I am in My Father, and ye in Me, and I in you." (John 14:20.) The meaning is, that Christ will by the Spirit take up His abiding place in the disciple's heart, illuminating the understanding, rectifying his will, purifying his affections, and directing all the energies through which the currents of life flow.

Faith is the link by which we are united to Christ. By faith we become partakers of all the benefits of His atoning work on our behalf, and if He is to dwell in our hearts it must be, as Paul prays, "by faith." Through faith we are hidden in Christ, and through faith we become members of His Body, or a branch in the Vine receiving the power to live and bear fruit by the impartation of strength from Christ. This faith, the Apostle tells us in -another place was the center of his own life, "I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me." (Gal. 2:20.) And this faith which is magnified in the Bible, and which is dear unto the saint, is no tepid belief, but a passionate conviction. It is the conviction that God is our Father, and has loved us from eternity, from before the foundation of the world, "Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure -of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, wherein He hath made us accepted in the Beloved." (Eph. 1:5, 6.) It is the conviction that having called us to His eternal glory, "He which hath begun a good work in us will perform it [margin, "will finish it"] until the day of Jesus Christ." - Phil. 1:6.

Furthermore, there is in this faith a heart reliance in the fact of Christ's power to so captivate and enlist the complete surrender of a man's whole being over into His own hands, that his faith instead of being a mere shadow, becomes the strongest principle in his life, and thus "faith operating in us by love" becomes complete devotion to Christ. It was just such a love and devotion filling the heart of Paul that made him so enthusiastic in his own possibilities in Christ, and that constrained him to pray so fervently for his Ephesian brethren. Paul well knew that he could never in this life rise to the perfection of Christ, but there was a constant joy for him in the fact that through faith in the power of Christ on the one hand, and his own love and devotion on the other, he could be continually growing into the image and likeness of the One he adored, whose bond-slave he rejoiced to be.

"When one believes with all his soul in Jesus, what sacrifices may not be accomplished! what services may he not render! what mercy will be in his soul! what charity will be visible in his life!

His will be no mere deeds of ordinary morality -- such poor efforts can be accomplished without faith; his will be a rich and delicate fruit of the Spirit -- the lessons which can be learned only at the feet of Jesus Christ. A new principle of life in his soul will appear in acts of which, in their spirituality and in their graciousness, morality never dreams, and which have been revealed and made possible only by the life of Jesus Himself." "He that abideth in Me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit; for without Me ye can do nothing." - John 15:5.

That Ye may be Rooted and Grounded in Love

When Christ comes into the heart of one who has given Him undisputed possession there, He brings His own love in, and that love consciously received, produces a corresponding and answering love in our hearts toward Him. This reciprocal love, the recognition of His and the response of ours, becomes the soil in which our lives are "rooted" and in which they grow, and it is the foundation on which our characters are built and become steadfast. "That love will be the motive of all service, it will underlie, as the productive cause, all fruitfulness. All goodness and beauty will be its fruit. The whole life will be as a tree planted in this rich soil. It is heaven upon earth that love should be the soil in which our obedience is rooted, and from which we draw all the nutriment that turns to flowers and fruit.

"Where Christ dwells in the heart, love will be the foundation upon which our lives are builded steadfast and sure. The blessed consciousness of His love, and the joyful answer of my heart to it, may become the basis upon which my whole being will repose, the underlying thought that gives security, serenity, steadfastness to my else fluctuating life. I may so plant myself upon Him, as that I shall be strong, and then my life will not only grow like a tree and have its leaf green and broad, and its fruit the natural outcome of its vitality, but it will rise like some stately building, course by course, pillar by pillar, until the last shining topstone is set there. He that buildeth on that foundation of love shall never be confounded. Christ is love, and Love is Christ. He that is rooted and grounded in love has the roots of his being, and the foundation of his life fixed and fastened in that Lord."

Comprehending the Love of Christ

"That ye may be able to comprehend with all saints, what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height." The breadth and length of what? Paul does not say, except by the implication of the next verse, from which we may infer that it is "the love of Christ." "In what sense St. Paul has applied these geometrical dimensions to love -- a spiritual quality and without extension -- it is difficult to determine. But we believe that their meaning may be found in the logic in which Paul must have been drilled in the university of Tarsus. The Greek logicians employ the term breadth to denote the extension of a notion, the number of individuals to whom it will apply, as, for instance, man includes every being possessed of human attributes. The term depth denotes the intension of a notion, the aggregate of qualities which lie piled up one upon another, in one individual, distinguishing him from all others. With these terms extension, and intension, throwing a flood of light upon the breadth, depth, and length of divine love, we are able to get an enlarged view of the comprehensiveness of this petition. 'That ye may know the breadth,' is to know the vast number of individuals of our race embraced in the scheme of redemption. It is a remarkable fact, that as soon as the love of God is fully shed abroad in the believer's heart, he immediately overleaps the limitations of his theology, if he has been so unfortunate as to have been educated in the belief of a limited atonement, and feels irresistibly drawn toward every lost sinner as the object of Jesus' love. Hence it is that the missionary spirit is so intense in fully consecrated souls." Such was the case with Paul himself. How he yearned to carry the Gospel into "the regions beyond." The secret motive power of such consecrated hearts, which impels them to "make all His glories known," is the personal experience of His infinite grace, the realization of the amazing breadth of the love of Christ.

"He left His Father's throne above;
(So free, so infinite, His grace!)
Emptied Himself of all but love,
And bled for Adam's helpless race;
'Tis mercy all, immense and free,
For, O my God, it found out me!"

Next, when Paul prays that the Ephesians may know the length of Christ's love, "He prays for their eternal blessedness, for His love knows no limit in duration. In ordinary experience the sense of Christ's love is faint-He visits but He does not abide. Hence there is a lurking fear that Jesus may cease to cherish him on whom He once smiled, even though there should be no apostasy -on the part of the believer. Such a state of experience cannot be called rest in Jesus. There is unrest and fear where there should be repose and confidence. There is no cure for this but the fulness of the Spirit, revealing the fulness and perpetuity of Christ's love. In that glad hour the believer knows that Christ can be trusted for the future, as well as for the present. He hears the Savior say,

'Mine is an unchanging love,
Higher than the heights above,
Deeper than the depths beneath,
Free and faithful, strong as death.'

"In the first stages of Christian life the spiritual perception is not usually strong enough to hear this voice, but more frequently the ear is not intently turned in the right direction, But in that

maturity of grace in which love is made perfect, the feeling of the permanency of the divine regard takes full possession of the soul, and it becomes a certainty that He will not desert us unless we desert Him. This possibility only induces us to grasp with a firmer grip the promise that we shall be 'kept by the power of God, through faith, unto salvation.' Then we exultantly ask, with the Apostle, 'Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?' that is, who will turn away Christ from loving us? 'I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.'"

"That ye may know the depth and height." In this petition "we have really but one dimension, depth, which denotes the multiplied qualities of Christ's love, or, more exactly, the various spiritual perfections which it bestows on the believer. As God out of sunshine and dust makes all the varieties of color which clothe the landscape-as out of water and sunbeams He creates the seven colors of the solar spectrum-so out of our faith and the Sun of Righteousness He produces the whole rainbow of Christian graces. To know the depth of Christ's love is to possess all 'the fruits of the Spirit, love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, meekness, fidelity, patience, and temperance,' a spiritual constellation made, up of those 'gracious stars, perfect repentance, perfect faith, perfect humility, perfect meekness, perfect self-denial, perfect resignation, perfect hope, perfect charity.'"

Love Surpassing Knowledge

The next petition is, that ye may "know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge." "Blessed paradox! To know the unknowable fulness of Christ's love; to drop the short sounding-line of human experience into the unfathomable ocean of the divine mercy. We understand St. Paul to assert that the love of Christ surpasses all merely intellectual comprehension and logical statement, while it is apprehended by the spiritual intuitions. All who pass into this deep experience are impressed with the vastness, the boundlessness, of Christ's love, a sea without bottom or shore," and the vision merges into a prayer to be "plunged in God's deepest sea, and lost in its immensity."

Filled with the Fulness of God

The next petition is manifestly intended to suggest the final and utmost limit of experience "That ye may be filled with all the fulness of God," or more exactly, "even to all the fulness of God," even as He is full-"each in your degree, but all to your utmost capacity, be filled with wisdom, might, and love. The thought nakedly expressed, is, 'that ye may be filled with God.' In logical exactness there can be no increase to 'filled.' But St. Paul's soul, all aglow with the ardors of Christian love, must intensify the expression by adding fulness to filled, and then crowning the thought with the tautological all as a finishing of the climax. We do not understand that this is a petition for the Almighty God to compress His infinitude to the limitations of the human body and soul. It is rather a prayer for that complement of blessing which is ready to be poured upon all who have the spiritual capacity, the faith, to receive."

Thus we see, "in our analysis of this prayer we have shown that every petition is an out breathing of Paul's soul that the Ephesians might be made perfect in love. There is nothing negative in it; the aim of the whole is for the fulness of the divine life. The struggling expression, the strain and accumulation of words, all indicate a soul running, with abounding joy, up this higher path, and

not a mere guide-board with its foot planted in the ground, and outstretched, painted hand pointing out the way. This heaping up of terms, amplifying, heightening, and intensifying his expression, as if his soul was agonizing for utterance, is seen in the doxology at the end of the prayer, 'Now unto Him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us.' What a conception of the 'exceeding greatness of Christ's power to us-ward who believe' does St. Paul take Can any one believe that this was revealed to his mind by the Spirit, and yet question the practical realization of the large blessings he prayed for? Paul can never be accused of being an idle dreamer, he is always intensely practical, and no where more so than in his prayers." And so he concludes this prayer with the final assurance that nothing more has he asked than God is both able and willing to give. He has asked much, but God can give exceeding abundantly above all we think. "Thought outstrips language, words are but a pitiful mockery of the reality, and 'language is lame' indeed." But on the face of every petition, in the use of verbs in the present tense, we are to understand that Paul is praying for blessings, which in an ever-increasing measure, he longs to see his brethren enjoy as they continue to grow in grace and in the knowledge of Jesus Christ.

This prayer has been preserved for eighteen centuries for our instruction in righteousness. We cannot question its being as fully inspired by the Spirit as any other part of the Epistle, therefore it is intended for us as much as for the brethren in Ephesus. It was put on record as a permanent inventory of the riches of divine favor for all who in any part of the Age have set to their seal that God is true. Unquestionably it 'has been answered in the spiritual progress and enlargement of many devoted ones through these long centuries, and if we will to have it so, we may have its fulfillment woven into our experience from day to day, until we too stand where "that which is perfect has come. "-Contributed.

The History of the Church

No. 2. Seekers After God

"That they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after Him, and find Him, though He be not far from every one of us." - Acts 17:27.

IN the darkness of the long, long centuries man has ever sought for God. Heavy have the mists been above him; weary the endless procession of years; but, through the chill, forbidding clouds of his alienation and wistful ignorance, have pierced from time to time stray beams of a heavenly light, fragments as it were from the great and eternal Source of all light, in whom alone there is no darkness. Whether, as some of earth's Christian thinkers have seemed inclined to believe, these came as inspiration, or whether they were but bred in noble hearts and minds bearing still much of the original impress of the Maker, it matters not; true wisdom is, and must ever be, in the very nature of itself, divine wisdom; and truths which man may have arrived at from glimpsing the Invisible from all that is visible, the Creator from the created, and all he has found revealed to him in the law of nature and in the testimony of his highest conscience, are not set aside but are confirmed and strengthened, magnified and made yet more glorious, by the Word of God. "Not having the law," says St. Paul, "they were a law unto themselves and show the work of the law written in their hearts." "The divine image in man," says St. Bernard, "may be burned, but it is never burned out." Truth is ever of God, and is no less truth when found on blotted pages than when inscribed on priceless vellum; no less true when found on heathen lips, than when thundered forth from carved and costly pulpit.

What Christian heart could fail to feel, in that gratitude which is his for an infinitely fuller and more blessed revelation, aught but a compassionate interest in what truth or measure of truth God in His tender mercy vouchsafed even some Pagan philosopher in his dire need? "God is close to each one of us," said Paul to the Athenians, "for it is in Him that we live and move and exist, as some of *your own poets* have said." If the God-inspired Apostle thought it not amiss to quote to the crowd a fragment of truth from the Pagan poets, Aratus and Cleanthes (see margin Acts 17:28), surely we may deem it not displeasing to that Heavenly Father if we pause for a few moments to see what light, or aspect of light, a Seneca, an Epictetus, a Marcus Aurelius -- great philosopher, humble slave, and lofty Emperor, "groping blindly in the darkness," apprehended. Touched they God's hand in that darkness? Were they lifted up and strengthened?

The World Knew God not by Wisdom

The melancholy picture already presented of the state of Roman society at the time Christianity made its appearance corroborates the Scriptural declaration that *"the world by wisdom knew not God."* For philosophy was a religion of the intellectual and noble few--a mere handful history discloses -- soaring over the heads and leaving untouched the hearts of the travailing multitude. Christianity, on the contrary, called to not many wise, not many noble, who, hearing that sweetest of all messages, "Come unto Me all ye that labor and are heavy laden," embraced with joy all that it had to offer of peace and happiness in the present, and found hope and comfort in the anticipation of that resurrection and life brought to light by the Gospel, and made certain by the death on Calvary.

The Wrath of God-the Guilty World

" ... when they knew God they glorified Him not as God," declares the Apostle Paul, "for whatever is to be known of God is plain to them; God Himself has made it plain-for ever since the world was created, His invisible nature, His everlasting power and divine being have been quite perceptible in what He has made,, So they have no excuse." - MOFFATT.

Yea, they were without excuse, for the heavens above them had spoken to them by day, given knowledge by night. They beheld the bright sun, the gathering cloud, the falling rain, coaxing the dark mold until it burst forth into profusion of upward reaching life: ". . . as the bountiful Giver," declared Paul at Lystra, "He did not leave Himself without a witness, giving you rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, giving you food and joy to your heart's content." They thrilled to the lofty peaks of mountains clothed in blue shadows and capped with white clouds; they gazed at verdure crowned hills and calm valleys and saw the rivers running their clearcut paths to the heaving breast of the great ocean waiting to unfold them. Their wondering eyes watched the steady procession of the seasons, unalterable in their seedtime and harvest-the visible testifying to the Invisible, the things that are made telling ever of their beneficent Maker. "When I founded the earth where were you then?" asked the Eternal's voice from the storm cloud; "Who laid the corner stone, when the morning stars were singing and all the angels chanted in their joy? Who helped to shut in the sea, when it burst from the womb of chaos -when I fixed its boundaries, barred and bolted it, saying, 'Thus far and no further! Here your proud waves shall not pass'? ... Have showers a human sire? ... who has the skill to mass the clouds, or tilt the pitchers of the sky, when the soil runs into cakes of earth, and the clods stick fast together?" Then Job replied to the Eternal: "I have heard of Thee by hearsay, but now *mine eyes* have *seen* Thee."

The Work of the Law Written in Their Hearts

Out of the quagmire of the Roman world, like some high mountains rising from the common plain, there were those few men of lofty mind and soul who pushed their altars to the great Unknown. The exact date of birth of one of these, the philosopher, Seneca, tutor of the young Nero, is uncertain, but thought to be about B.C. 7. No (higher or grander truths have ever been - reached by man who had not the aid of Christianity, than were reached by this high-minded Roman, and many prominent in the Gospel's spread have paused at times to pay him tribute. "Seneca, our own," says Jerome of the Latin Vulgate. It has been interestingly pointed out that Seneca's early days were contemporary with those of the Savior and that before he had reached the great power and success of his mature years, the Son of God had been mocked and scourged and crucified in far Judea. As Seneca walked sedately along the streets of Rome, an attendant slave by his side, two fisher lads, Peter and John, played by the blue waters of the Sea of Galilee, and when, later, St. Paul was sitting at the feet of Gamaliel, the renowned teacher of the Law at Jerusalem, Seneca, a young man, haunted in his own great city the school of the Stoic, absorbing with eager attention the moral philosophy of the instructor Attalus.

The Stoic philosophy was the purest and highest in Rome and shone as light against darkness in the cruelty, the intemperate feasting, and the grosser appetites of the times. But a true Stoic must feel no pity, for pity is to him but a weakness and might disturb his inner calm; he must destroy rather than master the' human passions; indulge in no anger even against the moral evil about him, repelling to his very soul; he must feel no fear in danger; be given not to much affection-in short, he must suppress all emotion and scorn the sadness of his fellow-creatures. So stern a doctrine might rule the mind, but never the gentle soul of Seneca, for he taught kindness to slaves

at a time when kindness was despised; he wrote of the duty that the master should ever feel towards his slave, placing the human above all the prejudice of birth or position. Better far it seems could the philosopher have fitted his steps to follow the way of the Man of Sorrows who drove in indignation the greedy money-changers from the Temple, who wept at the tomb of the friend He loved, and bowed His meek head in grief in the loneliness of the olive grove. But Seneca knew the Christians only in the shocking calumnies uttered about them and they appeared to him but as a repellent sect of a repellent race, the Jews. It was an older 'brother of his before whom St. Paul stood as recorded in Acts 18, the careless Gallio, who with the true Roman scorn for the constant religious bickering of the Jews, said to them just as Paul was about to open his mouth: "If it had been a misdemeanor or wicked crime, there would be some reason in me listening to you -- but as these are merely questions of words and persons and your own Law, you can attend, to them for yourselves." And Gallio took no notice when the Greeks beat the president of the synagogue outside.

But to Seneca's shame, it must be confessed that his -life in one outstanding circumstance did not conform to his highest and best thoughts, for he became, his critics never fail to point out, rich and powerful under the patronage of the detestable Nero. Let us express sorrow rather than blame, however, at this blot on a good man's memory, for Christians too have shamed at times their higher and more glorious heritage.

How nearly Seneca approximated the revealed truth of the Scriptures at times may be seen from the following comparisons, but in his writings much is also alien to that Word, for, from the loftiest thoughts of God, he wanders at times into expressions of vague Pantheism, and great moral truths are intermingled with great error; paradoxes occur, but beauty of sentiment and a desire for holiness pervades even his mistakes. As we proceed further along the traveled road of Christian history and view the constant evidence that with all the help of the inspired pages of the Old Scriptures and with all the glorious revelation of the New, man has ever brought forth his brightest gems of truth encased still in much that is earthy, much that is human; that his best and most earnest efforts have ever been, in the very nature of man himself, imperfect and not free from fault, it is then, and only then, that we can duly appreciate and at the same time view with a clear and impartial charity the earnest work of these noblest philosophers of antiquity.

Scripture: "All things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do."

Seneca: "It is no advantage that conscience is shut within us; we lie open to God."

Scripture: "Let not -thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth."

Seneca: "Let him who hath conferred a favor hold his tongue-In confessing a favor nothing should be more avoided than pride."

Scripture: "Be kindly affectionate one to another with brotherly love."

Seneca: "Man is born for mutual assistance."

Scripture: "But other fell into good ground, and brought forth fruit, some an hundred fold, some sixty fold, some thirty fold."

Seneca: "Words must be sown like seeds; which, although It be small, when it hath found a suitable ground, unfolds its strength, and from a very small size is expanded into the large increase."

Scripture: "The love of money is the root of all evil." Seneca: "Riches-the greatest source of human trouble."

Scripture: "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us."

Seneca: "If we wish to be just judges of all things, let us first persuade ourselves of this: that there is not one of us without fault-no man is found who can acquit himself; and he who calls himself innocent does so without reference to a witness, and not to his conscience."

Epictetus

In the household of Epaphroditus, -- secretary and librarian of Nero, there lived a lame slave boy from Phrygia, called Epictetus, meaning "bought" or "acquired." The great Seneca may have noticed him there when he called on matters of business with his master, for awkwardness of movement often compels the eye more than grace of bearing, but what Seneca could not know, as Epictetus limped across the marble floors before him, was that in that mean and undersized body dwelt so lofty a mind and soul that later years would find him so high in philosophy as to reach the flight of the master philosopher himself. Epictetus had been educated under the best of tutors, for just as scores of slaves were needed for the lowest menial tasks, ignorant, and debased in fear, so were those also needed who could minister to the highest needs of the master, and it seems to have pleased Epaphroditus to own a philosopher-slave. Faith in God, resignation to His will, and gratitude to Divine providence breathes forth in all his lines.

Speaking of the multitude of our natural gifts, he says: "Are these the only gifts of Providence towards us? Nay, what power of speech suffices adequately to praise, or to set them forth? For had we but true intelligence, what duty would be more perpetually incumbent on us than both in public and in private to hymn the Divine and "bless His name and praise His benefits?"

Ought we not, when we dig and when we plow, and when we eat, to sing this hymn to God? -- What else can I do, who am a lame, old man, except sing praise to God? Now had I been a nightingale, or had I been a swan, I should have sung the songs of a nightingale or the songs of a swan; but being a reasonable being, it is my duty to hymn God-and you also do I exhort to this same song."

". . . He is a slave," says Epictetus, "whose body is free -but whose soul is bound, and, on the contrary, he is free whose body is bound but whose soul is free."

"Think of God," says the poor slave-philosopher, "oftener than you breathe. Let discourse of God be renewed daily more surely than your food."

We quote from his famous Manual these words of a resigned heart: "Remember that you are an actor of just such a part as is assigned you by the Poet of the play, of a short part, if the part be short; of a long part, if it be long. Should He wish you to act the part of a beggar, take care to act it naturally and nobly; and the same if it be the part of a lame man, or a ruler, or a private man; for *this* is in your power, to act well the part assigned you: but to *choose* that part is the function of another."

"If you wish to be good, first believe that you are bad," he counsels. "They that be whole need not a physician," says the Bible.

"Slave, will you not bear with your own brother who has God for 'his father no less than you? Are you yourself so very wise?"

Epictetus never mentions a life to come, although the inherent immortality of man was a prominent thought in the teaching of Plato, whose philosophy the Roman schools decadently followed. Either he did not believe or he felt he had too little evidence to stress it. It seems not to have been given to these philosophers to know Christianity as it really was, for it was everywhere viewed with suspicion and pictured with the grossest misrepresentations. Prejudice has often worked sad havoc in the best of Christian lives, therefore let us not condemn it too harshly in those of such an age. As we view a lame slave, knowing nothing of the hope brought to light in the Gospel, seeing in the present, on the one hand, all the dissolute and selfish folly of the rich, on the other, looking into the sad, the depraved, the ignorant faces of his brethren slaves about him -- slaves, chained even to kennels beside the great doors of the palace for human watch dogs: as we see him dragging his hindering limb beside him and hear again his song of praise and gratitude to his Maker, "What else can I do, who am a lame, old man, except sing praise to God?" -- What else can we do, who have the assurance of sins forgiven, who behold a new day when the tears shall be wiped off all faces; when the lame shall leap, the blind eyes see, the deaf ears hear; who see with the clear eye of faith the child at play beside the viper's nest, the tender lamb besides the jungle beast; nothing to hurt, naught to offend in the glorious land where none shall say, "I am sick" -- we repeat, what else can we do than to sing our constant praise to God in that love and gratitude which no "language can express" and "no ministry can show"? No time we find for idle disputations, no time to judge the feast days of another-time only for the praise of God, the Father; time only for the Bride to be made ready.

Marcus Aurelius

"O framed for nobler times and calmer hearts 0 studious thinker, eloquent for truth! Philosopher, despising wealth and death But patient, childlike, full of life and love."

The great historian, Niebuhr, says this of the noble emperor: "It is more delightful to speak of Marcus Aurelius than of any man in history, for if there is any sublime human virtue it is his. He was certainly the noblest character of his time and I know no other man who combined such unaffected kindness and humility, with such conscientiousness and severity towards himself." Another remarks, "It seems that in him the philosophy of heathendom grows less proud, draws nearer and nearer to a Christianity which it ignored or which it despised and is ready to fling itself into the arms of the 'Unknown God.'" And the gentle historian, John Lord, writes, "Marcus Aurelius is immortal, not so much for what he *did* as for what he was. His greatness was in his character; his influence for good was in his noble example." Absolute monarch over 120,000,000 of people, occupant of the throne of the civilized world, he was, "modest, virtuous, affable, accessible, considerate, gentle, studious, contemplative, stained by no vices, a model of human virtue." As the fame of David rests upon his Psalms, so the fame of Aurelius rests upon his Meditations. It has been said that Christian grace alone has surpassed the sweetness and resignation to the will of God that is expressed in this private diary where this mighty though humble Emperor holds soliloquy with his own heart and solemnly examines his own conscience. His thanks extends to Providence at all times, not for his great personal beauty, his wealth or his throne, not for those things that men seek, but for the careful guidance of his youth which kept him from the

gross sins of his day, trained him in philosophy, and for the grace that kept him in the way. The lofty discourses of Epictetus had a part in his education and thus the lowly slave, chattel of an unkind master who was himself but a vulgar freedman, became the teacher of the gentle aristocrat, his seat the throne of mighty Rome. There is sadness in these Meditations, the sadness of the pure and great in contact with a wicked, sinful world: "Soon, very soon, thou wilt be but ashes, or a skeleton, and either a name or not even a name; but a name is sound and echo. All the things which are much valued in life are empty, and rotten, and trifling, and little dogs biting one another-but fidelity and modesty, and justice and truth are fled." And again, "It would be man's happiest lot to depart from mankind without having had a taste of lying, and hypocrisy, and luxury, and pride. However, to breathe out one's life when a man has had enough of these things is the next best voyage, as the saying is."

But such notes of sorrow at life's disillusionment give way to nobler utterances: "For what will the most violent man do to thee if thou continuest benevolent to him? gently and calmly correcting him when he is trying to do thee harm, saying, 'Not so, my child; we are constituted by nature for something else: I shall certainly not be injured, but thou art injuring thyself, my child!' " And, "Begin the morning by saying to thyself, I shall meet with the busybody, the ungrateful, arrogant, deceitful, envious, unsocial. All these things happen to them by their ignorance of what is good and evil. But I who, have seen the nature of the good that it is beautiful, and of the bad that it is ugly, and the nature of him that does wrong that it is akin to me,--I can neither be injured by any of them, for no one can fix on me what is ugly, nor can I be angry with my kinsman, nor hate him." How closely here Aurelius approximates the Christian teaching-"Count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother." (2 Thess. 4:15.) "Forbearing one another and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any." - Col. 3:13.

"We ought to do good to others as simply and naturally as a horse runs, or a bee makes honey, or a vine bears grapes after season without thinking of the grapes which it has borne."

"Making life as honest as possible, and calmly doing our duty in the present, as the hour and the act require, and not too curiously considering the future beyond us; standing ever erect, believing that God is just, we make our passage through this life no dishonor to the power that placed us there."

"How hast thou comported thyself unto this day? Consider how complete is the history of thy life, how thou hast fulfilled thine office. Call to mind all the noble actions which have been done by thee, the many pleasures and pains thou hast despised, the honors thou hast neglected, the ingrates thou hast treated with benignity."

Do we find in these quotations something of self-complacency? If so, it is the inevitable outcome of man seeking salvation within himself. "Lord, I thank Thee that I am not as other men," cried the Pharisee in faraway Judea, and Stoicism was after all, the Pharisaism of the Roman but free from hypocrisy. Austere in its pride, it was the natural enemy of a religion based on humility, and in this as well as in his devotion to what he considered the good of the State may lie that answer of the seeming paradox of a good and kind and lofty character standing before the eyes of the world as a severe persecutor of the Christians.

Retiring into his small tent after the day's battle with the enemy, the barbarian along the Danube, he held ' nightly meditation with his own heart and conscience. Writing in his diary by the feeble brightness of his small lamp, he made permanent his thoughts in words that down throughout succeeding years would echo and re-echo in other noble hearts. "It is in thy power," he writes, "whenever thou shalt choose, to retire into thyself, for *nowhere* with more *quiet* and *freedom* does

a man retire than into his own soul." And again, "Since it is possible that thou mayest depart from this life this very moment, regulate every act and thought accordingly, while it is in thy power to be good."

But, we would ask, is not this the Emperor under whose reign the followers of Christ were greatly persecuted? Did not the venerable Polycarp, good Bishop of Smyrna, meet at this time the martyrdom he so courted rather than shunned? Can he be called *good* whose rulership stands forth before the world stained red, by innocent blood? It has often been said that the best of Rome's Emperors persecuted the Christians, the depraved and dissolute let them alone. Why this was so, we may see later on. Suffice it now to say that the early Christians regarded him charitably and without great blame, and the ablest and best of religious historians of more recent times rise to his defense, insisting that the charge of cold-blooded persecution alongside so gentle and loving and charitable a character creates but a paradox. In his time the Bishop of Sardis expresses doubt that he is really aware of the manner in which his Christian subjects are treated, *while* Justin Martyr, also to lose his life in that reign, addresses him *in his Apology* (the appeals of the Apologists are believed never to have reached the eyes of the Emperors) in words of great confidence and respect. It is true that Aurelius seemed to regard the Christians with the prevailing dislike of his kind. The philosophers surrounding his throne treated this new, "imitation of philosophy" with jealousy and aversion and the pure and lofty nature of the Emperor himself would shrink from a sect whose *supposed* midnight *orgies* included even the deed of cannibalism. Christian slaves had admitted this, and much more, under torture, and this was believed to be a sure criterion of truth to the superstitious populace, who sent rumor after rumor abroad. The mind of Aurelius could not have been heavily concerned with the Christians, for he mentions them but once in his Meditations and then only their seeming indifference to death, which he ascribes to perverse obstinacy rather than devotion to principle. There were many Christians in Rome but the persecution did not occur there; it seemed, rather, spontaneous and accidental, happening as it did in Gaul and Asia Minor. He cared so little for the State religion that he built but one temple and that to Beneficence and he looked with kindly tolerance on all sorts of beliefs and ideas within his capitol. Writing of the rigors of asceticism, which he viewed with disfavor, he remarks, "It is not fit that I should give myself pain, for I have never intentionally given pain to others." Do brackish fountains then send forth sweet waters? Nay, and figs grow not on thorns and thistles!

The morality of these philosophers is high and beautiful and we would reflect that if a Seneca could live a life of simplicity and self-denial in the midst of Roman wealth and extravagance; if an Epictetus, granted his late freedom, found contentment and high thoughts within his barren hut; if an Aurelius, absolute of throne, could live pure, simple, self-denying days-what shall we render to the Lord for all His benefits to us? They arrived at the sweet faith of divine guidance but with God and nature often confused; and with all the attainment of that which was good they were still left unsatisfied and sad. "The morality and philosophy of Paganism" says one, "as contrasted with the splendor of revealed truth and the holiness of Christian life, are as moonlight to sunlight. The Stoical philosophy may be compared to a torch which flings a faint gleam here and there in the dusky recesses of a mighty cavern; Christianity is the sun pouring into the inmost depths of the same cavern its sevenfold *illumination*." - *Contributed*.

Next of this series

THE CHURCH ESTABLISHED--PERSECUTION

"THESE MANY YEARS"

"These many years! What lessons they unfold
Of grace and guidance through the wilderness,
From the same God that Israel of old
In the Shekinah glory did possess.
How faithful He, through all my griefs and fears
And constant murmurings, these many years!

"Thy presence wrought a pathway through the sea;
Thy presence made the bitter waters sweet;
And daily have Thy hands prepared for me
Sweet, precious morsels-lying at my feet.
'Twas but to stoop and taste the grace that cheers,
And start refreshed, through all these many years!

"What time I thirsted and earth's streams were dry,
What time I wandered and my hope was gone,
Thy hand hath brought a pure and full supply,
And, by a loving pressure, lured me on.
How oft that hand hath wiped away my tears
And written 'Pardoned!' all these many years!

"Thine be the glory! Thou shalt have the praise
For all Thy dealings, to my latest breath;
A daily 'Ebenezer' will I raise,
And sing 'Salvation' through the vale of death
To where the crown, the golden harp appears,
There to rehearse Thy love through endless years!"