

## The Prayer-Meeting.

### Some Helpful Thoughts and Suggestions.

DEC. 10 16 —CHRIST EXPECTING.—Hob. x. 12, 13.

"After," "expecting"—both these words are in our Scripture. The word "after" points backward; the word "expecting" grasps the future. And between them there is real relation. The "expecting" is what it is because the "after" is what it has been. Notice first the "after," that we may see the reasons for the "expecting."

Consider, then, the "after"—that which has been.

(a) Our Lord and Saviour has offered sacrifice for sins—"But this man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins." You have sinned, but Christ has made offering of Himself in your behalf. Everything necessary for your complete forgiveness he has done. You need not carry a self-accusing and self-torturing heart. You may stand in a delivering acquittal, in the surprising gladness of a free and perfect justification. His sacrifice is enough. His atonement has been made. Repent of sin, accept Him and you are forgiven. This is part of the "after" which has been. "After He had offered one sacrifice for sins."

(b) Another element in this "after" is that Christ has offered a sacrifice for sins which need never be repeated. "After he had offered one sacrifice for sins." The atonement is a finished fact. The contrast here is between the sacrifices, day in, day out, year in, year out, repeated in the old shadowy, prophetic ritual, and the antitypical, substantial sacrifice of Jesus Christ. "And every priest"—that is, of the old and shadowy ritual—"standeth daily ministering and offering the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins;" "but this man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins." All our human doing is fragmentary and unfinished. But the propitiation of the Divine Man is perfect, finished. Having been once made, it has been altogether made. There is no need for a second Calvary to make up the deficiencies of the first. There is no need for any patching human attempt at sacrifice. There is no need for the blasphemously so called "perpetual sacrifice of the mass." Perfectly the atoning deed was done. "It is finished!" was the victorious cry upon the cross.

(c) It is a further element in this "after" that this one and finished sacrifice for sins is of perpetual and universal efficacy. "But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins forever." As for your sins and mine His atonement is sufficient, so it is for the sins of all men. As for the sins of our own generation His atonement is sufficient, so it is for the sins of all coming generations. There can be no time or time into which this glad Gospel may not be carried. This is a redeemed world in which we dwell, the need is simply that men accept redemption. The harvest waves, and it is affluent for all. If men will not eat of it, they must die of hunger. But still the affluent harvest waves.

(d) Another element in this "after" is that this Divine Man, having made such sacrifice for sins, has risen into the place of absolute governance and control. "But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins forever," sat down on the right hand of God. I am very sure that, in our usual thought, we limit our Saviour's ministry too much to His atoning work upon the cross. We let ourselves think too often that His ministry for us ended there. But beyond the cross there was the resurrection; and beyond the resurrection there was the ascension; and the issue of these was and is the throne of universal sovereignty. By virtue of His sacrifice and triumph the pierced hand grasped and is grasping the sceptre of dominion. The Lord Jesus has become the "King of the Ages."

Second. Turn now to the "expecting" based thus upon such accomplished "after." "From henceforth expecting till his enemies shall be made His footstool." Christ's "expecting" is toward nothing less than His universally subjugating and triumphant empire.

And that His "expecting" shall not find disappointment we may be sure, because

(a) Of the "after" we have just been considering. Such sacrifice and sacrificial rule of Deity in humanity and for humanity cannot miss its appropriate end and issue. Much, indeed, disputes that empire now—rebellious angels and rebellious men; ignorance, heathenism, tyranny; the prince of the power of the air, sin, death. But all this darkness must fly before the steadily rising beams of the Sun of Righteousness. Our Lord Jesus shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied. Not for failure was such stupendous sacrifice enacted.

(b) Because Jehovah's word is pledged to such triumph.

(c) Because it is the steady teaching of history that the Kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ is the winning Kingdom.

I cannot be a pessimist when I read history. I must be an optimist. That history is the record of disaster, defeat, huge patches of blackness, colossal tyrannies, many a refulgent midnight when the day seemed dawning, crash of empires, crash of battles, wails of wounded, holocaust of dead—I grant at once, I grant it all. But in the large view and in the long view I do not see how any man, looking carefully into history, can help the feeling that a Divine Power which makes for righteousness, freedom, the dignity of the individual man, which makes steadily for all spiritual and moral and social betterment, is overcomingly working in the world.

See how science is lending hand to a widening human weal. Consider the remarkable interrelations of history—the Reformation and the revival of learning; the discovery of the new world and the Reformation; the opening of Africa and the abolition of slavery by the two leading Christian nations, Great Britain and the United States. Consider the triumph of modern missions, etc. Let us throw ourselves into work along the lines of the "expecting" of our triumphant Christ. There is no higher dignity than to be with Him co-worker.

### The Religion of Zoroaster.

THE Asiatic Quarterly Review contains a valuable analysis by General Forlong of the Pahlavi Texts, Part IV, which have been added to the "Sacred Books of the East" series. From this it appears that "we may reasonably accept the well informed and studied conclusions of Avestan scholars, beginning with Professor Haug, that the prophet lived between the twentieth and eighteenth centuries B.C., and that his principal teachings—the Avasta or "Laws" of Auhar Mazda—were embodied with Zand or "Commentaries" about the seventeenth century B.C., when the Reformed Faith took effect under King Vishtasp."

The texts under review are a "popular summary" of these teachings, from a tradition of date 860 B.C., about two generations before Amos, the Hebrew. They contain a "mass of weary platitudes" and wordy casuistry; but, "There is also here in abundance the highest ethical and wise teachings by writers of marked piety, goodness and genius: men who are keen and grievously moved by the sins and sorrows, worries and miseries of their fellows, and, who are profoundly anxious to alleviate these and to lead all men into paths of holiness and peace, by the doing of justice, the love of mercy, righteousness, and truth; and as they add, 'looking always to and walking humbly before their God'—Auhar-Mazda, no mean God-idea. The Trinity of Righteousness. The texts continuously and piously counsel us regarding 'the peace which follows the renunciation of sin.' . . . There is scarcely a conceivable situation of life, public or strictly private, from that of the king on his throne, the judge on the bench, the maiden or wife in her chamber, the herdsman and his dog on the hillside, which is not here dwelt upon by these laborious and experienced old writers; and the burden of their teaching is the *Ashem Vohu* or 'praise of righteousness,' as that which alone exalteth the individual and the nation. Righteousness alone maketh, they say, 'a perfect character . . . it alone is the perfection of religion,' and is summed up in the three words which ought to be ever on our lips and in our hearts, good thoughts, good words, and good deeds.