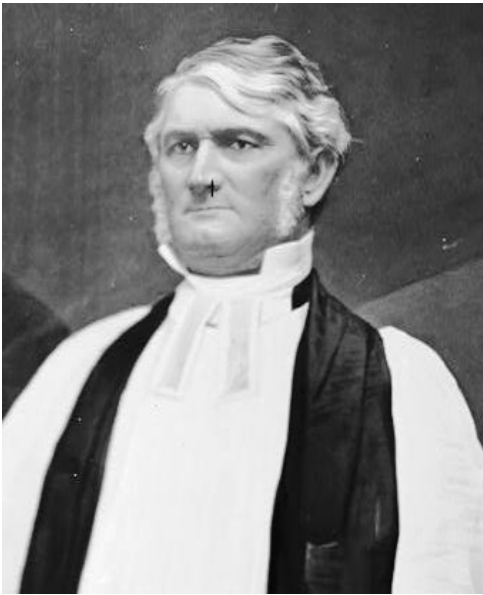


## A Chaplain and a Cadet



The following interesting statement of facts was made by Bishop McIlvaine (first Chaplain of the US Military Academy at West Point, and 3<sup>rd</sup> Chaplain of the US Senate). Bishop Charles Pettit McIlvaine was, at the time of this writing, the Bishop of Ohio (PECUSA). The occasion was the ordination of Leonidas Polk to the priesthood - later as Bishop of Louisiana. Bishop Polk later served as Major General in the Confederate Army and was killed at Pine Mountain, north of Atlanta.

It is now nearly thirteen years since a very remarkable work of grace occurred in the Military Academy of the United States. During a condition of almost universal indifference to religion, and of wide-spread infidelity, against which the efforts of the ministry of one man, set for the defense of the gospel, seemed for a long time to make not the least way, suddenly almost, in a very few days, many minds without communication with one another, and without personal intercourse with the minister, appeared deeply, and almost simultaneously interested in the great matters of eternal life. Officers as well as cadets participated in this, and to such an extent, that the minister's study was soon occupied every evening with assemblies, composed of both, for prayer and the exposition of the word of God; and a serious impression, more or less deep and abiding, was spread over a large part of the whole military community. Several became at that period very decided soldiers of Christ.

Many others received impressions then, which God has since ripened into manifest and energetic piety. Many more received the seed of the word, in whom, though it seemed to die, it has since, under the continued influence of the Spirit, sprung up and brought forth fruit. Some are still in military life. Others have been, long since, adorning the Christian profession in the ministry of the gospel.

The very first appearance of this work of grace, so remarkably and singularly the work of God, was the coming of a cadet, alone and most unexpectedly, to introduce himself to the chaplain, and unburden the sorrows of a contrite heart. All around him was coldness and skepticism. To speak decidedly in favor of religion was then so unusual in the academy, that it made one singular. To converse with the chaplain on that subject had not been ventured by any, except out of opposition to the truth. That anyone would appear there seriously seeking eternal life, even the chaplain was afraid to hope.

A cadet, however, did venture to come, in open day, to the chaplain's study, too deeply

concerned to heed what would be said of him. He was personally unknown to the chaplain. His message he tried to utter, but could not. Again he tried, and again; but his heart was too full for speech. At length he said, " Tell me what I must do; I have come about my soul. I know not what I want; I am entirely in the dark. What must I seek; where must I go?" Such was the first declaration of one who, for some days, had been awakened under the preaching and reading of the truth. A sermon preached on the Scriptures, and a tract, sent at a venture from the chaplain's study, to whomsoever it might meet, had been blessed to his soul. Doubts and cavils were all abandoned. Implicit submission seemed his engrossing principle. From that moment the young man appeared to take up the cross, and to stand decidedly and boldly on the Lord's side.

The singular and very prominent evidence of the hand of God in this case, was very greatly blessed to others. After graduating at that institution, and leaving the army, he passed through a regular course of study for the holy ministry, and was successively ordained deacon and presbyter. Many years have since elapsed.

The chaplain has since been called to a higher order in the ministry, and more enlarged responsibilities in the church. The cadet, meanwhile, after many vicissitudes of active duty and of disabling ill health, supposed he had settled himself for the rest of his life as a preacher and pastor to an humble and obscure congregation of negroes, whom he had collected together from neighboring plantations; to whom, living entirely upon his own pecuniary means, he appropriated a part of his own house for a church, and to whose eternal interests he had chosen cheerfully and happily to devote himself, as their spiritual father, with no emolument but their salvation.

But such was just the true spirit for the highest of all vocations in the church. To be a servant of servants is the very school in which to prepare for the chief ministry under Him who " took upon himself the form of a servant." The church needed a missionary bishop for a vast field, for great self-denial, for untiring patience, for courageous enterprise. Her eye was directed to the self-appointed pastor of that humble congregation. With most impressive unanimity did she call him away to a work, not indeed of more dignified duty, but of more eminent responsibility; not indeed of more exquisite satisfaction to a Christian heart, (for what can give a true Christian heart more exquisite satisfaction than to lead such of the poor to Christ ?) but of severer trials, and vastly greater difficulties and hardships. Counting the cost, he has not dared to decline it. Regarding the call as of God, he has embraced the promised grace, and is now ready to be offered. And thus the chaplain has here met the beloved cadet again, seeing and adoring the end of the Lord in that remarkable beginning.