

BISHOP CHASE AT A PROTRACTED MEETING

The decease of our lamented Presiding Bishop recalls to our minds one of the many interesting incidents, which he so vividly discusses in his "Reminiscences." After his removal to Michigan, he made an appointment to preach at a Mr. Anderson's, near the Indiana line. About the time he started to keep his appointment, he was informed that "the place at Mr. Anderson's was occupied by other denominations, and had been for more than a week—in a word, they were holding a "protracted meeting." The good Bishop nevertheless proceeded, and when he arrived on the ground, he sent for the Presbyterian, Methodist, Congregational, and Baptist preachers, and stated to them "that he had come to fulfil his appointment, and hoped they would see fit to join in the solemn service, which he was about to commence, in the worship of Almighty God." They said they would attend and hear, but as for joining or taking part in the service, they could not, for they had no prayer books. The Bishop replied "hearing prayers, is not praying, gentlemen; but I have anticipated your difficulty, and have brought some dozens of prayer books with me. "But we do not know how to use them," said they. "If you will allow me the honor, said the Bishop, I will direct you in this pleasing duty," so saying they all proceeded to the stand, where the Bishop proceeded with the service, addressing them as follows:

"Brethren of the human family, Christians of all denominations, I hold in my right hand a *Holy Bible*, and in my left hand a *Prayer-book*; the one teaches us what to believe, the other how to pray.—If any of you through the depravity of the natural heart, feel averse to being "taught how to pray," such of you need to repent, and be converted from your sinful pride, and to sit at the feet of Jesus, and learn to repeat, and offer up in spirit and in truth, the prayer which he hath taught you. But before you can use the Lord's Prayer in this spiritual manner, you need the exercise of faith, and the confession of your sins; for the Holy Scriptures say, "He that cometh unto God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of all that diligently seek him." Confess your sins unto the Lord; for, 'if we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.'

'By this, you perceive that without 'confession,' pardon is not promised: for this reason, the Psalmist saith, 'I will confess my sins unto the Lord; and so thou forgavest me my sin.' The point to be noted here is, that before you can say 'Our Father'—before He will hear you, as a people assembled in his presence, He requires confession of sins. Of this duty you are reminded in the sentences of scripture; and to the right performance of this duty you are exhorted in the address immediately preceding the form of confession which the Church hath prepared—a form so general as to embrace all sorts of penitential sinners, and so particular as that every one may feel himself identified in using it.

"That you are to confess unto God your sins, and not reserve the duty for any individual ear, was evidently the design of our Protestant Church, to prevent the great evils which had flowed from the Roman practice of auricular confession,—and that you are to do in the face of all, to the humbling of your pride and glorifying of the great name of the Searcher of hearts, the Maker of all things, must be evident from the whole tenor of scripture. That you are to perform this duty upon your knees, you must perceive, from the example of all good men when worshipping the God of heaven. David 'fell low at his footstool.' Solomon 'arose from praying upon his knees, and confessing the sins of his people.' Daniel kneeled three times a day looking towards Jerusalem, the place of God's promises. St. Stephen 'first martyr to *Christian truth*, recommended his soul to Jesus the Divine Saviour on his knees; and the holy Apostle Paul when lying on the sea-shore, kneeled down.

"After these examples, and in obedience to the voice of the whole Church in all ages, I call upon you, and according to mine authority, enjoin upon you all here present to fall on your knees, and make and say audibly your confession of sins unto God when it is

repeated in the beginning of the service.—In the meantime, even now, all of you rise and hear what God and his holy Church says unto you." Here then all rose as one man when the writer began the service, having pointed out the places in the prayer books to the ministers.

"When the wicked man turneth away from his wickedness and doeth that which is lawful and upright, he shall save his soul alive." "Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." "I acknowledge my transgression and my sin is ever before me." "If we say that we have no sin we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us," &c.

"Dearly beloved brethren! The Scripture moveth us in sundry places, &c. "Wherefore I pray and beseech you as many as are here present to accompany me with a pure heart and humble voice to the throne of the heavenly grace (saying:)"

Here the whole congregation, Presbyterian, Congregational, and all the "Standing Order," Old and New School; Baptists, Free-willers, and Close-communication; Methodists, both Wesleyan and Ranters, Dr. Coke's Episcopalians, and those who protest against that kind of Episcopacy—all knelt down just as the devout churchmen and their families did:

When the writer said aloud 'Now repeat with me the confession of your sins:—

"Almighty and most merciful Father: We have erred and strayed from thy ways like lost sheep." &c.

Here the writer cannot but stop to make known his astonishment at the remembrance of his own feelings, when witnessing the union of so many voices in this solemn act of social worship—so many of God's reasonable creatures—precious souls redeemed by the blood of his Son—brought by his heavenly grace, so suddenly and unexpectedly to overcome their sectarian pride and unworthy prejudices, as to fall upon their knees as one man before their great Creator and Judge, and there audibly and humbly, and (it is hoped) devotedly repeat the confession of their sins, word for word, as the Church, the bride of Christ, hath appointed for them to do. As they went along with him and said, "We have followed too much the devices and desires of our own hearts. We have offended against thy holy laws"—how unspeakable was the gratitude at witnessing the victory gained (if it were only for a time) over the ignorant obstinacy which so many, since the days of Cromwell, have cherished against the pure liturgy of the Protestant Church of Christ! And when they all went along with him, not only in confessing their sins, but crying out together for pardon—saying, "O, Lord, have mercy upon us, miserable offenders. Spare thou those, O God, who confess their faults: restore thou those who are penitent; according to thy promises, declared upon mankind in Christ Jesus our Lord."—And then with one voice, with the speaker, supplicating for heavenly grace to amend their lives according to God's holy word, saying, "And grant, O most merciful Father, for Christ's sake, that we may hereafter live a godly, righteous, and sober life; to the glory of thy holy name. Amen"—the effect on the writer's best feelings was almost overwhelming. Scarcely could he restrain his tears when rising to utter the benediction implied in "declaration of absolution" of their sins "to all who truly repent and unfeignedly believe God's holy gospel." "And now," said he, "let us join in saying the Lord's prayer with one heart and one voice." He kneeled down and said, "Our Father," &c. The response from the great congregation was "as the voice of many waters."

The rest of the service was performed as the Rubric directs. Being showed their places, the ministers of other denominations responded by reading the alternate verse in every Psalm, as if they felt the spirit in which they were composed for the use of the Church in all ages. All listened to the word of God read and preached, with devout attention; and all who had a voice seemed also to have a heart to sing the praises of God in the metre Psalms and Hymns, as they were "lined out" by the writer of this account of his attending this protracted meeting. It was indeed "protracted," for the sun had declined in the west so far as to admonish the writer and his family that it was time to seek their peaceful home in Gilead.

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MR. SALTER'S PORTRAIT OF THE

LORD BISHOP OF TORONTO. THE Subscribers to the above, are respectfully requested to forward all unpaid Subscriptions to EDWARD TAYLOR DARTMELL, Esq., Secretary to the Church Union, 113, King Street East, in order that the necessary measures may at once be taken to get on the Portrait and place it in the Hall of Trinity College. By order of the Committee. S. LETT, L.L.D., Hon. Sec. Toronto, September 17th, 1852. 1-4f

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