

CHAPTER XXVII

A Presbyterian Minister Approves. The Romanists Condemn and Persecute

In 1876 I spent some days in Halifax, N. S., where I spoke in Fort Massey Presbyterian Church.

The Pastor was the Rev. R. F. Burns, D. D., and his congregation was large and influential in the city. He was thoroughly in sympathy with me and my work, and was made up of the stern material which characterized his ancestors in Scotland, the Covenanters. He had no sympathy with the name Protestantism which does not earnestly and practically protest. He was told before the meeting in his church that there would be a disturbance from the Romanists, which he was reluctant to believe; but, let the apprehension of trouble be what it might, he was not going to shrink from having a Presbyterian minister speak in his pulpit, in a city and country where the British flag waves, which means civil and religious liberty.

The people came pouring into the church at the appointed time until it was packed, and there being a large crowd at the doors, who could not find room, it was concluded to close them. A crowd of Romanists collected around the church for the avowed purpose of preventing the *apostate Chiniquy* from preaching against Popery. During the service there was constant commotion, there was stone-throwing, and panes were smashed. Again and again large stones crashed through the windows. The Pastor, Dr. Burns, declared that such attacks were a scandal upon the common freedom of speech and worship. After other plain and pointed remarks from the doctor, I arose and said that what we needed was a dozen of orangemen to go out and clear the street. The disturbance

continued, but the meeting, though disturbed, was not broken up, and, after a collection was taken, it closed about ten o'clock. There was intense excitement inside and outside the church. A band of ruffians laid wait by the front door.

Dr. Burns, myself, and several friends passed out by a side door. The rioters soon discovered this and followed, throwing stones and snowballs. I was struck several times. Dr. Burns with several friends took refuge in a friendly house at the head of Tobin street. The crowd increased and two hundred of my friends, principally orangemen, formed in close order and came to the rescue. We proceeded to the Halifax Hotel, pursued by a howling mob.

When we were about half way the rioters resorted to a ruse, and separated, so as to more successfully close in on me and my friends, and if possible hustle and crowd us into the harbour. Near the hotel the cry was raised, "Chiniquy is here!" Then stones and sticks were freely used, by which I was struck several times. I entered by a private door, and the stones came showering after me as I went in. An empty bottle struck a young man and cut him badly.

My head and arms were bruised, but my injuries were not serious.

No arrests were made at the time.

Of course this persecution, though not openly defended by the Roman Catholic priesthood, was "allowed," and was not frowned down as might and ought to have been, were the priests true friends of liberty and order.

Such is a fine example of the freedom Romanists claim for themselves but deny to others, even in a land where they have full freedom to worship without molestation.

It is with satisfaction I record that public opinion in Nova Scotia so emphatically condemned my ruthless persecutors that, though afterwards I revisited Halifax frequently and addressed many meetings in the city and in very many churches throughout the country, no attempt was ever made to disturb my meetings or to injure me in any way. Even

the orangemen have safely marched in procession through the streets of Halifax; and freedom of speech and religious liberty have thus been happily vindicated. What is, thus, true of Halifax and Nova Scotia, is true of many other places—cities and rural districts in Canada, in Australia, in the British Isles and even in the United States.

Dr. Burns preached and published a sermon, soon after, called out by the riotous demonstration. It was on the text: "Be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image thou hast set up." In the discourse he drew a comparison between the Babylon of Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylon of Popery. He proved that there was a close correspondence between them.

This sermon of Dr. Burns was so timely and outspoken, that I give several passages from it which I feel sure my readers will appreciate. If we had more such fearless and heroic men in our pulpits, Rome would not stalk forth with such a bold front as she now does.

"Even now may the handwriting on the wall of the Vatican be discovered—distinct as that which formerly paled the faces and paralyzed the frames of the giddy and godless revellers in the palace of Babylon. When she is saying—'Peace and safety, sudden destruction will come upon her,' and the world echoes the doleful dirge, 'Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen.' May the Lord hasten it in His time.

"Our subject admits of a ready application to the scenes of Monday evening—a night much to be remembered in the history of our city and Church. How singular the contrast a few brief hours brought round!

"We thought not last Sabbath, when encircling so peacefully and profitably a communion table, that it was to turn out a table spread for us in the presence of our enemies, and that our blood was so near being mingled with our sacrifice.

"Hitherto we had known nothing but peace within and around these walls, but it seemed as if the Lord were coming not to send peace but a sword, and as if judgment were going

to begin at the house of God. Should the uppermost feeling with us be, 'An enemy hath done it,' let us feel it right to be taught even by an enemy. Nor let us be unmindful of the higher uses, for, 'Is there evil in the city, and the Lord hath not done it?' He permits what He does not sanction. And, 'We have seen the end of the Lord, that the Lord is very pitiful and of tender mercy.' For we have found abundant reason to sing of mercy as well as of judgment, and to conclude that the things which have happened to us will turn out rather to the furtherance of the Gospel.

"Very plainly has it been made to appear that the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God, and with equal distinctness that God can make the wrath of man to praise Him, while He restrains the remainder thereof.

"We are thankful that the venerable preacher was unharmed during the service, and sustained no very serious injury afterwards. We are thankful that the audience behaved so well, considering the noisy demonstrations outside and the repeated assaults made on the building. In circumstances less critical, and with no such dense masses collected, there have arisen panics that have issued in results most disastrous. We feel thankful that the hostile elements inside were kept under control through the force of superior numbers, and the fear of immediate exposure and expulsion. We are thankful for the part the press has taken, and the determination evinced by our public authorities to prosecute the investigation, and to bring the perpetrators of the outrage to justice. We are thankful for the efficient aid rendered by those outside ourselves, and for the sympathy expressed by the other churches throughout the city. We are thankful that the Protestant pulse amongst us beats stronger than it did a week ago; that the blood flows purer and freer. We have been at ease in Zion. We need arousing. In our simplicity, we had thought the voice Jacob's. We have found the hand Esau's.

“The features of the ancient Babylonians came out in their modern representatives with a somewhat repulsive prominence, especially that spirit of bigotry and intolerance which could not put up with the frank outspokenness of the Hebrew heroes, and their fearless protest against the popular prevalent idolatry. Wherever our modern Babylon is thoroughly in the ascendant, the minority have no rights which the majority are bound to respect. The faithful protesters must be hustled out of the way. Away with them, away with them! The spirit that worked on the banks of the Euphrates is reproduced on the banks of the Tiber and of the St. Lawrence, too, and it is the same that has startled and surprised us here in our fair city by the sea. Then and there it was three young men. Here and now it has been one old man. Against them were kindled the flames of the furnace. Against him were directed brickbats and bottles and bludgeons. In both instances, freedom of speech and freedom of action were sought forcibly to be put down. I suppose those lads were looked on by most as fools and fanatics—disturbers of the general peace, and deviators from the general practice. And so by some, even from whom better things might have been expected, our ‘old man eloquent’ has been regarded. It is easy to criticise him—to take exception to his sayings and doings—to pelt him with paper pellets soaked in vinegar and smelling of brimstone, from snug offices or cosy arm-chairs; but it’s not so easy to run the gauntlet as he has done—to take one’s life in one’s hand and to face, for nigh a score of years in succession, the kind of weapons that have been wielded against him. And what has been the head and front of his offending? Simply this—that ever since complying with the command, ‘Come out of her, my people, he’ has continued to be a courageous and consistent protester against the sins of our modern Babylon, and ceased not to ‘teach and to preach Jesus Christ.’ Simply this—that he has kept ringing out the ancient battle cry: ‘Be it known unto thee, O Pope, that we will not serve thy gods, nor

worship the golden image which thou hast set up.' This is true Protestantism. The Protestant who does not protest against Rome is unworthy of the name.

"The very life-blood of the Protestant faith oozes out when there is no protesting. For over eighteen years this remarkable man has been in close grapple with this 'mystery of iniquity,' and it is not to be wondered at if one of his temperament, and with his surroundings, and with the intimate knowledge which a quarter of a century behind the scenes has given him of Rome's inner life, and with the rough handling he has got from those he has left; I say it is not to be wondered at if he should occasionally 'speak unadvisedly with his lips.'

"Through all these years the most industrious and insidious efforts have been made to smirch and to stain his character in accordance with Rome's customary policy towards those who abandon her communion. From the fiery ordeal he has come forth like gold.

"He may have been at times hasty in word or deed, but so were the reformers, and so were the apostles and the prophets which were before them. Nevertheless, while a man of like passions with ourselves, and compassed with kindred infirmities, no breath of slander has dimmed the lustre of his character, or moral stigma been fastened upon his good name. From 1833, on through the twenty-five years of his priestly life, his character was of the best. He was a pure priest, and has in his possession the most undoubted testimonials to this effect, from the highest dignitaries of Rome. He was for years by far the most popular priest in Lower Canada—the very idol of the people. He was known as the great Apostle of Temperance—the Canadian Father Mathew. Within the ten years of his wonderful crusade, no fewer than 200,000 of his countrymen were certified as having received the pledge from his hands. The change thereby effected was without parallel. He had the offer of being made Bishop of the great Northwest, but had the humility to decline it. So devoted was he

however, to the interests of his order, that he received a special commission to gather into one fold those of his countrymen that were 'dispersed among the Gentiles.' Going, as he did, from one place to another in the States, he was not a little surprised to find that not less than 150,000 French Canadians had left their native country to live in that great Republic, and he was truly sorry to see that the greater part of them were in deadly danger of losing the Roman Catholic faith, from their being scattered among the Protestants, and from there being so many denominations of Protestants who were trying to convert them to their religious views, and to bring them into what he then called the Protestant net. On going back to Canada he brought this under the notice of the Bishops, who empowered him to throw himself into this department of missionary work.

"In 1851 he settled in the great Prairie State, Illinois, and 12,000 of his countrymen gathered round him. Some seven years later the Damascus scene was repeated. 'There shone a light from heaven above the brightness of the sun, and there fell from his eyes as it were scales.' It was principally the entrance of the Word which gave him light. Into this marvelous light he sought at once to lead his people. This has been his life-work since. He has led out from Rome six or seven thousand of his countrymen in Illinois, and at least as many more in Canada, and other portions of the States.

"During the past six months it is certified that after deducting some 200 who were deemed unworthy, 500 families, embracing 2,000 individuals, have come out from Rome, in and around Montreal. Considering the unusually strong foothold Romanism has got in Lower Canada, and the uncommon devotion of the French Canadian Catholics, such a result is truly surprising. When the Lord turned the captivity of these people, we were like men that dreamed.

"It was on the tenth of June, 1862, that Father Chiniquy applied for admission to the Canada Presbyterian Church. I had the honour and privilege of making the motion in our

Synod expressive of our deep interest in himself and his work and appointing the committee to adjudicate on his application I was a member of the first committee.

“The following year (on the 11th of June, 1863), he was formally received, amid great enthusiasm, so that he has been for nearly thirteen years a minister of our Church. During my residence in Chicago I repeatedly visited the St. Anne settlement, and, as a member of the Kankakee committee and convener of the French Evangelization Committee (they are now united), I had ample opportunity for forming a judgment regarding him.

“While in Montreal he often occupied my pulpit, and audiences of ten and twelve hundred, principally of his own people, hung upon his lips. His power in French is amazing. No one in our Dominion can come near him in reaching the ear and the heart of the French people. When he came, therefore, to our great city, I hailed him as an old friend, and gladly welcomed him to this sacred desk, in common with my beloved brethren in the ministry.

“It seems passing strange to me that such a man, who has had access to the best circles of British and American society, and to the leading pulpits and platforms of Christendom, who led a blameless and useful life for twenty-five years under Papal and for over eighteen years under Protestant auspices, who emancipated 200,000 from the slavery of alcohol and some twelve or fifteen thousand from the slavery of Rome, and who has for thirteen years made full proof of his ministry in our Church, should have been here branded as a fugitive and a vagabond, stigmatized as a liar in our pulpits, howled at as by a pack of wolves swarming round our holy and beautiful house, and hooted and hounded for half a mile along our streets, as if he were the filth of the world and the offscouring of all things, under the shadow, too, of a garrison of British soldiers, and beneath the folds of that glorious flag which throws the impenetrable shield of her protection around the obscurest subject and the humblest slave,

“It seems passing strange, too, that all this should have occurred in the clear moonlight, and only two or three of these hundreds have been recognized. It seems almost stranger still that those respectable gentlemen, of whose order the old man was once a most distinguished ornament, should not have publicly testified against such cruel and cowardly behaviour, and thrown themselves in the forefront of those who are trying to bring the perpetrators to justice. One of them could have accomplished more than our entire police force, without disparaging its members in the least. Of this I feel persuaded, and I know I can speak for my brethren as well as myself, that were it possible to conceive of hundreds of our people surrounding a Roman Catholic church, breaking many panes of glass, and disturbing by their yells, for an hour and a half, the service going on, and then assaulting, with murderous intent, the officiating priest, we would have been promptly out to try and check them. The first papers of the morning would have published our indignation. We would have at once tendered our sympathy, nor slept till we had lent our influence, to the making an example of some of them.

“Let our Protestantism get a healthier tone from this experience. Let our generous youth imbibe the spirit and imitate the example of those blessed young men and say boldly of Roman and every other species of corruption, ‘Be it known unto thee,’ etc. But let no grudge rankle in our breasts, for the religion we profess is a religion of love, and ‘Love worketh no ill to his neighbour.’ Let us ever keep the line drawn between persons and principles. We loath Rome. We love Romanists. Let us live as the noble Argyle died—when he said on the scaffold, ‘I die with a heart-hatred of Popery.’ ‘Which thing I hate,’ as the blessed Master says of the doctrines and deeds of the Nicolaitans. With a generosity and magnanimity his enemies would do well to imitate, Chiniquy says: ‘There are, in the Church of Rome, many millions of sincere and respectable men, and we must seriously pray the

Lord to send them His light—but we cannot go further. We must not abuse them.’ How can I more fittingly close my discourse than in the words of his yesterday’s letter to me? ‘Let every one of my friends unite their fervent prayers to yours to the throne of mercy for the conversion of the multitudes of the blind followers of the Pope, who want to take away my life. Oh, let the dear Saviour look down in His mercy upon them all, to give them His saving light that they may come with us to His feet, to find light, peace and eternal life!’ ”

Dr. Burns, in an appendix to the sermon from which I have taken these extracts, offers some true and pertinent thoughts in regard to the method of dealing with Romanism. They are certainly in place in this connection. My methods may at times seem severe, and to border on irreverence, but they appear to me to be such as the subject needs. The wafer-god of Rome is so utterly ridiculous, ludicrous, idolatrous and absurd, that it should be dealt with accordingly, which I have not hesitated to do. The author of this sermon shows very forcibly that my style in this respect is fully sustained by examples found in the Bible.

“Mr. Chiniquy has been taken severely to task, even by some Protestants, for breaking the wafer in pieces, which, after the priest’s consecration, is believed by the Romanists to contain in it the ‘body, soul and divinity of the Lord Jesus Christ.’ This infallible authority declares that a single consecrated wafer makes only one god, but that if you break that consecrated wafer into a number of fragments, the ‘body, soul and divinity’ of the God-man is in each separate fragment, so as to contain as many gods. On Rome’s principle, ‘once a priest, always a priest,’ Mr. Chiniquy has still this great power. It was to show the folly and blasphemy of such an assumption, that Mr. Chiniquy acted as he did. He meant not the slightest disrespect to a sacred ordinance for which, in the true Scriptural view of it, he entertains the profoundest reverence. The irreverence lies with those who

thus desecrate and travesty it. Chiniquy's mode of procedure may not precisely suit our modern ideas of propriety, but it is an ancient Bible way which has repeatedly 'received Divine endorsement.' It was substantially the way of Moses and Elijah, and Isaiah, and Hezekiah, when exposing the folly and falsity of the idolatries with which they had to combat. When the Israelites worshiped the golden calf, Moses, their leader, burnt it with fire, ground it to powder, strewed it in the water and made them to drink of it. (Ex. 32: 20.)

"Was the calf-god treated thus, then why may not a cake-god be treated in like manner? Was Moses chargeable with 'bad taste' in treating so contemptuously the object of the people's blind veneration?"

"Elijah, in like manner, poured contempt on the Baal worshipers at Carmel and brought the sharpest irony, the most scathing sarcasm, to bear against them. 'Elijah mocked them and said, Cry aloud, for he is a god; either he is talking, or he is pursuing, or he is on a journey, or peradventure he sleepeth and must be awaked.' (1 Kings 18:27.) Was it counted 'bad taste' in this holy man thus to 'make fun' of these worshipers who evinced their sincerity by their continual crying and 'cutting themselves with knives and lances' (like the flagellants) 'till the blood gushed out upon them.'"

"As a 'take-off' on idolatry, we know nothing to equal the vivid and graphic portraiture of Isaiah. (Chap. 44:9-20.) The man cutting down the cedar, using part of the wood for warming himself, part for cooking his food, etc., then employing the residue in making a god. 'He burneth part thereof in the fire, with part thereof he eateth flesh; he roasteth roast and is satisfied; yea he warmeth himself and saith, Aha, I am warm; and the residue thereof he maketh a god. even his graven image; he falleth down unto it and worshipeth it, and prayeth unto it and saith, Deliver me, for thou art my god.'—Verses 16 and 17.

"From the standpoint of our modern critics, Isaiah (or the

Spirit of God speaking through him) showed the extreme of 'bad taste' in violating the religious sensibilities of so many, and turning into ridicule their conscientious convictions.

"And how did the good king Hezekiah act towards the brazen serpent? It was the time-honored relic whose preservation seemed pardonable as a quickener to gratitude. But when undue homage began to be rendered to it, it was treated by the king as our modern iconoclast has been treating the wafer; 'He brake in pieces the brazen serpent that Moses had made; for unto those days the children of Israel did burn incense to it; and he called it Nehushtan—a piece of brass.' (2 Kings 18:4.)

"The parallel supplied by these four cases is perfect. If Mr. Chiniquy violated the proprieties, he did so in good company. Moreover, his action was intended as a test. If Deity resided in that thin, tiny cake and every portion thereof, would He not avenge His own honour thus sacrilegiously insulted by the prompt and signal punishment of the aggressor? That no harm came to him so impressed the beholders that thirty of them, the morning after the wafer was subjected to this test, abjured their allegiance to Rome.

"We are far from saying that Mr. Chiniquy's modes of procedure are always what we or our brethren would adopt. But he knows thoroughly the people with whom he has to deal, and adapts his treatment accordingly. In such matters 'let every one be fully persuaded in his own mind,' and the best criterion, probably, after all, by which to judge his measures, is the wonderful success with which they have been attended."