

thinks it can do without pope and property, executive and obedience. It proposes to erect new institutions on the shifting basis of aggregate private judgment; to confiscate and distribute property, to elect and inspire its teachers from the plentitude of its own untainted fancies. All who are not besotted beyond redemption with these theories must choose the other side, the conservative side of this contest." (History of the Irish Settlers in North America, second edition.)

What McGee foresaw as a possibility in 1892 is a fact today. Socialism sits enthroned in the Russian Soviet Empire for an empire it is) and neither liberty of conscience nor private property nor political rights are respected by it. Having conquered Eastern Europe and Northern Asia this doctrinaire revolutionary socialist despotism plans that the whole world shall "do without pope and property."

However it was not necessary to wait twenty years for a justification of McGee's political philosophy. It was justified in his own political career. As the editor of the Boston Pilot in 1845, he declared his adhesion to "the new political philosophy" of which O'Connell "is the founder and father," "the system of moral agitation."

This standpoint he maintained throughout his Young Ireland days till the French revolution of 1848 broke out. Then swept away by the enthusiasm of the hour and driven wild by the wholesale starvation of the Irish people and the criminal stubbornness of the British Government, or rather mis-government, he had recourse to arms. He thought it better that the Irish peasants should arm as best they could and die fighting rather than starve to death without striking a blow. Like many other Catholics he had great hopes that the revolutionary movement of 1848 would strike off, throughout Europe, the fetters which absolute monarchies had placed upon the Church and the people. It will be remembered that when the republican constitution of France was solemnly proclaimed in 1848 in the Place de la Concorde, the ceremony began with the intoning of the Veni Creator and terminated with the celebration of Mass by the Archbishop of Paris; and that when the Hungarian nation was fighting for liberty in 1849 against the Emperor of Austria and the Czar of Russia, the priests of Hungary stood by the people. As time went on, however, the heirs of the continental revolution of 1848 aimed at the overthrow not merely of the throne but also of the altar. This was especially the case in Italy. In the beginning of 1848 the revolutionists had not been unfriendly to the Church, for Pope Pius IX. had in 1847 led Europe in democratic political reform. The February Revolution of 1848 was not anti-clerical. The change began April 29th that same year when Pope Pius IX. formally refused to declare war against Austria to liberate Northern Italy from the Hapsburg rule. Anxious as he was for a free Italy, he felt that, as common Father of Christendom, he could not go to war against a Catholic nation. As a result, the promising movement for a free federated Italy, with the Papal States as one of the constituent States, was turned into movement for a unified Italian Kingdom or Republic, embracing the whole of Italy. To carry out this plan it was necessary to destroy the Papal States. Such a programme was a very welcome one to those revolutionists who were opposed to religion, because they fondly imagined that if they destroyed the Papal States they would destroy the Papacy. In November, 1848, a revolutionary mob assassinated the Pope's prime minister, killed his private secretary and stormed his Quirinal palace and forced him to flee from Rome. The so-called Roman Republic, set up in February, 1849, was as undemocratic as it was irreligious. Its "liberalism" was exemplified in insulting, robbing and persecuting the Church. The Prince Louis Napoleon, President of France, found it advisable, for the peace and prosperity of Europe, to restore the Pope to Rome. This left the Italian revolutionists bitterly anti-papal. Needless to say, the various Socialist and Communist groups scattered throughout Europe, were equally anti-Catholic, and their power was strengthened and to a certain extent systematically directed by various secret societies which plotted to undermine and overthrow the continental monarchies. This whole movement was decidedly anti-Christian and Pope Pius IX., when he returned to Rome in 1851, lost no time in condemning it. McGee, who had spent 1851 in re-reading history and in studying the philosophy of politics, emphatically disassociated himself from these false standard bearers of liberty and adopted publicly a frankly Catholic conservative programme.

The fruits of McGee's conservative political philosophy amply justified it. In 1849, in his Irish hatred of the British Empire, he had advocated a revolution in Canada. A decade later he was the leading figure in the evolution of the British North American Provinces into a great new Northern Nation. Which was the wiser plan? Which produced greater liberty? In 1849, he sought to help to procure freedom for the world by advocating the destruction of the British Empire. Such was the programme of his New York Nation.

Sixteen years later he defended Canada against the Irish American Fenian invasion and proclaimed the advantages of the Imperial connection. Which was the wiser plan? Which produced greater liberty? While rightly reviewing secret revolutionary societies with horror, McGee never lost a broad-minded impulse towards healthy popular movements of independence. His whole life is a proof of this. One example will here suffice, the lecture he delivered on the 8th January, 1863, at Quebec on "The Moral Taught by Four Revolutions." It is a monumental proof of the sanity and liberality of McGee's political philosophy.

THE MORAL TAUGHT BY FOUR REVOLUTIONS

In this lecture we have McGee's views as regards the causes and consequences of the English Revolution of 1688, the American Revolution of 1776, the unbloody Irish Revolution of 1782, and the French Revolution of 1789. The following newspaper report of this lecture, given by the Montreal Transcript, 20th January, 1863, is a clear indication of the soundness and intensity of McGee's Christian "liberalism" or "conservatism"—for both words, used in their best sense, are equally applicable as a description of McGee's political philosophy. As the lecture took over two hours in delivery, this newspaper report is merely a synopsis of the leading facts and arguments adduced by the speaker.

"The Honourable Mr. McGee delivered on Thursday evening, the 8th instant, the first lecture of the season, before St. Patrick's Institute, at the Music Hall, Quebec. The subject chosen was 'The Moral Taught by Four Revolutions.' This was a subject on which he had already lectured in Montreal, some three or four years ago and he stated that his propositions would be substantially the same as on that occasion. He proposed to offer some views which he held with regard to the causes and consequences of the four great revolutions announced in the subject. There would not be space for a complete narrative; but merely for a sketch of the leading incidents which related to their causes and the consequences which flowed from these causes.

"With regard to the first of these four revolutions, namely, the English revolution of 1688, in studying its events, we found ourselves often confronted with the question as to whether it was the result of the cabal of a few aristocratic houses to get rid of a king who was unpopular with them, or whether it was a general movement of the people struggling to be free. Whatever national partialities he might have in reference to some of the actors on either side, he considered it but right to say that he had impartially come to the conclusion that it was a great and necessary revolution. It was the ark of popular liberty in Europe. Without it we should have had no constitutional government, no limited monarchy, no popular government. For the true principles of constitutional government were indebted to the great men who conducted, with singular moderation and wisdom, the revolution of 1688. It was true that James II. was not more despotic than his father Charles I., but the man who conducted the opposition to his policy did so in a different spirit from that of Cromwell and his contemporaries. James by his own mere will had endeavored to dispense with Acts of parliament, thus setting aside the other estates of the realm. In these days we can scarcely realize the importance, which, at that time was laid upon the maxim that no law could be abrogated except by the King, Lords and Commons; nor of one or two without the others; the concurrence of the three was necessary. King James II. had attempted to introduce the system of the French or Spanish monarchies by copying their type of King and persisting in the belief in a legislative power vested in himself alone. The idea of liberty was old—as old as Christianity, as old as the world itself; the modern constitutional monarchy only dated from 1688. Another question which arose was whether the course of the King, in his unconstitutional acts, was sufficiently persistent, sufficiently obstinate to warrant a revolution. As a student of politics he (Mr. McGee) held that revolution was only justifiable when no limit of patience, no agitation, no constitutional effort would remedy radical evils and intolerable wrongs—then and then only could revolution be excused. Were King James's acts of this aggravated form and spirit? They were met here to judge him; they constituted the high court of Posterity which was to pronounce an opinion on his actions, and it was for them to determine. One fact was that James had set about doing a right thing in a wrong way. He sought to establish liberty of conscience for all, for the dissenter and the Catholic; but he had attempted to do so by his will alone. The fundamental laws of England did not allow of this. The constitution said that the laws should be enacted in a certain way. The monarch was not allowed to legislate by or for himself. The Roman Emperors had the power; some continental Kings possessed the legislative power; but the King of England never did. James attempted to alter the laws without the consent

of the other estates of the realm; and this was where he was wrong. For let us suppose that he had succeeded in giving his own will as law to the three Kingdoms, and to the colonial empire of Great Britain, what would have been the result so far as we are concerned? We may say—with profound respect for a Sovereign who has done so much to elevate the royal office—we may say that no rational man would like to see the mere word of the sovereign taking the place of the three estates of the kingdom; to see a proclamation in the royal gazette having greater force than the will of the people expressed through their representatives. If James II. had succeeded we would have had an absolute monarchy like France or Spain. The movement of 1688 might not have been intended as a popular movement by some of its promoters, yet it had that effect—the aristocrats who led it had enunciated and established popular principles. They desired to have the power of the king limited, but they have wished also to have a government characterized by strength and stability. They had conferred the crown upon another prince, not for his sake but for their own—carefully guarding the prerogative for the purpose of ensuring stability in the government. When they laid down their principles, they established constitutional government, not for themselves alone, but for the rest of the world. James II.'s reign was short; if he had longer experience he might have discovered that the temper of his people was not to be trifled with—but it was long enough to bring him into collision with every interest and every order of Englishmen. When he sent the Archbishop of Canterbury and the other bishops to prison, he placed himself directly at issue with the estate of which they were members. When he lectured the Speaker of the Commons as to the manner in which he should control certain members, and the expressions which he should or should not permit in the House, he placed himself directly at issue with the Commons. When he called the Judges into his private closet at Whitehall, and lectured them on their conduct towards the suitors who came before them, he placed himself at issue with the judicial power of the land.

"The honorable gentleman then spoke of James's flight, and observed that he had left the country in consequence of the alarm arising within him from his knowledge of the fact that he had violated the constitution. He found that the ground was out from under his feet; he did not know where to look for defence. A policy which was antagonistic to all the sentiments and feelings of the people, and which could never be supported by them unless maintained by the strong arm of military force—he felt this and fled in terror. In reality there could be no question but that from his accession to his abdication he had violated all the principles of English constitutional freedom. The people of England were on their own conservative ground. It was the King who was revolutionist. Where revolution was attempted for its own sake alone—where it proceeded on other than remedial grounds, it could not succeed in generating a stable government. Those who in a spirit of wanton innovation attempted to violate the constitution and destroy the privileges of a State, must fail. In 1688 James II. was in reality the radical and it was those who opposed him who were the conservatives. Revolution, if unjustifiable, should be opposed, whether it came with a crown on its head or a bludgeon in its hand. The Lords stood upon the ancient liberties of their country and refused to surrender them were in his opinion justified and the King was wrong."

(Before passing from this part of his subject the lecturer, as we learn from the Canadian Freeman report of his lecture on the same subject delivered in Montreal in 1859, felt it to be his duty to say that, although the Prince of Orange carried out the principles of civil and religious liberty in England and Scotland, he adopted a different policy in Ireland that rendered often those who were the noisiest to claim religious liberty for themselves were the most bitterly opposed to granting it to others.)

"The lecturer then came to the second point of his discourse, the American Revolution of 1776. It had always appeared to him that this subject had not been well explained in our current histories. Only one European writer, the illustrious De Tocqueville had entered rationally upon it; the others seemed to him completely astray. The Americans had tastes, habits and manners which were widely different from the Europeans, yet some Europeans persisted in taking their twelve inch rule, measuring all that they saw or heard in America by their own standard of measurement, and rejecting all which did not come up to it. In this they showed less the deficiencies of the Americans, than their own incapacity. Europe had occupied twelve or fifteen hundred years in working into its present shape. Yet it was when Europe had just divided into two great hostile religious camps, warring and contending with each other, that the foundations of the society of the New World were laid. Sectarianism and sectionalism were at the bottom of all the new communities. The American people had not our inheritance. . . . It was not right

therefore to measure them by our European standard. They were so far right, when in 1776, they had planted themselves on the traditional principles of English liberty and resisted their encroachment; and they then set to work to fashion anew the edifice of their liberty. They formed it of three estates, vesting the highest executive power in the President in the first place; they next formed a territorial estate which they called the Senate, and a popular estate denominated the House of Representatives. So far these divisions were copies from England. A difficulty soon arose. It was necessary that the principle of infallibility should be fixed somewhere; and the Americans vested this principle in thirteen Judges on the Supreme Court. So long as they believed in that Court and respected it, they got on harmoniously; but the moment they questioned it and set up caucuses against it, as in the Dred Scott case and others, chaos commenced, and the storm which it created threatened to sweep their government off the face of the earth. He desired to cultivate a friendly feeling between the British America and Republican America; he was by no means anti-American; but his conviction was that while Washington, Adams, Hamilton, and other truly great men of the early days of the Republic, had strongly impressed on their minds the wise principles of the revolution of 1688, the next generation had tried, not to improve upon Europe, but to cast it off; to get rid of its tradition, its influence, and its history, and to found their society anew; to teach Europe; but they had not succeeded. They had tried to disorganize, to dispense with the virtue of obedience—the moral sanction of all laws, and this drew upon them its own punishment with it. (It will be remembered that these words were spoken when the American Civil War was at its height.)

The hon. gentleman then traced the causes of the Irish constitutional revolution of 1782. He said there was not a nobler spectacle in history than that of Henry Grattan obtaining from England the declaration of Irish legislative independence—the admission that Ireland was a distinct Kingdom under the same Sovereign; that only the Kings, Lords and Commons of Ireland could make laws to bind that country; he did not seek for new things; he took for his basis his country's traditional privileges, and he was successful in his struggle for constitutional right against those who defended arbitrary innovation. He was too powerful for them; but they were too powerful for him in 1800—unfortunately for the peace and welfare and constitutional discipline and education of Ireland as he believed. After this independence was secured (in 1782), could the great majority of the people, those who were debarred from partaking of its advantages, have been educated for a generation or two in the conduct of constitutional freedom, they would have been the most free, happy and loyal people in the earth, for without freedom they could not be contented or happy.

"Coming next to the French Revolution of '89, which the lecturer remarked was different from all the others, being a wild attempt to re-organize society entirely and create a new France, it proved to us that that which was merely new—which retained nothing of old tradition or laws about it, could not succeed. They had done things in France then which were almost forgotten; they had swept away the days of the week, the months of the year, and the computation of time—and these were certainly radical changes. They had established a 'tenth day' of rest instead of the Sunday; but it was found that would not answer—it was a mistake. They had done things in labor and one-seventh of rest was more suited to the animal life, and so this arrangement of the French Republic was among the first proclaimed an error. In their zeal for liberty they had adopted privacy instead of publicity, and there were at one time in France, forty-four thousand committees of a secret nature, with signs and pass words. A charge, however, came. A great soldier arose—the greatest of the world had seen for 2,000 years—a great as a legislator, great as an orator—he caught the hydra in his mighty grasp and strangled it; and none were found to weep over the carcass of the French republic."

"Here, in this young country where we might freely examine all the constitutional experiences of others, we had two sets of ideas—the English and the French. The former might be sub-divided into the English idea proper and the American idea. The French idea was unfavorable to constitutional liberty. They had lost their first notions of constitutional liberty hundreds of years ago, and had not possessed it since. But the French race, like all others, were free to practise the principles of constitutional liberty, here in Canada under the British flag. In France, under the imperial rule, they could not; but here, in this country, they had the opportunity. It was no disgrace to them that they should draw their principles of liberty from England, as Rome drew from Greece, and Greece from Egypt, and Egypt no doubt from some other distant source, her systems and her wisdom. England, alone, in our days, possessed the true principles of free-

dom; she was, so to speak, the school of popular liberty from which others might learn; her system combined authority with freedom; and each was essential to the perpetuity of the other. The hon. gentleman closed, with some further sentences, on the imperishable relations of freedom and authority, as the moral to be taught by the revolutions he had sketched."

LETTER TO DORION

The reference in this lecture to the French idea of liberty provoked some hostile criticism. McGee, who was at that moment President of the Council in the Canadian Cabinet of Sandfield Macdonald answered his critics by a public letter, dated Quebec, January 14, 1863, to his Cabinet Colleague, Hon. A. A. Dorion. In this letter he showed himself to be as emphatic in defence of personal liberty as of national liberty, as the following extracts prove:

"I feel that I owe it to our common friends, to point out the mischievous malice of those writers who are attempting to get up against me, the cry of being 'an enemy of the French race' because I cannot, in the face of every fact of modern history, put France on a par with England as an exemplar of constitutional monarchy. Had my discourse been of arts, or science, or arms, it would have been blind bigotry to deny to France a glorious and a foremost place among European nations; but my topic was the problem of reconciling liberty and law—stability in the head with freedom in the members of a State,—and I could not, and did not try, to evade the truth, that England, from a happy combination of circumstances and advantages has preserved and established that well-poised representative system, of which the French race lost possession several hundred years ago. Who were this French race of 'several hundred years,' of whom I so spoke? Were they in Canada? Assuredly not; they were the French race whose local, provincial and national liberties, religious and civil, had fallen under the centralizing sway of Louis XI., of Richelieu, and of Louis XIV."

"On the only really serious respect of these discussions—the attempt to get up a cry of race—let me add a few sentences. The charge as against me is simply absurd. In Ireland it is on record, that I defended the great qualities of the Norman and Saxon rivals of our Celtic ancestors; in New England I defended against the exaggerations of Anglo-Saxonism, the reputation of the Celts; among the Irish of Canada I have defended the Scotch; among the Scotch, I have upheld the Irish; with Protestants I have defended Catholics; with Catholics I have defended Protestants;—why, then, should I, of whom this is the true mental record—I myself, a Celt and a Catholic—be 'the enemy' of the Celtic and Catholic French race? Because I cannot read history through the spectacles of these gentlemen, my political critics? Or because Parliament meets shortly, and a little preliminary muddling of the Ministerial waters would be serviceable."

"What I write now, my dear Sir, to you, I write as a friend and ally, not as a Minister, nor even as a member for Montreal. Correct or incorrect in my historical disquisitions I will defend to the last hour of my life, the right of free discussion, on all subjects on which rational men may differ; and the cry of race raised against the political representative will not, in one iota, lead the historical lecturer to alter or suppress his convictions, on questions of constitutional history or on any other questions."

"This super-sensitiveness to free historical disquisition, I am sure you will admit, is not a sign of robust mental health. I doubt, if it is any evidence of a really vigilant patriotism, and it certainly neither alarms, nor convinces, nor conciliates me. No one more cordially believes tribute than I do to the great talents and lasting services to our free government of French-Canadians—the Bedards, Papineaus, Vallieres, Lafontaine, Morins—and some others, still in the arena. But every one of these great men walked in the glory succession of statesmen whom I glorified,—in the right line of Welden, of Lord Somers, of Edmund Burke, of Pitt and Fox, and O'Connell and Brougham. Had they chosen as their models, Prissot and Danton, and Mirabeau, the result could not have been so fortunate for Canada as it has been. They contended on behalf of a French population, but they contended for British liberties. Had they made their ultimatum of the doctrines of 1789, could they have stood where they now stand in history—or have won the victories they did? I for one, my dear Sir, am most ready to be guided by their distinguished example; and I should be sufficiently consoled for any ephemeral injustice I may suffer, by being numbered among the least of their successors."

"Pardon me—I run on too long. It is possible, nay probable, that educated as we were in different languages, and arriving at our experience through different avenues, you may not subscribe to the views of the French and other revolutions you heard me utter years ago and which I sincerely hold. I hardly dare expect otherwise. But at least I rest assured of the fact, that in your fair and candid judgment, you do not consider me capable of intentionally offending so large a portion of our fellow subjects as speak

French, or any portion, large or small, of the people of Canada of any language.

"If I were capable of shaping my convictions for every vicinage, I might well be distrusted and high spirited men. So long as within the forms prescribed by good manners and good neighborhood, I maintain my own convictions, religious, political, or historical, I am guilty of offence to no men, or race of men, and I acknowledge none."

"Believe me, Yours always,
"THOS. D'ARCY MCGEE."

(For this letter and lecture I am indebted to J. J. McGee's manuscript "Reminiscences of the Hon. Thomas D'Arcy McGee.")

While the reader may not subscribe unreservedly to all the views, historical and political, expressed in the lecture on the Four Revolutions, he will admit that the lecture and letter prove beyond doubt the soundness of McGee's general attitude towards popular movements of independence. Having now, by this digression, enabled the reader to convince himself of the unfairness of Mrs. Skelton's condemnation of McGee's "conservatism," we shall now continue our consideration of McGee's specifically religious activities. To do this we must return to the year 1852.

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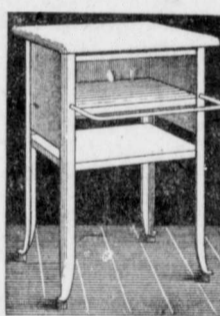
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