



# Christianity or Secularism

WHICH IS TRUE?

VERBATIM REPORT OF A PUBLIC DEBATE

BETWEEN

The REV. DR. JAMES McCANN

AND

Mr. G. W. FOOTE

(Editor of "The Freethinker"),

AT THE

HALL OF SCIENCE, OLD STREET, LONDON, E.C.,

ON THURSDAYS, APRIL 8, 15, 29, AND MAY 6, 1886.

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*(Revised by the Disputants.)*

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CHRISTIANITY OR SECULARISM:  
WHICH IS TRUE?

A VERBATIM REPORT OF A FOUR NIGHTS' DEBATE BETWEEN

THE REV. DR. J. McCANN AND MR. G. W. FOOTE,

*At the Hall of Science, Old Street, London, E.C.*

FIRST NIGHT, APRIL 8, 1886.

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MRS. BESANT, in introducing the speakers, said: You are all of you aware that the subject for the debate to-night is "Christianity or Secularism: Which is True?" The arrangements for the debate are as follows:—Dr. McCann opens the debate to-night in a speech of half an hour; Mr. Foote answers in a speech also of half an hour. The second hour will be divided into four speeches of a quarter of an hour each, Dr. McCann commencing and Mr. Foote closing for to-night. Next Thursday Mr. Foote will open the debate, but arrangements otherwise will be the same. I don't think I need ask those who are present here to give help to the disputants and to me by preserving thorough order throughout the debate. I conclude from your presence here we may take it for granted that you are searchers after truth, and that those of you who are sure that you are right will be willing to listen patiently and quietly to the arguments on the other side. (Hear, hear.) I will now call on Dr. McCann.

DR. McCANN: The time at my disposal is so short that I must enter on my subject with but few preliminary remarks. I may then at once state that I do not think a debate of this kind is the best way of arriving at truth, because it must be apparent to all that questions so important as those which we are discussing require calm and protracted thought; and I have not the slightest doubt that if either Mr. Foote or myself were to answer the other from the solitude of our study, we should answer very differently from the rapid method necessitated by the platform. Nevertheless this debate may be of use; I hope it may.

One word more. In this discussion there will be nothing personal; I shall hit as hard as I can anything Mr. Foote may say that I think mistaken. To do that I must mention his name, but when I say Mr. Foote, I mean only what Mr. Foote has said. I am also well assured that my attitude towards him will be the same as his towards me, so that no feeling but one of friendliness will exist in either towards the other. (Applause.)

And now to my subject. Believing Christianity to be true and a most important aid to human progress, I am about to state my reasons for that belief. If these reasons be not refuted my point will be established. Believing Secularism to be untrue, in fact impossible, I shall state my reasons for that belief on a future evening. I hope to do this in so explicit a way that, whether I convince you or not of my accuracy, you will at least learn to treat with more respect than is now always accorded to it, that belief called Christianity, and also have your belief shaken in that something called Secularism.

The propositions I am about to maintain, and of which Mr. Foote has a copy, are the following:—

1. Christianity is belief in the deity of Christ, and a life in harmony with the teachings of Christ and the writers of the New Testament.

2. These teachings are in harmony with the facts of consciousness.

3. They are helpful to human progress.

As regards the deity of Christ, it is no part of my work to-night to prove or even explain that position. It will be attacked on the next evening by my opponent, when I shall do my best to answer him. Meantime I proceed on the assumption that the claims made by Christ are true. Indeed no other course is possible, because were I to pause to enforce this doctrine all our time would be occupied, and I might with perfect consistency be asked to go farther back and prove there was Deity at all. So the debate would become one on the existence of God. I apprehend, however, that you wish the subject treated from a practical rather than a speculative point of view. You will observe then that I make true Christianity to consist in a life moulded by the teachings and example of Christ, and the teachings of the writers of the New Testament. It is not merely intellectual assent to a series of propositions, it is also the heart surrender to the influence of a person—as Paul expressed it when he said “to me to *live* is Christ.” This principle will be acknowledged true of all moral systems, or those that concern conduct. He would not be called a consistent Secularist who merely professed to believe the writings of Secularists

but who in life contradicted them. And such was the contention of Christ always. "He that hath my commandments and *keepeth* them, he it is that loveth me." "If a man love me he will keep my words." Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, "If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed." The same with his apostles. "Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves." This, however, is so manifest as not to require proof. Consequently, before any action or life can be rightly called "Christian," it must be shown to be in accordance with the *teachings* of Christ and his apostles. The doings of Christians are very frequently, unfortunately, in direct opposition to these teachings; so that they ought to be called un-Christian. (Applause.)

It is unnecessary to dwell longer on this point, as it cannot be disputed. Our next question is, Are these teachings calculated to elevate the life that is in accordance with them? Now it is perfectly clear that any system to benefit the character of man must be adapted to the fundamental principles of that character—that is, they must be in harmony with the facts of consciousness, for these are the base and guarantee of all truth. This is so important that I must pause for a quotation from Sir Wm. Hamilton relative to it. "It is at once evident that philosophy, as it affirms its own possibility, must affirm the veracity of consciousness; for, as philosophy is only a scientific development of the facts which consciousness reveals, it follows that philosophy, in denying or doubting the testimony of consciousness, would deny or doubt its own existence." Again: "It is manifest at once and without further reasoning, that no philosophical theory can pretend to truth except that single theory which comprehends and develops the facts of consciousness on which it founds itself, without retrenchment, distortion or addition."

We are, then, conscious of the possession of reason, conscience, will and affection. I select these because, as time will not permit of a more extended analysis, I prefer considering those powers that are called the *motive* powers of the mind, or the powers that persuade to action. Surely any system that appeals to man's reason, appeases his conscience, defers to his will, and wins his purest affections, must for him be true. Christianity does all these. (Applause.)

First, it appeals to his reason. We are not asked to believe anything without a reason for that belief, or evidence in its favor. Belief that is not based on evidence is *credulity*, and not worthy the name belief. Christ appealed sometimes to his works, as when he said "believe me for the very works' sake." Again: "Why even of yourselves judge ye not what is right." In fact all his



teachings were an appeal to men's reason, and his followers were even more emphatic in their claims for reason. Paul says, "Let every man be fully *persuaded* in his own mind." "I speak as to wise men; *judge ye* what I say." We read that Paul "went in unto them [Jews] and three Sabbath days *reasoned* with them out of the scriptures." When before Felix "he *reasoned* of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come." He reasoned with the philosophers of Athens, and with such effect that certain clave to him there and then, while others wished to hear again. He states one of the chief qualities of a bishop to be that he is "apt to teach." But in point of fact it is not necessary to establish this from the New Testament, for the mere fact that reason is a gift of God is of itself sufficient to prove that reason ought to be used; it is a talent, as the Christian believes, to be accounted for one day. We should then regard it as a primary duty "to be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh him a *reason* of the hope that is in us with meekness and reverence."

Further, the authority of conscience is recognised, and its claims admitted. The greatest sorrows in life, the deepest degradations of our days, have arisen from disregarding its utterances. Well does the poet speak of that "peace above all earthly dignities a still and quiet conscience." When conscience speaks all other voices must be hushed, custom must be disregarded, profit must be rejected, worldly affluence or influence must be set aside. That which is believed to be right, must be, as far as possible, rightly done at all hazard, and at all cost. So Paul says "herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men." John tells Timothy "to hold the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience." Peter also speaks of the "answer of a good conscience towards God." "Ought" is made the imperative word. "These ought ye to have done." "We ought to obey God rather than man." "He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk even as he walked." Is this, or is this not, in accordance with our moral sense? Surely we cannot deny that when a man's conscience tells him a certain course is right, he ought to follow it if he can. What would be thought of the man who said, I feel I ought to do this, it is right, but it won't pay? How much better, happier would our country be if every individual in it tried to keep his conscience void of offence, tried to do that which in his heart he honestly believed he ought to do. I freely grant that sometimes the action might not be altogether a prudent one, but that does not alter my position, that even with these mistakes for all men to act conscientiously would be the dawning of a brighter day than our land has yet seen. (Applause.)

Further, Christianity never loses sight of the fact that we have will, freedom ; are so far agents in our own lives, and responsible to God for the manner in which we use that agency. Man is every where appealed to, urged, prayed, entreated, to cease to do evil, and learn to do well. He is never regarded as a machine. So consistently is this borne in mind that even Christ does not bring his power to bear in the moral world. In the physical world his word was sufficient, but in the world of man's responsibility that word never was used. He wished the love and consistency of brethren, and not the monotony of machinery. It is ever "Come unto me," "seek," "strive," "labor," etc. Let your view of the truth of Christianity be what it may, none can deny the beauty of the statement regarding Christ, "Behold I stand at the door and knock." The love, the patience, the deference to human responsibility, expressed in these words, cannot, on our hypothesis, be overstated.

There is one other point to be considered here, and that not the least important. It is that Christianity gains man's affection. It is perfectly clear that when we act from personal affection we shall do so much more energetically, happily, and successfully, than when duty is the *only* motive. Now on the theory of Christianity, the affections must be won of those who practically embrace it. For that theory is that Christ, for man, came from heaven to earth, for him suffered more than any other man, is still conferring benefits upon him, and procures for him the greatest blessing possible to confer on any human being. Whether truly or falsely, that is what Christians believe, and believing that, it is not difficult to tell the results. And in-fact such have been the results in those who are *rightly* called Christians. This love is possible only to a person—no abstract truth could call it forth. So far Christianity is not assent to doctrines, but love and likeness to a person. It is built on Christ. "He made it first, he makes it still. His blood was its seed, and his spirit creates its flower. Without him it would never have been, without him it could not continue to be." Never has Being kindled such love as he, the unseen. For him men have borne everything. He has stirred a love in life that has ennobled the poorest, and made the penniless wealthy. (Applause.)

Allow me to quote here a passage from the life of Napoleon, not now for the purpose of proving the divinity of Christ, but of describing his power over men. While at St. Helena he said to one of his generals "Who was Christ? Alexander, Cæsar, Charlemagne, and I, have founded empires with force—he with love. Millions would die for him. I understand human nature. These were men, Jesus Christ was more than man. I have inspired multitudes, but to do this it was necessary that I should be visibly

present with the electric influence of my look, my words, my voice. When I saw men and spoke to them I lighted up the flame of self-devotion in their hearts. Christ alone has succeeded in so raising the mind of men towards the unseen that it becomes insensible to the barriers of time and space. Across the chasm of eighteen hundred years he makes a demand which is beyond all others difficult to satisfy; he asks for the human heart. He inspires a supernatural love. Time, the great destroyer, is powerless to extinguish this sacred flame; time can neither exhaust its strength nor set a limit to its range." Christianity, therefore, appealing to the facts of consciousness, to the motive powers of man's life, would convince his reason, enforce the dictates of his conscience, stimulate his will, and win his love; Christianity necessarily elevates him both intellectually and morally, making his life truer and grander than before. (Cheers.)

The next point to be considered is—that a system to benefit man must be adapted not only to his nature but also to his surroundings or condition in life. It must not be for men of any one class, or culture, or age, but for *all* men. Equally it must be able to reach and elevate the rich and poor, the learned and the unlearned, the old and young. It cannot for a moment be denied that this is true of Christianity. Its disciples are found in all these positions. This is made possible by the simplicity that is in Christ. All can understand what it is to trust and follow Christ. In his own days the common people heard him gladly, and they do so still. True there are profundities of thought that sages cannot fully fathom. This, however, is exactly what we should have anticipated, as when a father teaches his child there is much the child can apprehend but there is also much beyond its power of thought, at least for the time. But yet again, if this power is to be for man it must be adapted for man as such, irrespective of country and age. There must be neither "Jew nor Greek, barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free." All must be one. It must also be detached from all those frameworks of human life that necessarily pass away: codes of law, systems of government, institutions, theories of philosophy, forms of language and literature; it must be able to live with and rule all, be identified with none. It must be universal in space and time. Now this would have been utterly impossible for Christianity had it, as some have thought it ought to have done, elaborated a detailed set of rules for the guidance of life—directions regarding individual conduct, forms of government, political economy, etc. J. S. Mill thought it defective here, yet, what does he say on its ethics as a whole: "I am as far as anyone from pretending that these



defects are necessarily inherent in its ethics, in any manner in which it can be conceived ; or that the many requisites of a complete moral doctrine which it does not contain, do not admit of being reconciled with it. Far less would I insinuate this of the doctrines and precepts of Christ himself " (*Liberty.*) Instead of a system of casuistry, or cases for conscience, it gives broad leading principles of conduct that strengthen a man's moral muscle, teach him to think for himself, and act intelligently as a master, and not a slave. In moral as in material things one man's meat is another man's poison, what will help one may hinder another. Therefore in things indifferent, liberty is allowed and self is developed. One set of principles for example is given by Paul : " Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are of good report ; think of these things." These precepts honestly carried out will do more than volumes of specific rules to guide men aright. Suppose some revelation were imagined to be given from God in the present day for the guidance, at the present time alone, of all men in government, commerce and private life, on this principle of detail demanded by Mr. F. W. Newman ! Why the idea would be ridiculously impossible. But these principles stated by Paul, can you imagine a country, time, or circumstance in which they would not be a guide ? Christianity is for all ages of life, all ages of the world, all countries, and all circumstances. Christianity also starts man from the first on the right and manly way. " Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you." It places truth first and all other things as secondary. Who would have it otherwise ? The man who is not true is nothing. He may *have* much, but he *is* nothing. On the other hand, the citizen of the empire of truth has, so far, the true in all things. If he has wealth, he uses its truth and becomes richer ; if poverty, he uses it and becomes less poor. One of Christ's most honored names was " the Truth," and therefore the life. He who will first of all, and before all, make it his aim to be true to his God, true to his fellow-man and true to himself, may be poor in the wealth of gold, but he will be rich in wealth of self, nobility of character and grandeur of life. And this is Christianity. (Applause.)

Not only, however, does it start man on a grand career—it also supplies him with motive forces that are, or ought to be, sufficient for his needs. Such aids are urgently demanded, for there are unmanly habits to be mastered, evil tendencies to be overcome, temptations to be conquered. What is that aid ? I might refer to the promised help of the spirit of God coming with power into our



weakness to make us strong; but I wish to keep to the human side as much as possible; therefore I pass this by, and speak alone of the power of love. This is the strongest of emotions, mastering all the rest—mastering them happily as well as surely. In Christianity we have love to Christ as the great foundation, as has been already shown. And this love Christ claims as his own, and rightly so, if his character and services be what Christians believe them. They have learned to love that Christ who did not allow man's evil to hide the man; who came to seek and save the lost; who was so gentle as to draw children to his side, and so sympathetic as to conquer the fear of the fallen. That Jesus whose heart was the home of a love that enfolded the world, whose spirit was the stainless and truthful mirror of the eternal. That Jesus whose spirit had depths storms could not reach, heights they could not disturb. That Jesus that loved with more than brother's love, and felt with more than woman's tenderness. But love of Christ ends not there; from it there springs love to our brothers also. No fact in the whole of the New Testament is more insisted on than this, and surely no fact could be more influential and good than brotherly love. For love worketh no ill to his neighbor, therefore love is the fulfilling of the law. What says Christ himself on this point? "Love your enemies; bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you and persecute you." If all men only acted on this precept, enemies would be changed to friends, and hate give place to love. (Cheers.) There may be some not able to appreciate such high-toned character, but this only shows me the more their need of such an elevating influence. Again, "A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; as I have loved you that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples if ye have love one to another.", He also summed up the whole law regarding man's duty to man in one sentence, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself."

When we turn to the Apostles we find exactly the same teaching. Many of you may be familiar with Paul's splendid eulogy of love, as charity, "Though I speak with the tongue of men and angels, and have not love, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling symbol." "Now abideth faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love." What, I ask, could be more emphatic than the language of John: "He that saith he is in the light and hateth his brother is in darkness even until now." "Beloved, let us love one another." "If a man say, I love God and hateth his brother he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath

seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?" Quotations of this kind might be multiplied indefinitely. But these are sufficient for my present purpose, and they give you the spirit that animates the whole teaching of Christ and his Apostles. Again, I ask you, in all earnestness, what would be the effect of their universal adoption? Would they not put an end to all warfare and dishonesty, to all cruelty, to all slander, to unbrotherliness of every kind? Would they not give effect to the injunction, "Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you with all malice, and be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you." More hopeful and ennobling teaching, a sublimer system, based on so spotless and consistent a life, cannot be imagined. (Applause.)

If the age is ever to advance, it can only be in the future, as in the past, on these lines, and by means of a genuine Christianity; for Christ is the Master Spirit of all progress. "He inculcates that which is real and vital, he annuls that which is no longer helpful; his eyes are ever on living needs—his face towards the future. 'I am the truth,' he said; therefore whatever is untrue in doctrine or life, in science or philosophy, is contrary to his spirit. He was a hater of shams and forms that did not thrill with beneficent life. He put behind him whatever of theory, or custom, or tradition that interfered with human welfare. He brought the world face to face with realities. Christianity is most vigorous in the most vigorous and progressive nations. It marches in the van of the world's advancement. It lives in the sunlight, and walks in the day, and grows under the gaze of men. It leads the procession of those who minister to suffering, alleviate poverty and seek to speed the day in which the brotherhood of man and the Fatherhood of God shall be recognised around the world." Well might Lecky, in his *History of Morals*, write of the founder of this faith: "It was reserved for Christianity to present to the world an ideal character which, through all the changes of eighteen centuries, has inspired the hearts of men with an impassioned love, and has shown itself capable of acting on all ages, nations, temperaments and conditions; has not only been the highest pattern of virtue, but the highest incentive to its practice; and has exercised so deep an influence that it may be truly said that the simple record of three short years of active life has done more to regenerate mankind than all the disquisitions of philosophers and all the exhortations of moralists." This is not the testimony of a friend, and what say those who reject his greater claims and view him from the standpoint of the true rationalist? What says Strauss, the apostle of destructive criticism?

"He remains the highest model of religion within the reach of our thought, and no perfect piety is possible without his presence in the heart." What says Keim: "His is the religion of the loftiest idealism, in faith and will; and yet again so entirely measured, rational and sober; because resting on actually experienced facts and built on earnest deeds of highest, fullest and truly human, free, reasonable performance." Hear the words of J. S. Mill, in his *Essays on Religion*: "Whatever else may be taken from us by rational criticism, Christ is still left, a unique figure, not more unlike all his precursors than his followers. Nor would it be easy, even for an unbeliever, to find a better translation of the rule of virtue from the abstract into the concrete than to endeavor so to live that Christ would approve his life." Lastly, one quotation from Rénan, who wrote to show that Christ was only a man. I close with the words in which he concluded his volume: "Whatever be the surprises of the future, Jesus will never be surpassed. His worship will grow young without ceasing; His legend will call forth tears without end: His sufferings will meet the noblest hearts: All ages will proclaim that among the sons of men there is none born greater than Jesus." (Loud applause.)

MR. FOOTE: To-night I am placed in rather a difficult position. To begin with, although I was furnished with the three propositions Dr. McCann would maintain to-night, I had no more idea of the line he was going to pursue than any person in this audience. The terms of his propositions are so vague that they include the universe, and it was utterly impossible for me to make a selection beforehand. I had not the slightest idea what writers Dr. McCann would quote—that is a disadvantage which I shall endeavor to remove for him next Thursday evening. It was a point we had not sufficiently considered. Next Thursday Dr. McCann will have a list of the books I shall cite, and, within reasonable limits, of the passages I shall quote. He will, therefore, be able to quote from the context, or from other portions of the same books, or the writings of the same authors. I am also in a position of difficulty because I rather agree than disagree with a great deal of what Dr. McCann has said. (Hear, hear.) It was only when he came to the close of his speech, and gave you a series of panegyrics on Christ, which I have not time to refute in detail, that I found myself in collision with him. The thought occurred to me, as he was reading that glowing piece of rhetoric from Rénan, that it would have been as well if that eminent writer had read a sentence of George Eliot's before he wrote it—namely, that "prophecy is a gratuitous form of error." It is impossible to comprehend his entering among



the prophets, except on the theory that Rénan, who is a great man, is conscious of his greatness, and is not devoid of that vanity of opinion which marks too many writers of the nation to which he belongs.

Dr. McCann thinks that a debate of this kind may not be of great value, and that if we had a private conversation we should more probably arrive at truth. But that is not our purpose to-night. Dr. McCann has arrived at truth, as he thinks; so have I; and our purpose to-night is to lay before this impartial audience our respective views, so that you may judge between us. In a private conversation we might be too lenient with each other. We might concede too much. We might slur over differences and make the most of agreements. To-night our business is rather to make the most of disagreements.

It is not enough to say that Christianity inculcates moral precepts. All religions that ever existed in the world do that. The proper basis of discussion to-night is—what is it that differentiates Christianity from other forms of belief, and is Christianity especially true and beneficent in that respect? To describe a particular man in the terms of physiology would be to describe him so that nobody could recognise him. If you describe him you must describe all his peculiarities and not all his generalities; that is, you must describe him according to those characteristics that difference him from others. I hold that Dr. McCann ought to have dwelt most on those features of Christianity that separate it from other religions, and give it its individuality. Whether he has done that is a matter for you to judge. I have my own opinion, and perhaps after all it would coincide with that of Dr. McCann himself. (Laughter.)

Another curious observation I wish to clear away is this: Christian practice must not be taken into account when we are judging Christianity. (Hear, hear.) Evidently Dr. McCann's view is shared by some persons, but if you are to take the lives of Christians, select from their practices everything which throws credit upon Christianity, and exclude everything that throws discredit upon it, you can of course prove just what you please. (Hear, hear.) It was well remarked by Cardinal Newman once that by a judicious selection of facts you can prove anything. (Laughter.) I want to point out what a very two-edged argument this is. If people who do things which are not inculcated in the New Testament are not to be reckoned as Christians in that respect, then all those who refrain from doing things that *are* inculcated in the New Testament must likewise be exempted. If you exclude all who supplement and all who neglect the maxims of the New

Testament, you would have such a large category of exclusions that I doubt if a single Christian would remain.

I believe it is a Christian doctrine that there is efficacy in prayer. I believe Jesus Christ himself said that "Whatsoever ye ask believing, ye shall receive." In a Christian country, under a Christian law, the House of Commons must supplicate the divine aid every day before it commences its deliberations. That is the profession. But when some member who really believes it all rises and asks the Prime Minister to set aside a day for special prayer to God against the prevailing distress, the Prime Minister sets the request aside with a half-veiled sneer; and his frame of mind is similar to that of ninety-nine out of every hundred Christians outside, who imply one set of principles in their rites and ceremonies, and practise quite another in all the business and pleasure of life. (Applause.)

Christianity is in harmony with the facts of consciousness! Now this is a very wide phrase. It includes everything that anybody ever had in his mind. If that be a fair view of "the facts of consciousness," Christianity is certainly not in harmony with them. The Buddhist, the Brahman and the Mohammedan, and the professors of every other creed, would reject it as not in harmony with their consciousness. No doubt Christianity is in harmony with the consciousness of those who have been taught from their childhood to believe it. It would be a miracle if it were not. But it is not in harmony with my consciousness. (Laughter.) It is sadly in discord with it; and I do not know how Dr. McCann can maintain his position unless he excludes me from the category of humanity.

Now we were told that Christianity stimulates the reason, the conscience, the will, and the affections. I do not think anyone who candidly reads the history of Christianity would come to any such conclusion. Christianity has so stimulated reason that during the greater part of its history reason has been remorselessly trodden under foot. It is a fact, which I think no student of history would think of disputing, that until Christianity appeared in the world there never was a religion, except Judaism, which of course is only another branch of the same theology, which ever put forward the monstrous dogma that a man was to be saved or damned, or in any way rewarded or punished, for his faith or want of faith. A religion which has always taught that dogma, and written it in the tortures of the Inquisition, in the fires of the stake, in the loathsome dungeons where men expiated the crime of thinking for themselves, has no right to talk of its love for reason. Christianity has no right to-day, when its power is diminished, to claim a love

for that rationality which it always derided and oppressed in the day of its power. (Loud applause.)

I am sorry to confess that the teachings of the New Testament do put a great strain upon my reason. Of course my reason may not be so accommodating as Dr. McCann's. It may not be so pliable and docile. You will pardon me for introducing a little story. A gentleman was once holding forth to George Eliot on the beauty of Christianity. She listened to his platitudes with great patience, and when he had done she said: "Well there's a great deal in what you say, and after all I have only one objection to Christianity," "And what is that, pray?" "Why," she replied, "it isn't true." (Laughter). If Christianity simply meant that men were to have brotherly love towards each other, if it simply meant that they were to assist each other, if it simply meant that men were to do their best in this life for themselves and all around them, if it simply meant that they were to try to make the world a little better for their having lived in it, everybody would be a Christian; and I venture to say that if Christianity had carried only that message to the heathen world it would have made infinitely greater conquests than it has. (Hear, hear.)

But Christianity says that Jesus Christ is God. That is a strain on my reason. Dr. McCann said he would not enter into a discussion on that point because it would take too much time. No doubt it would—to prove it. (Laughter.) We might be driven back on the question of whether God exists! Not so. I would admit for the sake of argument the existence of God, and then we should simply have to discuss whether Jesus Christ was God in the sense both of us attach to the word. Dr. McCann was judicious in skipping that question. I cannot believe that Jesus Christ was God; and what is more, ninety-nine out of every hundred Christians do not believe it. (Hear, hear.) If they believed that he is God would they not implicitly obey every injunction that ever fell from his lips? Jesus was God and told us what is necessary for our guidance! Yet no man will quote him in Parliament, on a town council, on a School Board, or on any committee where men are engaged in serious business. The place to quote him is in church or chapel, and that is a place where, as you know, one man speaks at a time and no one dare contradict what he says.

Christianity, according to the teaching of the New Testament writers, demands belief in miracles. The modern mind rejects them. If you tell a man that a miracle occurred yesterday he will laugh at you. If you tell him that a miracle occurred eighteen hundred years ago, he says "That is just what I believe." But why is this difference? Simply because if you tell him a story of



yesterday he uses his common sense, while he believes without thinking a story which is found within the borders of the book which he accepts in a spirit of faith and not of reason, and bows to as before the tribunal of God, which he must not question but simply submit to. (Applause.)

Christianity stimulates men's consciences! Some people respond very feebly to the stimulant. (Laughter.) I am not aware that Christianity stimulates man's conscience any more than Buddhism. Nay, I consider that Buddhism is more tender, more beautiful, more loving, than any form of Christianity. What Christianity ever taught the rights of the lower animals? Yet Buddhism teaches that the moral law holds with every being capable of feeling pleasure and pain, and I say that is a higher and more tender form of conscience than any Christianity has produced. (Hear, hear.) Conscience did not begin with Christianity, and fortunately will not end with it. I object altogether to the statement that Christianity stimulates conscience. I agree with Professor Bain, who says that whenever Jesus says a right thing he always gives a wrong reason for it. Jesus says we must do this and do that, but he never gives us the right reason. "Love one another" he commands us, as if love could be commanded! It can only be earned. (Hear, hear.) We are to forgive each other because then God will forgive us! It is a question of profit and loss. (Laughter.) If Jesus had said, Do good to each other because you are all of one family; if he had said, like the great Roman moralist, the emperor Marcus Aurelius, that men are made for co-operation like the rows of the upper and lower teeth; if he had taught, like that noble sage, that what is not good for the hive neither is it good for the single bee, and what is not good for the single bee neither is it good for the hive; he would have put morality upon a basis that never could have been subverted. But he bases morality on the will of God, and we have simply to obey. That may be the slavishness of fear, but it is not the morality of universal love. (Cheers.)

Christianity has won the affections of men! So has every religion that ever was taught. Children are told from their earliest days that Jesus was pure and perfect, and how many men in the world ever think themselves out of the teaching of their childhood? Unfortunately, very few. The priest knows that as the twig is bent the tree inclines. If children are taught that Jesus Christ was the noblest, purest, and loftiest being that ever existed, men will say it when they grow older, and Dr. McCanns will be found to expatiate on it even from secular platforms. (Laughter.)

Christ suffered for man! If he were God, as Dr. McCann says, how could he suffer for man? There is no sense in the proposi-



tion, except on the supposition that Jesus was a man and not a God. If he were God suffering on that cross, if he were God calling to himself "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"—(laughter)—the whole thing would become a farce beneath contempt. There is no pathos in the Calvary story except on the supposition that Jesus of Nazareth was a man who, like so many others in the world's history, met a cruel death because he was inimical to the people in power. Does Dr. McCann suppose that Buddhism has not centred the affections of the hundreds of millions of Buddhists round the person of Buddha? He knows it has. If his argument proves anything, it proves that Christ was God and Christianity is true, that Mohammed was God and Mohammedanism is true, and that Buddha was God and Buddhism true. (Cheers.) An argument which proves too much is quite as bad as an argument that proves too little.

Millions are ready to die for Christ! Well, as I said before, prophecy is easy. Millions were not always found ready to die for Christ. As a matter of fact, Protestantism was established on the continent and in our own island by the right arm of secular power; and out of the thousands of clergymen in the reign of Queen Mary who had to choose between yielding up their livings and preaching a doctrine in direct opposition to that which they had sworn to maintain, how many do you think followed Christ? About a hundred and twenty. (Laughter). I know that men will fight for right. I know that men will fight to realise what they think true. I know that men will fight rather than yield positions they have taken up. If you exclude all these you will find that the martyrs for Christ might be counted very much more readily than Dr. McCann believes.

Christianity is adapted to all men! It is so adapted to all men that three-fourths of the human race, after eighteen centuries of preaching, still reject it. Although the missionaries come home and boast of the converts they have made in heathen countries, it is still true that they make no converts worth mentioning amongst the adherents of the great historic systems—the Mohammedans, the Buddhists, the Brahmans, or even the Jews. How then can Christianity be considered fit for all men? And it can be proved that faster even than it professes to make converts among the heathen abroad it loses it hold upon the people at home. (Hear, hear.)

Christianity is strongest among the most progressive nations! Not so; it is the feeblest. If you go to the most backward countries of Europe, such as Spain and certain parts of Italy, you will find Christianity meeting you at every turn. But it leaves you freer when you come to the most progressive countries like

our own, where men fling off their religious profession with their Sunday clothes, and in their work-day costume act on their work-day principles, which are invariably secular and never Christian. (Loud applause.)

DR. McCANN : My friend in his opening remarks said, and very rightly said, that he found his position a very difficult one, and I believe every man who attempts to oppose Christianity by argument will find it very difficult indeed. Mr. Foote also said that the terms of my propositions were so vague that they included the universe. Considering that I was to defend Christianity I could not make them much more precise than I think they are. They included its love, its tenderness, its improving influences, and its power of stimulating the conscience of man. I am obliged to Mr. Foote for his offer to give me a list of writers he will quote, which I willingly accept as it will add much to the importance of our debate. I could not well give him a list of the passages I was going to quote this evening, as I have only quoted from the New Testament and from one or two authors with whom I am sure Mr. Foote is as well acquainted as I am.

He referred to Rénan's prophecies and thought that these were the products of his vanity, but there might be other reasons than vanity for prophesying certain events in the future. Might he not be inferring from the past what will take place in the future? Rénan understood human character, and his prophecy was a result of reason and not a bauble born of vanity. (Hear, hear.) Mr. Foote says that Christianity inculcates moral precepts, but so do all systems of religion. Yes, but inculcating moral precepts is one thing, but enforcing them is another. It is little to say—do this or do that. But Christianity does more. It not only tells us what to do, but tells us how to do it; also supplies a moral force enabling us to do it. One great point of our faith is this: it gives you an ever-present power, and reasoning born of love for living a Christian life. But Mr. Foote also says I ought to have shown how Christianity was differentiated from the religions of the Mahommedans, the Buddhists and the Brahmins, and how these differentiæ showed a superiority on the part of Christianity over the other religions of the world. My subject to-night is not Christianity and other religions, but Christianity and Secularism. (Hear, hear.) In so far as this debate is concerned, I shall speak of Christianity in its comparison with Secularism and nothing else, and I shall try to show you how superior it is to that Secularism in which you believe. You call yourselves Secularists and not Buddhists, and therefore I need only explain to you Christianity as compared with your own

creed, and not with the creed of other people. (Hear, hear.) I am perfectly content to compare Christianity with any other religion in the world at a proper time, when that should be the subject of debate, but as our time at present is limited it is just as well to confine ourselves to the questions in hand.

My opponent says that I affirm that Christian practice is not to be taken into account when we are judging Christianity. Nothing could possibly be further from my mind than such an assertion. We are to take Christian practice into account when we are judging Christianity, but it must be the practice of those who are truly Christians, and not of those who are merely Christian in name. From the New Testament I deduce certain principles. These are the principles of Christianity, and anyone acting in accordance with these principles is a true Christian, so that the very first thing to do, if we want to know whether a man or woman is a Christian or not, is to compare their practice with that of Jesus or his disciples. He says if we leave out all who transgress Christianity we should leave out a very large number indeed. There is no doubt about that whatever. Will you find me a perfect man of any kind whatever on this world at the present time, of any class, of any church, or of any creed? None will acknowledge more readily than do Christians themselves that they are not as true to their high standard as they ought to be, that their Christianity is not what it ought to be. They very often do what they ought not to do, and they very often think as they ought not to think; that, however, is weakness of ourselves, and not the weakness of the faith which we profess. (Hear, hear.) It is our purpose and our endeavor to go on ever from strength to strength. Christ's example is something set before a man as a guide for him to act by, as a spur to help him on, ever onwards, upwards, higher and still higher. (Hear, hear.) I say, therefore, it is to help those who are toiling along, to bring the erring, the weak and the prodigal into the right way of rest. We are also told that Christianity necessitates belief in prayer. There can be no doubt whatever about that. In our prayers we ask for blessings, believing in the will, in the power, and in the wisdom of God to answer them. We pray to him as your children would pray to you. If they want anything they will come to you in prayer, for prayer on earth is only one person asking another for something he wants, and you would use your judgment for their good in responding to their request. Would you grant that prayer if you knew that what they were asking for would be bad for them? Certainly not. They come to you in the hope, in the faith, that if what they are asking for is for their good you will do what you can to please them.



And so the Christian, in exactly the same way, believing in the wisdom of his Father, goes to him asking him for help, deferring to his wisdom and judgment. In other words, we go to God in prayer in exactly the same manner as children go to a dear and loving father on earth. (Dissent.) I think I ought to know the theory of prayer as well as you.

Mr. Foote objects to my claim that Christianity was in harmony with the facts of consciousness, and this he said because it was a very wide term involving all a man's thoughts, but all that a man thinks about is not what is understood by this term; it means the primary facts of a man's nature. To say that Christianity agreed with everything that all men could think about would be utter nonsense; for if it agrees with what I think about, it cannot agree with what Mr. Foote thinks.

Mr. Foote also said that never till the time of Christianity was it taught that men were to be saved by faith. Then I think he ought to be thankful to Christianity for teaching anything so world-wide in its truth as that salvation is by faith. (Dissent and laughter.) I should like to know in the overwhelming majority of cases what is a man saved by if not by his faith. Have you no faith in Secularism? Perhaps you have not and you are right. You know best. If you have no faith in it, it won't be of much use to you. It is faith that leads a man to use anything. If he had no faith in it he would not use it. If he had no faith in Secularism, or in Christianity, he would not try it; and so it is because we have tried Christianity that we have faith in it. Our faith is based on our reason. We are conscious of the greatness of its power in our lives, and therefore we have faith in Christianity for the same reason that every scientist has faith in the order of nature, his faith in the future being based on the experience of the past. (Applause.)

MR. FOOTE: At the risk of giving Dr. McCann an opportunity for another witticism, I repeat that I am in a difficult position. I have to follow him to-night, and it is not easy, because he has advanced, as I think, so few arguments in support of the position he occupies. Next Thursday evening I shall have to lead the debate. I shall then give you what I think very definite reasons for believing Christianity to be untrue, and I dare say Dr. McCann will find it quite as difficult to overturn them as I have found it to reply to what he has advanced to-night. (Hear, hear.) I should like to observe in passing that I don't consider I had violated the proper conditions of debate by referring to Buddhism or any other creed. I did not attempt any elaborate descriptions of those

systems. I simply mentioned them as illustrating an argument. If I may mention nothing but Christianity, even by way of illustration, my wings will certainly be very much clipped. (Laughter.) I shall be like a poor bird in a London cage, instead of having the free air to expatiate in. I might also say in passing that it is rather dangerous to be always citing those panegyrics on Christ by Rénan and other writers. Rénan's panegyric is in the *Vie de Jésus*, his first work of any importance, and written at a time when he was much more under the influence of Christianity than he is now. The quotation from Strauss is also from an earlier work, and is utterly out of accord with sentence after sentence in Strauss's last book, *The Old Faith and the New*. I was only turning over its pages this afternoon, and I find Strauss saying that the so-called life of Christ is so obscured by supernatural fables that it is utterly impossible for criticism to ascertain what he really was, and therefore any veneration of him as a man would be a gratuitous absurdity. Were he a God, the case would of course be different. I will not dilate on that further, but I think it might act as a check on the exuberance with which the friends of the Christian Evidence Society quote these earliest passages from the writings of men whose latest writings often express very different views.

I will now, with your permission, jump to Dr. McCann's concluding remark, because I want to deal with it first. We Secularists have faith like other people! We have faith, but *not* like other people. It is not like to like, but, as the poet says, it is like in difference. (Laughter.) Faith according to knowledge, and faith without knowledge, are two very different things. You have faith in your brother man, but it depends upon how much you know of him. I doubt whether Dr. McCann himself would take a promissory note from a man who this morning came out of Wormwood Scrubs, after doing five years. (Laughter.) You have to take my opponent's statements with very much reservation. What I referred to was not faith according to past experience, but the doctrine of salvation by faith, which, as everybody knows, means faith or belief in certain doctrines which we do not arrive at through any process of reason, but which have come to us through dogmatic channels. Now, if men are to be saved or damned through faith in that sense, I say it is a doctrine both infamous and absurd: absurd, because it shows an utter ignorance of the conditions of human thought; and infamous, because it punishes or rewards men for what they can no more help than the color of their hair or the height of their stature. (Applause.)

Christianity, says Dr. McCann, does not simply inculcate precepts, but it tells us why we should practise them, and helps us to do so.

Now Dr. McCann did not notice a very important point which I advanced in my previous speech—namely, that when Jesus inculcated a right thing he too frequently gave the wrong sanction for it. Every moralist knows that the sanction of morality is the most important thing about it. Why we should do so-and-so is the most important question we can ask. If you say we are to love our brother because God loves us, it is really no reason at all. If you say we are to love our brother because if we do not God will punish us, it is a very bad reason. It could not induce love. It might induce an outward semblance of the reality, but never could lodge the reality in our heart's core. (Hear, hear.)

There is another point I ought to emphasise. Christianity, says Dr. McCann, does not give us a moral code, but it gives us moral principles, and the great example of Christ. If you mean that Christianity gives us no moral laws to guide us, I deny it. Next Thursday evening I will quote from Jesus Christ and the Apostles to show that Christianity teaches moral doctrines which civilised men cannot practise, and which, if they could be practised, would produce social chaos and barbarism.

Christianity, we are told, supplies us with an emotional force in affection for Jesus Christ. The same kind of thing is done by every system which teaches children to venerate some historic person. No doubt if children were taught to look up to Socrates instead of Jesus they would feel the same affection for him, and surely there was enough of nobility and heroism in the life of Socrates to furnish a centre for the affections of children to revolve round. The death of Jesus on Mount Calvary, so far as he was concerned, is no more to be compared with the fine serenity, mingled with tenderness, with which Socrates met his death, than the moon can be compared with the refulgent and glorious sun. (Cheers.)

Dr. McCann misunderstands my objection that he ought to have set forth Christianity in its differentiae, and not in the generalities it has in common with other systems. I did not desire that he should give us a history of all the systems of the world. What I said was if you described a man according to abstract physiology you would define him so that no person could recognise him. You must mention those particulars that difference him from other men. You must give us his personal peculiarities. It is useless to tell us how many bones he has in his body, and how many muscles he has in his arm. It is futile to say he has so many limbs. He has those things in common with all other men. You must describe his features, the color of his hair, the color of his eyes, and so forth. These are what difference him. And I say that what



differences Christianity from Secularism is not the fact that it inculcates moral principles. It must have certain principles distinct from Secularism, or it is left without any differentia at all, and is too vague for discussion. (Hear, hear.)

A word too about facts of consciousness. Dr. McCann says that what he means by this phrase is simply that man has certain faculties and that all men possess them. But how could anyone construe the phrase "facts of consciousness" into that meaning? "Facts of consciousness" without any explanation simply mean any fact that man has ever been conscious of. Now there are four faculties which Dr. McCann says that Christianity appeals to. I fail, however, to see how Christianity does appeal to them. Dr. McCann gave us Reason, which I think it has always abused: Conscience which I think it has impaired by giving us a wrong reason why we should do a right thing; the Will and Affections which I think it has perverted by teaching children that they are to act in certain ways in order to win heaven or keep out out of hell, when they should have been taught that certain actions would promote and others hinder the welfare of their fellow man. Men have still another faculty, namely Imagination, and that is the one which I think Christianity has been most concerned with. Imagination is a valuable faculty when it is in the service of reality. See it in the work of the great painter whose masterpiece we wonder at and admire through age on age. See it in the work of the great sculptor, like some of those glorious artists of antiquity whose statues have survived the ravages of time. See it in the epics of a Homer or the dramas of a Shakespeare. See it in the scientific genius of a Newton or a Darwin, which perceives subtle lines of evidence all running to one point, although other men, with little less knowledge, perceive nothing but chaos because their vision is dim. Such imagination is grand indeed. But when the imagination, uninformed by knowledge and uncontrolled by reality, employs itself in the mere combination of its internal resources, joins one fact of memory to another, and fancies that the product must be real because the fancy is so vivid; when it revels in the creation of ghosts, and dreams of dead gods, and fantastic miracles, and heavens, and hells, and all the foul or foolish things which are foisted on the minds of little children in their undiscerning youth; then it is fearfully debasing to the whole life. The corruption of the best is the worst; and that imagination, which is the noblest of all faculties in literature, science, and art, becomes infinitely degrading in the curse of religion. (Loud and long-continued applause.)



DR. McCANN: I don't think anyone here could differ very much from the principle of the closing words of Mr. Foote, that imagination, like every other faculty when rightly used, is grand and true and healthful, but when wrongly used is neither grand nor of use. When imagination is concerned with the world of realities, and pictures to itself possible combinations of that world of reality, imagination is then most wisely used and does good, but as to exercising itself in the world of ghosts and dead gods, no power could be more misused or dishonored. We as Christians have no concern with ghosts or dead gods either. ("Yes, yes," and laughter.)

Mr. Foote began his reply to me by a reference to faith, and said that your faith differed from the faith of others. I agree with that, because I think that your faith is not that of strong conviction. He said there is faith without knowledge and faith with knowledge. Faith without knowledge, as I said before, is nothing at all. It is mere credulity. If a man says he believes and doesn't know why he believes, what is his belief worth? If he says I have faith in this, the question we naturally ask is, why have you faith in this or in that? And if you ask him why he has faith in Christianity, in the Bible, and in Christ, rather than in Buddhism or in Mahomedanism, and he cannot tell you, you may be sure that his faith is no faith worthy of the name. He ought to be able to tell you, if he has faith, why he has faith. No other can be helpful in a man's life. Salvation by faith—does it mean merely assenting to a doctrine? I told you that was not Christianity. Christians hold the faith and *practise* it. A man may be struggling in the water for his life, and some one flings him a life-buoy. If he has no faith in the buoy he will not try to reach it, and will sink to the bottom; but if he has faith in it will he go on struggling as before? No, he will lay hold of the buoy and be brought to shore. A means of rescue is set forth before him, and that man's faith in that life-buoy becomes his salvation. The faith that saves the Christian is not faith apart from Christ, but faith in Christ, laying hold of Christ and following him as his teacher and as his example in life. Of course if Christ be no true teacher, no worthy example, then faith in Christ cannot save him; but he believes Christ was true in his doctrines and in his teachings, and so he has faith that he will save all those who believe in him. But the Christian's faith goes higher still. It brings a pardon for the guilt he himself has committed, and this faith works by love in our life and lays hold of the hopes set before us. (Hear, hear.) So the salvation that is by faith, so far from being a useless doctrine, is the only one that can lead him to

happiness. God's law in the spiritual world is as certain as it is in the material world. If we are to have the results of any law we cannot get them outside the law. If we are hungered there is a law of hunger, a law of satisfaction of the hunger, that enables us to satisfy our hunger. In coming within the law we will have our reward and the benefits of that law, be it what it may. (Hear, hear.)

The Christian Evidence Society was mentioned by Mr. Foote. I may say I am not here to-night as representing the Christian Evidence Society. They don't, as Mr. Foote knows, approve of this kind of debate, and so I undertook it altogether on my own individual risk and responsibility. (Applause.)

Again, Mr. Foote stated that this doctrine of salvation by faith caused the Inquisition and other persecutions. I know nothing in the world more horrible than were the persecutions of the Inquisition. But these were not in the interests of any faith whatever, but in the interests of the power of a politico-ecclesiastical church which would not have her authority weakened, or lose her subjects, and so all who differed from her were tortured. There are none who will speak with more horror of the terrors of the Inquisition than do Christians themselves.

Then Mr. Foote said, If we believed that Christ was God would we not obey all his injunctions; but while he is quoted in churches and chapels, he is not in places of business. I grant you this, that believing Christ to be God, all his injunctions ought to be acted on with all our power. It is our duty as Christians to try to live according to his precepts and his example, but we know that there are great weaknesses and evil habits in our human nature, and while our judgment would lead us one way our inclination and passions lead us sometimes the other way. That were surely a poor Christian that didn't do his best to act on the principles of Christianity. I have not always myself the most faith in those who always have the name of Christ on their lips, and who are always quoting scripture. I wish to see Christianity in the lives, in the deeds, and in the works of those who call themselves by that name. It is quite right for a Christian when he enters on his business to put on his business habits, but he ought in these to be more honest, more kind, more true than those who do not pretend to have the same noble teachings that they themselves possess. I say, therefore, that Christianity in deed, in truth, ennobles men's lives. (Hear, hear.)

Mr. Foote has also said Christianity demands the performance of miracles, and the modern mind rejects miracles. Some modern minds may, but not all. My mind does not reject them, and many

scientific minds do not reject them. (Dissent and laughter.) The performance of a miracle does not violate in one single instance the basic principles of science. (Great laughter.) I think I know as much about science as you do. Again, Mr. Foote says Christ gave us wrong reasons for right things. The reason he gave that we should do these right things was because they are born of brotherly love, because they are right, and right is the fulfilment of the will of God. There can be nothing wrong in the reason of God, for his reasons must be all right. Submitting ourselves to the will of God means that we are willing to be guided by perfect love, perfect wisdom, perfect justice—for God is all these. What truer reasons for conduct could be given than these ?

Mr. Foote said "You cannot command love." With that I perfectly agree. You cannot command the emotion of love, for all emotions are spontaneous in certain conditions. It means we are to act in love, to act lovingly towards those by whom we are surrounded. You are to act lovingly to your brother, you are to do right by your brother man. Does he not always inculcate these precepts ? Does he not teach his disciples to dwell together in love, to love others as he has loved them ? And we believe he has better loved the world than any other. We are told that Buddha and Socrates called forth as much love in their followers as did Christ. Not so. They are both respected for their wisdom and their sympathy with man, but neither could call forth the enthusiasm inspired by Christ, for neither ever professed to do for us what Christ did. I did not say Mr. Foote was violating the conditions of debate in "referring" to Buddhism ; but he did more than "refer"—he asked me to give him the differentia, and that would have been impossible without a detailed comparison. Mr. Foote is also in error as to my stating that Christ did not give any moral directions. What I said was he did not give detailed directions for every man in all circumstances of life, but in the New Testament are certain principles, and I say those are the principles to be guided by. Take those principles, and let them guide and influence your life, and you will be going forward, onward, higher and higher. Christianity does win man's love, and, rightly or wrongly, it points to a high ideal—the ideal of Christ, and leads us to his Father, and to our Father. It gives us liberty, guidance and love, stimulating our whole life, and I hold that it has done more than any other system in this wide world for the benefit of mankind. (Applause.)

Mr. FOOTE : Dr. McCann once expressed a wish on this platform that I were his curate, and after listening to him to-night, I venture



to hope that Dr. McCann is on the road from the cause which he is championing. (Laughter.) He is so near us, or so it appears to me, that it wants simply the resolution to break a sheet of tissue paper to see us face to face ; and I hope, to use the language of the old book, that we should speak unto him face to face as a man speaketh to his friend. We were told, and the statement involves certainly what I cannot help calling an ignorance of the history of Buddhism, that Buddha did not evcke the love of his followers as Christ did. It is altogether untrue. The persecutions which Buddhism underwent when it was cleared out of India, the land of its birth—and it suffered so ruthlessly that India has never been its home since—sink almost into insignificance any persecutions that Christianity ever underwent except from its own hands. (Hear, hear.) I will admit that Christianity has shed blood in internecine strife, unfortunately in excess of that which was shed when Brahmanism expelled Buddhism from India, but I say there was nothing in the persecution of the Christians by the Pagan emperors and governors at all like the awful persecution which swept Buddhism like a wave out of that Indian peninsula. And why did these men suffer death ? Why did they suffer exile ? Why did they suffer the loss of all that makes life dear ? Because this love for Buddha was so great. And let me say, in passing, that Buddhism, throughout its long history of twenty-four centuries, never once interfered with the rights of thought or action of man, woman, or child. (Applause.)

Imagination, says Dr. McCann, is of course degrading when it exercises itself about foolish things. I say it is degrading when it exercises itself about mere speculations which we never try to verify. (Hear, hear.) How many Christians do try to verify the dogmas of their faith ? How many of them think out the question whether Christ is God ? How many of them think out the question of whether the miraculous stories of the New Testament have any truth ? How many of them think out the question of whether Jesus Christ was born without a father—(laughter)—or whether he rose from the dead, or whether during the crucifixion there was a wholesale resurrection of dead saints ? How many of them take the trouble to think whether Jesus Christ could have ascended to heaven from two different places and at two different times ? (Hear, hear.) They are told in their childhood to believe these things, and they never afterwards criticise Christianity. It is for that reason that the faith of nine hundred and ninety out of every thousand men is determined, not by their own reason, but by the geographical accident of their birth and the education they have received. (Loud applause.) If faith without knowledge is credulity, that is credulity.

(Hear, hear, and "No.") To believe because our teachers taught us, without giving us any foundation for it; to go on believing it without ascertaining or inquiring after evidence; if that is faith, and it appears to be, then it is credulity, and such a faith must be a curse rather than a blessing. (Applause.)

I do not hold it is true that the Inquisition arose simply for ecclesiastical and political reasons. Mr. Lecky, whom Dr. McCann has quoted to-night, has said that in some cases it is undoubtedly true that many of those Grand Inquisitors, who looked on callously while a heretic was undergoing horrible agony, were not worse men even than those they were torturing. They were believers in the doctrine of salvation by faith, and they asked whether it was not better that the heretic should go to hell alone than that he should drag down others with him to perdition. I have had to go over the history of that Inquisition in detail lately, and I feel thoroughly convinced of the truth of what I am saying.

Christians believe we are saved by faith, but we must do as well as believe! Yes, but we must also believe as well as do. We must believe all the supernatural contents of the New Testament, and if our salvation is to depend on that I am afraid the gate of heaven is so minute that no human being is diminutive enough to go through it. (Laughter.) To talk about the New Testament not being quoted while the serious business of the world is going on because of such reasons as Dr. McCann advanced is simply absurd. (Hear, hear.) Every decree in every Mohammedan country is in agreement with the Koran, and it is generally sanctioned by quotations from it, and laws can be set aside if they are found to be in contradiction with it. That is honest. (Hear, hear.) When Christians were really in earnest they did quote the New Testament in Parliament. In the time of the Puritans they did quote the New Testament in all public business. But all this is gone because faith is gone. (Hear, hear.) Christianity has died out of men's life, and that is a great proof of its untruth. I know that its professors may go on teaching its doctrines. I know that people go to church and chapel on Sunday, and listen sometimes with an inward and sometimes with an outward smile. I know it. But from the secular life of the people it is divorced. The educated classes cannot be called Christians in any proper sense of the word, and statistics show that three-fourths at least of the working classes, who are a hundred times more useful to the community than the idlers—(applause)—do not take the trouble to attend the ministrations of religion. Why, if all the people of London took it into their heads to go to church next Sunday, you would want places of fifty-fold elasticity. (Hear, hear.) John Bright has said

many true things, but he never said a truer than when he declared that in England the lower classes care as much about the dogmas of Christianity as the upper classes care about its practice. (Applause.)

Towards the end Dr. McCann showed the cloven hoof of his doctrine of salvation by faith. It leads us, he said, to repent, and to obtain pardon of Christ. Suppose a pious bank director establishes churches out of the proceeds of fraud, and is so holy that he will not read the paper on Monday because it necessitates Sunday labor; suppose he wrecks thousands of families, sends honest men to a suicide's grave because their strength of mind is not sufficient to bear up under ruin; suppose he makes orphans and widows eat the bread of sorrow moistened by tears; suppose he at last repents and gets pardon from Christ. Is that any satisfaction to those he has ruined? (No, no.) Will it revive the suicide? Will it undo the misery? Will it re-unite the broken home? It cannot. This doctrine of repentance is one of the most iniquitous that ever was preached. (Hear, hear.) *Our* opinion is that men should look beforehand instead of after. We want them to realise that all their actions produce inevitable consequences. We want them to understand that the misery that results from wrong can never be washed away, even if we shed an ocean of tears. (Applause.)

My last words shall be addressed to Dr. McCann's statement that the modern mind does not reject miracles. I did not say that the modern mind rejected the miracles of the Bible altogether, although many people who profess they believe the Bible to be the word of God will often laugh at many of its wonderful stories. The question of whether the modern mind rejects miracles is to be decided by inquiring whether the modern mind believes in miracles to-day. (Hear, hear.) In the ages of faith men believed that miracles happened then. Three centuries ago they did not believe that the age of miracles closed with the apostles. Miracles occur in Catholic countries still—that is, they occur as much as they ever did. (Laughter.) Wherever the faith remains the miracle is found. (Laughter.) But the modern educated mind does reject miracles. I am speaking of the forward-looking people, the on-flowing water of the stream of progress, and not its backwash. And if the modern mind rejects miracles to-day it will by-and-bye reject them in past history. When you bring up a new generation, educated by the School Board to reject miracles from daily life, it will reject them from religious life too. If no miracles occur to-day, whilst thousands occurred in the ages of faith, even children ask the reason and discover the answer. It is because those *were* ages of faith and these are ages of reason. (Hear, hear.) It is not the miracle that



gave the faith, but the faith that produced the miracles. Cardinal Newman is wiser in this matter than Dr. McCann, and knowing full well the truth I am contending for, he advises people not to look for evidence first and believe afterwards, but to believe first, and evidence will come after as the reward of faith instead of its groundwork. The great Catholic is right, and I agree with him that if you once believe a thing without reason, you will go on believing it without any further help from that quarter. But to my mind the practice is pernicious. I would advise you, like Descartes, who was in some sense the founder of modern philosophy, to pursue the opposite plan, and give complete assent to nothing unless the truth of it is so clear that it is impossible to doubt it. (Loud cheers.)

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## SECOND NIGHT.—APRIL 13.

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MRS. BESANT: The debate to-night will be opened by Mr. Foote with half an hour's speech. Dr. McCann will occupy half an hour, and the last hour will be divided into four speeches. I call upon Mr. Foote. (Applause.)

MR. FOOTE: Although last Thursday evening I did not consider that Dr. McCann had really faced all the difficulties of his own position, or maintained all the doctrines that are by all Christians held essential to that form of faith, I yet thought it wise to follow him scrupulously in the debate, in order that I might not set a bad example which he might imitate this evening. But fortunately to-night it lies with me to decide the lines on which the debate shall run, and I do not intend to soar away into the infinite vague, but to bring the debate down to a practical issue. (Hear, hear.) I want us to argue whether Christianity be true according to such methods as we should apply to any ordinary question in ordinary life. I submit that if any creed will not bear such a test it falls, and that its claims cannot be substantiated. (Hear, hear.) Now the propositions I have undertaken to maintain to-night, and copies of which I have furnished to Dr. McCann, are these:

(1) Christianity is belief in the Bible as God's word and in the Deity of Jesus Christ.

(2) Neither of these positions is true.



(3) Many of the teachings of Jesus Christ and the Apostles as recorded in the New Testament are vicious and absurd.

(4) Christianity is, and has always been, mainly a hindrance to human progress. (Applause.)

I shall commence then, in fulfilment of this task, by impugning the doctrine that the Bible is God's word, and I shall very rapidly give you the reasons why it is impossible for any man imbued with the modern scientific spirit, or any man who thoroughly realises the claims of truth and morality, to accept the collection of Hebrew and Greek tracts which form the Bible, as the infallible word of an Almighty and all-wise God. Let us begin with the Old Testament. The first half of the Bible consists of a number of documents written, so far as scholarship can decide, for the most part nobody knows where, nobody knows when, and nobody knows by whom. Some of these books are ascribed to Moses, one of them to Joshua, and others to various early traditional heroes among the Jews. But I think there is scarcely a scholar in Christendom to-day who would deny the statement that these Old Testament documents were collated in their present form after the captivity of the Jews in Babylon, or rather, to be more accurate, after the return of the remnant of them from the Babylonian captivity. So we have writings dealing with very remote times, times that were certainly more barbarous than that in which the scriptures were collated, times going far back into pre-historic periods; and as we cannot place these writings either in time, or authorship, or space, they cannot be considered as God's word, unless they contain revelations of truths which the human mind had not arrived at without them, and which the majority of men agree the human mind never could have arrived at without them. I suppose Dr. McCann will not maintain that the Bible contains any statements either in theology or ethics, which necessarily stamp it as original and unique. There is nothing in the Old Testament, or in the New Testament, which cannot be paralleled in the scriptures of ancient Egyptian and Oriental peoples, or in the writings of Pagan sages and moralists.

In the next place I say that the Bible cannot be God's word because it is absurd to suppose that God, who knows everything, would have dictated absolute falsity. Now the science of the Bible, as contained first of all in the Book of Genesis, is thoroughly exploded. It needed all the sophistry and persuasive rhetoric of Mr. Gladstone to give even a plausible color to the Creation Story in the presence of modern science and criticism; and I think no one who read the discussions in the *Nineteenth Century* between Mr. Gladstone and Professor Huxley can for a moment doubt that the Professor utterly pulverised his opponent, and showed that science

and Genesis, whenever they come into contact, are utterly contradictory to each other, and therefore mutually destructive. (Applause.)

The Bible is false in its chronology. It tells us, and we deduce this from the various chronologies in it, or rather, to speak more correctly, the various genealogies in it, that man's existence on earth—to say nothing of the question whether the word *day* means day or period—does not extend beyond six thousand years. Now we know very well that men existed in the Nile Valley in a state of comparative civilisation long before the time when, according to the Bible, God made the first man and woman to be fruitful and multiply and replenish an else unpeopled world. We know further that man, in a rude primitive form, has existed in Europe for at least a quarter of a million years. There is not a scientist I am aware of who would dispute that man in Europe antedated the last glacial epoch, and I do not think there is a scientist in existence who would assign less than a quarter of a million years to the period between now and then. No universal deluge could therefore have happened less than five thousand years ago, and the Bible chronology becomes as a drop in a huge measure of water compared with the vast periods demanded by geology and biology.

Again, we are met face to face in the Bible with remarkable statements about the longevity of the early patriarchs, which not a single scientific man would dream of entertaining. Even Professor Owen, who, as a rather orthodox anatomist, was appealed to on the subject, gave his verdict against the story. He declared that from what we know of human teeth it was quite impossible that they could have lasted for nine hundred years. The result would have been—there being no dentists in those days—(laughter)—men would have to go about for centuries like mumbling old dotards. We are still more forcibly struck with the absurdity of this when we turn to the mythology of other peoples. Buckle tells us that the average life of common men among the ancient Hindoos was eighty thousand years—(laughter); some died a little sooner and some died a little later—(renewed laughter); and it is recorded of two kings that they reigned respectively thirty-two thousand and sixty-six thousand years. Both these unfortunate gentlemen were cut off in their prime. (Laughter.)

Next—and you must pardon me for hurrying—we find the story of the universal flood which is contradicted by geology and is inherently absurd and contradictory to the elementary principles of science. We also find a mythological story about the tower of Babel, which pretends to account for the origin of the various languages now spoken on the face of the earth, and gives us a

philology which would be the laughing-stock of a Müller or a Whitney.

Next, I say that the Bible not only countenances but expressly teaches witchcraft. The Book of Exodus says "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live." Saul repaired to the witch of Endor to raise up for him the ghost of the dead prophet Samuel. We find also in the New Testament the correlative idea of demoniacal possession. Jesus Christ could cast out devils. He expelled seven from one lady, and on one occasion he cast a legion out of one or two men and sent them into a herd of swine; in that manner, I believe, introducing devils to pigs for the first time in history. (Laughter.)

Next, the Bible is full of self-contradictions. I have recently published forty pages of them which are at Dr. McCann's service. I need not enumerate them, but if Dr. McCann denies that there are any self-contradictions in the Bible I shall be happy to give him one or two. The Bible also contains a great many absurdities. It abounds with many funny stories. I will not venture to recite them all, but I will give two as illustrations; namely, the wonderful exploits of Samson, the Hebrew Hercules, who slew a thousand soldiers with the jaw-bone of an ass, and carried off the gates of an eastern city in a drunken midnight frolic; and the marvellous adventures of the prophet Jonah, who was swallowed by a whale, and not only hospitably entertained by the animal for three days and nights but finally vomited up all safe and sound on dry land. I venture to assert that if these things were found in any other book than the Bible they would be regarded as simple childish stories of the world's infancy. (Cheers.) And if a book with such stories came before us to-day for the first time, and claimed to be the infallible word of God, there is no man, even a Christian, who would give it a moment's serious consideration.

I say next, that the Bible contains a large number of immoralities, indecencies and atrocities. There are things in the Bible which I doubt if any man living would care to read to his family. There are parts of the Bible which I am quite sure no Christian minister dare read to his congregation, unless he is prepared to see all the bonnets leave the church and all those who do not wear bonnets kick him from the pulpit to the street. (Cheers.) There are atrocities in the Bible, such as wholesale slaughters commanded directly by God himself, which are sufficient to impurple every page of the sacred narrative; and if there were nothing else than the vile crimes that were committed by the Jews, according to their own acknowledgment, when they took possession of fields they had never tilled, and cities they had never built, in the name



of their God, that would be sufficient to show they were simply a horde of bandits, worshipping a God who was no better than any of the barbarous gods of the peoples that surrounded them. (Applause.)

I come now to the Deity of Jesus Christ. Dr. McCann passed this by last week on the ground that we might be driven back on a discussion as to whether God existed or not. I said I would allow, for the sake of argument, the existence of God, and we could then discuss whether Jesus Christ could be God in the sense both of us attached to the word. Now I will to-night define what the term God must mean. It means a being all-wise, all-powerful, all-good. It may mean more than that, but it cannot mean less than that. If, therefore, we find that Jesus Christ does not come up to that standard, he cannot be God. What reason is there for supposing Jesus Christ to be more than man? We are told that he was miraculously born. So were all the horde of semi-human and semi-divine heroes of antiquity. Although Jesus Christ is said to have been born without an earthly father, neither John nor Mark ever heard of it. At least that is a very fair inference from their silence about it. Who will dare to say that a man would sit down to write the life of Jesus Christ, in Apostolic times, who knew he was born miraculously, without the assistance of an earthly father, and yet would conceal that tremendous fact from his readers? If the Gospels of John and Mark are utterly silent on this subject it follows that the writers never heard of it, or if they did, that they did not believe it; which is still worse from the Christian point of view. (Hear, hear.) The whole story rests upon a dream of Joseph's. In the night he had a celestial visitation in his sleep telling him that the child of Mary was the offspring of the Holy Ghost. In the morning when Joseph awoke he believed it. He had a perfect right to believe it; but I deny that he had a right to expect anybody else to. (Laughter.) Next, I can show from the New Testament that the contemporaries of Jesus Christ never heard of his miraculous birth. Both Mathew and Mark make the fellow-citizens of Jesus Christ say "Is not this the carpenter's son; is not his mother called Mary and his brethren and sisters are they not all with us?" They never heard of the Incarnation. Of course not, because it was a legend which grew up long after the death of Jesus Christ, and we find a parallel to it in the history of many other of the so-called Saviors of the world.

Can the Gospels be accepted as witnesses for this or any other miracle? I say not. I lay down broadly this position, which I will maintain in debate, that there is not a single reference to our



four Gospels to be found in any of the writings of the Apostolic Fathers before about the year 170, that is more than a century and a quarter after Jesus Christ was dead and buried. Now the testimony of tradition, put into a literary form so long after the event, is utterly worthless. It would be considered worthless in any court of law, and how much more shall it be considered worthless in the high court of reason and humanity, where we are called upon to pronounce judgment on the most important questions that can be submitted to the human intellect. (Applause.)

I say, further, that the teachings of Jesus Christ in the New Testament are not of such a transcendent character that it requires the supposition that he was God to explain them. I agree with Buckle that whoever asserts that Christianity revealed to mankind truths with which they were previously unacquainted is guilty either of gross ignorance or of wilful fraud. I fail to see why God should come from everywhere to this earth ; I fail to see why God should neglect the affairs of the universe and die like a malefactor on this little planet, only to tell men what they knew before he condescended to instruct them. Lastly, I say we find in Pagan and Oriental incarnations, or as the Hindoos call them avatars, parallels to the miraculous birth and career of Jesus Christ. These justify any man in asking the question whether the Gospel story of Jesus Christ is true or simply a legend like that of Chrishna, Mithra, Buddha, Hercules, and other antique demigods. When we go to Egypt, we find centuries and perhaps milleniums before the time of Jesus Christ, the virgin mother Isis holding the divine child Horus in her arms—the exact counterpart of the Christian pictures of the Madonna and child ; and when we find further that all the names given to the Virgin were previously given to Isis, as all the names given to Christ were given to Horus, we see that Christianity has merely borrowed all this from the Egyptian religion. I might even venture the assertion that if Christianity gave back to the antique religions all it borrowed from them, it would not have enough left to shield its nakedness from the winds of criticism. (Cheers.)

Now as my half hour is drawing to a close I shall, with your permission, run over very rapidly some supernatural doctrines which Jesus Christ and the apostles teach and which all Christians are bound to believe, reserving for my two remaining speeches the treatment of the domestic, political, social and other teaching of the New Testament. To begin with, the New Testament teaches that there is a personal Devil. He had very definite adventures with Jesus Christ. With Jesus Christ he took part in what I cannot help thinking a most grotesque pantomime, namely, that of the temptation in the desert—God Almighty allowing an inferior to

tempt him, knowing he could not succeed, and the inferior tempting him, also knowing he could not succeed. Next, the New Testament demands belief in prayer. I dealt with that subject last Thursday evening, and will say no more about it now. Next we are called upon to believe in the resurrection of the body. That is an article which I believe is explicitly taught by Dr. McCann's Church, and which I do not think he will repudiate to-night. We are also expected to believe in a Day of Judgment at which all will be arraigned before God—the great and small, the bad and the good—and each will receive his portion for all eternity according as he passes through the ordeal. We are next to believe in the dogma of the Fall, which, as Adam and Eve never existed outside the imagination of Jewish mythologists, must be false. We are also expected to credit that infamous doctrine of Original Sin, which is a falsity so absurd and so atrocious, that if you propounded it to any mother bending over her first child, with the maternal instinct quickened in her bosom, you know that whatever her lips might say, according to the instruction of her religious teachers, her heart would revolt against it. Trust that mother's heart, I say; it is holier and more sacred than all the creeds that ever were or ever will be. (Cheers.)

All believers in the New Testament are required to accept the doctrine of salvation by faith. Last Thursday evening I dwelt on that doctrine, and to-night I will simply rest satisfied with saying that it is one which no man who understands the conditions of human thought can ever accept, and which I believe no man can teach without scruples and compunctions in his heart of hearts. For my part—and I say it with all due respect to what is true and good—I want no part or lot in a heaven which is not big enough to hold all honest men. (Hear, hear.) I say with Ingersoll that if there be a God who can punish men because of their unbelief, which is no crime, and reward them for their faith, which is no virtue, I neither want his heaven nor fear his hell. (Cheers.)

The last supernatural doctrine I shall refer to is that of eternal punishment. At the day of judgment, according to Jesus Christ's teaching in that famous chapter of Mathew, all of us are to be separated into two great lots, the sheep on the one side and the goats on the other; the sheep, creatures made to be fleeced—(laughter)—who are to go to heaven; and the goats—those strong-legged creatures who will always be jumping fences to see what is on the other side—who will go to hell. Now what an absurd idea it is to suppose you can divide mankind into any two such categories. If you put all the black on one side and all the white on the other, it would be simple enough; but how about the infinite

shades of grey between them? Good and evil are inextricably mixed in all of us. There is no man so good that has not his failings, no man so bad that he has not his redeeming qualities. You cannot punish a man for his bad actions without rewarding him for his good ones. Consequently every man who was sent to hell would deserve some intervals of heaven, and every man who was sent to heaven would deserve some intervals of hell. (Laughter.) But I say in conclusion that this doctrine of everlasting hell-fire taught by Jesus Christ in the Gospel of Mathew is the most accursed that ever was invented. It must originally have crawled out of the putrefying brain of a priest. Since then it has developed into a serpent of fear, twining itself round millions of hearts. I want to kill that reptile and set free the throbbing heart of humanity. (Cheers.)

DR. McCANN : Mr. Foote, on the last evening, said he had a difficulty in following my arguments because they were as wide as the universe. I should like to know how much further he could extend his ideas than he has to-night. If he had some difficulty in answering my arguments on the last evening, I think he must have had more difficulty in constructing arguments of his own with which to meet me this evening. Our subject is Christianity, but we have been taken over the whole of the theology of the Bible and the chronology and antiquities of ancient times. We have been led everywhere, from north to south and east to west. I cannot profess to-night to follow him into the dim and distant past, into what he himself has told you was the false chronology of Eastern nations. It struck me as being strange that this chronology, which he himself acknowledges to be false in many respects, he relied upon to help him in this argument. If it be false in one element it may be false in all, and therefore not to be relied upon.

There are, however, one or two points I want to refer to before beginning systematically to-night. Mr. Foote asked me last evening to differentiate between Christianity and other faiths of the world and show the superiority of the former. I have been thinking about that matter since, as it is one in which I have always taken an interest, and I consider it important and interesting to study wherein Christianity differs from say Mohammedanism, or Brahmanism, or Buddhism, and also the points in which Christianity is—at least to my mind—infinately superior to these others. I have always felt an interest in reading those ancient books, because I have found in them many glorious truths and thoughts. They were written by men of noble aims, for man never was altogether bad, altogether false, or altogether degraded. I shall be glad then,



at some future time, to meet Mr. Foote in friendly discussion on this point, if he likes to undertake the task of showing, if he believes it, that these systems are superior in general teaching to the Christian system. I shall be glad to meet him to discuss in a friendly way this subject—he, if he wish, to advocate the Eastern creeds, and I to maintain the superiority of our own Christian faith.

But to return to our subject, which, as I have said, is Christianity. Apparently, in turning to Christianity for arguments against itself, Mr. Foote did not find that he had sufficient there to accomplish his object, so he has gone to the Old Testament. It is one of his propositions that Christianity is belief in the Old Testament as the word of God. Christians do believe the Old Testament to be the word of God, but that is a very wide, a very vague, and very indefinite proposition. (Hear, hear.) All here who know anything about theology, know there are different views regarding the inspiration of the Old Testament, regarding what is the direct teaching of God, and what is merely an inspired record of the wrong doings, and wrong sayings, and wrong lives of men. There is no one who will affirm that all which is recorded of men in the Old Testament is for our example and our imitation. Many of these things are written for our warning. Many utterances of those who on the whole were good and well-intentioned men, have been recorded for our warning, that we might avoid their weakness. I therefore believe that in the Old Testament there are many direct teachings inspired by God for the education of mankind, for the elevation of humanity. I believe, as it is stated in the New Testament, that all scripture inspired by God is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction and instruction in righteousness. But we have to discriminate in matters of this kind, and determine what is the direct teaching of God and what are the records of the sayings of men that are not the teachings of God.

Mr. Foote has told you—and in this I perfectly agree with him—that the being he considers God must be all-wise, all-loving, all-perfect, all-good; therefore it is perfectly clear that if there be any statement, or teaching, or deed, not in accordance with this character, it is not a command of the Being who is all-wise, all-perfect, all-good. We must in these matters, before we can judge correctly, know all the facts of the case, and have a cultivated and enlightened judgment, so as to be able to judge correctly. But one point here is important: every objection Mr. Foote has brought forward to-night has been urged again and again, and I believe Mr. Foote must be aware of this fact. Also all these objections have been replied to again and again; and it seems to me an utter waste of time—

(cries of "No")—I know best what seems to me; I do not say what seems to you, I cannot tell what your depth of folly may be—it seems to me an utter waste of time to be continually repeating old objections and as continually repeating old answers to those objections. If we want to advance in these discussions — (Interruption.)

Mrs. BESANT : I must point out to those who interrupt that they are making debate simply impossible. No one has the slightest right to interrupt Dr. McCann. (Hear, hear.) If they remain in the hall they must be good enough to be absolutely silent and not to interrupt in the excessively rude way in which some people are doing. (Applause.)

DR. McCANN : If we want to advance it seems to me that the better way is, if Mr. Foote, or any other opponent of Christianity, when stating the objection will also at the same time state the answer to the objection and then his objection to the answer, —(hear, hear)—because in that case we shall know exactly where we are, and we shall be making some progress. If Mr. Foote tells you wherein, or why he differs from the answers to his objections, then I may go a step forward and reply to his objection to the answer. In that way going step by step, we shall advance, but if we must go over the familiar ground of the old objections and old answers we shall go on in an everlasting circle.

Now I come to his detailed objections to the Old Testament. I wish to reply to some things he advanced in his closing speech of last evening. This I shall do in the course of the evening if I have time; at present I must address myself to what he said to-night. You will see by the very large ground he covered that it will be utterly impossible for me to follow him in detail, so I shall meet it with general propositions as rapidly as I can. He said we do not know who were the authors of the different books of the Old Testament scriptures, etc. I put it to you whether it would be possible for any man to critically examine this question in less than half an hour, considering the other matters to be disposed of, even if I had the scholarship—which I confess I have not—to enable me to give you on the instant from memory only, the literary criticisms, the many idioms, and peculiarities of the Samaritan, Hebrew and other languages in the various writings necessary for so extensive a subject as the authenticity and genuineness of the books of the Old Testament. That is a work for volumes, and for the study, demanding calmest thought and fullest leisure. I will adopt another way of putting it, not only with regard to the Old Testament, but the New Testament writers as well. It is not a question to which I attach myself primary importance in the present dis-

cussion, what were the names of the writers of the different books of the Bible, in what particular years they wrote, or from what particular places they dated their books. You give me, for example, a golden sovereign, you come and tell me who the master of the mint was, where the mint was situated, and what country that gold came from—that may be all very well eventually; but my first question is “Is that sovereign gold?” “Yes,” you answer, “the sovereign is gold.” All right. I am richer for the possession of the sovereign; I can take that because it is gold, with me all over the world; let the inscription be what it may, the coiner be whom he may, and the country from which the gold comes from be what it may, I have got genuine gold, and that gold over all the world will procure for me its intrinsic value. So I come to the New Testament. I do not ask whether the name of the writer of this book was John, or Matthew, or Mark; I do not care what country he dated from; all I ask is, “Is that the New Testament? Is that genuine gold for human nature, and human life?” If it be the thing I want for the elevation of my life, if it be the thing the world wants for the purification of the world’s life, I care, in the first place, for nothing else; and I will take that gold over the whole wide world and it elevates human character.

Again Mr. Foote rightly said if the Bible was the word of God he would not dictate anything that is false. With that I am perfectly in accord. He said the science of Genesis is exploded. To that statement I altogether and entirely demur. (Hear, hear.) I defy Mr. Foote, or any other man living, to name one single fact of nature contradicted by a single statement in Scripture. (“Oh!”) I only ask it to be done. Remember I do not care a straw for scientific theories. (Laughter.) They are needful working hypotheses, but scientific theory is only the thoughts of man about the universe that surrounds him. Scientific theories have risen like houses of cards and have fallen just as rapidly. I do not know at the present day—I do not know a single scientific theory—now I am speaking deliberately in the presence of those on my left, who, I believe, know something of science—our President is not permitted to speak here or I believe she would give us some information—but I believe Mr. Foote has some acquaintance with science—I do not know a single scientific theory that is holding its ground at this hour; and I am very glad of it, for the discoveries that are being made are very brilliant, very grand, glorious, and the result will be that new scientific theories will be constructed, and new departures taken.

We have had reference made to the discussion between Mr. Glad-



stone and Professor Huxley, and I say at once that Professor Huxley had undoubtedly far the best of it. When I saw Mr. Gladstone's first article I was uncommonly sorry, and I thought "Well, my dear friend, you do not know everything, and *if* you do not get a wiggling for that, my name is not what it is." And he did. But here comes the point. Professor Huxley said if geology has anything whatever to say upon the subject Mr. Gladstone is wrong, and I believe Professor Huxley in saying that is right—if geology has anything whatever to say upon the subject. But the question I would ask Professor Huxley is this: "Has geology at the present hour anything to say on the subject?" He says "No; it has not." Let me quote some words of his in his lectures to working men. Mr. Foote said last evening he would give me the names of any work he was going to quote, and the passages. I received this morning the names of a few works he might quote from, but no passages indicated. However, as he has quoted very little it does not matter in the least. I have not, however, sent to Mr. Foote what I am going to quote, as I had no idea he would take me to the heart of the earth in this matter. Professor Huxley says: "Only about one ten thousandth part of the accessible parts of the earth has been examined properly, therefore it is with justice that the most thoughtful of those who are concerned in these inquiries insist continually upon the imperfection of the geological record, for, I repeat, it is absolutely necessary, from the nature of things, that this record should be of the most fragmentary and imperfect character. Unfortunately, this circumstance has been constantly forgotten. . . . Geologists have talked of this deposit being contemporaneous with that deposit, etc. From our little local histories of the changes at limited spots of the earth's surface, they have constructed a universal history of the globe as full of wonders and portents as any other story of antiquity." Mr. Foote referred to the high antiquity of man as being contradictory of the scriptural chronology, and said that men were existing before the last glacial epoch, and put it at a quarter of a million of years ago. The ice age has by some geologists been dated at 200,000 years or so from the present time. Professor Andrews, the well-known geologist in America, says it was about 7,800 years ago. Now when one geologist says 7,800 years and others 200,000 years, I think we may say, "We shall leave geological chronology alone until you yourselves settle whether it is 8,000 years or a quarter of a million of years ago." (Cheers.) I suppose most of you have heard of Sir Charles Lyell and Professor Geikie. They place the glacial period of Scotland not more than 6,000 years ago, and they are supposed to know something about it.

Again, we have the flood referred to as contradicted by modern geology. I do not profess to be a profound geologist, but I know something of it; yet I do not know what modern geology contradicts the necessary elements involved in the story of the flood.

Again, he has referred to contradictions in the Bible—absurdities, immoralities and atrocities. As I said before about these contradictions, he is not the first who has discovered certain statements that appear to be contradictions in the Bible, but these that appear to be contradictions have been absolutely and perfectly reconciled. (Laughter.) I do not for one moment dispute that some of the transcribers of the Bible may have been in error in a date, because it is so easy from the old numerals to mistake one letter for another. I must, however, skim this very rapidly if I am to touch the Christian element in the debate at all.

That is Jesus Christ himself; because I hold that while the Old Testament was preparatory to Christianity it was not Christianity, any more than the root is the flower or the leaf is the fruit. They prepare the way for the fruit; they are not the fruit itself; and the whole teaching of the Old Testament is that it prepared the way was preparatory to the higher, more mature, and developed teaching of the New Testament. Mr. Foote says the incarnation of Christ was analogous to the incarnations of the mythologies. There is no doubt these did teach that there were incarnations of some inferior deity, but these incarnations in Eastern mythologies, while they bear this likeness to the incarnation of Christ, in all else differ totally from that of Christ, which is an incarnation of the one only and eternal God, and on that point the whole value of the incarnation of Christ depends.

But will Mr. Foote be able to show that many of the common beliefs which are found in our Christianity and in Eastern religions, are not as small rivers flowing from one great original source?

We believe all mankind came from one pair—whether that pair be Adam and Eve or not—I think Mr. Foote will acknowledge that all mankind did come from one pair; he must if he be an evolutionist. In point of fact, we must have come from one pair, let that one pair be named Adam and Eve or not. There was consequently the starting of humanity from one couple, and that couple “not born in our imagination” some 7,000, or 8,000 years—I do not care for a thousand or two of years in a matter of this kind (laughter)—about that time was the starting of the history of the human race on this planet.

My friend then says that Mark and John did not know of the miraculous incarnation of Christ; that they did not know of it because they did not write about it. But they had other work in

hand and other thoughts to write than this. This fact was written by others. If Mr. Foote takes this as his principle—whatever a man does not write about he does not know—all I can say is that a very large number of those present here to-night, do not know much because I suppose they have not written much. Am I to take Mr. Foote's own writings and say "I have read Mr. Foote's writings upon a certain subject and he said nothing about this, that, or the other, and therefore he did not know anything whatever about it?" If so I should attribute an ignorance to him which I am sure he does not possess. They had their reasons for writing of other than the miraculous incarnation. We are next asked "Can the testimony of the Gospel be received and accepted for any miracle?" And the only reason for doubt is that, as he says, there is no account of these miracles before the year 170. Books of the New Testament were referred to generally before that time, and the fact of miracles is an integral part of the New Testament story. Christ's life is incomplete without miracles. When you take the miracles recorded of Christ, and his incarnation, his resurrection and his ascension, you have them all working together in one grand unity. They all support each other in one consistent, one harmonious scheme. It is not just to select miracles here and there and say they are improbable. You must take Christ's life as a whole, or take it not at all. You have no right to cut that life in two, and leave out the part you do not like, and take the part that you do like.

As regards miracles, Mr. Foote does not deny that they are possible. (Laughter.) I think I have a small work by Mr. Foote here, and in that work I read these words. This is *Secularism the True Philosophy of Life*, p. 23: "I do not say that miracles are impossible, an audacious and quite unscientific assertion, rightly stigmatised as such by Professor Huxley in his admirable book on Hume." That is Mr. Foote, and he is right, because, admitting the existence of God, to say that miracles are impossible is to talk nonsense. The only question Mr. Foote asks, "Are they probable and are they actual?" and the question of probability is one for our judgment, and that of fact is one for history. Therefore miracles *per se* cannot invalidate the authenticity or the truth of the teachings of the Gospels.

But he also said: "Would God neglect the affairs of the universe to come down to the earth and tell men what they knew already?" There are two fallacies here. Christianity is not a system of knowledge only. The theory of Christianity is that it does not only teach mankind, as I said last evening, a purer and a nobler way than they ever knew before, and that Christ was the best and



truest of teachers. There is another element in it, and that is that Christ was more than a teacher or a man. He was also God. You must accept the whole theory. When Christ came from heaven to earth, to live and die for man as man's Savior, it was not only God's coming to teach mankind what they knew before, but it was that, and *much more than that*. I perfectly acknowledge that many of the teachings in Christianity were found before the time of Christ, and were found in other countries of the world. Our friends speak as though we believed that until the time of Christ men were inhuman beings and had no true thought or feeling in their lives. I deny anything of the kind. Mr. Foote says "every man I believe has something good about him, and every man has also something bad about him, and so is a kind of grey." He used the word I have used for a long time in other places. We are a kind of grey, a mixture of good and bad. The better you are the lighter the grey, the worse you are the darker the grey. Christianity is to make the grey lighter and lighter still until there is no spot of darkness left, until you are pure white light. But beyond this, if God be all-perfect, and all-good, and all-wise, he cannot neglect anything. Being here as man does not mean that his knowledge is localised, that he has no knowledge of the universe. Localise the knowledge of God! It is utterly impossible. He must and ever will remain absolute and infinite. I do not suppose Mr. Foote will found a serious argument on this. There can be no neglect on the part of God of anything in God's universe. Again he referred to prayer, but said that he would not speak further upon that. I hold that prayer is the very essence of our Christianity. It is as philosophical and scientific as it is human. Tyndall says there is nothing unscientific in the theory of prayer, but the only question is, is prayer a fact. It is a perfectly fair question and one that demands a fair and honest answer. But as far as the prayer is concerned, if you acknowledge God, you must acknowledge the *possibility* of prayer. My time is up. I was going to speak of the resurrection of the body, but I must leave that to the next time I have an opportunity of addressing you. (Applause).

MR. FOOTE: Dr. McCann complained that my opening speech was as wide as the universe. It was as wide as the Bible. (Hear, hear.) I can quite understand that is rather too wide for my opponent. Dr. McCann also complained that I had devoted too much time to the Old Testament, and I notice that, forgetful of his own criticism, he spent at least half of his time in doing the very same thing. Jesus Christ said—and he is a very much higher authority than Dr. McCann on his own theory—that he came not to destroy

the law and the prophets but to fulfil. If the Old Testament is to be set aside I can quite understand why it is preparatory—it is preparatory to equally lightly setting aside the New Testament. The Bible is God's word or it is not. If it is not God's word I have no quarrel with Dr. McCann. If it is God's word I want him to defend it. If it is God's word and man's word mixed, I want him to give some criterion for separating the one from the other. (Hear, hear.) It is quite true I only sent Dr. McCann last evening a list of the books I might use to-day, but I told him in the letter I should have to refer to exceedingly few, and I only mentioned such books as every man in Dr. McCann's position must have or ought to have in his own library.

Now I will pass on rapidly, clearing away a few of Dr. McCann's criticisms, because I want to give him something fresh to answer. He said the objections I had urged to-night had been urged before. Similarly, every answer Dr. McCann has given to-night has been given before. We came here with a clear platform. We came here to discuss whether Christianity is true; and whether my arguments against Christianity have been urged or answered before is nothing to the point. The question is—Can they be answered now? (Cheers.)

Dr. McCann will not trouble himself about who wrote the Old Testament. According to his theory God did, or God dictated it, which is much the same thing. It is a matter of no importance who wrote the Old Testament. Indeed! A matter of no importance who wrote a book which tells you some prodigious stories which you want the best authority for before you accept it! Is a witness to be brought blindfolded and gagged into court, and is the counsel to make him testify anything he pleases? Is a witness not to be cross-examined? Are we not to be told who he is, where he lives, and what his name is? I can quite understand what lamentable errors our Christian friends fall into when such are their canons of evidence and criticism. (Hear, hear.) But if the thing is gold, says Dr. McCann, what does it matter what stamp it bears? If it is all gold! If it were all gold we should not be here discussing to-night. As a rule, if you offer a man a piece of gold he does not trouble much about the stamp on it, especially if you give it him for nothing. I do not admit that all the Bible is gold. Some of it is brass and more of it is brazen. (Hear, hear.) There are passages in the Bible which no clergyman dare read to a mixed congregation. (Hear, hear.) I know that there are coarse passages in many old writers, but they were fallible men, infected with the coarseness of their times despite their own genius. But if a book is written by God, or at God's dictation—and it will not do to

say God did not write, for the Bible says he wrote the Ten Commandments with his own fingers—then I say it should not fall below the purity of a progressive civilisation. And if God only “inspired” the Bible writers in a general way, he might still have checked the foul mind of the scribe when he wished to record anything that would bring a blush into the cheek of a child. (Cheers.)

I do not allow that all mankind sprang from one pair. I know of no evolutionist who holds anything of the kind. Such an assertion seems to me to show a poor acquaintance with the Darwinian theory. I need say no more. Dr. McCann founded an argument on my admission, and as I repudiate the admission his argument falls to the ground.

Dr. McCann says that Mark and John did not refer to the Incarnation because they were writing about other matters. If I were writing a paper on brown bread I might reasonably omit all reference to Reckitt’s blue. (Laughter.) But if I were writing a life of Shakespeare, what an omission it would be to make no reference to his plays! And if a man is writing the life of Jesus Christ, and makes no reference to the transcendent fact that he was brought into the world unlike other men, that God was not metaphorically but actually his father, I do not see how you can explain his silence except by supposing that he was ignorant of it, or that he disbelieved it.

A word as to miracles. I quite allow that it is absurd to say that miracles are impossible. On the same theory it is absurd to say anything is impossible. That is an abstract and futile discussion. Nobody can absolutely say what will take place to-morrow. When we are dealing with such things we must go upon probabilities. But that does not make miracles any the easier of belief. A miracle is a prodigious story. Being a prodigious story, it requires prodigious evidence. It cannot dispense with the first-hand evidence of eye and ear witnesses. If you can only produce the evidence of rumour, passed from mouth to mouth and from generation to generation, and finally put into a literary form, nobody knows exactly where, when, and by whom, everybody gifted with common sense can see that your evidence is insufficient. It would not be enough to convict a man of petty theft; and how much more is it inadequate in a court like this where we have graver matters to consider?

Prayer has been dealt with. The question is, is prayer ever answered? Professor Tyndall is referred to. That is rather an ominous name. Professor Tyndall has challenged the theologians to test the matter. He has asked that a ward shall be set aside in



a hospital and specially prayed for by all Christian congregations ; and if more cures are recorded in that ward than in the others, it would be decisive of the question of prayer. But you cannot catch a theologian in that way. (Cheers.) Dr. Littledale asks whether Professor Tyndall thinks that God Almighty is going to submit himself to scientific experiments. (Laughter.) But if you will not submit your theories to scientific tests, you have no right to ask scientific men to give them a moment's consideration. (Cheers.)

Last Thursday evening John Stuart Mill was referred to, and I have given Dr. McCann notice that I may refer to that writer's *Essay on Liberty*. We had a quotation from that work in which Mill says that the sayings of Christ, if properly understood, are noble in their ethical teaching. On the very next page—I am referring to page 30 of the People's Edition—Mill says : “ I believe that other ethics than any which can be evolved from exclusively Christian sources must exist side by side with Christian ethics to produce the moral regeneration of mankind.” He expresses himself still more strongly in another passage. “ What little recognition,” he says, “ the idea of obligation to the public obtains in modern morality, is derived from Greek and Roman sources, not from Christian ; as, even in the morality of private life, whatever exists of magnanimity, high-mindedness, personal dignity, even the sense of honor, is derived from the purely human, not the religious part of our education, and never could have grown out of a standard of ethics in which the only worth, professedly recognised, is that of obedience.” There speaks the real Mill, in accents very unlike those of the vague and temporising passage which Dr. McCann quoted from the same chapter.

I now proceed to deal with the teachings of Jesus Christ and the Apostles on other matters. You have heard what I said in my first speech, you have also heard Dr. McCann's reply, and when you calmly read the debate in print you will be able to see which of us has the stronger case.

In the matter of domestic morality the New Testament is altogether wrong. Domestic morality being the beginning of all morality, it is of primary importance. Civilisation grows out of the family. What counsel has Jesus Christ to the husband and wife, and the father and mother ? Simply none. He himself apparently knew nothing of this relationship, or he looked down upon it with ill-disguised contempt. When you come to Paul you find him teaching what I am sure no person here would for a moment approve. In the seventh chapter of the first Epistle to the Corinthians he puts the marriage of men and women on exactly the same ground as the coupling of brute beasts. He says—I do not

care to read *all* he says: "I say, therefore, to the unmarried and widows, it is good for them if they abide even as I"—that is unmarried—"but if they cannot contain, let them marry: for it is better to marry than to burn." Paul in this passage does not recognise in the relation of husband and wife any other sentiment than mere animalism. If you are by nature so cold that you can remain unmarried, Paul says it is a supreme blessing. He does not understand that woman is the complement of man and man the complement of woman. He does not understand that only by true union of the sexes can men or women live out their proper life. He shirks altogether the question of how the human race is to go on if men and women do not marry. Without marriage or promiscuity our race would soon terminate, and perhaps Paul, with his view of things, would have considered that a consummation devoutly to be wished.

Again Paul says in the fifth chapter of Ephesians, "Wives submit yourselves unto your own husbands as unto the Lord. . . . Therefore as the Church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands, in everything." And in the fourteenth of Corinthians—the very next chapter, by the way, to that which contains his glowing panegyric on charity—he says: "Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law. And if they will learn anything, let them ask their husbands at home." Fancy some women with no other source of information! (Laughter.) I say, in conclusion, that Paul and Jesus Christ give us no wise counsel in domestic morality, which is the chief part of human conduct; while Paul distinctly degrades the union of husband and wife, teaches the stultification of human nature, and treats marriage as mere animalism disguised by law. (Applause.)

DR. McCANN: Allow me before it slips my memory to take the last point first—a very important one—with regard to social morality in Christianity in the teaching of Paul, and what is said about the relation of wives to husbands, because you have not heard all that Paul said. You might imagine from Mr. Foote's quotation that there was only one side, and not another side. Mr. Foote read: "Therefore as the Church is subject to Christ so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything." But there is something following: "Husbands love your wives even as Christ also loved the Church and gave himself for it." Love your wives as Christ loved the Church and gave himself for it. Can a husband love his wife more than by giving himself for

her? "So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies; he that loveth his wife loveth himself," and so on. "For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother and shall be joined unto his wife, they two shall be one flesh: this is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the Church; nevertheless let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself, and the wife see that she reverence her husband." (Cheers.) All I have got to say is this, that if there were more homes guided by those rules—husband loving his wife, giving himself for her in care, in work, in labor, and in trust; and the wife reverencing her husband—there would be fewer miserable homes, fewer unfortunate unions than there are at the present moment. (Applause.)

I must now go back to where I left off in my former remarks. Mr. Foote said I had devoted half of my time to the consideration of the Old Testament, although I had objected to him for devoting so much of his time to it. But Mr. Foote told you in his first speech that I did not discuss on the previous evening all the doctrines of Christianity, but nevertheless he set a good example by following me as closely as he could on that evening, and he hoped I should follow his example. I did so, and if he took me into the Old Testament I accepted his example and tried to follow him as closely as possible. If he had not gone there he would not have found me there. There are one or two doctrines I wish to refer to, that have been mentioned, before I go further. Meantime allow me to say that it is in the quiet reading of these debates in your own houses that you will arrive at the truth of the case, and not in the excitement of listening to the words spoken here, because there is much, in partisanship, to excite the feelings and to arrest your judgment. I will also freely confess that many doctrines have been taught in the name of Christianity that are not Christian, but the reverse. Whatever I believe I honestly believe, and whatever I object to I fearlessly state, fearing not the consequences. We never gain anything by unfair explanation or garbled interpretation. If I had heard many of such doctrines, as a man ignorant of what the truths of Christianity were; if I had believed such doctrines were taught in the word of God, and were taught for the benefit of mankind, I should no longer have been a Christian, but should have joined the opposite ranks. I believe much harm is done by calling that Christianity which is the reverse of Christianity, and I have a large amount of sympathy with our secularist friends in so far as they are taking that for Christianity which is not Christianity.

Mr. Foote spoke strongly against the Day of Judgment, when all shall be judged before God and each awarded his portion for here-



after. I would ask Mr. Foote, or any man, would he think it wise in the moral Government of God, any more than in the natural order of the universe, that actions should be parted from their inherent and necessary results? No action ends with itself. If it be a bad action something follows it that is bad; if it be a good action something follows it that is good. Mr. Foote himself speaks of a Day of Judgment, that Day of Judgment being in the first place here. He said we were a grey mixture of good and bad. Your character is as you stand to-night in your own knowledge the result of all the past of your lives. Every word you have spoken, everything you have done, good or bad, has left its mark behind it, and you are to-night the balance of all the right that has been done by you and of all the wrong that has been done by you. That final Day of Judgment is simply the final revelation of man to himself, more clearly, more thoroughly, than ever he was revealed to himself before.

One word referring to Mr. Foote's closing remarks of last evening. He spoke of it as being a very hard and very false doctrine that there should be pardon for guilt, and he mentioned the case of a banker who had robbed many a poor widow and brought many a family to degradation by his dishonesty. A sin of that kind would be forgiven, he said, because he professed penitence for what he had done that was wrong. Let me tell Mr. Foote that in the scriptures there is no pardon for evil of any kind. There is pardon for sin, but no pardon for evil. As this is an important point, I want you to understand it—sin and evil. A man may try to strike me. In trying to strike me, he may miss me, strike something and break his arm. He may be repentant for his ill-feeling, and coming to me, tell me he was sorry for his anger against me. Would you in that case, if you believed that man was sorry for having attempted to hurt you or do you harm—would you, or would you not, forgive that man his angry feeling against you? I know what I should do, and I believe I know what you would do. But, on the other hand, you cannot forgive his broken arm. That must be healed by the ordinary curative process. The same here. If a man who does that which he ought not to do scars his soul, for that there is no pardon. There is no pardon for evil; there is for sin. God may pardon a sin against him, but God does not pardon a sin against a brother. That has to be done by the brother—the man himself. Christ's teaching was: "If your brother has aught against you and you come to offer a sacrifice to God, it is useless if you are at enmity with your brother. Go to your brother and get his pardon. If you sin against your brother, go to your brother and get his forgiveness, and then go to God and ask his forgive-

ness." Pardon of sin and pardon of guilt are very different, and I want you to understand the difference. Mr. Foote spoke of original sin as being false and atrocious, and said if you try to teach this doctrine to a mother nursing her child upon her breast, whatever her words might emit, her heart would altogether repudiate and rebel against your doctrine. But that depends upon what your definition is. What is this original sin? I want that defined. As I understand original sin, it means a fact acknowledged by every living being. As that mother would see her child indicate or exhibit a certain amount of vicious temperament, she would know that that child had inherited a tendency from its parents. ("No.") Do you mean to say you deny inherited tendency? If so, your Secular philosophy is somewhat at fault. There is in all our being this tendency towards wrong inherited from those who have gone before, and I scarcely know a stronger deterrent from wrong to parents who love their children than the thought that if they are leading vicious lives and impairing their nature, they will bequeath the legacy of a tendency to vice to their children, and so leave the curse of their own sin to those who are following after, and in that may let the offspring enter upon a career in the world weighted with this tendency. There is no theory here; there is no doctrine here; but this is simply the fact of original sin.

My opponent also objects that we are to be punished for our unbelief and rewarded for our belief, belief and unbelief being beyond our control. I am aware that no man can believe or disbelieve at will. We are bound to believe on evidence, and as I said on the last evening if you have no evidence for your belief, call it by any name you like, it is not belief; but we must bear in mind that we can to a very large degree select what evidence for belief we shall examine and what evidence we shall exclude. You need not tell me for a moment that a Secularist will study the scriptures with exactly the same view as a Christian will. (Hear, hear.) Do you think so yourselves? Will you tell me that Mr. Foote and myself will get exactly the same idea from certain passages of scripture? You have heard what his ideas are. Those are not my ideas. The scriptures are the same to both. He goes to these scriptures and he misinterprets them; I go to the same scriptures and interpret them differently; to that book which I believe to be God's book and my guide and help for life. Therefore the Bible being the same there must be a difference somewhere. That difference is in ourselves. It is subjective; it is not objective. Therefore the will has a certain bearing upon this matter and a very important one. We certainly are frequently able to believe what we want to believe and to disbelieve what we wish to disbelieve.

Consider next the word "punishment." It is a very misleading word. If a child of mine does that which I believe a child ought not to do, I can take and subject that child to punishment inflicted by myself. That may be good, but that is not God's moral order. God's moral order is that the result of the action shall be in the doing of the action, and that when you do wrong you suffer wrong, and when you do good you get good. Here as everywhere there is law. It reigns no less in the moral than in the natural world. Obedience to any law obtains the result of that obedience, disobedience entails its own punishment. There is no respect of persons. There is not arbitrary punishment, it is self-inflicted suffering. The law is self-acting and the suffering is in proportion to the violation. There is no added punishment here as we understand the term. It is a self-acting, ever-present, unaltering law, the expression of the will of a moral governor.

MR. FOOTE: As this is my last speech, you must pardon me if I try to get as much as I can into it. I was quite aware when I quoted Paul that I did not read the whole of the epistle. (Hear, hear.) The gentleman on my left seems to imagine I *ought* to have read the whole of it. I read as much as served my argument out of a big book. I will now explain that what Dr. McCann added does not in any degree touch my criticism. I knew what followed, but what I quoted vitiates it all. Directly you begin to talk about obedience between husband and wife, you are bidding society return to barbarism. Marriage, as George Eliot well said, is a union either of sympathy or of conquest. If it is a union of conquest, your "obedience" is right; if it is a union of sympathy, your "obedience" is wrong. It vitiates and must corrupt the whole home. (Cheers.) Why there are some wives who are a great deal more sensible, and a great deal more honorable, and have a great deal more stability of character, than their husbands; and if Paul meant to put the thing on a proper basis, or at any rate a more sensible one, why did he not say "Wives, submit yourselves unto your husbands, except in such cases as they ought to submit themselves unto you"? (Laughter.) The fact is Paul was a crusty old bachelor. If he had been married he would never have talked such nonsense.

I am quite aware that God can never pardon the consequences of our actions, but that is not my argument. It is not my duty to defend it. What have I to do with God's pardon? I am here to repudiate the notion. I say that to talk of God, a third party, pardoning me for my wrong to a fellow man, is an infamous absurdity. How can he pardon the wrong done to another? To talk about punishment and consequence as if they were the same thing,



is also absurd. I know if I put my hand in the fire I shall suffer for it. That is not a punishment; it is the natural consequence of my folly. Punishment is the deliberate infliction of pain by society for a specific purpose. What relation is there between a natural consequence and a superadded punishment? When you tell me that God's law simply means that we are to take the consequences of our actions, you are preaching Secular morality under the disguise of Christianity. (Applause.)

I am aware, too, that children inherit tendencies from their parents. But what has that to do with original sin? Original sin is something, according to the Christian theory, that we are to be made responsible for, and probably punished for; while inherited tendencies in a child from its parents are not circumstances for which it should be punished, but circumstances that must be taken into account on the credit side in all the judgments we pass upon it. (Cheers.)

I will now follow out my own prospectus. I say Christianity in the New Testament teaches a doctrine of slavish submission, which all free countries have had to violate. In the thirteenth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, whoever wrote it says: "Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers: For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist, shall receive to themselves damnation." Then erect a monument to Bomba and inscribe a tablet of infamy to Garibaldi! You know that in every country the hearts of true men and women belie this doctrine. Ask any man during his best and highest moments which he would rather be—the crowned perjurer upon the throne of France, or the lonely poet exile upon his channel rock, nursing year by year the conscience of humanity within his mighty heart—and you know the answer that would come. "The powers that be are ordained by God." I wish he had ordained them better. The powers that be in Russia are ordained of God! Then all those men and women who blacken the highways to the Siberian mines, simply to expiate the crime of daring to hope their country might be free, have resisted the ordinance of God and shall receive to themselves damnation. Why the doctrine is an incredible infamy. (Applause.)

In social matters Christianity teaches doctrines that would lead us all to ruin. It teaches universal improvidence. Trust in God, like the lilies of the field! Take no thought for the morrow, for the morrow shall take thought for itself! I know in our Revised Version they twist this into a new interpretation—"Be not anxious for the morrow." But I ask whether civilised men must not be anxious for

the morrow. The difference between a savage and a civilised man lies precisely there. The one is anxious for the morrow, and the other is not. Is not the civilised man anxious for long after the morrow; anxious for his wife, anxious for his children? And some in whose breasts the social sympathies are still stronger, are anxious for the welfare of all posterity. Nay some devote their whole energy to that end; and some heroic souls have taken all—fortune, reputation, and life itself—and offered it as a sacrifice on the altar of man's highest hopes. (Cheers.)

Suppose a young man beginning business turns to the Sermon on the Mount for directions. He finds he must give to every one that asketh. Therefore, as every body wants credit, in a fortnight he would be in the Bankruptcy Court. Jesus Christ taught a crude form of Communism. I agree with Professor Newman, who writes as follows in his *Christianity in its Cradle*:—"The virtue cardinal to his moral system, the virtue without which no disciple can be *perfect*, is that fundamental one of the Essenes, the renunciation of private property. This pervades his discourses from end to end. Not many Christians in any age have obeyed him, and the prevalent excuse is, that he intended this precept *for the twelve apostles only*. But the Sermon on the Mount was addressed to the multitude, and therein he enjoins: 'Give to him that asketh of thee, and from him who would borrow of thee, turn not away.' The precept has no limitation. He who *asks* may be idle, may be a worthless beggar or a drinker; no special case is suggested as ground for just refusal. That industry is a human duty cannot be gathered from his doctrine: how could it, when he kept twelve religious mendicants around him?"

I will not argue whether Socialism, or Communism, or any other system, will be the ultimate form of society; but I object to the crude Communism which consists in telling people, as Jesus told the young lawyer who only required one thing to be perfect—"Sell all that thou hast and give to the poor." We should be all poor together again to-morrow, and there would be no fresh partition to keep the ball rolling.

Among the sayings of Jesus are these. "Blessed are the poor in spirit! Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth!" They have never made a beginning yet. (Laughter.) "Resist not evil! "Whosoever shall smite thee on the right cheek, turn unto him the other also!" Try it on the first big Christian you meet. "Whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain!" I know of no Christian who will do it unless you carry him. (Laughter.) Even in that beautiful and pathetic parable of the prodigal son, you get essentially false teaching. I call it pathetic

because it is true to human nature. It is not a parable we should study for any moral it conveys. When the young fellow has spent all his portion in riotous living, he comes back because he is starving, and for no better reason. The moral of it is that there is more joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth than over ninety and nine just persons who need no repentance. That is a cardinal error of Christianity. It is always working upon the worst material, always trying to convert the incorrigible, always trying to reclaim the irreclaimable. Why does not it turn its attention to the best material of society, and leave the worst, the morally stunted and deformed, until there is time for them. (Oh!) I do not say you should oppress the morally stunted. I do not say you should tread upon the fallen. But I do say it is wrong to waste your efforts in reforming gaol-birds, and all sorts of moral lunatics and lepers, while there are better men in a back street, whose poverty evokes no sympathy, though they are painfully striving to be honest and keep out of prison. (Applause.)

In bringing my address to a close, I desire to say that in all history Christianity has been a determined foe of that liberty without which no progress is possible. Show me any Christian country on the face of the globe that has not enacted laws against heresy! Even in our own country, which boasts of its freedom, and where Christianity has so far abated its imperial claim that it sometimes condescends to discuss with "infidels" instead of persecuting them; even here, I say, an Atheistic member of parliament is robbed for years of his seat in the House of Commons; an Atheistic mother is robbed of her child (applause); and an Atheistic journalist can be sentenced by a Christian judge, after trial by a Christian jury, to study the evidences of Christianity in a Christian gaol. (Applause.)

Lastly, I say that Christianity, by concentrating attention on this man of sorrows, this ghastly dejected figure upon the crucifix, has turned men from the proper channel of their existence, and provided a convenient doctrine for all the despots of the earth. While men spend time in dreaming about compensations hereafter, they will submit to misery and degradation now. I admire that old pagan myth of Hercules, clearing the world of its monsters, and cleansing its Augean stables, rather than the effeminate figure on the cross, the semi-suicidal martyr of Calvary, who, so far as I can see, struck no great blow for the remedy of evil. Surely, it is high time, and surely the world sees it is high time, to make a change. Christian profession still lingers on the lips, but Secular practice is dominating our lives. (Cheers.) The priests shout "Great is Christ," as Demetrius the silversmith shouted "Great is Diana of



the Ephesians," and too frequently for a similar reason. But the people are leaving the Church, and the foremost intellect of the day has long been outside it. We witness a grand transformation, which is leaving the priests of a dead faith to practise their rites in a dead church, round whose aisles there flits the phantom of a dead God. (Applause.)

DR. McCANN: Mr. Foote and I must attach very different meanings to the same words when he talks about a dead faith and a dead God. I should use exactly the opposite term and speak of a living faith and a living God. There never was a time when Christianity was so intelligently, so earnestly, and so thoroughly held as it is at the present hour. (Cheers) There never was a time when God was preached in all the power and grandeur of his character so clearly as now; and this fact that there is so much intelligence being brought to bear upon our faith, is that which causes many to doubt our faith who never doubted our faith before. So much I grant you at once, and I am not sorry to see this, because a man striving to find out for himself why he is a Christian, and why he believes our Bible, will find out difficulties and obstacles that another will never discover who accepts his creed and Bible as a mere heritage left to him by his ancestors. Was there ever a time when Christian activity was so active as at the present time? Christianity is spreading itself far and wide, not only over our own land, but from North to South and from East to West, over the whole of the world. It is going to India it is going to China. and the result is that the old idolatries of India, and the mysticism of China are giving way before its light, and before long it will spread over the whole world until the prophecy is fulfilled.

Mr. Foote says Christ raised no stroke to remedy the evil of the world! Think of what the world was when Christ was born; try to realise the degradation of Rome; think what Germany was, or our own land at the time when Christianity became a force purifying morals and overturning rooted idolatries. Somehow the change from idolatry to Christianity took place through Europe and England. Think what they are at the present hour and what they were then. I ask you to consider carefully what they are now. I again affirm what I said on the last evening, that Christianity is most progressive in the most progressive countries, My friend referred to Spain. Spain is not a progressive country and so Christianity is not progressive but stagnant. We, on the other hand, are a progressive country. Thought is awaking, intelligence is being developed, and as a result our appreciation of Christian truth

is becoming quicker, stronger, and brighter than ever before. Why not? Are we never to expand our views? Are we never to alter our apprehensions of facts placed before us? No one would claim that for science. Science is the gradual study of the material world. What is the result of that? The material world in itself is exactly now what it was 100 years ago, but our apprehensions of it have become brighter and clearer day by day because we study it with continually increased knowledge, and so come to know it better. This is what we understand by the progress of doctrine. It is simply growth of thought.

Mr. Foote says that the gospel he believes in is the gospel of gladness, and there I perfectly agree with him, but is this not our gospel? I know there are men who think they ought always to look miserable, men calling themselves Christians. They seem to think it a misfortune they ever were born, and I feel sometimes inclined to agree with them. But that is not the teaching of our gospel. It is to "rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say rejoice." It is that God has given us all these things richly to enjoy. Is not this the gospel of gladness?

We are also told that Christ taught slavishness because he said "Blessed are ye poor." Now we know that the poverty he referred to was poverty of spirit, but that this could not possibly mean what Mr. Foote would have us to believe is made clear by Christ's own conduct and that of his disciples. Was Christ poor in spirit when he braved scribes and Pharisees, and denounced them to their faces, those rulers of Israel who held his life in their hands? Was he poor in spirit thus, when he drove out from the temple those who were trading there? Was Paul thus poor in spirit when he stood before kings, caught them by the conscience, and shook them on their thrones?

I will tell you, however, who advocates the blessings of poverty as such, and that is Mr. Foote. Here is his *Secularism the True Philosophy of Life*. On page 25 I read: "Secularism came into existence with the decline of the Socialist movement, and has found adherents mostly among the poor, to whom all new systems not of the pedantic order must appeal. It was not the rich who first welcomed Buddhism, nor the wealthy Jews who flocked round the prophet of Nazareth. The rich, the respectable, are naturally averse from change and freely content with the existing order of things. Whatever is, is right because they flourish under it. . . . To the poor alone change offers a prospect of gain, and they therefore are the earliest adherents to principles which aim at radical societary as well as speculative changes." If he does not mean that as a benediction on poverty I know not what blessing means. He

says in effect, if not in words, "Blessed are ye poor for you will be changed for the better." (Cheers.)

But surely such arguments as Mr. Foote has been indulging in this evening go rather too far. If Christ's teachings be as he represents them, Christ must have been mad—(hear, hear)—and if Christ were mad, his disciples must have been mad to follow such teachings—(hear, hear)—and if his disciples were mad, all Christians must have been mad, and are mad to the present hour. And so, my Secularist friends, you have a mad Christendom, one huge asylum, and you are the keepers. It has been sometimes said that men who are mad believe all men mad except themselves.

Again, Mr. Foote has said that Christianity is a foe to liberty because it taught that these early Christians were to be subject to the higher powers—subject to the authorities in those countries where Christianity was first taught. Supposing they had been taught, "You are to oppose every form of Government," what would the result of that have been, think you? It refers to higher principles, and says "the things that are Cæsar's give to Cæsar, and the things that are God's give to God." (Cheers.) If a man claims my submission or allegiance in things that are wrong, I say, "No. Whether it be right to obey God or man, judge ye." So long as I can obey the ruler of the land in harmony with obedience to my God, I shall do it; but the moment the authority of the emperor or king, be he who he may, violates the command of God, that moment man must go to the wall and Christ must reign supreme. This has been the history of the Church in all times.

Our friend spoke of persecution and said that Christianity taught persecution. I know Christians have persecuted, I am sorry for it and I hope the day will come when punishment for theological views will be banished from our statute book. (Applause.) Persecution is not the teaching of Christianity itself. We read "who art thou that judgeth another man's servant? To his own master he stands or falls." He is the judge and not we. It is also written "Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind." "If you love not your brother whom you have seen how can you love God whom you have not seen." The man who is a true Christian and who loves his brother will be the last to persecute that brother in any way whatever. He will show his love for Christ by loving his brother also.

But our friend has further urged against Christianity that it seeks to reclaim the irreclaimable, to waste power, while they go to the good, and those who do not need them and leave the others alone. Yes, Christianity does seek to reclaim all. It does try to benefit even those in prisons, while not neglecting those who in



poverty and struggle try to keep out of prisons. How do you know what may be the result of your influence on any one? What right have you to assume they cannot be reclaimed? Many have gone to the slums of our city and spoken words of kindness, and hope to the poor there, which have kindled new aspirations, and opened to them a new heaven, a new world, when our friend would have left them rotting in the gutter. ("No.") I do not believe he would himself but his words tell us so. Christianity is not neglecting the slums and back streets of our city. Have you read the *Cry of Outcast London*, and do you know the work which is being done in outcast London? There are people who go night after night into the streets of London, to pick up the waifs and strays and take them where they can get some help and food for body and soul. This is the work that Christianity is doing, carrying out the teaching and example of Christ, who went about doing good; and his enemies could only say of him: "He saved others; himself he cannot save." This debate, or this portion of it, is now drawing to a close. You will have our words respectively before you. Read them carefully and honestly, and I have no doubt whatever of the result. You will find that Christianity kindles love, awakens noblest aspirations, gives you a model of life such as man has never seen before. What has Mr. Foote brought against Christianity as a whole?—a few passages and thoughts, touching only the fringe of the subject. I say to those who are here, Christianity is the true Secularism, having the promise of the life that now is as well as of that which is to come. (Cheers.)



# CHRISTIANITY OR SECULARISM: WHICH IS TRUE?

A VERBATIM REPORT OF A FOUR NIGHTS' DEBATE BETWEEN

THE REV. DR. J. McCANN AND MR. G. W. FOOTE,

*At the Hall of Science, Old Street, London, E.C.*

THIRD NIGHT, APRIL 29, 1886.

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MRS. BESANT (who was received with cheers) said: The debate to-night deals with the question of Secularism, and it will be opened by Mr. Foote. It was at first announced that to-night's debate would be opened by Dr. McCann, but it was felt that as Mr. Foote took the affirmative in the second half of the debate, it would be more rational for him to open it, and so state his positions, which will then of course be attacked by Dr. McCann. (Cheers.)

MR. FOOTE: To-night I have to open this debate on Secularism, and I shall endeavor to confine myself strictly to the subject; yet it will be quite impossible for me to avoid making reference to Christianity. Although we have divided this discussion practically into two, of two nights each, the subject of discussion throughout is "Christianity or Secularism: Which is True?" Consequently Dr. McCann will not feel that I have at all invaded his province if in maintaining my own positions I have to make reference to those which he maintains. (Hear, hear.)

I think it will be as well for me at the very outset to tell Dr. McCann and yourselves what I mean by Secularism. (Hear, hear.) I have drawn up my definitions so as to harmonise all the teachings on the subject of all the leaders of Secularism. I should simply waste my time and yours if I occupied a portion of my address by giving long or even short quotations from the writings of leading men and women on our side. I shall give you the propositions which I have submitted to Dr. McCann, and which I think he will



agree do contain the substance of what Secularists teach. Just as Christians have diversities among themselves, so have we; but I think the points upon which we differ are of infinitesimal importance compared with those upon which we agree. My propositions are these:

(1) "Secularism is the philosophy of this life, without reference to another; it recognises no providence but science and no savior but human effort; and it regards the public welfare as the criterion of right and wrong." (Cheers.)

(2) "The ground and guarantee of morality exist in human nature."

(3) "All real progress is Secular and not Christian." (Hear, hear.)

These propositions are short. They may seem at first sight comparatively harmless. But I think on analysing and testing them we shall find that they practically cover all that differentiates Secularism from surrounding systems, and especially all that differentiates it from Christianity. To begin with, I say that Secularism is the philosophy of this life without reference to another. This statement of course implies what Dr. McCann would at once contest, and I have no doubt will contest presently, that we have no knowledge of a future life. A man who knew that there was a future life, and had reason to believe that his position in another state of existence would depend upon his conduct or his belief here, would be a fool if he did not take these things into calculation in his daily life. (Hear, hear.) He would be quite as great a fool as if he acted to-day without reference to to-morrow. If there be a future life, then it is, so to speak, only a great to-morrow; and to leave it out of our calculations for the present would be the height of absurdity. Now Secularism is not called upon to assert that there is *no* future life. Men have many views about many things we may hold to be so highly improbable that it would be credulity to profess belief in them; and yet we are not called upon to positively deny the existence of such things. Professor Huxley once took this illustration. Suppose a man asserts that in some remote planet there is now going on a discussion on an education bill. I have no means of judging whether the man speaks truly or falsely, although I may have a very decided opinion that he is going very far beyond the bounds of his present knowledge. Well, as I have no information on the subject, I do not positively assert that there is no such discussion going on in that remote planet. (Laughter.) But if the man asks me to take that discussion as the basis of my decisions on public education, I should at once say to him—"My dear sir, I decline to do anything

of the kind. I will not settle the education of this earth with reference to lunar politics." (Hear, hear, and laughter.) So I am not called upon to assert to-night that there is no future life, although I frankly admit that I have no belief in any other life than this. (Hear, hear.) I frankly admit that to my mind science reveals no secrets of futurity. I frankly admit that, so far as I know, the eternal silence of the grave has never been broken. If there be any mystery in death, the veil has never, to my knowledge, been lifted in the slightest degree. (Hear, hear.) If I ask a thousand different men in different parts of the world what a future life is, I shall get as many answers as there are people, and as different answers as there are creeds. (Hear, hear.) One man in one part of the world thinks the next life has plenty of good hunting. Another thinks it is full of peace and rest. Another thinks it has plenty of fighting. Another thinks it has interminable psalm-singing. Indeed, we find all over the world that men's conceptions of a future life are simply the reflection of their present life cast upon the infinite curtain of an illimitable future. (Hear, hear.) Speculations and conjectures are all we have to proceed upon. I suppose even the devoutest Christian has sometimes doubts and searchings of heart as to whether the future life is after all fact. When I regard the sorrow in which Christians are plunged on the death of those who are near and dear to them; when I find that they exhibit the same signs of woe as those who have no belief in the felicities of heaven—(hear, hear); when I see that their grief is quite as profound as ours; I am forced to conclude, either that they do not in their heart of hearts believe what they profess with their lips, or else that all the promises of theology fail men in the hour of their direst need. They look strong and protective when they are not required, but they betray in the hour of necessity, like broken reeds which pierce the hands that trust them. (Cheers.) Of course if Dr. McCann can show conclusively that there is a future life, I shall have to take it into my calculations for this life. But as a Secularist I know of no future life, and I decline to base my philosophy upon anything but knowledge.

Next, I say that Secularism recognises no providence but science. The ages of faith are ages of ignorance—(hear, hear)—and ages of ignorance are ages of misery. (Hear, hear.) What is it that really constitutes our modern civilisation? What is the vital principle of it, out of which all grows and develops? Science. Moral precepts were practically the same three thousand years ago that they are now. The dogmas of Christendom were formulated almost as they now stand fourteen centuries ago. It is neither the moral precepts of the sage, nor the dogmas of the theologian, that

have made the tremendous changes which the western world at least has witnessed during the last two centuries. Science has been the vital principle of all that change. Why, Science, even more than all the preachers and moralists in the world, is making mankind one great family, by increasing communication between nations, by carrying the products of one country for the consumption of another, and by internationalising ideas as well as things. It shows that the interests of all mankind are indissolubly bound up together ; that we are all mutually helpful ; and that by co-operation we may bless each other, instead of cursing each other by the narrow prejudices of patriotism, race and creed. (Cheers.) Peasants to-day enjoy luxuries that were denied to kings centuries ago. (Hear, hear.) If you compare the general condition of our own population now with its condition in the last century, you are struck by a most remarkable change. Now the cause of this change is the growth of science, the spread of information, the ferment in the public mind, the consequent growth of new tastes among the people, and the advent of democracy on the scene as the outcome of it all. (Cheers.) We sometimes hear it said that Christianity preached that God had made of one blood all nations of men to dwell upon the face of the earth. We sometimes hear it said that Christianity preached the doctrines of the brotherhood of man effectually for the first time. We sometimes hear it said that Jesus Christ was the greatest and truest democrat that ever lived. But I know well that with all the centuries of the preaching of Christianity, democracy never appeared on the scene until the great French revolution ; and the preparation for that was made in the studies of philosophers, who deluged the world with fresh ideas, bearing grand fruit in that tremendous crisis which rang the death knell of all the feudalisms of Europe. (Cheers.) I agree with Buckle that the Hall of Science is the Temple of Democracy. (Hear, hear.) As a matter of fact we find that what the Christian may be the Secularist is sure to be. (Hear, hear.) You may have a Christian on the side of right or of wrong in political and social questions. But when the history of our country comes to be written, I think it will have to be recorded that in season and out of season, in prosperity and in adversity, in hours of sunshine and in hours of darkness, the strength, the vote, the voice, and the pen of Secularism were all cast on the side of righteousness, liberty, and progress. (Cheers.)

If Dr McCann can point me to any providence but science, I shall be glad of the information. I know of none. God helps those who help themselves. (Hear, hear, and laughter.) And you know, as well as I do, that when people say "God help you,"



it is all over with you. (Cheers, and laughter.) I suppose Dr. McCann will not deny that if there were any special providence in the world apart from man's knowledge of the laws of nature, there are many opportunities for its exercise without our ever perceiving it. How many doomed cities have been destroyed by fire or volcanic eruptions? How many ships have foundered, with praying hands uplifted, as hundreds of poor souls went down to a watery grave? How many mothers have bent over dying children, moistening their faces with tears, beseeching the great God in pity to spare the one beloved object, yet seeing the light fade from the dear eyes and the sweet lips close in death? Has prayer ever been answered? ("No.") We know it never has. (Hear, hear.) And I say the theologians know this quite as well as the sceptics, for they will not allow the question of prayer, as Professor Tyndall has asked, to be submitted to a scientific experiment. They prefer to let their dogmas float about in the vague region of sentiment, where no obstacle impedes, and where a man can be as erroneous and stupid as he pleases, without the least possibility of his errors and imbecilities being exposed by facts. (Hear, hear.) Secularism recognises no savior but human effort. When men were on their knees praying to gods and ghosts the world never was saved. When men got tired of praying, raised themselves from their knees, assumed the proper attitude of men, looked nature in the face, and drank deep of her truth, although at first it was bitter—from that moment his deliverance began. (Cheers.)

Now-a-days we trust very little to supernatural agency. We rely upon ourselves. If we can save ourselves we shall be saved; if we cannot there is no hope for us. (Hear, hear.) Instead of praying to God now we are studying science. We are learning how to secure good and ward off evil. We fling ourselves into political, social and religious movements, to break away the fetters of bygone times, or to preserve whatever is good in old institutions by pruning away the pernicious accretions that have gathered around them. This is how we try to reform the world. We no longer trust, but we act. We no longer pray, but we think. The age of faith is dying. The age of reason is dawning. The prophets of the past have been the dreamers about the future. The prophets of the future will be the students of the present. (Cheers.)

Secularism regards the public welfare as the criterion of right and wrong. How many objections are raised to this doctrine from pulpits and Christian platforms, and how little departure there is from it in the business of life. (Hear hear.) Supposing any measure is proposed in the House of Commons: what is the sole

criterion of its justice or injustice, of its rightfulness or wrongfulness? Simply the public good. And any person who in the House of Commons introduced another criterion would be thought either a fossilised old Tory, or a preposterous member of some unheard-of and incredible sect. Suppose a man got up in the House of Commons, believing that the Bible contains what is necessary for our guidance, and said, "Mr. Speaker, I object to this bill—the fourteenth of Matthew and the twenty-fifth verse is dead against it." (Laughter.) Why I venture to think that even if it were poor Mr. Newdegate himself—(laughter)—his fellow bigots would only consider it was proof positive that the poor man was gone at last. (Laughter.) No other criterion than the public welfare is ever advanced in Parliament, or at any municipal meeting, or, indeed, in any places except those which are devoted to religious worship. Men prate on Sunday about a criterion of morality which they never think of practising on any other day of the week. (Hear, hear.) If Dr. McCann does not admit my criterion of morality, I will ask him to give me his. I can conceive no other criterion except the will of God, and that I consider is no criterion at all. The will of God must itself be justified morally before I am bound to obey it. God may command me to do a wrong thing. It is, at any rate, within the bounds of possibility. I do not know that even deity is unchangeable, and if his character is reflected in the Bible he certainly is not. (Hear, hear.) How do you know that God might not command me, as he once commanded Abraham to take his son Isaac and offer him as a sacrifice? You may say that Abraham was checked at the last moment. Yes; but in obedience to the command of God he put himself in the position of a murderer. His heart was tainted, and the word of command which arrested the murder did not prevent the deterioration of his character. (Hear, hear.)

I say next, in pursuance of my programme, that Secularism finds the ground and guarantee of morality in human nature. I do not purpose to trouble you with an abstract metaphysical discussion on morality, its origin, or its meaning. Generally you may rely upon it that metaphysics are good to be flung into the fire. (Laughter.) As a great metaphysician, Bishop Berkely, once said: the metaphysician raises a dust to cloud the eyes and then complains that we cannot see. Plain people get at the truth much better than metaphysicians. The best plan is the Darwinian or scientific method of ascertaining how morality originated. That will give you the key to everything else. I agree with Mr. Darwin—of course very humbly and a long way off—that morality grows out of our social instincts. Man is a gregarious animal—that is

men flock together. We find that twenty people can do a great deal more than one; nay that twenty people together can do things that twenty separate ones could never do. How could I build my house; how could I make my clothes; how could I make my shoes; how could I do the thousand and one things necessary to my existence? I cannot. I depend upon others. They depend upon me. And by this co-operation we are brought into contact with each other. (Hear, hear.) Now we do not need any divine revelation to show us the necessity of this. Many of the lower animals are gregarious, and wherever we find them herding together we find there is a kind of social law amongst them which they enforce upon each other. If you read the writings of men like Huber and Sir John Lubbock on ants and bees, you will find that, far below mankind, social laws are carried out where organisms herd together for the purpose of mutual protection and support. (Hear, hear.) Now Mr. Darwin says that out of the social instincts, morality grows. As men advance in the scale of mentality, they look before and after. They estimate the consequences of their actions, and much of that evil which, as Hood says, is wrought by want of thought as well as by want of heart, is eliminated from our daily life. Then the growth of language enables each man to express to his fellows his desires, and it enables the community to promulgate the laws which it will insist on every member of society yielding obedience to. Next, there is the power of habit which you see exemplified all through our lives. You go to a committee consisting of half a dozen men you have never seen before. You associate with them for some practical purpose, but you cannot do that without contracting a sympathy with them, and it is that sympathy or fellow feeling, as we sometimes call it, which is really the basis of the moral relation between man and man. (Hear, hear.)

With respect to conscience I hold that it is a growth. The conscience of a man in one country differs from the conscience of a man in another. It is no use preaching to the Hindoo Thug on the sacredness of life. Many of these Thugs have actually felt remorse when they have failed to commit a murder. What is remorse? Remorse is simply the uprising, after a moment of temporary depression, of a permanent social instinct which has been outraged by the revolt of an intermittent instinct. For instance, if a man, in giving way to a sensual appetite, violates a law which he permanently recognises as just; when the appetite is satisfied, it ceases to importune him, and then the voice of the permanent social instinct which he has outraged makes itself heard. He feels a conflict going on between one part of his nature and another, and this we call remorse. (Cheers.)



Some men's consciences are really a curious compound. I was turning over the pages of Schopenhauer, a German philosopher, this afternoon. That great writer says—and I am sorry to say that I agree with him—that a great many men's consciences might be divided into one-fifth fear of man; one-fifth religious fears; one-fifth prejudice; one-fifth vanity; and one-fifth custom. A pure enlightened conscience is unfortunately rare. It can only exist where a man consciously makes the welfare of society his highest object, and deliberately calculates the consequences of his actions. Happily, however, such consciences become more numerous as false standards and illusory ideals disappear.

We may roughly lay down these as general motives. First, there is egoism; the contraction of a man's desires and aspirations entirely to his own personal pleasure, without respect to that of others. Next, absolute malignity, which relishes the pain of others, seeks their misery, and eventuates in cruelty. Unfortunately this motive is very strong in some, and the best of us have a taint of it. Third—pity, benevolence, compassion, sympathy, or what else it may be called, which is really the cement of society, and the feeling upon which all morality is based.

We may also divide the virtues into two great ones: *justice*, which is the repression of one's egoism in the interest of the general social order; and *charity*, which is the individual, unsolicited, exercise of the social sympathies. Comte, Spencer and others, call it the altruistic sentiment. Combined with a love of truth, it leads men sometimes to gaol, sometimes to exile, and sometimes to the stake. They feel within them that burning enthusiasm for humanity, which swamps their lower appetites, and raises them into the loftiest region of morality; and their martyrdoms are as beacon-fires of warning and exhortation to generation after generation of their fellow men. (Loud cheers.)

DR. McCANN: I had hoped this evening that our debate would have been much more satisfactory than the former ones, for this reason—that as Mr. Foote's propositions seem to me not very numerous, and somewhat explicit, at any rate from his own standpoint, I might therefore have had an opportunity in the time at my disposal to touch more or less effectively on all points put forward by him. But he has contrived so to surround nearly all that he has said by a metaphysical character, and has so dwelt within the region of philosophy from first to last that I shall find it difficult. (Hear, hear.)

I hope to refer, as time permits, to the mode in which he has treated his own propositions, but in reading them

quietly by myself, I thought perhaps it might be a more useful way to proceed this evening by explaining these propositions as they presented themselves in their inferences and faults to my own mind. In the first place, I knew that before I commenced to speak you would have heard his views on the subject, and then you would be able to compare my interpretations of the propositions with his interpretation of them, so be able to contrast them for yourselves, and thus to contrast them more effectively for yourselves.

His first statement is this, that "Secularism is the philosophy of this life without reference to another." I was glad of this admission on Mr. Foote's part that Secularism is a philosophy, because many Secularists have told me they do not consider their system a philosophy at all, but simply a system of practical directions for their guidance as to their mode of living in this world. However, Mr. Foote says that it is a philosophy—it aspires to the rank of a philosophical system, and as a philosophy of life must be the most important of all philosophies. Now the very first requisite of any philosophy is that it shall by the most complete possible induction muster all its facts. In proportion as this is defective, so must the philosophy based upon these insufficient facts be defective also. What shall we say, then, to a philosophy that deliberately ignores some of the most important facts for which it ought to account and which ought to be incorporated in its system? In life there are beliefs regarding another life—beliefs which are and have been most influential in and for this life, apart from the existence of another life. And yet we are told by these propositions that all these are to be disregarded. A system that wholly ignores a large number of its most vital facts is certainly the strangest system in the whole history of philosophy—in fact, is not a philosophy at all. (Hear, hear.) In this claim, however, Mr. Foote is not consistent, for he writes in his *Secularism*: "It finds noxious superstitions impeding its progress, and must oppose them. It cannot altogether ignore orthodoxy, although it would gladly do so, for the dogmas and pretensions of the popular creed hinder its progress and thwart secular improvement at every step." This position is tenable and consistent. But here is the alternative—in so far as Secularism does *not* refer to another life, it is not a philosophy; in so far as it *does*, it is Atheistic.

The next point is that "Secularism recognises no Providence but Science." Remember that I am quoting the exact words of the propositions as submitted to me by Mr. Foote. "No Providence but Science." If so it is in opposition to the facts of every-day life. Providence means providing for. We speak of provident and of improvident men. All will grant the great importance of science,

or a knowledge of the order of that nature in which and by which, so far, we are to live. But is a knowledge of science the only way by which we are enabled to provide for the future? How few of us know much about science. We depend upon others for that. But apart from that, do not sympathy, counsel, help of many a kind, aid us in providing for the future? (Hear hear.) Help from our fellow men, guidance, sympathy, advice from our fellow men not for them to do our work, but to teach us, to help and aid us in doing our work for ourselves. And so far they are providences for us in helping those who are willing to help themselves. (Cheers.) I ask you—would you be willing to help a man who would not help himself? You would say at once—“to help that man is utterly useless. Do all you can for him you only leave him in a worse plight than he was in before.” But if you see a man in difficulties, and endeavoring to overcome obstacles that block his way, will you not at once say—“That man is worthy of help, that man is deserving of getting on; he is desirous of doing his best and I will help him by my wisdom: I will help him by my guidance and by my sympathy.” And the man who adopted any other principle than that does not act as a wise man, but very much otherwise. (Hear, hear.) In other words he helps those who are willing to help themselves. (Hear hear.)

The next proposition is that “Secularism recognises no Savior but human effort.” I would here ask—whose human effort? Does it mean our own efforts only? (Hear, hear.) If so, it is nonsense, as no living man exists by his own efforts only. (Hear, hear, and laughter.) Does not, for example, a drowning man find his savior beyond himself? Does not a sick man find his savior beyond himself? If it mean superhuman as distinct from human help, it is a mere waste of words, for having said that another life is ignored, it is surely useless to say that help from that life is not recognised. How possibly could it be?

We are next told that Secularism regards the public welfare as the criterion of right and wrong. To avoid confusion it may be as well to use the correct words. Mr. Foote has referred to utility and it is as well to say so, for by morality—if I understand him rightly, and as he has himself in fact, stated to-night inferentially—he means utility. I should like to know—this being so—who is to be the judge of what is for the public welfare? In our country, for example, I suppose you will assume that the judge is to be public opinion? In fact Mr. Foote has almost stated that. What is in our own country the representative of public opinion but that Parliament to which he himself has referred? Therefore whatever Parliament decides to be for the public utility is so for the time



being, according to Mr. Foote's own teaching. It has decided that imprisonment for blasphemy was necessary for the public welfare; therefore according to his own showing, he was usefully imprisoned for blasphemy. (Hisses and cries of "No, no.") I do not think for one moment that Mr. Foote will affirm that he was usefully imprisoned for blasphemy, and yet—speaking as a Christian, I do not know that he was not. ("Oh, oh.") And perhaps from my point of view, Mr. Foote will assent to my statement that he was usefully imprisoned for blasphemy—that his imprisonment will do a work that might not have been done for the liberation of human thought, but for that imprisonment. (Cheers.) He was imprisoned, however, we must remember, in harmony with the law of Parliament and that was in harmony with public opinion. (Cries of "No, no.") At the time the law was passed certainly it was, or it could not have been passed. Public opinion changes—public opinion is changing now—(hear, hear)—and changing rapidly, I am thankful to say, and before long I believe the law will be altogether changed, and when the law is changed it will mark another step, another stage in the growth of public opinion. (Cheers.) But still it was the expression of public opinion for the time being. I do not think myself, however, that public opinion is the best judge of what is for the public welfare. (Hear, hear.) I believe the public as a whole to be somewhat like a flock of geese—all cackle when one cackles, simply because they are a flock of geese. (Hear, hear, and laughter.) I consider—and here I think that Mr. Foote will agree with me—that cultured intelligence is the best judge of what is good for all. (Hear, hear.) But the cultured intelligence of the present day and in our own country would not decide the question on the basis of utility; but, on the other hand, on that of moral right.

His next point is this—that "the ground and guarantee of morality exist in human nature." I must say that this statement puzzled me exceedingly as to its meaning. The ground of human activity, or character, must be in human nature. It could not possibly be elsewhere. I felt, however, that Mr. Foote was not the man to mean such a palpable truism as that, and so I decided to wait for an explanation, which he has given slightly but not sufficiently. The expression also that "the guarantee of morality exists in human nature" is scarcely less difficult. Can it possibly mean that human nature as it now exists is a guarantee that whenever anyone knows what he ought to do, or what is useful, he will at once do it? Not even Mr. Foote, in the sweet simplicity of his nature, could say anything so sadly contrary to fact as that. And if it does not mean that, what does it mean?

His concluding statement is that "all real progress is Secular and not Christian." Now, as all progress is found alone in Christian countries—(laughter)—is not found in any until Christianity is also found there—(cries of "Oh, oh")—Mr. Foote can give me cases when he rises if he knows of any such—and invariably accompanies Christianity when it does come to the country, it will I fancy be somewhat difficult to prove that progress is caused by a system which is opposed to Christianity and would be subversive of it. If it be meant that progress is secular in character, that it is for time only, that is a position impossible to prove, except as regards material progress. Eternity must be disproved before it can be asserted that mental progress is not for eternity. Allow me to give just one illustration out of many, where there was progress of the most important kind, and where that progress was Christian beyond all controversy. I am certain Mr. Foote will acknowledge that a change from impurity and licentiousness of manners to purity, was progress in the right direction. I appeal to Gibbon, in his *History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*. He is accounting for the rapid spread of Christianity, and he gives this as one of the reasons—"the pure and austere morals of the Christians." He says "the primitive Christian demonstrated his faith by his virtues." "Their serious and sequestered life, averse to all the gay luxuries of the age, inured them to chastity, temperance, economy and all the sober and domestic virtues." "If we seriously consider the purity of the Christian religion, the sanctity of its moral precepts, and the innocent as well as the austere lives of the greatest number of those who during the first ages embraced the faith of the Gospel, we should naturally suppose that so benevolent a doctrine would have been received with due reverence even by the unbelieving world." Here then is one case of progress that is essentially Christian, look at it as you may; and did time permit I could give you many other cases also of the same character.

And now I come to what Mr. Foote has said himself with reference to these propositions. In the course of his remarks this evening in reference to the first, he contended that we have no knowledge of a future life. What he has said here about this future life I am rather glad of, for his address is rather on the evidences for the state of immortality than an ignoring of it according to the principles of Secularism. For if we are not to pay any regard whatever to a future life, then there is no necessity either to speak about having knowledge of this future life or not having a knowledge of it. The moment you argue that question you come to the philosophy of it, and you will see that regard is so far paid to it while you are saying, or attempting to prove, that you take no

notice of it. Entering at once upon this philosophical question you are departing so far from this principle of Secularism. He may affirm that we have no knowledge of a future life, but I would ask him what he means by the word "knowledge"? If he means that we have no right to infer a future life from our own consciousness, and our own convictions, I say there I differ from him *in toto*. I have the same reason for believing in the existence of a God, and a future life, that I have for believing in your existence—both are inferences drawn from consciousness. If he says that by not knowing a future life he means we are not conscious of it, I say certainly not. But there are many things in this world that we strongly believe although we do not know them in that sense. But I think that from the philosophical point of view we are warranted in believing in a future life. We are justified in inferring that the revelation made by God to us in the Scriptures is a revelation in harmony with our own inferences, and with our own convictions. If Mr. Foote will not affirm knowledge of anything he does not know in consciousness, he will limit his knowledge very much indeed.

Again he knows "no providence but science." If he means this—as apparently he does—as referring not to providence in the strict sense of the term, but providence as applied to God—he will imply this, that science alone helps us, and that there comes no help from God. (Hear, hear.) On that point also I join issue with him at once, as from the Christian standpoint all help that comes from science comes indirectly from God. (Hear, hear, and No, no.) There is no help for it, because what is science but a knowledge of the order of nature, and what is the order of nature but the product of God? (Hear, hear.) From the Secularist point of view there being no God there can be no order of God in nature. Science means the learning something of the phenomena that surrounds you, and taking advantage of the phenomena as best you may.

But does not all that belongs to the Secularist belong to the Christian also? And much more forcibly and thoroughly, because the Christian believes life to be a more valuable thing than the Secularist does. (Hear, hear, and No, no.) He is told that his life is given to him by God. The right using of his life is a talent entrusted to him by God. The Secularist believes that if he misuses—I won't say purposely—but if he misuses his life, if he has wasted his life, if he has voluntarily, so far as its utility is concerned, lost his life, there is no reckoning for him, either here or hereafter.

The Christian, on the other hand, is taught that if he does not use the talents committed to his care, if he does not study nature, if he does not work, if he does not use the means at his disposal to the utmost of his ability, he must give an account of his carelessness



and his false stewardship to his master one day. (Hear, hear.) Be the belief ever so wrong, the belief is there as a motive to influence him in life. I have not yet heard one of the motives that can be urged by Secularists for the study of nature, except the welfare of himself, and his own happiness in any way that Mr. Foote likes to put it—say if you will in its highest aspect—the promotion of the happiness of others. (Hear, hear.) I am very glad to hear that “hear hear,” but will Mr. Foote say for one moment that Secularists are that kind of people that they do not always do the right thing simply because they do not know what the right thing is? Do they not very often do that which they believe they ought not to do, and leave undone many a time the thing which they believe they ought to do? Will he tell me that the only thing men want in this life to make them better men is a knowledge of what is right, of what is their duty, and of what they ought to do? Because in saying that, he would say that which is contradicted by the experience of every one of our lives.

He spoke very earnestly and strongly of the great achievements of science and its power to increase the brotherhood of the human family. But why should science, simply because it places men of different lands in contact with each other, increase their brotherhood? They may have antagonistic interests and feelings in this world of ours. We want something more to make brotherhood than placing men side by side and shoulder to shoulder. And that something science will not give us. He mentioned certain teachings of our Scriptures, and I was glad to hear him do so—although he attempted a reply to it—“that God made of one blood all families of men to dwell upon the face of the earth.” There the teaching of true brotherhood is quite distinct and clear. We are told also that if we are to be true Christians we are to love our neighbors as we love ourselves. We are to do him what good we can. As we help ourselves we ought to help him. Here is true brotherhood—a brotherhood such as science cannot by any possibility give you, for it does not lie in the plane of science at all.

“Education will give us new tastes.” There is no doubt about that. Education will develop mankind. Education will increase our power to understand and appreciate the world by which we are surrounded. I would ask you, however, in whose hands was the education of our country when your name as Secularists was unknown and unheard of? (Hear, hear.) Pass over the length and breadth of this country and Scotland too, and you will find no church—certainly no parish church—without its schools and its means of education. I know well that the education was not so full and thorough, and complete, as it ought to have been. (Hear,

hear.) I know full well the world was not perfect then. I ask you, Are you all perfect now, are you all you ought to be? You and I hope for improvement. Is the possession of weakness to be confined to you alone. If you do not claim this weakness and imperfectness of character to belong to you, then you have no right to say the same weakness should not be found sometimes in others also, as doubtless it is. Our world is progressive; the education of mankind is spreading, and it is one of those things the more we have the more we want to have. The more light it gives to us the more we want. Mr. Foote can speak no more strongly in favor of science than I should. But we should bear in mind that, from the Christian standpoint, obedience to the law of science is obedience to the order of God, and we must never banish that from our minds when we are studying these questions and speaking of science. Of course we have the advantage here of Mr. Foote, who speaks of ignoring the existence of God altogether, but I, speaking as a Christian, can never ignore that existence in any of my arguments, regarding the lives he has produced and placed in the world he has created.

Again he has referred to the providence of God being incompatible with the occurrences of catastrophes in our world, such as shipwrecks, fire, disease and death. But I ask him, would he have it otherwise? (Hear, hear.) Would he have this world so regulated that, let a man find himself anywhere voluntarily or involuntarily, he might by uttering a prayer, have all the phenomena at once changed as a consequence. If there was a storm, for example, and a sailor in danger in that storm, and he uttered a prayer for the storm to immediately cease, and his prayer was invariably answered, where would be any order in life? where would the possibility of life be if every man by a prayer could alter at will the system of the world in which he lived? The thing would be utterly impossible. God is a God of order. (Interruption.)

But our friend also, with regard to death, made a very important statement, that Christian promises failed because Christians sorrowed when they lost their friends, exactly as Secularists sorrowed. They do grieve when they lose their friends; there is no doubt about that, for we cannot live for years with a friend or one of our own families, and then when they have been taken away from us have no sorrow for it. The thing would be impossible and unheard of. But they do not sorrow as do Secularists, for in their sorrow they have hope. In their sorrow they have peace. In their sorrow they have trust that the one they have lost is not lost to them for ever. I cannot fancy a greater sorrow than that of a Secularist or an Atheist, who feels that the friend taken away from his side is

lost to him for ever. We have heard, and I have heard, of the joys of Atheists at these death-bed partings. I can only say that when a man is called to die who has a wife or a child he cannot have much love for them if he is joyful at such a time; because if he loves them he cannot be glad at the thought of the parting from them. He might bear it stoically as best he might, but he could have no joy or gladness. The wife or child who loses husband or father cannot have that in their sorrow which is given to Christians—to true Christians. They will tell you in the hour of their direst grief that, although they do mourn, they do not mourn as those that have no hope; and they will say to you that the Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away. (Hear, hear, and laughter.) And in their power of faith and trust they will still be able to say “Blessed be the name of the Lord,” because the parting is only for a short time, and the meeting will be, as they believe, again for ever and ever. I am not saying these are your beliefs, but they are our beliefs. But I do say this, that the man who has this belief will sorrow very differently from the man who has not that belief. (Cheers.)

MRS. BESANT: Friends I must ask you to preserve more complete order in the remainder of the two speeches which Dr. McCann has to deliver. It is not right that cries of “Oh” and “Aye” and so on, should be made during the speech. We certainly ought to set an example of courtesy as we are in the majority here. And if you persist in it the only thing that I can possibly do is to say that all the time which is thus occupied shall not be reckoned, and Dr. McCann shall be given as extra time all that which the disturbers of the meeting take from him. (Hear, hear.)

MR. FOOTE: I quite sympathise with Dr. McCann in his position. He has an uphill fight here. It would have been easier for him if some of those persons, who profess at times to be so fond of discovering truth, had only made a reasonable effort to get some orthodox people here to-night to listen to the debate and to help their champion. I do not mean to help him by their arguments, but by their sympathy. Every man speaks better, feels more at home, and sees that he is making a mark, when the audience yield him a sympathetic response. (Hear, hear.) But we know that some of the Christian representatives Dr. McCann has the misfortune to work with, believe that discussion does their side more harm than good, and perhaps they have rather tempted Christians away than induced them to attend.

Let me now say that I quite fail to see what Dr. McCann read to us from his papers had to do with my opening speech. I think



it would have been far better if he had simply followed me rather than given you the thoughts which occurred to him this afternoon. Next Thursday evening he will have an opportunity of directing the lines of the debate himself. To-night he might have followed me absolutely, and I think he need not have troubled you about my third proposition, because my first half-hour was only long enough for me to deal with the first two. I shall in my second speech deal with number three. Dr. McCann has anticipated what I may have to say on the third proposition, without properly answering what I did say on the other two propositions. That this debate will not be satisfactory I can quite believe. (Hear, hear.) I do not think it will be quite satisfactory to me, because Dr. McCann appears to evade instead of meeting the responsibilities of his position. (Hear, hear.) For instance, I said that Secularism is the philosophy of this life without reference to another, and Dr. McCann says he is glad to hear that it is a philosophy. Well that is very amusing by the way. But for all that, it is not particularly relevant to the argument. What does it matter whether you call it a philosophy or a system. What's in a name? A rose by any other name would smell as sweet; and if Secularism be true, it is of no importance what you call it—a philosophy, a system, a creed, a faith, or anything else. (Hear, hear.)

Dr. McCann says that Secularism ignores facts by not concerning itself with a future life. Is it not clearly his business to adduce those facts? But all he does is to show that people have beliefs about a future life. I am aware of that. They once had beliefs about witches. Some people have beliefs now-a-days in the philosophy of dreams. There are nearly as many dream-books sold in this country as Prayer-books. (Laughter.) It is one of the most flourishing branches of the publishing business. Well, why should I take that belief into account in my philosophy? Did I not also say that with respect to a future life there was a multitude of beliefs, diverse, conflicting, and mutually destructive because mutually contradictory? And did I not say that when you interrogated the various peoples of the earth on the subject you were deafened by a babel of discordant answers? What are the facts that Dr. McCann adduces? I will deal with them if he shows whether they are facts or not. Until he does this I stand firm on the position I took, that Secularism is the true philosophy of this life, precisely because it is foolish to base conduct in this life upon beliefs, which are of a purely speculative and conjectural order, as to the possibility of another. (Hear, hear.) You well understand that I did not say there is no future life. I did not say that there is no God. I never was so foolish as to say either the one or

the other. I simply do not know of any God, and I do not know of any future life. My opinion is that, in the future, men will treat these beliefs precisely as they now treat astrology or witchcraft. You will not be called upon centuries hence to say whether you believe in God or a future life any more than you are now called upon to say whether you believe in astrology or witchcraft. They will be put aside as effete superstitions marking the dreary path that man had to advance along into the sunshine of civilisation. (Cheers.)

Is it true that Christians when they lose their relations do not sorrow as persons without hope? I know not what hope lies in their minds; but if their conduct be any index to their minds they have no more practical hope than we have. Profession is one thing; I prefer to judge men by their practice. (Hear, hear.) You say it is natural and human for them to sorrow. Precisely so. That is what I say. (Hear, hear.) And the fact that they do sorrow, and that it is natural and human, shows that the grim reality of death frowns down the sunshine of the creed you trusted in in the hours of prosperity. (Hear, hear.) But supposing these persons who sorrow really believe in what they profess as to heaven, what miserable selfish creatures they must be. (Hear, hear.) The dead one has stepped out of the miry street across the threshold of a glorious palace, and they shed tears for the dear one's prosperity. (Hear, hear.) And at the same time they expect soon to enjoy a share of it themselves. (Hear, hear, and laughter.) Why, instead of weeping, they ought to dance with joy. They do not, because they know, as we know, that there is nothing to dance about. (Cheers.)

Dr. McCann appears to me to have rather muddled my argument with respect to providence and science. (Hear, hear.) He says "Is there no help in human effort?" I stated so in my propositions. I said there was no savior but human effort. He asks, "Do not men help each other, and are we not a providence to each other?" Well the word "providence" applies to something other than effort. I used a phrase with some color in it that surely carries its meaning to every intelligence. (Hear, hear.) To the Providence which the Christian seeks in prayer, I oppose the providence of science, which the Freethinker seeks in study. (Hear, hear.) Of course science will not carry you where you want to go. It points the way, it tells you what to do. If we study the laws of nature, says Dr. McCann, we are only getting God to help us; and if we break the laws of nature we suffer from it. That is a misuse of words. You cannot break a law of nature. You can violate a canon of art, but you cannot break a natural law. Whether you fall from the

top of a ladder or walk down it, you equally descend by the law of gravitation. But what you can do—knowing the operation of the law of nature—is to take it in your own way instead of letting it take you in its way. (Laughter.)

Dr. McCann says that science does not help us to promote human brotherhood. I say it does, and I told you how. I said—and surely the argument was worth replying to—that the precepts of moral sages were to-day practically what they were in the days of Plato, Socrates, Aristotle, Buddha and Confucius. I said that the doctrines of Christianity were formulated fourteen centuries ago. During all that period of time the same principles were inculcated and the same dogmas promulgated, and yet we had to wait for the revelations of Science to inaugurate the new era in which we live. (Hear, hear.) Did I not say that Science, by means of international communications, brought men face to face, and taught them that there was mutual helpfulness between them, and substituted that for the enmity which the spurious patriotism inculcated by kings, and the false notions of service to God inculcated by the priests, had engendered in their minds? (Hear, hear.)

Dr. McCann says that education does not give man a higher morality. Does he not know that in the Christian schools of England, which you raised to God and religion, the education was very imperfect? You had these schools, and what effect did they produce? Little on the general moral tone of the community. They were the privilege of the few, and the lower orders of society, as they are called, were kept in the darkness of ignorance. Consequently their lives were too fruitful in immorality. But at last society awoke and demanded universal education. An Education Act was passed in 1870, providing daily instruction for every boy and girl; and in sixteen years that Education Act has done more good than all the sermons preached from all the pulpits of Christendom. It has decreased the criminal statistics of this country by one half in that time. (Cheers.)

A word as to our criterion of morality. Dr. McCann wants to know how we are to apply the criterion. Like you do every other criterion, by the exercise of intelligence and common-sense. You may make mistakes in applying it. That is no fault of the criterion. You may make mistakes in the scientific laboratory, but that says nothing against the rules of research. It is your own ignorance and clumsiness. Society does not know everything to-day, but if you have a criterion you can go on applying it, and in the long run you can find out what is right and what is wrong. Of course we do not begin every action afresh, any more than when we sit down to dinner we have to study *de novo* whether every



article is nutritious or poisonous. The experience of previous generations, as well as our own, has taught us many things. Murder, theft, adultery, lying, and many other actions have been discovered to be wrong. There is no need to argue about them now. We take for granted what reason and experience have settled. We take it for granted just as we do the truths of the multiplication table. The great laws of morality are obvious to the commonest intelligence, and starting from these certitudes we proceed with fresh experience and study that bring us new truths. (Applause.)

DR. McCANN : Mr. Foote finished by referring to the criterion of morality, and he said, How are we to know that criterion or how are we to apply it but by the exercise of our common sense ? We sometimes make mistakes, for we do not know everything ; but making mistakes is nothing against the criterion as such." I accept those words, and ask you to bear in mind that the mere fact of having a criterion is one thing, but the applying of that criterion erroneously or mistakenly is nothing against the criterion as such, for what he said with reference to a criterion of morality may be said regarding conscience. He referred in his former address, and has referred again, to a point I will just say a word about, as it seems frequently misunderstood. He mentioned the conscience, and said that men judged differently in different countries as to what was right and what was wrong, and therefore, he thought, the conscience was of no value.

We have a moral sense, but the using of that moral sense wrongly is no argument against it as such, any more than using a criterion wrongly is an argument against the truth of the criterion as such. You must always distinguish between moral sense and moral judgments. The moral sense is the faculty which may be developed, educated, and can be cultivated. According to this our judgments are formed as to what is morally right or morally wrong. You have in like manner the æsthetic faculty, relating to the beautiful. If you had no such ability or power, your training in the perception of beauty could not be carried on. You could have no education in the conception of the beautiful if you had no æsthetic faculty. So there could be no moral training, or character, if you had not the moral faculty. What we mean by conscience is the moral sense found in all mankind in all times and in all countries—that conviction that something was right and something wrong. The judgment as to what was right or wrong was formed by education, culture and growth—the moral sense being part of our original human nature ; the

moral judgment being the result of our culture and our education.

Mr. Foote referred in his last speech to the Houses of Parliament and the scriptures, and contended that no one would nowadays oppose the passing of any measure by quoting chapter and verse, and saying "That is opposed to the principle of this Bill." That I am not sorry to hear, because we have passed beyond the mere quoting of the letter to the spirit of Christianity as a whole. But let it be affirmed in the House of Commons by any member that any law proposed to be passed was in itself morally wrong—not a useless law, but a morally wrong law ; and if he could only persuade the House of Commons that that law was not in harmony with Christian teaching as a whole—with the morality found in Christianity—the member who introduced it would not even in the present day have much of a chance of passing it into law.

Mr. Foote spoke a few words against metaphysics, and said they are good to be flung into the fire ; but I do not see how you can carry on any metaphysical argument apart from metaphysics. I stated I was glad he had acknowledged that Secularism was a philosophy. In reply he remarked there ought to be no new thought in that, because it was a fact, it was a philosophy, a creed, or system, or something. But a philosophy and a system are as widely apart as the Poles. You may have a system utterly unphilosophical in every detail, and you may have a system philosophical in all its parts. I have no doubt whatever that Mr. Foote could tell you of many systems in this world that were and are unphilosophical. Has he not been trying to speak and to show to-night and the previous nights, that Christianity—he will not deny it as a system, no human being could deny that—but will Mr. Foote here to-night assent to this proposition that Christianity is a strictly philosophical system. If so, I shall thank him very much for the admission, If he will not do that, then his own statement that philosophy and system are one and the same thing must fall to the ground.

He quoted Mr. Darwin to explain the growth of morality, and referred to Darwin's account of the development or growth of what he called social instincts. Let this be distinctly understood, if you will only use the word "useful" instead of the word "right" or "moral," we shall be very much more nearly agreed than we appear to be. I grant there are now social instincts—never mind how they have arisen. I grant there is a science of sociology, and I affirm with all my power that whatever is good for society, is by that shown to be right, as well as useful. But he says common sense and judgment are to be used to apply

this criterion. The exercise of our common sense will tell us what is useful and useless. But who are to exercise this common sense and tell us what is useful or useless? But Mr. Foote has not told us. He has spoken of a criterion of morality. He has not yet told us what morality is in itself. When you have a criterion of something, you have something of which it is a criterion. I can tell you what utility is. It is that which develops, which fosters the growth of society as a whole, and of the individual as a whole also—the whole character of the body and soul. Will Mr. Foote tell me what he means by morality? Whatever is permanently useful and aids the whole development of society, so far is a criterion of its rightness, but it is not the attribute of rightness in itself. Nitric acid may be the criterion of gold, but nitric acid is not gold.

Alluding to what I said in my former speech that Secularism ignores facts because it does not concern itself with our beliefs in a future life, Mr. Foote asks me to state what are the facts it ignores. I say the facts it ignores are these: Our beliefs in a future life; these beliefs are facts as beliefs. They are not fictions. (Laughter.) I suppose you are not trained in reasoning or you would see the difference. You may believe falsely; but it is a fact that you believe falsely all the same. You cannot say I have not a belief about a future life. That is a fact, and not only that; but these facts of our beliefs ought to be taken cognisance of because they are the most essential and important in the *present* life. Will Mr. Foote say that belief in a future life has *no* influence on this life?

If they have an influence on this life it is either for good or for evil. If the influence be for evil, as I think Mr. Foote imagines it to be, is it not his duty in his philosophy to counteract those beliefs and try to prove their falseness; to show, if possible, that they are not based upon sound reasoning; that they are inferentially illogical? You have no right in the philosophy of life to ignore such important facts for this life as these beliefs which human beings have with regard to a future state, whether they are true or false. (Hear, hear.) I hold, therefore, that this is the only philosophy that I know of that ignores the facts of human nature altogether and yet at the same time would hope or expect—while ignoring these—to elevate human life and make it higher than it is. Mr. Foote does not say there is no future life or God. Therefore these two things are possible: future life and the existence of God. Does this possibility entail no responsibility upon us to study very carefully whether these things be facts or not. (Hear, hear.) The mere *possibility* entails the duty of trying to solve that possibility and to see whether it is really a chimera of our imagination, or a logical inference from our most deeply-rooted convictions.



Again, Mr. Foote indulged in a little of that prophecy which he sometimes denounces, for he told us that in the future time all these beliefs of ours will be cast aside as dreary superstitions. (Hear, hear.) But if it is possible that there is a future life and a God, it may possibly happen that they will not be cast aside as a dreary superstition—but in future times our Christianity may be more brightly and more clearly held, and our position as to Christianity and the existence of God more distinctly maintained even than it is now. If he indulges in prophecy, he cannot find fault with me for following his laudable example.

Then, alluding to the Christians who sorrowed for their friends at death, he said "they must be miserably selfish creatures, because, believing in the existence of heaven, they were sorry when their friend went to heaven." They are not sorry that their friend has gone to heaven, but that death has taken him away for a time, and surely that is not altogether incomprehensible. Can he not understand a mother whose son is leaving his home where he has passed many years, to go out into the world to better himself, to enter the world of business, to enter upon a most lucrative situation—will that mother be altogether joyous because her son is leaving her? May she not shed many a tear and be very sorry he is going away, and yet at the same time be glad that he is going to better himself in life. (Hear hear.)

I daresay Mr. Foote has been present at a wedding. It is generally supposed, although it is not always the fact, that when people get married they are going to better themselves. In these circumstances has he never heard it said, or seen it shown on this—the happiest of days—by the flowing of tears that it appeared almost as if it were the saddest of days? It is utterly impossible for us when our friends go from us, not to be sorry at parting from them for our own sakes, and yet be glad for theirs, because the parting is better for them. He said "It is natural and human." Yes, it is natural and human, and I have yet to learn that Christians are supposed to be unnatural and inhuman. (Cheers.)

So far from that, if I want true humanity I look to find it in the man who develops all the elements of human nature in his character. If I want to find a truly natural man I look to the man who ignores no facts but takes everything into account his beliefs, his consciousness, and his thoughts—one who believing that nature comes from God, does his very best to place himself in harmony with nature and so be in harmony with its Creator.

I have been further charged with having muddled up Mr. Foote's argument about providence and science when I

asked "Don't men help each other?" Yes men undoubtedly do help each other. As I have said before, when speaking about prayer, what does a Christian do? He simply asks in prayer from the Being who is powerful, and wise, and loving, what we on earth ask of beings who are not powerful, who are not altogether wise, nor are they altogether loving. We believe in the existence of a Being above this world of ours, who knows all, has power, and who has a desire to help us as far as is well for those who pray to him. And so we pray to him, not in a mode of command, but in the words of entreaty that, if it *be best for us*, that those prayers of ours should be granted. (Applause.)

MR. FOOTE: Dr. McCann complains that I have entered, like Saul, the ranks of the prophets. I did nothing of the kind. A prophet is a man who says what will be. I merely said, I believe it will be. I will now deal with the matter which Dr. McCann concluded with. A mother, he says, in parting from her son who is going out into the world to better himself, sheds tears. Yes. But why? Chiefly because of the incertitude of the future. She feels that while he may prosper, he may not. She feels the world is full of accidents; and although the reasonable chances of his coming to grief are but few, her trembling mother's heart magnifies them. (Hear, hear.) But when the Christian dies, and his relatives believe that he has gone to heaven, they ought to show signs of gladness; because their bereavement is only for a few years, and is overwhelmed by the transcendent felicity into which the dead one has entered. (Cheers and laughter.) Do you think I should be sorry if a friend of mine came into a fortune which I myself was going to share in a few years? Surely not. (Hear, hear.) I admit that it is natural and human for Christians to grieve. It is natural and human for Freethinkers to grieve. And the fact that they both act in the same way before the shadow of death, shows that the theological differences between them are not the springs of their conduct, but the human heart which they share in common. (Cheers.)

With respect to the criterion of morality Dr. McCann wants me to say what is the difference between the criterion and the thing itself. What is morality? Morality is, I say, the science of right and wrong; and the criterion of what is right or wrong is the public welfare. (Hear, hear.) Now I think that statement is intelligible to all. If Dr. McCann does not understand it, I cannot help it. Has he given us any other criterion? No. And he cannot. At least I think not, and I might venture to prophesy that he will not give us one. (Hear, hear, and laughter.) "Who is

to apply this criterion ? ” Everybody. And it is to be applied, as I said before, through intelligence. There are certain methods of scientific research. You practise those methods. You cannot always practise them aright. If so, you would soon discover all truth. But their failures are the result of your want of intelligence. They are not the defects of the methods. (Hear, hear.) So I say, although the public welfare is the criterion of right and wrong, we differ as we go along as to the public welfare itself. But our differences with respect to that settle in course of time as our differences as to other things do, because knowledge takes the place of doubt. (Hear, hear.) Who now doubts whether the abolition of the Corn Laws was a wise act ? Who now doubts whether extending education to the masses of the people was a wise act ? Yet when these things were proposed, they were hotly discussed ; men took sides upon them, and differed as to whether such measures would conduce to the public welfare. But experience has settled the matter now. And when experience has done that, there is no longer room for doubt or discussion on the subject. (Cheers.)

I admit that Parliament can do wrong, simply because Parliament is only an assemblage of men like ourselves—(hear, hear)—and they are as liable to go wrong as we are—a little more liable, for they have their own ends to serve. (Laughter.) The law of this country sent me to gaol. Yes, but I never said the law could not be mistaken. The law which sent me to gaol was passed in an age of barbarism. It was an age fertile in similar mistakes. We have corrected hundreds of them. This one still lingers ; but it is on the high road to correction ; the evil law will be speedily abolished. (Cheers.) “ Why not call an action useful,” says Dr. McCann “ instead of moral ? ” Are we to return to the barbaric or savage use of language ? The development of language means finer discrimination of tastes, sentiments, and thoughts. The savage calls almost all objects by generic names. He does not differentiate them. The civilised man, with a larger power of holding facts in consciousness, differentiates them and gives them new names. To the savage—there are such savages—an action, a person, a flower, a stream, and a meal are all alike “ good.” But the civilised man has a finer mental palate. He gives different words to different shades of appreciation. Consequently we call the inanimate object “ useful.” But when we come to actions, which are expressions of organic character, we apply a different term and call them “ right ” or “ wrong.” But the criterion is the usefulness to the whole social community ; and if we call such actions “ moral ” we have a right to do so—for Dr. McCann has



no claim to a monopoly of the best words in the vocabulary. We claim to use them and give our meaning to them. Let Dr. McCann and his friends give theirs if they have any other meaning to give. (Cheers.)

"Beliefs are facts." (Hear, hear.) Well they are facts inasmuch as they are mental facts. But do they correspond to objective realities? (Hear, hear.) Of course there are hundreds of thousands of persons in this country who still believe in witchcraft. You find people in the rural districts brought up from time to time before the magistrates for molesting some poor old woman who, they say, has bewitched them with her "evil eye." (Laughter.) In some ignorant districts it is rather a rough time for an old woman who has outlived the seventies. Well then, am I to take that belief into my philosophy, because it is a fact? Witchcraft is a belief, although it is not a fact. Future life cannot be called a fact simply because persons believe in it, unless those who believe in it furnish the evidence which justifies it. (Hear, hear.)

Is there not a possibility of God's existence, asks Dr. McCann, and of the existence of a future life? The region of possibility is infinite. No sane man ever tries his wings in vacuo. What we have to deal with is certitudes and probabilities. Our knowledge here is certain as far as it goes. If a man asks me to base my conduct upon any other foundation than my knowledge of this life, I ask him to give me some knowledge of a future life which is as real and solid as my knowledge of this life. (Hear, hear.) If he cannot do so, I say I will trouble about the next life when I know something about it. "Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof." (Laughter.) But, suppose there be a God behind nature; suppose what we call the laws of nature are the stereotypes of his will; we have then to ask—How does God act? If there be a God, there is no proof that he acts except through inexorable law. Now, I cannot see how we can enter into any relations of a moral character with a God who works through a rigorous machinery, regardless of whether it grinds out pain or pleasure; a God who sees a good ship and its living freight sink or float with equal satisfaction. (Cheers.)

I agree with Mr. Darwin as to the growth of morality, and no man who studies morality amongst savages can doubt it for a moment. Morality grows out of the family; from the family it develops into the tribe; and from the tribe into the nation. Let us hope that is not the final step. Morality is in the tribal and national stages now. If we go to the Central African tribes, we find that they consider it quite right to do to neighboring tribes what they would consider to be quite wrong if they did it to one

of their own tribe. The stealing of a wife from a neighboring tribe they think is right, but to take the wife of a man of the same tribe is wrong. The social bond only obtains within the tribe, and consequently its benefactions do not extend to other tribes unless they have treaties with it. And in regard to national morality, do we not go abroad on filibustering expeditions? Do we not lie and steal, and cloak our robberies with the name of diplomacy? Do we not do to Ashantees, Maories, Afghans and Zulus, what would bring a blush of shame to the cheeks of the worst man in England, if done to a fellow Englishman? (Cheers.) I hope this is not the final step. I hope that as the family grows into the tribe, and the tribe into the nation, so the nation will grow into the great human family. We shall then reach the time when all will say, like Thomas Paine—"The world is my country, and to do good my religion."

Christians see a greater sacredness in life than Freethinkers, it is said. If so, how is it that so many parsons commit suicide? They have to give an account to God, and we have no God, yet we keep here and fulfil our obligations. We do not cut our throats and leave our families behind to God's protection. We comprehend and stand by our obligations. We do not desert those who are near and dear to us. (Hear, hear.) We know that if God forgives us our families ought not to do so. It is the most dastardly thing a man can do to desert those who depend upon him, simply because a little trouble has come upon himself. (Cheers.)

Let me conclude by dealing with what Dr. McCann said in his opening speech. Civilisation, he says, is most progressive in Christian countries; it is only in Christian countries that we find true civilisation and true progress. Is it? Of course it is if you do not study heathen nations. Is there no civilisation in China? Was there no civilisation in Burmah, which we have entered on the pretext of doing something for the people, but really for our own officials who are in want of jobs? (Cheers.) Let us see what this sentence from Gibbon comes to—Christianity spread through the pure and austere morals of the early Church. Dr. McCann dwelt on the "pure" but not on the "austere." He might have remembered another sentence of Gibbon's—"It was not in this world that the Christians wished to be happy or useful." Quite so. They looked straight at the next world. That is the difference between their time and ours. We do not strive for heavenly crowns but for earthly ones; true crowns, which a man has placed upon his head by his fellows, who recognise his services to humanity.

"Christianity gives us our progress!" I deny it. (Hear, hear.) Progress is Secular and not Christian. The true Christian ages

were "the Dark Ages" when men lay prone at the foot of the altar and the throne. (Hear, hear.) The light of Arabian science flashing upon Europe was the daybreak of our modern era. The infidel Mohammedans had homes of science and seats of learning when the Christians prayed and hymned in mental darkness; and the Mosque had its school when the Church had none. Science lifted her head in Christendom, and the Church of Dr. McCann—for it is but one Church through all the ages—crushed her down. It made Galileo recant what every man knows to be true; it burnt Bruno at the stake; it plucked out the tongue of Vanini before reducing his body to ashes. It fought against reason with the ferocity of a tiger, and it revelled for ages in blood. It broke men on the wheel even in the days of Voltaire. The world grew pale and breathless at its crimes. But that stupendous genius, the greatest Freethinker of France and of the world, challenged its pretensions, and impeached it at the bar of humanity. The peoples have gathered round the tribunal, marvelling at the great indictment, and still more at the weak defence. Their voice of judgment is swelling into a mighty roar—"Tried and found guilty; down to oblivion as reward." (Loud cheering.)

DR. McCANN: I must most emphatically protest against the last, what I may call, parenthesis of Mr. Foote, when he said that my Church did certain things, and then said in this parenthesis that all Churches were one, and then immediately he commenced to say what was done by the Church of Rome. I deny most emphatically that my Church is the Romish Church—on the contrary, the Church of Rome—(hear, hear)—I repudiate as strongly as any man can. The persecutions were practised by the members of the Church of Rome, and not by the members of my Church. I know full well that these things have to many a man the voice of Christendom, because they were done by those who called themselves Christians. But they were done in direct *violation* of the teachings of Christianity, and not in accordance with those teachings.

I now return to where our friend referred to Providence and Science. He said: "We sought providence in prayer, but the Secularists sought providence in study." Yes; but we have study as well as you; and we have the prayer in addition. The Christian is as earnest in studying the conditions of life in which he is placed as you can be; and, knowing the value of this study and also his own weakness, and his own ignorance, he asks for guidance, and for life, health and wisdom to aid him in studying that world in



which he lives. Mr. Foote corrected me for saying we can "break" a law when I remarked that if we break a law of nature we are punished for that breach. If I used the word "break" I used a word that was incorrect, because, as he said, and as I have frequently mentioned, there is no such thing as breaking a law of any kind whatever. We may disregard a law, but we cannot break it. We may violate an injunction, or a commandment, but to break a law of either God or nature is beyond the power of any human being. I have said all along whatever law we obey we get the result of that obedience, and if we disregard a law we get the result of that disregard.

He further said I affirmed that science cannot help to promote brotherhood. Yes, science can help very materially indeed, by bringing human beings into contact with one another, and thus *help* to promote brotherhood. But the brotherhood lies not in the science, but in something beyond science. Science places them in juxtaposition one with another, but brotherhood is not found in science. Will Mr. Foote tell me what particular science it is, apart from moral or Christian science, which will promote the brotherhood of man and the amity of nations? I was misunderstood in one expression. He said I referred to education as not giving a higher morality. That was not my statement. It was that education gave higher tastes and higher aspirations, and also will, I believe, very importantly aid towards a higher morality, by cultivating and developing the moral judgments of the moral sense. As we learn more we know more and better what purer morality is; and therefore education in all points of view helps us intellectually, morally and socially. (Hear, hear.)

His reason for a mother shedding tears was certainly to my mind a strange one, taken as a whole; it was, he said, because of the incertitudes of the future. No doubt a mother in sending forth her son into the world is anxious concerning his welfare in the future; but let him ask any mother on earth if that is the *only* cause of her shedding tears—the uncertainty whether her son will prosper, or the reverse. in the world into which he is going. Ask her if there is no personal mother's love in her breast, and I think she will tell him there is. He says it is quite natural to grieve; and that as a Secularist and a Christian both act in the same way, therefore we approach each other more nearly than some imagine. Certainly both act in the same way physically. Tears are produced in the eye of a Secularist exactly in the same manner as in the eye of a Christian, and the whole physical part of shedding tears is the same in one as in the other. But if the Secularist tells me the emotions

in the heart of a Christian are the same as those in the heart of a Secularist, I say he differs from the truth as widely as man possibly can. There is human love in both cases, therefore there is sorrow at the parting of friends in both cases; but there is a brilliant and happy hope in the heart of one that cannot be in the heart of the other, and therefore these two differ widely as the Poles.

What is morality I asked him, and Mr. Foote answered that question by saying that morality is the science of right and wrong; the criterion of right and wrong is the public welfare. Again the question is evaded. What is morality? The science of right and wrong. Then we come to the further question—what is right and what is wrong? We must have these differentiated from utility, rather more fully than Mr. Foote has done. However, he has attempted to show why he used the word morality rather than the word utility. He asks me if we are to return to the barbaric mode of speech. I say no. But in the present time we have not dropped the word “useful.” Yet if he would apply it only to inanimate objects, and say what is done by an inanimate object is a useful action, and what is done by an organised thing is a moral action, he must go further than that; because I do not suppose he will apply the word moral to all organised beings—for instance, to plants. A plant is organised; but I do not think he would apply the word moral to that. He would perhaps limit it to beings who are conscious. But I ask you with regard to the actions of a human being, does he not apply the word useful, as well as the word moral to them, quite as frequently as to inanimate objects? When you speak of a useful action have you not in your mind one quality denoted by the word “useful;” and when you use the words “moral,” “right,” or “wrong,” do you not mean something very different, not only in degree, but in kind? I know when I speak of a man doing a useful action I mean one thing, and when I use the word “moral” I mean something totally different. I am very glad of the admission of Mr. Foote’s, that the category of words belonging to morality, virtue and vice, are the best words in our language. They are the best, and if he banished them, I say that we would banish the best words from our vocabulary.

And now a word as to beliefs being facts. Mr. Foote grants mental facts are facts in our own minds, but he asks the question—a very unnecessary one—“Do these beliefs correspond to objective realities?” In a large number of cases they do not. I know Secularists say that Christian beliefs do not correspond to objective realities; but I think that what my opponent has to deal with is not to simply say you have a belief and that belief does not correspond with objective reality, but to examine my *reasons* for having

that belief, and to test those reasons by the methods of logic and philosophy, and so to see whether they are sound or not. (Hear, hear.) I have reasons for my belief, and those reasons are based upon what I know. We do not begin our thinking with belief. No man can begin with belief; he begins with knowledge, and from knowledge he goes on to infer that which he is compelled by his reason and his knowledge eventually to believe. I would ask any man who says that he begins with anything but knowledge, to tell me how he knows his own existence, or the necessities of thought in reasoning at all. We all begin with knowledge. Therefore it is because I have knowledge and laws of thought that I have certain convictions as regards the existence of a God and as regards the existence of my own soul. However, my time is passing away rapidly.

There was one other point referred to. It was an Act of Parliament. He said that the Acts of Parliament which sent him to jail were passed in barbarous times. That may be so; but at the time they were passed—according to his own showing—they were useful for society and right, because they were passed in accordance with the public opinion of society at the time—(interruption)—and the parliament which passed them was an embodiment of public opinion then. (Cries of “No, no.”) We have now grown beyond that public opinion. We have grown out of it into a higher and better one; but understand that what I repeat again is that, while the moral sense as an element in human nature remains ever the same, the moral *judgments*, which are totally distinct, are subject to culture, to the education, and to the growth of ages. Our moral judgments are altering; but the moral sense, or conscience, remains the same as it was before.

My inferences from Gibbon's quotation have been in no way invalidated. If these men chose to live pure, austere and virtuous lives here, looking forward to a reward hereafter, still I say, let the motive be what it may, they were pure lives, whereas before they were impure; they were austere lives when before they were licentious; they were virtuous lives when before they were vicious. (Hear, hear.) And any principle which can alter the character of a human being like this, is a principle which is not to be ignored.

We have had a great deal to-night spoken by Mr. Foote about moral philosophy, sociology as a whole, and the development of our moral faculties; but we have had from him *very little indeed* of Secularism as such. We have heard nothing about the motives that Secularism brings to bear upon mankind; nothing as to how that system which takes no account whatever of the existence of



God, the existence of an hereafter, or of moral responsibility, can bring a leverage to bear upon mankind, who in their selfishness disregard all their fellows and their descendants, and care nothing for any members of society except themselves. It is that which Secularism professes to do, and Secularism has not yet told us how that may be done and what is its dynamic power. I do not doubt for one moment that your motives may be good, that your aims may be right and your principles sincere—I would claim for you the same sincerity and honesty as I claim for myself—I have nothing to do with you or you with me. We have simply to examine each other's principles, and when I compare our Christianity with your Secularism, when I place your principles on one side, men born yesterday and dying to-morrow, ignoring or disregarding the important facts of your nature, having no vital principles or powers, nor dynamic forces, to bear upon your lives other than those which you have heard; and on the other hand consider the Christian belief, from its own standpoint, seeing a God above nature, who knows what is going on in this world of ours, the necessity of help in our human needs; when I remember all the pious and true and wise and holy men who have been Christians. When I think too that we have also brought to bear upon our lives—as our friend has said—the hope of a bright hereafter; or the fear of a dark one if we are untrue to ourselves, then we have a motive power to act upon a man to make him lead a good Christian life. (Hear, hear.) When I think of the two and place them side by side in all their bearings and teachings it appears to me that the teachings of Christianity are as the noonday sun shining in its strength, and that Secularism is a dark moon that would come before its surface to hide it, to change the brightness of the sun into darkness—the darkness of error and misery here, and what may be hereafter, I cannot tell. God knoweth. (Cheers.)

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#### FOURTH NIGHT.—MAY 6.

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MR. BARNARD (the Chairman): Ladies and gentlemen, the subject to-night, as you will all know, I dare say, is the same as it has been on the previous evenings on which this debate has been held—"Christianity or Secularism, which is True?" As chairman, of course I shall not occupy your time. All I ask of you is to give to each debater a fair hearing. (Hear, hear.) You know well

that interruptions do no good to anyone. They are unfair to the audience and unfair to the speakers. With these words I introduce to you Dr. McCann to open the debate to-night. (Hear, hear.) He will have half-an-hour's speech. Mr. Foote will then follow with half-an-hour's speech; and then they will have alternate a quarter-of-an-hour each. I now call upon Dr. McCann.

DR. McCANN : Friends, it is my turn to-night to open this debate by attacking Secularism. In doing this I must say much from which you will differ; I may say something you will not like; yet I shall avoid as much as possible anything irritating, and ask you to bear with me, and listen as patiently as you can to what I may say. I know you will call it, "nonsense," "rubbish," and other flattering names, but please do so inaudibly and I shall not object. While speaking about this, allow me to thank Mr. Foote for having so far abstained from remarks calculated to wound the feelings of Christians. Of course he had to defend his own position, but in doing it he has indulged in no unnecessary invective, and I gladly acknowledge his courtesy. And now to our subject.

As Secularism was presented to you last evening by one of its ablest advocates, it was represented as being a philosophy that was not metaphysical, but only a system based on, or consisting of, a series of abstract propositions. Now, suppose for the sake of argument, we assume that these are true propositions—I have shown that they are either meaningless, or philosophically false—but suppose them to be true, and even believed in by Secularists, would they do anything to make men better men? A man might say, I believe them all, and yet remain as bad as a man could be. This is not any reproach to Secularism, for exactly the same might be said of the precepts of Christianity. Something more than statement is needed to make these principles of any practical value. Something more must be done, if bad men are to be made good, than formulate finely-sounding phrases, construct abstract statements, and admit the *possibility* of a God and a hereafter. In these propositions there is not one syllable about the duty of man either to himself or to other men, not one syllable about the elevation either of our own character, or that of others; not one syllable as to how humanity is to be made more human. If these propositions fairly represent Secularism as a system, they are the most defective that ever saw the light of day.

But even if these considerations had found some place either in the preliminary statements, or even in the subsequent explanation of them, that would not suffice. I want to know what force this system, so-called, can bring to bear on men so as to cause them to

recognise and accept their duties. I want to know what impelling energies it has at its disposal without which our propositions are valueless. We had no word of any such forces for the simple reason that Secularism has none such, and cannot have any. They are barred by the dogma of necessity. My task to-night will be to show that this dogma effectually prevents any one from having any leverage for the benefiting either of himself or any other individual.

I might have attacked Secularism in many different points, in fact, in almost every point that differentiates it from Christianity; but I prefer limiting myself to two which, if established, will render all further discussion needless. They are morality and possibility. It is perfectly clear that if I establish the fact that whatever a man does it cannot be right, and secondly, that he cannot do anything at all, I need not prove more. There was a town once visited by a king, but no royal salute was fired. Asked why, the citizens replied they had sixteen reasons, the first being they had no guns. "Enough," said the king, "we shall dispense with the remainder." To-night I shall establish two positions, which will enable us to dispense with the remainder. To put my thoughts in order, I have also arranged them in a series of propositions, so that my line of argument may be more easily followed by you. These have been in the possession of Mr. Foote some time.

The first is that "Secularism in philosophy is Materialistic and Necessitarian." A difficulty meets me here at the outset in the fact of Mr. Foote's horror of metaphysics and philosophy—a horror I can perfectly understand. Still it is difficult to keep an antagonist on lines of exact thought, who would fling metaphysics to the fire; regard philosophy, system, or creed as interchangeable words, and ask what's in a name. In a debate such as this much is in a name, when that name is used to designate a quality. I must therefore be pardoned if I use words in their almost universal significance, and refuse to accept Mr. Foote's dictionary, at least till it is somewhat better known. I do not care to dwell long on my first position, because practically it is generally acknowledged, and has the high authority of Mr. Bradlaugh. Mr. Foote may of course dispute this position if he choose; but as I wish another point discussed which is the really important one, I shall make no further reply than this, that it is directly involved in Mr. Foote's position of last evening. The theoretical ignoring of God is the practical negation of him. Also, that Mr. Foote and all the Secularists I know are Materialists.

My second position is, that "Necessity in the Materialistic vocabulary is equivalent to physical compulsion." On the



materialistic supposition all states of a human being are physical states, all mental states are states of brain, all activities are physical activities, as are the activities of a stone. I wish you to understand this thoroughly and clearly, as much depends on it. All activities in the universe are activities of matter, consequently physical activities, and so far they are on one plane. This being so, it necessarily follows that all their laws are of one order—physical laws. For example, the laws that govern (to use the popular word) the alkalies and acids, the flasks and the crucibles of the laboratory, are of the same order as those that govern the chemist himself.

But further, as our activities are physical, they are as a consequence compelled also. That is, they are not voluntary, but necessitated. Stones cannot move themselves, they must be moved by *external* forces, and the movement must be in the direction of, and according to the amount of force employed. All individuals, whether animate or inanimate, are as links in a chain, necessarily moved by the links on one side, and as necessarily moving the links on the other side. I imagine that so far there will be little opposition on the part of my friend, because, as I understand the doctrine of Materialism, these are some of its teachings.

I also wish you to comprehend that I am not now attempting to prove the falseness of this teaching—the time at my disposal would forbid that. I only wish to state it fairly, that I may be able to show the disastrous consequences flowing from it, and to show also that it is utterly impossible to be a consistent Secularist. (Cheers.)

My third position is that “physical compulsion is incompatible with morality, and all included under that term.” It is not my intention at present to traverse the positions occupied by Mr. Foote on the last evening with regard to the general subject, or further criticise his very extraordinary, and unique, explanation of what he meant by morality, as distinct from utility. Indeed the hopeless confusion of Materialists as to what they mean by morality, might well excuse us from noticing anything they say on the subject. By it Professor Bain means the codification of social law; Mrs. Besant, harmony with natural order; Mr. Foote, the utility of organic beings, etc.

I particularly wish to concentrate attention on one quality that must be found in all actions which are correctly called morally right or wrong, virtuous or vicious. That must be found also in all actions for the doing of which the doer can be either praised or blamed. That quality is voluntariness. They must have been done voluntarily, the doer must have been free; he must have had

an alternative. I appeal to that common sense which Mr. Foote and we all value so highly when we find it. Suppose you saw a man chained on right and left, dragged by those chains into the water and held there till he was drowned, would you call that death by drowning on the part of the drowned man either virtuous or vicious? Moral or immoral? Praiseworthy or blameworthy? He was helpless, physically necessitated, had no alternative. He was only a machine driven by a force over which he had no control, and consequently as a machine must he be regarded, and not as a moral agent.

On the last evening I stated that true Christians regard life as more sacred than do Secularists. Mr. Foote replied that this was not so, because we heard of clergymen who had committed suicide, and he added that a more dastardly thing a man could not do. There I quite agree with him, but it was surely a somewhat peculiar way of showing that Christians do not value life, by giving the case of one who so far forgot his Christianity as to violate one of its fundamental commandments and murder himself. But by what right does Mr. Foote call him "dastard." I would; but how can he consistently? Would he call the former man "dastard" who was dragged by chains into the water? Why not? Because he could not help it you say. Exactly, but if all activities are physical necessities, neither could the other help it. (Cheers.) Both may be pitied, but neither blamed, according to this teaching.

We had the case also of a banker cited on one of the earlier evenings, who went to prayers and also cheated the widow and the orphan, his conduct being described in language none too stern. Now if this banker voluntarily selected this course of fraud; if he decided to pray and to rob, when other courses were open to him, and possible to him, then he was an immoral man, vicious, and deserving of all censure. But if our friend's theory be true, then his wrath was misplaced, and his censure illogical. I offer him the alternative, either to withdraw his theory, or his condemnation, and I await his decision.

You must either withdraw your physical compulsion, or your indignation. I am ready with reply in either case.

My opponent also introduced the subject of remorse last evening, and, if I remember correctly, defined it as the sorrow felt when we temporarily depart from a permanent law. Without pausing to dwell on the utter irrelevance of the explanation, as such departure need not in many cases, as that of the drunkard, have any element of remorse about it. Indeed, such a man ought to be glad he sometimes even temporarily departed from a permanent law. But

putting this aside for the moment, I ask why should anyone be sorry for this, or for anything he has done—I mean sorrow in the sense of censure—if he be physically compelled to depart?

You will allow me to quote a sentence or two from my debate with Mr. Bradlaugh, for the purpose of showing that there are Secularists consistent enough to accept the position, and to confess compulsion in their actions. Mr. Watts wrote (p. 22): "Man is as much the consequence of all the causes and circumstances which have affected him in his development previous to and since his birth as any tree or mountain." Mr. Austin Holyoake once said (p. 23): "He did not think any thanks were due to him for what he might have done in a public way during the last twenty years, as he could not help the impulses of his nature; they were beyond his control." Still more explicit, if possible, are the words of Mr. H. G. Atkinson (p. 65): "I am a creature of necessity. I can claim neither merit nor demerit. I feel that I am as completely the result of my nature, and compelled to do what I do as the needle to point to the north, or the puppet to move according as the string is pulled. I cannot alter my will, or be other than I am, and cannot deserve either reward or punishment." These men understood their principles, accepted their position, unutterably miserable as it is, and were consequently consistent. In my judgment, Materialism, Necessitarianism, Secularism, need no further, and could not have any more damaging, exposure than such confessions as these. Whether Mr. Foote will be equally consistent remains to be seen. The whole problem may be expressed in a sentence or two. Either free or not free; either free or compelled; either, therefore, moral agents or only physical links.

My next and concluding point is that—"Such a system is antagonistic to human progress." Before proceeding to make good this position, I must notice one error and a fallacy into which my opponent fell on last evening with regard to Christian progress. I had stated that progress was not found in any but Christian countries; in reply to that Mr. Foote stated that civilization existed in China. He had, no doubt inadvertently, substituted the word civilisation for progress, which is a very different thing, unless on our friend's principle that there is nothing in a name. I do not imagine progress will be claimed for China. So I re-affirm my former contention, that progress follows Christianity, aye, as closely as shadow follows body in the sunshine. (Cheers.)

He also stated that moral precepts had not civilised the world; there I agree with him, and have stated the same frequently; but what shall we think of that system that does not possess even moral precepts? Precepts require some force to make them practical; and one



force at least belonging to Christianity was acknowledged by Mr. Foote as a reason for the self-denial of the early Christians. It was the hope of a crown hereafter. This force was, he admits, strong enough to produce purity in the midst of debauchery, and self-denial in the midst of the grossest self-indulgence. It may be sneered that they were striving for a heavenly crown, while Secularists are striving for an earthly crown. Even if the sneer were true, is it nothing to have such a hope within us? But the Christian strives for an earthly crown as well as a heavenly—the crown of righteousness for time and for eternity. Will the Secularist name a nobler? (Hear, hear.)

Again, Mr. Foote spoke of science as the one instrument of progress, and the only providence and only savior of the Secularists. If so, I am sorry for them. But it seems to be forgotten that what science will do for the Secularist it will do also for the Christian. In the same way as it proves a savior to the one, it will prove itself a savior to the other. (Cheers.) It seems to be forgotten that the Christian is as ardent a student of science as the Secularist, and that much of the science of the present day has been received from Christian sources, and given to us by Christian teachers. I need not go farther back than last night, when the chair at a Christian lecture in this hall was taken by Professor Stokes, President of the Royal Society, and the first physicist in the world.

But Mr. Foote has tacitly acknowledged that science is not the only instrument in progress; there is that hope of a bright hereafter, born of Christian influences. What, I again ask, has the Secularist to help him to progress? Absolutely nothing. Nay more, not only has he no motive force, but the only distinctive principle on this subject that he possesses, is absolutely fatal to progress of any kind; and if he does progress it is in defiance of his creed, and not because of it. (Cheers, and cries of "oh, oh.") I now proceed to make this clear. What is the practical outcome of the doctrine of necessity, or physical compulsion, as I have already explained it? It is, in a word, this: that you deprive yourself of the right to urge on any man any line of conduct whatever. You have no right to say to anyone in any circumstances, "You ought to do this or that." He might turn on you and say, "What right have you to talk to me about 'ought'; I am as helpless as a stone, the creature of necessity, and cannot be other than I am. Go with your 'ought' to those who believe they have some self-control, and can so far select their own course, but come not to me, the product of fate, and the victim of circumstances, with the mockery of your advice." What reply would Mr. Foote give in such a case as this? I care not what reply he may give, it must be, from the necessity of the case,

either inconsistent with his principles, or inconsistent with his advice.

Let us take an illustration from inanimate things, for there we shall get the idea in its simplicity, and the illustration is perfectly legitimate, if all existences are under laws of the same order. You take a barrel of gunpowder, and we shall for the moment imagine it capable of understanding you, and of replying to you. You say to it: "Now everything is ready for the explosion, why don't you blow up? You ought to do so." The answer would be: "I cannot, it is impossible, I have no power; you must first apply the spark, then I shall go off." You do apply the spark, and the explosion follows immediately. (Cries of "Oh, oh!" and laughter.) Some person seems to object to that statement, but if he tried the effects he would not be able to object a second time. (Laughter.) There was no alternative; before the application of the spark an explosion was impossible, after the application it was unavoidable. And that is the condition to which our friend's theory would reduce you Secularists! (Laughter, interruption, and cries of "Order.") Puppets never to move, but only to be moved as the strings are pulled. Well, then, if Mr. Atkinson be correct, and Secularists are only puppets, I suppose all Secularist meetings must be regarded as puppet-shows.

Another very important consideration showing how Necessitarianism would obstruct all progress, is the fact that, if we be physically compelled to all we do, praise or blame for any action is the veriest burlesque. Once you affirm that any deed is necessitated, you at the same time lift it out of the category of censurable or praiseworthy actions. Once you admit that a thief could not by any possibility be other than a thief, and that he has himself no power to stop his thieving, to blame him for theft would surely be impertinent mockery. His hand was placed on your watch for the purpose of stealing it, not by himself, but by the forces not himself, over which he had no control; therefore no word of censure, he deserves it not. Of course, this must be at once evident to all.

Again, I appeal to your common sense, and ask what influence, think you, this teaching would have on the progress of men? Do we not require all the deterrent influences of displeasure and censure which we have at our disposal, and all the helpful influences of approbation, to aid man in striving after right and avoiding wrong? And even with all these brought to bear on men, with all their force, are they all they ought to be? Banish even one of these, however, and how much worse would they be! Fortunately the whole system is so diametrically opposed to the basic principles of our nature, that you cannot get any single individual to act on

it consistently in every-day life. No thanks to our friends, however, for that.

Secularist progress! Oh yes, there may be such a thing, but it is the progress of a stone when kicked—it has no choice but to go, and just as far as the kick may carry it. Necessitarians remind me of balls on a billiard-table, going in many directions, ever on the move, but moving whither they must, not whither they would. Such progress is as far removed from truly human progress as anything I can imagine. The progress of man is the development of individuality of character, of personal self-control, of mental energy, of high-toned principle, of the power to reign in life, the power to say to circumstances—Thou shalt, or thou shalt not. It is the power to say to all things—I shall compel you to work together for my good. But this is exactly what Necessitarianism would crush out and make impossible. Progress depends on the internal, and not on the external. You may increase wealth and increase at the same time corruption. You may develop science, and develop at the same time power for evil. You may extend your literature and at the same time extend your licentiousness. Growth in these things is not necessarily growth in human greatness, though they may materially aid it. But when you elevate motive and ennoble self, you involve progress. Necessitarianism would make you as mere things—possessed of all things, possessing none. Christianity would enable you to say: “All things are mine, whether Paul, or Apollos or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all things are mine, for I am Christ’s, and Christ is God’s.” (Great cheering.)

MR. FOOTE: For half-an-hour I have exercised my patience and admired yours. (Hear, hear.) I take it that to-night Dr. McCann has said his very worst against Secularism. (Cheers, and hisses.) Allow me to say that by “the very worst,” I am speaking simply as a debater and not as a fish-fag. The gentleman who hissed should understand that Dr. McCann and I know what courtesy means. He should leave his hisses until he gets outside. That will be very much better. (Hear, hear.) Dr. McCann, I take it, has said his very worst against Secularism, and if that is the worst he can say, it does not stand in much danger. (Hear, hear.) Before I come to the first point of his attack, I may as well clear away one or two matters which he has introduced, because I think they only block our path. Dr. McCann has faith, and all persons that have faith have a great capacity for taking things for granted. Dr. McCann tells you that last Thursday evening he conclusively showed that all my positions were meaning-



less or valueless. (Hear, hear.) Well that may be Dr. McCann's opinion—(A voice, "Only his")—but it appears to me an extremely vain way of putting it. I do not admit—and I know some of you will not admit—that Dr. McCann did anything of the kind. ("No, no.") But I shall not undertake to reply to such a statement. I shall let the printed debate stand for itself. (Hear, hear.) We were also told that I had a horror of philosophy. Now I said nothing of the sort. I did say that metaphysics were, generally speaking, good for the bonfire, and I hold to the statement. Dr. McCann turns the word "metaphysics" into philosophy, and then twits me with talking as if any two words were interchangeable. (Hear, hear.)

Dr. McCann said I gave you an extraordinary definition of morality last Thursday. But an extraordinary one is better than none at all. My opponent in this debate has sedulously avoided giving any definition of any of the terms he has employed. I ventured to say last Thursday evening that Dr. McCann would not give us any definition of morality, and I ventured to say he would not give us any criterion of morality. The only criterion I know that Dr. McCann has ever given in his life, is that an action is moral when it is right—(hear, hear)—which is only saying it is moral when it is moral. (Hear, hear.) The word "right" strictly means straight; and the straightness of an action depends upon the end you propose to reach. It is precisely that which I have stated, and which Dr. McCann has declined to state from beginning to end. (Hear, hear.) I defined a moral action as one which conduces to the welfare of society. Let Dr. McCann give his. As we are discussing the relative merits of Secularism and Christianity, it will be quite impossible to arrive at any satisfactory conclusion unless he exhibits what he wants discussed, as well as asking me to exhibit mine.

I now propose to follow Dr. McCann throughout his half hour's speech. What, he says, are the schemes which we propose to put in operation in order to make bad men good? I am not quite sure that any such operation is possible. (Hear, hear.) There are cases where men, owing to bad conditions, have had the worst elements in their nature stimulated into excessive action. (Hear, hear.) I know also that there are cases where men are born with diseased moral organisations that will inevitably lead them to the gaol or the lunatic asylum. (Hear, hear.) All the reformatory work in the world will never change the construction of these men's brains; and if Christianity pretends to do anything of the sort it only shows that Christianity is as defective in brain as the patients on whom it proposes to operate. ("No, no," and cheers.)

What are our duties to ourselves and to others? I said last Thursday evening that our duty to others was to consult and consider their welfare as well as our own. My duty to my fellow man is in all my actions to regard their effect upon him. I cannot, of course, every time I do a trivial thing ask myself how it will affect my fellow men; and that applies to every moral or religious system under the sun. No Christian, for instance, before he preceeds to perform any trivial action, can read through the New Testament and see what precise guidance Jesus or Paul gives in such an emergency. (Hear, hear.) When I am face to face with possible actions of mine, which I clearly see must definitely and not distantly affect the welfare of my fellow men, I am then bound to consider their welfare as well as my own. As Secularists, this is our duty to our fellow men. Duty to ourselves is a rhetorical phrase. Duty strictly means, and should mean in such a discussion as this, what a man owes to his fellows. His duty to himself is really a loose way of talking, because, if he does not perform it, no one can enforce it. The word "duty" involves an obligation on the one side, and the right to exact it on the other.

I proceed to the next point. What force do we bring to bear upon men? I think I said something about the brotherhood of man. I think I said that as morality began with the family, and extended to the tribe, and afterwards to the nation, it would continue to extend until all mankind were recognised as one great family. The words of Thomas Paine would then be accepted by all—"The world is my country, and to do good my religion." (Cheers.)

Let me say that the doctrine of the brotherhood of man, as we preach it, is safer and more beneficent than it is as preached by the Christians. They found it upon the Fatherhood of God, which may be real or may be fictitious. (Hear, hear.) From a study of history I know that, with the name of God the Father upon their lips, men have taken each other by the throat in religious quarrels until the wet blood distilled through their fingers. (Great cheering.) I say that men belong to a common brotherhood, not because of the assumed Fatherhood of God, but because of our common nature, our common wants, our common desires, our common hopes, and our common aspirations. On the material side it depends upon the teaching of experience that we are mutually helpful, and that if we strike hands, and assist each other, we can build up a civilisation, the benefits of which will be infinitely greater than any the individual could reap for himself. (Cheers.)

Dr. McCann's next point is that Secularism is materialistic. Are there not Christians, and are they not a growing body, who

believe that man is a physical compound ? Is not the doctrine of conditional immortality growing in the Churches precisely because they see that science does not countenance belief in a soul independent of the body ? Do they not base their immortality upon this ground, that God will confer immortal life in the future upon them as a special boon, while all those who are not so favored will not be—as the old theologians thought—burnt in hell for ever, but simply annihilated, that is, swept off the scene, while their more fortunate brethren go to heaven, and live in the mansions prepared for them ? (Laughter.)

I know something of matter ; so does Dr. McCann. I know nothing of spirit, and I think he knows as little. (Cheers and laughter.) It appears to me that I am more likely to be a product of the known than a product of the unknown. (Hear, hear.) Dr. McCann may of course entertain a different opinion. He may prefer springing from the unknown, and I decidedly think that some of his arguments to-night have sprung from that source. (Cheers and laughter.) It is a condition of morality, says Dr. McCann, that an action should be praiseworthy or blameworthy. But no one in the world ever disputed it. (A voice, "Certainly not.") Is there any need to insist upon truisms ? Is there any need to emphasise what nobody thinks of contradicting ? I know that actions are praiseworthy or blameworthy, but the question between us is, Why are they praiseworthy and why are they blameworthy ? (Hear, hear.) If the doctrine which Dr. McCann calls necessity—but which I prefer to call causation—is incompatible with morality, I must say that according to history, three-fourths of the great Christian teachers, from St. Augustine to Luther and Calvin, have all held doctrines incompatible with morality. (Hear, hear.) The dogma of free will was never taught until men declared that there was an all-good God and at the same time all-powerful, and thus found themselves face to face with the problem of evil. In order to save the omnipotence of God on the one side, and his omniscience on the other, they promulgated the doctrine that man had a free will, that all the evil in the world was the result of his own voluntary action, and not ascribable to the God who made him. Suppose we take some of these great Christian philosophers—if Dr. McCann will pardon me for applying such a term to them—(laughter.) I will take as a typical one Martin Luther, because I hold that on the whole he is the most representative theologian Protestantism has produced—and of course Dr. McCann belongs to the Protestant side of the happy Christian family. (Laughter.) Said Luther—"The human will is like a beast of burden. If God mounts it, it wishes and



goes as God wills. If Satan mounts it, it wishes and goes as Satan wills. Nor can it choose the rider it would prefer, or betake itself to him, but it is the riders who contend for its possession." There is free will for you. (Hear, hear, and laughter.) I need not say that John Calvin did not teach free will. Jonathan Edwards, the greatest theologian that America has produced, expounded and illustrated the doctrine of causation in morality as clearly and as powerfully as any man in the world ever did. The great consensus of authorities on Dr. McCann's side is against free will, and in favor of moral causation. Yet, he stands here to-night with that historical fact behind him, and tells us that the doctrine of necessity is incompatible with morality. Then so much the worse for the Church that has maintained through so many centuries, by so many able teachers, the dogma which Dr. McCann now reprobates.

Dr. McCann appears to forget one thing, and that is the very theory he is combating. He might have remembered the story of the schoolboy and the Calvinistic master. The boy was about to be flogged when he said, "Sir, it is wrong to flog me, it was all predestined, I could not help it." "Right, my boy," said the master, "and I was predestined to flog you—(laughter)—and the next time you are about to do the same thing you will remember the flogging, and you won't do it." You see it cuts two ways. (Laughter.) Dr. McCann says that my indignation against the suicidal clergyman is misplaced. But what is the use of telling me that, for on the very theory Dr. McCann is opposing, I cannot help it? Why tell me it is misplaced if I cannot misplace it? (Great cheering.) A word in passing about suicide. I do not think all suicide is dastardly. I hope I shall never be stupid enough to say anything of the kind. The noblest women have committed suicide rather than have their honor violated. (Cheers.) Roman soldiers have committed suicide rather than fall into ignominious captivity. I agree with Gibbon that all sane persons have ever recognised that in the ultimate resort man retains the free choice of life or death. What I said was that if a man rushed out of life, and left his wife and children behind him simply because he could not stand up against a little trouble, and wrote upon a piece of paper "I leave them to God," that was the act of a stupid dastard. (Cheers.) And I see no reason whatever to recede from the position I then took up. (Hear, hear.)

Dr. McCann does not appear to understand the doctrine of moral causation. (Hear, hear.) I will as briefly as possible explain what I think it is. If you go to the inanimate world you find causation ruling. Every fact, as even the Christians now admit, has its antecedent cause or causes; and wherever the

physical cause or causes operate the effect or effects will follow. There is no disputing that in the inanimate world. We pass from the inanimate world to the animate world. We come to the lowest forms of vegetable life. The transition is so gentle that it is practically impossible for the most skilful botanist to put his finger on the point where the vegetable world begins, and the inanimate world ceases. Even the Christian does not dispute that in the vegetable world the rule of causation still obtains. But no person can deny that a new form of causation has come into existence. The vegetable is generally stationary. It has a local position, and what we call life; that is, it has the power of preserving its identity against the shock of the surrounding universe. Now there is a capacity in this plant of responding to external stimulus. It comes under the law of excitation. There are plants so developed in this respect, that they actually live by flies and are carnivorous, and they are so susceptible, and so unconsciously discriminating, that if a piece of meat is dropped upon a leaf it will fold upon it. But if a piece of stone is dropped on it, which is of no use, it will not attempt to digest it. We pass by a gradual transition from the vegetable world into the animal world. No physiologist can lay his finger exactly on the spot and say, "Here the vegetable world ceases, and here the animal world begins." Amongst the lowest forms of animal life we find this response to external stimulus. The law of excitation obtains there very much as it does in the vegetable forms. But as the animal rises in the organic scale—as it develops a nervous structure and a brain—it gets what we call intelligence; and when the intelligence reaches a certain point motivation commences. That is, the external world stimulates the organism, not only directly through the channels of sense, but indirectly through the intelligence, which remembers previous facts of sense, and has a capacity of looking forward, and of regulating its course, by considerations that extend far beyond the mere external solicitations of the moment. As you proceed higher and higher you come to man. Those of us who are Darwinians believe that there is no absolute difference between man and other forms of life. We hold that man has been developed from a lower form, and he is still subject to the law which ruled his progenitors. An ordinary man acts mainly through immediate external stimulus. A glass of beer is there. Unaccustomed to think, the man drinks it, and then he drinks another and another and gets frightfully drunk. He beats his wife, neglects his children, and becomes a suicide or perhaps a murderer. Another man, with some culture, with more capacity of thinking, not only sees the consequences of

his action, but he is brought under the sway of fresh motives. Let us take an illustration. An ordinary criminal is about to commit a burglary. Suppose I know, as well as he does, that £50,000 is in that house, and might be had if the burglary were successful. The temptation to me would be very much smaller than it would be to him—partly because of my past life, which has been decided by my organisation and my training, and partly from the fact that my superior culture gives me a greater power than he possesses of estimating the consequences of my actions. Nay, my superior culture has also opened up in me a number of motives which may be latent in him, but are certainly not operative. (Hear, hear.) I have dear friends, and to lose their respect would be worse than death. I have a large circle of acquaintances throughout the country, belonging to the party which I have the honour to represent, who would scorn me and hate me for committing such a crime, and my punishment, if I were detected, would be infinitely greater than the ordinary criminal would suffer. Thus you see I have fresh motives, and these fresh motives come not through the heart, but through the head. When you improve men's understanding you give them fresh motives, besides strengthening the old ones. Notwithstanding all Dr. McCann's speeches, and all the sermons on his side, I say that a great argument in my favor is the one advanced last Thursday and which he has not replied to. The Education Act of 1870 has reduced crime more than all the sermons, from all the pulpits in Christendom, through all the centuries. (Cheers.)

A word as to praise and blame. I am on explanatory lines now, because I want Dr. McCann to understand my position. If a man stricks me, and inflicts pain, I cannot help feeling annoyed or wrath, as the case may be. If a man does me an injury, that is, if he retrenches the happiness I should otherwise have enjoyed, or inflict upon me positive pain, I cannot help feeling indignation or hatred towards him. That is a recognised fact, which has been decided for us by nature. Were it not so it would be very obvious, as Bishop Butler points out, that society would soon go to rack and ruin, because individuals would not have sufficient self-assertion to protest against wrong. An external object is palatable or serviceable, and I call it so. Why do I not praise or blame it? Simply because it is not an organism under the rule of motivation. It is an inanimate object, not amenable to motives. Whenever men even cease to be amenable to motives, you treat them accordingly. You put them in lunatic asylums. You no longer praise or blame them, but treat them with kindness to the end of their lives. Now if I praise an action which I like, it is an inducement



to the person I praise to repeat it. Society punishes in order to prevent crime, and not merely to wreak its vengeance upon the man who has violated the law. Punishment is sensible if you know that men are amenable to motives, and that the dread of the punishment will be a strong deterrent from crime. But if you cannot calculate—if man does anything he pleases according to some fantastic free will of the soul lying in some secret recess of his being—then legislation against crime is an absurdity. No prevision is possible without causation. You would be dealing with an incalculable future that might frustrate all your efforts, and baffle all your designs. (Hear, hear.) We punish to prevent crime. We know it will do so, because men are amenable to motives. We know that the man who violates the social law, and has not the social instincts strong enough within him to conform to it deliberately, may conform to it under the fear of punishment. If he do not then conform, the punishment is inflicted; he is incarcerated in goal, and is sent there, if need be, again and again, until he learns the lesson, or ceases to plague the world. (Great cheers.)

DR. McCANN (who was received with cheers): My friends, I am perfectly willing to confess at once that I have very seldom during any argument in my life been more completely puzzled than I am at the present moment. (Hear, hear.) Our friend has been Necessitarian and Libertarian by turns with the most consistent inconsistency. First he talked about intelligence, followed by motivation, and next he spoke of motives very thoroughly and very truly, and when he is speaking of motives I am heartily at one with him. I never heard any one advocating free will who did not speak of motives. I have heard Secularists say that motive was of no value whatever, and that it was the action that told, and not the motive which caused the action to be committed. When speaking of motive he said that if free will obtain, then punishment would be silly. But I want to know what he means by motive. Does he mean that which compels or does not compel a man? If motive compels a man to act, then he must give us his meaning for the word "motive," because, as I understand motive, it is a man's reason for doing something, or why he does that while another alternative is open to him. Would you talk of the "motive" of a stone falling from a table on to the floor, if the stone could not help falling? Either it could, or it could not help falling. If it could help falling, you may talk about motive, but if the stone has no alternative but to fall, where does the motive come in? If a man has no alternative but to follow a certain line of conduct, what do

you mean by motive? If a man, on the other hand, has liberty to select one line of conduct rather than another line of conduct, then I understand what motive is.

What I want to know explicitly, and distinctly, from Mr. Foote is this—Is a man at liberty, or is he able, to select one course of action himself, rather than another course of action; or is he compelled to action, or necessitated, by motive, or anything else, either externally or internally? Let us have that question fairly and distinctly answered—is he free or not free? We cannot have this matter darkened by any cloudy words about motives, and inducements, and reasons and principles, and so forth. With all these things I am perfectly at one. You will not find a Christian in the world who will not agree with you, that men are to be guided by reasons, motives, and principles, in their conduct. What I want to know is whether you affirm him to be free or not. If he is free you can blame him, or you can praise him, but if he is not then all Mr. Foote has said about motives, are so many words inconsistent the one with another; because a man can either select a course or he cannot. If he can select a course and selects the wrong one you can blame him; if he selects the right one you can praise him. The whole question centres here—free or not free.

Again he referred to causation and said he believed in moral causation. I should like to know who does not believe in causation. Mr. Foote has told us what his views on causation are. I will tell him they differ very widely from those of many materialists who deny altogether that there is any thing in causation except antecedence and consequence, who say that the notion of force of any kind is illegitimate—such for example as Professor Bain, Huxley, and others.

But so far as a true causation is concerned, I hold the theory of causation in all departments of life—mental life and material life—as strongly as any man can do. I do not know what is meant by uncaused action. I am not a Positivist or Materialist. Comptists and others will tell you that matter has the power to spontaneously move itself without knowing that it is moving itself, and without knowing why it is moving and where it is going. That is uncaused action if you like; with this, however, I have no sympathy, because I believe that all actions are caused. I may say that on that point Mr. Foote and I are at one. I am glad he has given this address to you, because when it comes to be read it will be difficult for himself or anybody else to explain his position, which is at the same time a believer in necessity and also a believer in free agency.

He began his address by stating I had said my worst against Secularism. Well, I do think I did say my worst against it, because I cannot fancy anything can be worse than to say that man has no power to select his action, and cannot deserve blame or praise. What, from a philosophical point of view, could be more disastrous than that I confess I do not know. He said I was rather mistaken in speaking of his horror of philosophy, and that he only spoke of metaphysics. He may not have combined together metaphysics and philosophy in the same phrase, but when I said I was glad to hear that Secularism was a philosophy, he replied: "It is a philosophy, or a system, or a creed, or a something; what's in a name? a rose by any other name would smell as sweet." When, therefore, he did not think philosophy had any distinctive name, he could not have any very high regard for the value of philosophy.

He has requested me to define morality. My reason for not having defined it before, is that I said I did not want to traverse the whole philosophy of morality—I wanted to save our time, which is very short. I sympathise with my opponent in this matter quite as much as I do with myself, and that is saying a good deal. I want one point kept prominently forward—the element of voluntariness—or volition, in will—as the necessary basis of morality. Do you acknowledge that an action to be a moral action, must be voluntary? If on the other hand you contend that an action may be moral and not voluntary, then there is a violation of the universal use of language which would make all discussion useless. By moral action I may say at once that I mean that which has God in it—(laughter)—I did not say you meant it; I said I did—one that has God in it; one that involves a feeling of responsibility and of duty, and consequently a feeling that you cannot base on the platform of humanity, but you must rise to a higher platform than your own in order to obtain it. (Cheers.) Further, he said I asked what schemes Secularism has to make bad men good men. I did not ask anything of the kind. I did not ask what schemes, but what force or power you are to bring to bear upon men to make your schemes effective. He tells us of men who professed Christianity whose deeds were deeds of barbarity and of blood. What does that show? That precepts, which are but words, are not in themselves sufficient, and that men may call themselves by the Christian name, may assent to Christian teaching, and Christian doctrine, and yet be as unchristian in conduct and life as any man on the face of the earth can possibly be. (Cheers.)

He said that he does not believe it possible to make very bad



men good. I do. I believe it possible to make bad men good. (Cheers.) And I would like to know from Mr. Foote, or any other person living, how and where will he draw the line of possibility in any living character? Is he to be a judge of any one, and say, "You are bad, I do not think you can be made better, therefore I shall leave you alone." If that be true human sympathy; if that be the way Secularism is to improve society, only going to those who do not require improvement, and leaving outside those who do, it will be a long time changing bad society into good.

Further, I did not ask him what are our duties to ourselves and others, but I did ask, when men have recognised their duties to others, how are you to make them perform those duties? Recognising duty is one thing, and acting up to that recognition is another thing. He also stated that we are bound to consider the welfare of our fellows. Why are you bound, as a Secularist, to consider the welfare of any human being but yourself? The reply seems to be that by increasing knowledge you increase civilisation, and by increasing civilisation you get more good in your own life than would be otherwise possible, and therefore you are bound to do this. No, why are you bound to get the most good you can out of your own life? If I go to some one and say that, he might reply: "I am not bound to do so. I am not bound by anybody or anything, except my own will. What am I to you, and what are you to me? I may try to benefit society if I like." How easy. to use the words of that incarnate angel Tom Paine and say: "The world is my country, and to do good my religion." (Cheers.) How nice these sentiments are, and how well they read, especially when written by such a man as this! (Applause.) But suppose a man says—such as we find a great many of every day of our lives—"The world is not my country, and to do good to myself is my only religion." (A voice, "Yes.") There is one such. Here is one man who says that the world is not his country, and to do good to himself is his only religion. Go and act on that man and alter his conviction—(interruption)—and let us know how you perform it. Experiment on one, and we shall then try the same experiment on others also. I want an answer to this in distinct terms—upon what principle or theory, what moral leverage can you bring to bear upon men to cause them to do that which is unpleasant, which is self-denying, which may cause them many hours of suffering and many hours of struggling; because we know when we have evil inclinations, or evil habits, it requires much of self-denial and much of battling and struggling to raise ourselves to a higher platform than we stood on before. Now, if there be no duty higher than that coming from your fellows, who are merely organisms like

yourself, born to-day to die and pass away to-morrow, I scarcely think the motive would be strong enough to cause a man to struggle in order to reach a higher mental condition and a purer morality.

Our friend has spoken much of the teaching of the early Christian Church, with regard to predestination and free agency. My subject is not the teaching of the early Church. (Laughter.) If you think it is you know more than I do. It is the teaching of Secularism, and although Mr. Foote could prove to positive demonstration that the teaching of necessity was corrupt and corrupting in the early Christian Church, that would not prove it to be morally elevating in the Secular Church of to-day. (Cheers.)

Mr. FOOTE : Dr. McCann mistakes me. I did not say that the doctrine of moral causation as taught by the Christian fathers was degrading or corrupting. On the contrary, I think it was the only sensible thing about them. (Hear, hear.) What I said was this that if the doctrine of moral causation, or, as Dr. McCann chooses to call it, necessity, is incompatible with morality, three-fourths of the greatest teachers in the Christian Church have taught a doctrine which is incompatible with morality. What is sauce for the Secular gander I hold is sauce for the Christian goose. (Laughter.)

A word as to making bad men good. The first man Dr. McCann comes across he proposes to hand over to me, although he has the specific and I doubt whether I have. Surely that is not very consistent. (Hear, hear.) Let us continue this. I read a few years ago of a man in South Wales, walking about the country, who murdered a whole family for two shillings and a pair of boots. Now I want to know what hope Dr. McCann would have of turning that fellow into a good man. I say it would be a radical impossibility. A man so devoid of sympathy with others, that he could deliberately murder a whole family for such a trifling reward, or, as he might call it, profit, regards his fellow man's happiness and welfare as so light in the balance that nothing you could do with him would make him a decent member of society. (Hear, hear.) But I allowed that there were men whose worst elements are not irrepressible, whose surroundings have unduly stimulated those elements into foul play. I allowed that such men had latent possibilities of better things, and might be placed amid new surroundings, or might be brought under the influence of mental culture, which would open up new motives. By means of changing the condition, and recognising that they were amenable to motives, you proceed upon the inevitable law of moral causation ; and you may improve men who would otherwise continue to live degraded lives. (Hear, hear.)

Does punishment compel a man? No. But the fear of punishment restrains him. (Cheers.) Surely Dr. McCann does not mean that if all the policemen took a week's holiday, it would not be very awkward for everyone who has anything to lose. The policeman does act as a deterrent—a great deal more than the Devil. (Cheers.) I believe that one policeman is a greater terror to the criminal classes than all the devils vast hell can hold. (Hear, hear, and laughter.) The dread of punishment is a new motive induced by human law. A man lives in society. He dreads, if he violates a definite social law, the ill-will of his fellow men, provided he himself has a sufficiently sympathetic nature to feel their ill-will as a calamity. But if he has no such sympathetic nature—if he does not feel their ill-will as a calamity—if two shillings and a pair of boots would outweigh all that in the man's mind—then public opinion has no influence on him. But you introduce a fresh motive. If a man cannot be drawn by sympathy you have to drive him by fear; and without it society would go back into the terrible anarchy from which it emerged.

Is a man, says Dr. McCann, free or not? I will answer that question when you tell me what you mean by free. Free means many things. (Hear, hear.) According to some persons I was a free man when I was in Holloway goal. (Laughter.) I did not think so. (Laughter.) But there is a difference of opinion on the matter, and clearly therefore we are not all agreed as to what free means. There is physical freedom, there is intellectual freedom, and there is moral freedom; and so far as these words have any meaning to me I will tell you what the meaning is. Physical freedom, as applied to a man, is the freedom of his body. A man is not physically free if his motor nerves are paralysed. A man is not physically free when chained or locked up by his fellow-men. A man is intellectually free when he consciously thinks with freedom upon all subjects presented to him. I do not hold that an orthodox person is a Freethinker, as he sometimes pretends, simply because you cannot prevent him from thinking as he thinks. He has been taught from his earliest childhood that if he faces evidence in certain directions it will lead him to conclusions for which he will be punished; consequently he shirks the evidence, although if he faced it he could not resist the conclusions. (Hear, hear.) When is a man morally free? He is morally free when he acts according to his own nature without restraint. (Hear, hear.) That is the only sense I can attach to the word. If a man acted as Dr. McCann thinks, in some incalculable way, if he were not subject to moral causation, you could not discern your friends or your foes from day to day. A man who acted honorably yesterday



might be a rascal to-morrow, and the man who acted as a rascal yesterday might be an honorable man to-morrow. Fortunately such a chaos does not exist. When an external motive acts upon an organism, and the two co-operate to produce a volition, you know that that act is the inevitable result of that motive at that strength operating upon his character—(hear, hear)—and you know very well that he will do the same thing again under the same circumstances as long as he lives. "You have betrayed me," says a man, "and I never trust you more," or as Othello says to Cassio—"I love you, but never more be officer of mine." If a man lies to you deliberately you cannot trust him again. If a man deceives you deliberately you cannot place confidence in him again. You may talk about it, and pretend confidence, but you will not stake anything upon it, and that is the real test of the state of your mind. (Hear, hear.)

Now let me work out this notion of moral causation with these ideas of moral freedom. Has a man no power of selection? It depends upon what you mean by selection. If you mean, Is it possible for a man to act in opposite ways at any given moment? I say no. Given a man's character, and given certain motives operating upon him, and I say he can and will only act in one way. A man leaves his work, and says, "I am a free agent, I can either take a walk, go to the club, go to the theatre, go outside the city altogether and wander at large, or go home and sit with my wife." Now what does he mean by this? He means at bottom that either of these actions is possible if he wills to do it. (Cheers.) But the question is, which does he will to do, and why does he will to do it? (Hear, hear.) He might go to the theatre, he might go to the club, he might go for a walk, or he might go home to his wife; but the action which expresses his volition will in each case depend upon the motive which proves itself the strongest, and defeats the others in the conflict of motives. (Hear, hear.) Now let me show, as a Necessitarian, as a moral Causationist, as a Secularist, that this very truth has a great promise for us. Instead of wasting our time in savage indignation with those who have gone wrong; instead of wasting our time in regrets which are infinitely vain—for if wishing forward is stupid, wishing backward is the height of imbecility—when we get hold of criminals now, we do not torture them as we used to do. Given their moral constitution, their bad training, and the whole circumstances that preceded and accompanied their career of crime, what they are is the inevitable result. Consequently the tendency of all our criminal legislation now—slow, I admit, but sure—is to reform the criminal instead of degrading him. (Hear, hear.) And what does that

mean? It means stimulating those latent faculties in the man which have been as though dead during his life outside prison. He has lived a desultory life, he has followed the whim of the moment, he has spurned discipline, he has never known what it was to do a steady week's work. He has not learnt that, even commercially speaking, honesty is the best policy. In a scientific establishment like the model penitentiary at New York, he is set to work, paid wages, rewarded as well as punished, and disciplined and educated in the best sense. And with what result? In the ordinary prison, such as in our own country and in the United States, eighty per cent. go back to gaol again. Under the new system of stimulating the better part of the man, and bringing him under the influence of moral causation, only twenty per cent. go back to the prison again, as many as eighty per cent. being reformed. (Cheers.)

Now let me give Dr. McCann a dilemma. (Laughter.) I hope he will not feel puzzled by it. (Laughter.) I have a body. So has Dr. McCann. But he believes in addition, that he has—whether I have or not—a soul. Now that soul began to be, or it existed eternally. If it existed eternally, Dr. McCann is coeval with God and consequently he is in a sense co-powerful with God; that is, his individuality bounds the otherwise infinite God. If, on the other hand, Dr. McCann's soul began to be, it was created, or it came into existence through the operation of natural causes. If it was created by God it must be subjected to the qualities with which God endowed it. If it came into existence through the operation of natural causes, it must participate in the character of its natural parent. (Hear, hear.) So that his soul must be subject to causation as well as my body, and even with his spiritualistic philosophy he cannot escape from that which every great philosopher in the world has seen to be inevitable. (Cheers.)

DR. McCANN: Mr. Foote said he would conclude by giving me a dilemma, and he most decidedly has; but the dilemma is this,—how any man of Mr. Foote's intelligence should think there was any dilemma in the case. He said the soul is either created or it is not. It is perfectly clear if the soul were created it must be subject to the qualities with which it was endowed. Who would think of denying that? One of the qualities with which it was endowed was freedom of action or freedom of selection, and because endowed with that quality, I believe in moral causation; in other words, that we are agents, and have the power of selecting, so far, our own courses in life, and are therefore acting in accordance with the qualities with which God has endowed our souls. There is no difficulty in the matter. (Hear, hear.)

I have now but a very few moments at my disposal, but I want to make one or two remarks here on what Mr. Foote said in his former address, which was that there were Christians in the present day who at the same time that they were calling themselves Christians still, were Materialists, because they believe in the dogma of conditional immortality. What this has to do with Materialism I do not know, for I think he will scarcely find any believer in the doctrine of conditional immortality who denies the fact that any man possesses a soul, and how he could call one who believes in the existence of God, of heaven, of a hereafter, and of a soul, a Materialist, is a dilemma for himself which I hope he will see his way to get out of as soon as possible.

What he has said has evaded the question of personal selection altogether. I never denied for one moment the doctrine of moral causation, nor did I deny the existence of motives in human action. But Mr. Foote says that a man will be guided by the strongest motive, and his action will depend upon the motive. I ask does punishment compel a man? No! we are told, but fear induces man. Will Mr. Foote not distinguish the difference between inducing a man and compelling a man? If men will not follow the inducement, then they must be compelled—if you induce a man you certainly mean, do you not, that when trying to induce him you may succeed, or you may not succeed. If therefore you do not succeed, why do you not succeed? Was it the man's own personal doing, or was it the result of some antecedent condition?

He has asked me to define what I mean by free will or liberty. I mean that men have the power of control, so far, over their own actions, that they have the power of self-selection, and self-determination. That is what I mean; but whether my friend will agree with me or not, is another thing. By free will I mean that human beings are moral agents, and not materialistic links, and have the power of determining and selecting their own actions, and what they shall do and what they shall leave undone. He thinks that if we believe in free-will we should not know how to depend upon our friends from day to day. How he connects those two thoughts as cause and effect, I cannot tell. We have motives guiding us, and we are so far consistent with our principles. On this subject, as in all matters of philosophy, our plan is to first discover our facts, and then find out for ourselves as best we can the explanation of those facts.

But surely Mr. Foote's statement on one point contradicts his own theory. He has said, Why go to the jails and reform the criminals who are there? Confine yourselves to those who are outside—the better class of men, where there is hope—and yet



he has told us that by the superior mode of treatment in this day in the jails 80 per cent. of criminals are reformed, and 20 per cent. only go back again. Suppose his principle should be acted on, that as these criminals are jail-birds and will always fly jailwards, you leave them alone, it is of no use trying to reform them. The result would have been that you would have lost about 80 per cent. of those criminals who are now reformed, according to his own showing. I have come a good deal in contact with men; I know of such cases as my friend has referred to—very difficult, awkward cases, perhaps impossible cases, but that is not my business. My business is to do my duty to the utmost of my power, not knowing what the possible result of that duty may be. Mr. Foote tells us that there are some men apparently so bad that there is really nothing good about them. I hold that a man—I care not how bad he is, has something good about him, if I can only find out that spot of brightness. I do not believe there is any man living who is radically bad—altogether bad from end to end. (Applause.)

Mr. Foote spoke also again about the teaching of the early Christians and of the theory of Necessitarianism being immoral. I do not agree with those teachings. I do not think they are Biblical teachings. I do not go to any man for infallible teaching, I go to the Word of God. I am glad to get help from anyone who will give me help, but I acknowledge no master on earth. There is this difference, however, between their Necessitarianism and that of Materialism. Behind their necessity they place conscience, intelligence and God; behind the Materialistic Necessitarianism there is no being whatever, only the world of matter of which he himself forms a part.

And now my last address to you in this debate has come, and I must say I have enjoyed it more than I anticipated, and I hope also it will be productive of more good than I anticipated. I must thank Mr. Foote for the manner in which he has done his work, and I think it of no mean importance to show that two men differing as widely as we do, can yet meet and defend our respective beliefs with calmness and mutual respect, attributing no motives and calling no names. (Cheers.) I must also thank you, the hearers, for the attention you have given me, the great majority having been opposed to me in thought; but you have listened to me with most exemplary patience, and have given me the fairest of hearings. There have been a few interruptions, which I perfectly understood, and which indicate to me earnestness rather than rudeness. (Cheers.) It will be for you to read carefully what we have said, and draw your own conclusions as to how we have respectively accomplished our tasks, under what I still

consider the disadvantageous circumstances of an oral debate, where there is no time to accurately analyse arguments and to condense expressions. I do not yet despair of having a debate conducted on a totally different method, and I could wish no better antagonist from your ranks than Mr. Foote. (Cheers.)

Time does not permit me to analyse our discussion, nor is it necessary. I have been accused by a correspondent in the *Free-thinker* of "explaining away" certain doctrines. I have explained certain doctrines, but I have explained *away* none. One would imagine, to hear our opponents speak, that they alone understood Christianity, and that the only persons ignorant of it were Christians; that the only individuals ignorant of theology were theologians, that the only persons capable of telling you all about eternity were Secularists—metaphysical ones, not you—and the only persons competent to reveal the secrets of infinity were Agnostics. (Hear, hear.) One thing this debate has shown us is, that many of the misapprehensions regarding Christianity are due to the very peculiar mode adopted by sceptics of treating the Scriptures. Let me give you only two illustrations from what Mr. Foote said. To prove the defective social morality of Christianity, he quoted firstly some personal advice of Paul about the advantages of single blessedness, but he did not quote that which explains all (1 Cor. vii, 26)—that it was on account of "the present distress."

Again, when quoting the passage relating to submission to the powers that be, he read "they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation." I have little doubt those present thought by damnation, was meant hell, whereas my opponent knew full well it had no more reference to hell than it had to this room. He did not tell you that the word "damnation" having changed its meaning in our own language, the word in the Testament has been changed also to express still the idea of the original, which was and is condemnation, and that the word "damnation" has in this sense disappeared from the New Testament. This might not have served his argument, but it would have served truth. You will never get at the truth of any doctrine in this way. (Hear, hear.) May I impress on you this thought, that many Christians are as honest, as pure, as upright, as learned, even as you are, and if they can cling to Christianity as they do, there must be in it something more than some of you seem to think. (Cheers.)

I turn to Secularism and ask, What has your advocate done for that? When I read over his propositions, barren as they are of all practical value, and still more his defence of them, I must confess I was surprised. I thought something more could have been pleaded in its favor, something more urged in extenuation of its

pretensions. And this, I thought, is all even Mr. Foote can say in reference to it—Mr. Foote, the very *ablest* advocate it has at present. It must be in a sorry plight indeed if that be all even he can advance. We heard much about its ignorance regarding a possible God, and a possible hereafter; much about its helplessness outside the realm of science; much about its ever varying, and ever uncertain criteria of what was best for the majority; much about its sorrow, without hope, in the hour of death. Literally that was in substance all! You have heard my indictment of Secularism to-night, and our friend's reply. Are you satisfied? I am not blaming Mr. Foote; no one could have done more; the blame lies in the poverty of his subject. With all my heart, I say, defend me from that system that would rob me of all that is noblest in manhood: the desire and the power to struggle against the false and wrong, and to struggle for the true and good; from that system that would teach me I am but a bubble born of the waves of chance, helplessly to be drifted to and fro till the bubble bursts, and I become nothing once again; that would come to me on the bed of death, and, as the shades of night are closing around, say to me, Look on your wife, who for years has been to you as your own soul, look on your children, your sunniness in many a dark day, and look on them for the last time for ever. Nay, give me rather that glorious Christianity that offers me the noblest precepts, that would inspire me with the grandest motives, that would animate me with the purest love, that would aid me in my battle of life with the highest and holiest help, and would keep me in communion with my Lord and Father. That Christianity which has God for its author, Christ for its illustration and example. Christ whose work is described in simplest words as "going about doing good." That Christianity which has truth as its kingdom and its power; happiness as its end and aim. That rightly lived, joins all the varieties of race, creed, caste, together by the silver cord of love. That epitomises all law in this: Love worketh no ill to his neighbor, therefore love is the fulfilling of the law. (Cheers.)

MR. FOOTE: I take this opportunity of reciprocating the good will which Dr. McCann expressed. He has conducted this debate with as much courtesy as he ascribes to me. And whatever else may result from it we have shown that imprisonment is altogether unnecessary. We have shown that a Freethinker can meet a Christian in debate on a common platform and not show himself an incarnate fiend. (Hear, hear.) But I think that truth was established before my imprisonment, and did not wait for this occasion to demonstrate it. (Hear, hear.) I pass by the compli-



ments Dr. McCann has bestowed on me. It might be very flattering to one's vanity to think they are all true, but I feel quite sure that they are all well meant. (Hear, hear.) And now for the subject.

Dr. McCann's escape from the dilemma I put to him may have been effective, but it was very scrambling. (Hear, hear.) I prefer to let you read the report for yourselves, and see whether he has not, in wriggling off one horn of the dilemma, impaled himself on the other. (Laughter.) Dr. McCann accuses me of inconsistency. He is the most inconsistent man I ever met ; for he says he believes in moral causation, and yet he believes in free will. (Cheers.) Now to my mind these two things are quite incompatible. The word necessity is quite superfluous. Causation is the fact, necessity is the mental attitude. I know as a fact that the law of gravitation exists. I know that if I let this glass fall from my hand, and there be no greater intervening obstacle than the air, it will fall to the floor, simply because I know it has been scientifically worked out, and demonstrated by experience since, that every particle of matter attracts every other particle in a definite ratio. (Hear, hear.) But if I say the glass will fall I simply mean that the law of gravitation will not be suspended. If you use the word necessity, and say it must fall, you are not teaching anything fresh. You are only emphasising your mental attitude, and showing the impossibility on your part of conceiving that the glass will not fall. There is nothing else in it ; the fact is the cause and effect, and all else is a mental figment. If Dr. McCann admits the fact of moral causation, the free will he maintains is put out of court altogether. (Hear, hear.) Let us take that illustration of the gaol again. Dr. McCann says that on my theory it would be useless to go to gaol. Not so. What I objected to was that sort of Christian philanthropy which devotes its energies to reclaiming criminals without giving proper support to those who are trying to keep honest. But when men violate the law, and come within the grip of society, society is morally wrong itself if, while it has the opportunity, it does not try to turn these criminals out of the gaol better men than they entered it. (Cheers.) And how is that to be done? The free-will plan is this. Put a man into a pulpit with a black coat and a white choker, and let him preach. That is the free-will plan, and that has been pursued in the gaols from time immemorial. But it has never had the slightest effect on the criminals. I speak from experience. (Laughter.) Dr. McCann has never had my opportunity of studying the inside of a gaol. I watched the prisoners in Holloway during service. They looked at the parson in a way that reminded me of a story in George Borrow. When he read the

Bible to a circle of gypsies, they listened in silence because they respected him; but when he took his eyes off the pages of the book he perceived that they were all squinting. (Laughter.) The chaplain was always telling of men coming to him and pretending that they had been made better by his teaching, but in nearly every case they turned out to be hypocrites, and they had pretended conversion in order to get some special advantage. That is the free-will plan. But the man of science goes to work in a different way. In that model New York prison a good secular governor is appointed. The chaplain takes a back seat, for his preaching is seen to be useless. The prisoners, as I said, are rigorously subjected to a wise discipline, which, if some of them had been subjected to in their early days, would have prevented them from ever becoming inmates of a gaol. (Cheers.)

I now come to Dr. McCann's point that the same motives produce different effects upon different men. I said in my previous speech that the effect of the motives depended upon the character of the organism to which it appealed. Every man is born into the world with definite characteristics and tendencies. You have only to look at babies twelve months old—not looking at them with the eye of indifference but with the eye of a loving parent—to see that they show even at that tender age strong indications of inherited character. (Hear, hear.) That is a law of physiology, and it is a law of morality. Many a man has gone to a drunkard's grave because he inherited the lust for drink in his blood and nerves from his parents. (Hear, hear.) I will take the same motives in two cases. Here is a man with blood and nerves suborned by inheritance in favor of drink. And here is a man with sound organs, blood full of oxygen, and a healthy nervous system that does not want these stimulants. There is something to drink. The latter may or he may not drink it. If thirsty he may drink it, or he may even prefer cold water. But having quenched his thirst there is no desire for more. The former takes it and drinks it at once. It finds a co-operating mischief in his system, and he takes a second glass, not because he is thirsty but because of the inherited craving for the liquor. He drinks himself dead drunk, and finally that man drinks himself into a drunkard's grave. Here we have the same motives producing different effects, because of the different constitutions. Now let us take a case where a man has a tendency to drink, but where he also has conflicting motives. Some men derive a craving for drink from their parents, but sometimes they also derive strong sympathies and a craving for affection. They are devoted to their friends, strongly attached to wife and child, and these motives fight against

the craving for drink. They fight it, and perhaps in the end they conquer it. But it is not the man saying, "I won't drink;" it is the new motive—the love of friend, the love of wife, the love of child—exerting itself. One part of the man's nature is fighting another part, and which ever is the stronger triumphs, and thus for good or ill the victory is decided. (Cheers.)

Dr. McCann's only definition of morality is that it has God in it. (Hear, hear.) The most extravagant definition that ever proceeded from the lips of man. Does he mean that every thing that has been commanded in the name of God is moral? If not, what does he mean? If he means that only some things commanded in the name of God are moral, who is it that discriminates what is right from what is wrong? Ourselves, of course. We are the ultimate judges after all. We are the sovereign judges of revelation itself. The book Dr. McCann preaches from says that God commanded people to go to cities they had never built, and fields they had never tilled, and water them with the blood of their inhabitants, whose only crime was that they defended their homes. The Jews entered Canaan like a horde of bandits. If this is the morality of the Bible, the sooner we fall back on our poor, weak, inadequate, but radically sound, Secular morality, the better for humanity. (Cheers.)

Secularists and Freethinkers are the only people who know Christianity, says Dr. McCann, or at least they think so. Aye, sometimes we think so with good reason. A man who has been brought up a Christian; who once believed as sincerely as Dr. McCann ever did or ever will; who has—rightly or wrongly—thought himself out of Christianity, may surely claim to know both sides. (Cheers.)

Dr. McCann complains that I quoted the Bible and did not explain it. I cannot help it if the Bible does not explain itself. I quoted from the authorised version. A new version is out, and no doubt when we get the next version that will be still more different. (Laughter.)

We are weak and helpless things! Our motives bear no comparison with the Christian's! The Christian on his death bed feels that there is an immortality of glory and happiness for him! Aye, but may there not be an immortality of pain? Why present to us the sweet side and conceal the bitter? Why give one half of a dual doctrine? Why not give us the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth? If it is a pleasure to know that you will live with your loved ones for ever and ever in heaven, what a terrible agony to think that you may only be united in pain! What a greater agony to think you may be for ever divided, and that you



or they in heaven may witness eternally the others' torture in hell. (Great and continued cheering.)

A word in conclusion. I asked Dr. McCann in the early part of this debate to differentiate his Christianity from other systems and especially from Secularism. I will occupy my last few minutes in dealing with the grand difference between Christianity and Secularism myself. We both live on this earth. That is undeniable. It is the world of all of us. Dr. McCann talks of another as a Christian. I know nothing of it. If there be another world my unbelief will not destroy it. If there be another life my unbelief will not annihilate it. If there be a just God my honesty of purpose here will stand me in good stead elsewhere. (Hear, hear.) But here is the world we live in. Here is the world where the great battles of our forefathers for liberty and progress were fought. Here is the world where all the triumphs of the future will be achieved. (Hear, hear.) Christian doctrines are not merely dreams about a possible future; they are dogmas, and they claim sovereignty here. Precisely at this point it is that Secularism finds itself in direct antagonism with Christianity. You may spend your time in speculating about another world if you please; but the moment you bring dogmas derived from unknown sources, and claim for them a sovereignty over this world, we challenge you in the name of reason and humanity.

This life is our garden, and we must cultivate it. It may produce beautiful flowers or it may be overrun with weeds. I hold that the worst weeds in all ages have been the dogmas of the priests. We Secularists do not propose to create a world. We only hope to improve this one. We will cultivate the flowers here, and exterminate the weeds. If we do this, is our work merely negative? Is it not truly positive? Standing on the conquests of the past, we enjoy them in our day, and transmit them with added glory to the future. Our garden of life is fair, but we can make it fairer. The lily of liberty and the rose of progress are too often stifled by the weeds of religion. Let us kill the weeds, and these lovely flowers, the queens of our garden, will flourish in deathless splendor. When theology leaves a man he takes a new departure. His faculties expand. All things are seen in a new light, and the world takes fresh colors. Where he saw dimly, he sees clearly. His mind soars, and his heart swells with a new joy. And if, at the end, he has not the Christian's selfish expectation of personal immortality, and endless felicity in an unknown heaven; he may at least enjoy the nobler consolation of reflecting that the world is a little better for his having lived in it, that he has fought like a man in the front of the battle instead of shrinking like a

coward to the rear, and that his courage has made the struggle less arduous for those who follow. His heart will be at peace with itself. Without doubts or forebodings he will enter the great silence. And the consciousness of tasks achieved and duty done, will tint with rainbow colors the mists of death, far more surely than expected glories from the mystic land of dreams (Loud and continued applause.)

The proceedings closed with a vote of thanks to the chairman.





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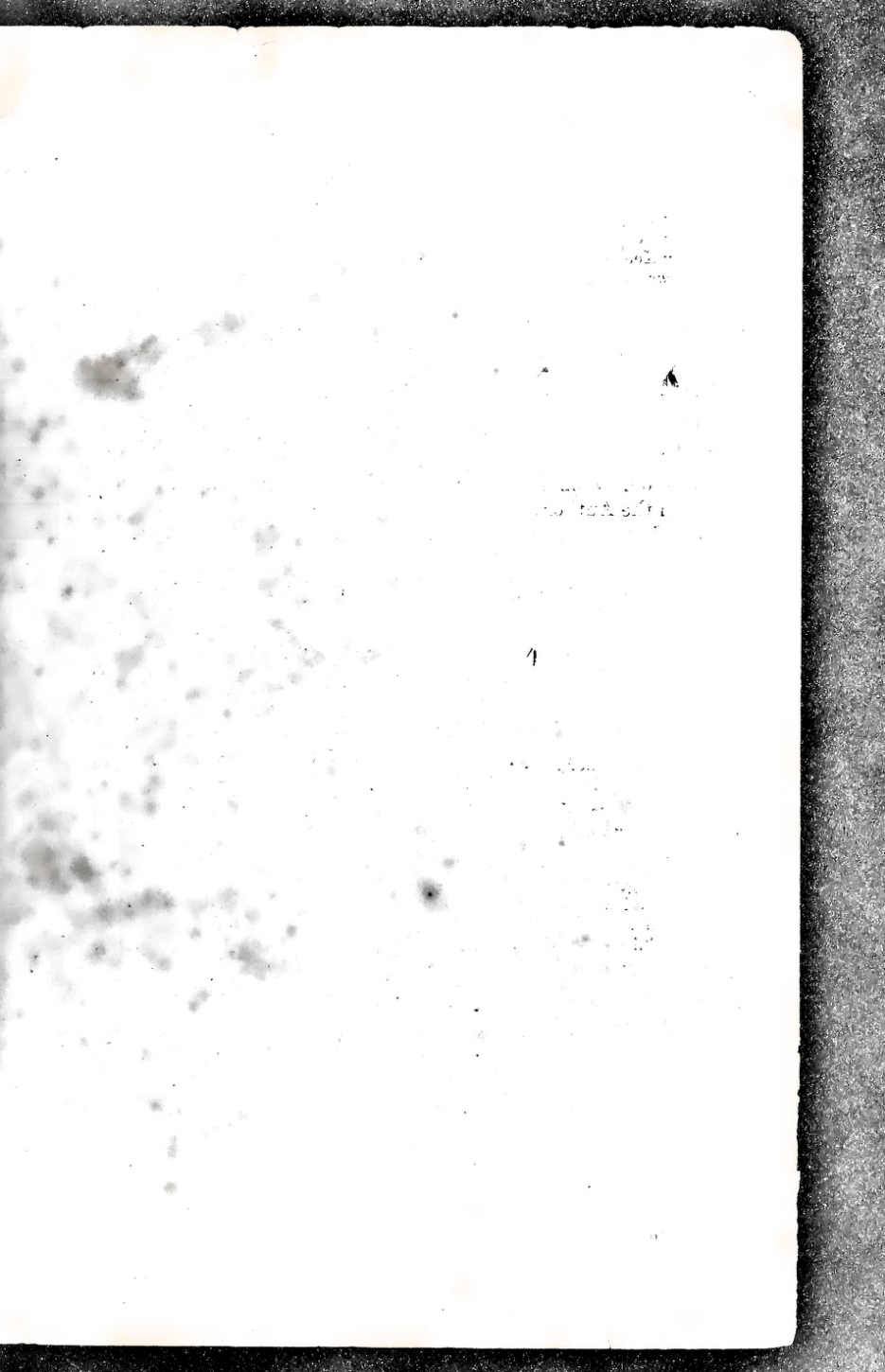
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