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**CHRISTIANITY OR SECULARISM:**  
**Which is the Better for Mankind?**

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VERBATIM REPORT  
OF THE  
**GREAT DEBATE**

BETWEEN

**Mr. W. T. LEE**

(representing the North London Christian Evidence League)

AND

**Mr. JOSEPH McCABE**

(representing the Rationalist Press Association, Limited)

Held at the Town Hall, Holborn, on Thursday and  
Friday evenings, March 9 and 10, 1911

REVISED BY BOTH DISPUTANTS

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DEBATE ON CHRISTIANITY OR SECULARISM :  
WHICH IS THE BETTER FOR MANKIND?

ISSUED UNDER THE JOINT AUSPICES OF THE  
RATIONALIST PRESS ASSOCIATION, LIMITED,  
AND THE NORTH LONDON CHRISTIAN EVIDENCE  
LEAGUE.

# CHRISTIANITY OR SECULARISM :

## Which is the Better for Mankind?

VERBATIM REPORT OF TWO NIGHTS' DEBATE

BETWEEN

MR. W. T. LEE AND MR. JOSEPH McCABE  
"

HELD AT THE TOWN HALL, HOLBORN, ON THURSDAY AND FRIDAY EVENINGS,  
MARCH 9 AND 10, 1911

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## TWO NIGHTS' DEBATE

ON

# "CHRISTIANITY OR SECULARISM: WHICH IS THE BETTER FOR MANKIND?"

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FIRST EVENING—MARCH 9

*Chairman*—MRS. H. BRADLAUGH BONNER

Mrs. H. BRADLAUGH BONNER : Ladies and Gentlemen,—We have met here this evening to listen to a discussion between two able and practised speakers upon a question which, I am sure, everyone here will agree, whatever his sympathies, is one of overwhelming practical importance to Western nations. The subject to be discussed this evening is "Christianity or Secularism : Which is the Better for Mankind ?" This discussion arose out of a challenge which was sent by the North London Christian Evidence League to the Rationalist Press Association, and accepted by that body in due course. These two societies nominated gentlemen to represent them. The Rev. Mr. Lee represents the North London Christian Evidence League, Mr. McCabe speaks for the Rationalist Press Association. The two associations arranged a procedure on behalf of the two speakers. It was arranged that this debate should be continued for two nights, this evening and to-morrow evening ; that the discussion this evening should be opened by Mr. Lee in a speech of half-an-hour, to be replied to by Mr. McCabe in a speech of equal duration, and then that each speaker was to have an opportunity for further discussion in speeches of one quarter of an hour each, Mr. McCabe closing the debate for this evening. To-morrow evening Mr. McCabe opens the discussion (the procedure will be the same as this evening), and it will be closed by Mr. Lee. You will be glad to know that the two associations have arranged to issue a report. The reporter will take notes on both evenings, and the report will be published at the earliest possible moment. Now, ladies and gentlemen, your duty and mine this evening is very simple. All that I have to do is to see that the arrangements which have been made shall be carried out in due and proper order. What you have to do is to put your fullest confidence in the gentleman who represents your views, and to listen with all respect and attention to the opposing arguments that are laid before you. In that way the proceedings will be carried through

harmoniously and, I hope, profitably. I now have pleasure in calling upon Mr. Lee to open this evening's proceedings.

Mr. LEE: Mr. Chairman, Mr. McCabe, Ladies and Gentlemen,—By *Christianity* I understand those ideas, precepts, and doctrines given to the world by Jesus Christ, and which are made known to thought and proved to be applicable to life in the various books of the New Testament. These ideas, precepts, and doctrines embrace God and man, sin and salvation, time and eternity; and constitute a religion which has not merely a local or temporal meaning, but also a universal and eternal significance. In this religion God is represented as Perfect Father and Holy Love, and is declared to have expressed Himself in the wondrous life and work of Jesus Christ. This religion regards man as not only needing redemption, but also as having a value greater than that of worlds. Hence it addresses its appeals to man as man, without regard to culture, creed, or country, and aims to establish a kingdom of redeemed men which shall out-last time and transcend all material, social, and national limitations. This, then, is what I understand by Christianity.

By *Secularism* I mean all those forms of thought and theories of conduct which have their origin and their end in this world, without reference to any other—a world whose substance is material, and whose latent and active energies are mechanical. In a word, Secularism is a system of Naturalism—a system which looks on the world order as a closed circuit, and therefore rejects all ideas of God, Freedom, and Immortality as valueless and pernicious—denying the presence and action of Spirit in the affairs of men. It grounds its hopes for the betterment of mankind on the doctrine of salvation by organisation. Recognising that the natures of some men are radically corrupt, it gives these up to destruction. Thus Secularism in relation to God is Atheistic; in relation to nature is Materialistic; in relation to man is Pessimistic.

This brings us to the word "*man*," which, I presume, my friendly opponent will allow me to suppose includes woman. What do we mean by "*man*"? If we study men, we shall find that they appear to think, speak, and act as though they were rational, moral, and religious beings. They live not only in a world of things, but of thoughts, of feelings, of deeds, of worship. These thoughts, these feelings, these deeds, this worship, are hall-marks of personality; they not only exist, they have power, they have meaning, they have value, and cannot be made part and parcel of any world-order which is interpreted by mechanical processes alone. Man is more than a body energised by physical forces: he is a mind, a will, a person.

With these interpretations before us, the question at once arises, is Christianity or Secularism the better for man? I suggest to you that the better system for man is the one which has done, is doing, and is likely to do, the most for man.

As a matter of theory, Secularism should have done the most for man. First, because it is older than Christianity. Second, because it claims to have a firmer grasp on reality. But, as a matter of fact, Secularism has



totally failed to justify its existence by deeds of redemptive value ; while Christianity, in countless ways, among distant and diverse races of people, amid circumstances of almost paralysing difficulty, face to face with forces of relentless cruelty, has accomplished, and is to-day accomplishing, works which have not only sweetened the world, but added meaning, dignity, and value to the life of man. Where Secularism has cramped the intellect, warped the emotions, sapped the will, and dethroned the soul of man, Christianity has quickened the intellect, purified the emotions, energised the will, and delivered the soul from the bondage of festering sins.

Let us see if these immense allegations can be sustained. I am not particularly anxious to take you back two thousand years to the Roman world, already burdened with accumulating miseries ; mastered by abominations which, like an ever-present and active leprosy, ate into the life alike of patrician and plebeian. I will not harrow your feelings by depicting the horrors of the gladiatorial shows, nor tell of the tens of thousands of men who were thus ruthlessly slaughtered in order to afford amusement to a degraded and morally exhausted people. I will not, in detail, picture out the practices of those men and women who, lacking the feeling which nearly every animal possesses, did not hesitate to free themselves from the obligations of parentage by the devilish practices of abortion and infanticide. I will not marshal the evidence, so clear and so abundant, of the terrible state of woman in that society. I will only ask you to remember a few simple but terrible facts, such as these :—Millions of women were slaves, and many of these worse than slaves. In the so-called superior classes chastity and modesty were practically unknown. Friends appear to have found no difficulty in the exchange of wives. Marriages were usually matters of convenience, and, Seneca says, were commonly contracted because they gave to adultery an added zest. Women of noble rank did not hesitate to enrol themselves on the police registers as common prostitutes, in order that they might, without restraint, abandon themselves to the most wanton excesses. Even the priestesses in the temples were women of easy virtue, who assisted the worshipper in his religious exercises by practices which would have shamed Sodom and Gomorrah. I will not tell you how the rights of man were invaded, nor attempt to depict the countless wrongs daily inflicted on the sixty million slaves in the Empire. It is enough to know that these sixty millions of men and women were regarded as things, not persons. They were bought, they were sold, they were exchanged, they were given over to lust, they were exposed to hunger, to torture, and lingering death. The right to hold property was denied them ; so was the right to contract marriage. The slave might be a father, a son, a brother, but such words had no legal meaning. He might be guilty of foul adulteries, but no action could lie against him. He could not appear as a witness in a court of justice. He could only give his deposition under torture. A slave had no moral responsibility. Ladies and gentlemen, all these crying evils, and countless others, had spread over, had been built into, had become part of the life of Rome.

Into this Rome Christianity came. With what results? I will let Froude answer:—

The evidence of the truth of religion is not the testimony of this or that person who saw, or thought he saw long ago, something which seemed to him an indication of a supernatural presence. The evidence is the power which lies in a religion to cope with moral disease, to conquer and bind the brutal appetites and intellectual perversions of man, and lift him out of grossness and self-indulgence into higher and nobler desires. This [mark the words] was what Christianity effected as no creed or system of philosophy ever did before or has done since; and Christianity was thus, as Goethe declares, beyond comparison the grandest work which was ever accomplished by humanity. It is a height, he says, from which, having once risen to it, mankind can never again descend (*Essays*, Vol. IV., pp. 367-8).

There is the testimony of Froude, backed by that of Goethe. Will Mr. McCabe deny its truth? If so, will he produce the evidence which will justify his denial? A few moments ago I said I would not take this audience back two thousand years and ask them to gaze upon the growing corruption of the Roman world. Neither will I. Rather I will ask this great company of earnest and intelligent men and women to look on the world in which they live to-day, and the world in which their fathers lived; the world of the nineteenth century and the opening decade of the present century. Face to face with this known period of history, let us ask whether Christianity or Secularism is the better for man. Which has done and is doing the most for man?

In the year 1800 Asia was a dark continent. China and Japan were closed to the foreigner. India was little better. Africa was scarcely more than a name. South America and the Islands of the Pacific were known to exist, but of the life of their peoples the world was strangely ignorant. A hundred years later, and the gates of the continents and the islands of the seas were wide open; and a knowledge of the countries and their peoples, of an exact and comprehensive nature, had become the possession of the Western world. What had happened? The answer is easy. Christian missionaries, impelled by the Christian gospel, had gone forth to claim these lands for their Lord, and, in spite of peril, suffering, and awful death, had wrought for the redemption of these countries and peoples. Without, at this stage, stopping to enumerate the manifold results of these missionary labours, I ask Mr. McCabe if any body of Secularists have ever sent forth a number of heroic men and women to distant continents and degraded peoples to preach their creed and expound their doctrine? I ask him if, in the long sad history of the centuries, any single Secularist, under the pressure of the consciousness of the *alleged* precious truth and emancipating power of his theory, has turned his back on the comforts of home, the love of friends and country, and gone forth to the dark places of the earth where ignorance, oppression, corruption, and gigantic evils enslave the souls and haunt the lives of countless millions of men and women? Don't talk to me in fine-spun phrases of secular ideas of Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity. Don't spend your



strength in preaching to me your stoical philosophy, with its meaningful words of pity and humanity, for I shall say of you what Domitian said of Seneca. They are "sand without lime"; and with that you will find yourselves unable to erect a structure that will last a single day.

But let us come to closer grips. I apprehend that you will agree with me when I say there are four directions in which we can test the value of any system which has been at work in the world of men. We can carefully state the conditions of life in which this system or systems appear; then we can carefully watch these systems at work. Step by step, and day by day, we can see them being driven back or moving forward, challenging old habits and customs, attacking great and venerable superstitions, undermining and casting down proud and subtle philosophies, and replacing all these by newer, purer, and mightier conceptions. This is what I now propose to do. Christianity is at work in all parts of the world. I am going to ask you to consider this system at work.

*First:* In the Intellectual World—bringing enlightenment.

*Second:* In the Moral World—bringing renewal.

*Third:* In the Political World—bringing justice.

*Fourth:* In the Spiritual World—bringing satisfaction and joy.

*First:* Let us consider the World of the Intellect. What has been accomplished there? I do not mean what have been the intellectual benefits which *we* have obtained from missionary enterprises, though these have been simply gigantic; I mean, what have been the effects of missionary work upon the people among whom the missionary has laboured?

Well, to begin at the beginning, most of the peoples among whom missionary work has been carried on were people destitute of education; they had no written language, no grammar, no literature, no schools. Whatever knowledge they had of the past was confined to traditions; whatever knowledge they had of nature was unreal; whatever knowledge they had of life was childish. The missionary comes on the scene. He learns the spoken language, invents an alphabet and a grammar, constructs his vocabulary, and reduces the spoken to a written language. He translates some portion of the Bible into that language, has it printed, opens a school or schools, gathers scholars of all ages, teaches them the alphabet and the grammar. They learn to read, to write, to cipher. Their intellects awaken; they are in possession of new powers; they are, intellectually, a new people.

Or the missionary goes to a country like India, where, out of one hundred and forty or one hundred and fifty languages, some ninety were written languages. He sets to work, learns the languages, written and unwritten, translates his Scriptures into those languages, opens his schools, collects his scholars, instructs them, not only in reading, writing, and arithmetic, but in the higher branches of learning. Women, who before he came were ignored, despised, maltreated, enter these schools, gain this knowledge; and, to the wonder of India and of the world, the first woman to take the M.A. degree in Bengal was Miss C. M. Bose, a Christian; and to-day she is the Principal of the leading college for

women in India. The first Indian woman admitted to practise as a barrister, the first to enter upon the study of medicine, the first to take the M.A. degree at Calcutta University, the first to take the degree of B.Sc. at Bombay University, were all Christians—*Christian women*. I emphasise both words: "*Christian*" because Christianity values, awakens, and educates the intellect; "*women*" because, while philosophers spoke, and still speak, of women as "weak things" and "animals," Christianity places them, by arousing their capacities, on an intellectual equality with men.

In every province of India, wherever the missionary is found, educational work is going on. In some cities splendid colleges are found; while "there is no educational institution in India that has half the popularity of the Christian College in Madras; and, as far as academic distinction and university success are concerned, it outstrips every other college."

One cannot think of China without calling to mind the mighty labours and success of Robert Morrison, whose Chinese Dictionary has been the basis of all scientific study of the language. In this connection think of the work of Dr. Timothy Richards, who, as late as November 18, 1910, was the recipient of an honour unparalleled in the history of China. What was this honour? It was a public reception given to Dr. Richards by the President and Provincial Assembly of Shansi in recognition of his educational work in Shansi, and to celebrate the constitution of the Shansi University. Well may Dr. Richards exclaim: "Formerly coolies despised our work; now statesmen are glad to converse with us."

It would be impossible to write on the education of Japan and fail to give a large place to the work of Neesima, who not only founded the Doshisha, or pioneer university, but did more for the higher education of his country than any other person. He lived when Japan was closed to foreigners; and, seeing no hope for his country unless light could be brought from the outside, he fled his country; reached Singapore; there saw a Bible; sold his sword in order to purchase it; became a Christian; returned to his country with the "Light of the World" filling his mind and heart; and set to work to educate the people. In the light of these and countless other facts, I conclude that Christianity in the world of the intellect has brought enlightenment.

*Second:* In the World of Morals Christianity has brought renewal.

I will not go to obscure and utterly degraded peoples in proof of my case. I will direct your attention to peoples and countries boasting of civilisation—countries like India, China, and Japan.

India occupies an unenviable prominence as a land of immorality. This the tell-tale stringency in the seclusion of woman; low views of woman's place, power, and character; the tainted family life; the unseemly marriage customs; the obscenity of talk and song; prostitution, concubinage, child-marriage, adultery, and Phallic worship abundantly prove, without recounting the horrid practices which give notoriety to India's fanatical devotees.

China, too, has its festering sores—its unnatural vices, its shameful traffic in blind girls, its hateful trade of the "pocket mother," and her

colonies of slaves; its awful pollutions of speech; the number of its suicides; the almost universal practice of lying and theft; its narrowness and living death.

Japan, though in some directions more favourably placed, is in a sad plight. "*Immorality is her national vice.*" The "social evil" is the open shame of Japan, more than of any other people, outside the license of tropical barbarism. The finest houses in the country are the licensed homes of vice. And here the Japanese may find a wife or a concubine. He may indeed freely register concubines as inmates of his home. He may, and does, if it pleases him, give his daughters to a life of shame in the brothels, and no one thinks the worse of him. Like a modern Stoic, he may end his life by suicide, and be regarded by his friends as having done a noble thing. The last thing the Japanese thinks of is to speak the truth if he can do better by telling a lie.

Here, ladies and gentlemen, are three countries, each boasting the possession of civilisation, of elaborate systems of ethical teaching; yet they are literally honeycombed with shocking immoralities. I know that Christendom is not free from numerous vices. But I also know, and to this I especially direct Mr. McCabe's attention, that in Christendom these evils are denounced and opposed by an ever-growing body of alert and vigorous opinion. Here in Christendom the standards of conduct are permanently elevated, and the demands of the conscience of the community are enforced by regnant principles. The moral forces which represent law and order, peace and sobriety, justice and brotherhood, truth and honour, are in the ascendant, and growing in power day by day. It was not so in India, in China, and Japan until the missionaries entered those countries.

Now will you consider the following facts?—

In India to-day there are at least 1,124 European and American missionaries, 1,200 native ministers, 7,179 catechists and evangelists—representing seventy-three missionary societies. There are two-and-three-quarter millions of native Christians. From 1891 to 1901 the population of India increased by 2.5, while in the same period Christians increased by 30.8. These Christians are to be found among all the races. They are a progressive community. They are easily first in moral tone and conduct. I say in moral tone and conduct; for the religion they accept is absolutely opposed to all the vices and immoralities which are natural to the non-Christian in India.

In China to-day there are 4,000 Protestant missionaries, 10,000 Chinese pastors, 250,000 full Church members, above 1,000,000 adherents. Add to these another 1,000,000 adherents of the Roman Catholic missions, and you have a Christian population in China of above 2,000,000.

As to Japan, the situation is really remarkable. The first missionaries of the nineteenth century landed in Japan in 1859. In 1873 the calendar of Christendom was adopted. In 1898 there were 41,000 Church members. In 1908 these had increased to 70,000. To-day there is a Protestant community of above 200,000, a Roman Catholic community of 100,000, a Greek Church community of above 30,000; and these results have been



reached in a land, among a people, usually supposed to be self-contained and self-sufficient.

*But what does all this suggest?* It suggests, ladies and gentlemen, that great forces of moral reform and moral renewal are at work in the midst of the civilisations of the East; that the mighty moral ideals of Christianity are taking hold of the hearts of the peoples of India, China, and Japan, shaking those peoples out of their lethargy and self-sufficiency, putting, as it were, iron into their blood, vision into their hearts, vigour into their wills, purity and power into their lives. And this, ladies and gentlemen, is taking place in the East, in ever-widening spheres, at this very moment.

*Third:* Turn to the World of Politics, and see what is done there. Turn to New Guinea. What was the condition of this country less than a century ago? It was a veritable hell. Not so very many years ago the unfortunate ship *St. Paul*, with 360 Chinese passengers, fell into the hands of the natives. "These were cooped up and marked for slaughter; and day by day so many were clubbed and cooked and eaten, until only four were left."

In Fiji, not so long ago, the natives were addicted to deeds of horror, rapine, and bloodshed, which outraged the most elementary instincts of humanity.

All this, and much more, could have been said of Uganda only a few short years ago.

Let us, however, take a brief glance at Tierra del Fuego. In 1833 it was visited by Darwin, who, after exhaustive observation, declared the people to be "in a more miserable state of barbarism than I ever expected to see any human being." They were given over to almost every conceivable abomination.

I might take scores of other examples of backward and iniquitous peoples. I might even refer to human sacrifices and infanticide and widow-burning in India, to trials by torture in Japan, to horrible punishments in China; but I will not do so. Rather I will ask: What is the state of New Guinea, Fiji, Uganda, and Tierra del Fuego to-day? I will not say they are morally perfect; but I will say that socially, politically, ethically, they are parts of a new world. The progress they have made in the decencies, the arts, and the comforts of life under the teaching of the missionaries forms the elements of a great social, political, and moral miracle. In support of this I will quote the words of Darwin *re* Tierra del Fuego, which would be equally applicable to the other places. We have heard his opinion of the Fuegians in 1833. In 1869 he visited that people again. He found everything altered. In 1833 he had stated that it would be impossible to civilise the Fuegians. In 1869 he wrote this letter to the London Missionary Society:—"I shall feel proud if your committee shall think fit to elect me an honorary member of your society. I certainly should have predicted that not all the missionaries in the world could have done what has been done. It is wonderful, and it shames me, as I always prophesied failure." With this letter Darwin sent a cheque for £25.

I conclude that politically Christianity has worked for the progress of man. It has civilised him ; made him peaceable ; opened the avenues of sympathy, brotherhood, and humanity to him ; quickened his self-respect, purified his affections, exalted his views of the value of life, the sinfulness of cruelty and murder and wrong of every kind. It has filled the dark places of the earth with life and light. Can Mr. McCabe parallel these achievements ? *Can he tell of any conquests similar to these which Secularism has made ?*

*Finally :* In the Spiritual World Christianity has brought satisfaction and peace. It has done this for countless millions of the human race in the past ; it is doing this for millions of people in the present. And the secret of its power lies, not merely in its high and holy conception of God as an ethical Personality, a living, loving Father ; not only in its comprehensive doctrine of man as a rational, a moral, and a spiritual being ; not only in its doctrine of redemption from the consequences and the power of sin, but in its great central doctrine of the Person and Presence of Jesus Christ—a Living Person who not only reveals God to us, but comes to us in the hour of our need, speaks to us in our sorrow, strengthens us in our weakness, saves us from our sins, sets us in new and loving relations with our fellow-man, gives us a vision of a coming day when a new earth, wherein righteousness shall reign, shall be the dwelling-place of man. And those who have seen this vision, those who have heard this voice, those who have felt this Presence, those who have known this Person, those who are doing His will—these men are satisfied ; these men are glad ; their lives have found their true centre, their hearts their true home. And amid the clash of world-forces, the rise and fall of nations, there is One who lives and works with His people, in whom and from whom all good comes and every hope returns fulfilled.

I therefore conclude that Christianity, and not Secularism, is the better for man. (Loud applause.)

The Chairman then announced

Mr. McCABE, who spoke as follows : Madame Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen,—The debate which we are conducting to-night is a compendium of a debate that is filling, I think, the whole of the civilised world to-day. Christianity is on its trial in the conscience of humanity. The path of mankind through the ages can be traced by a series of venerable ruins—the ruins of temples. From the earliest Egyptian temples of four thousand years ago down to the ruins of the latest religion that is crumbling into dust you can trace how man, age after age, has discovered new gods ; how his eternal truths have proved to be only the temporary aberrations of a childlike imagination ; how his immortal gods prove to be only one more link in the endless chain, the always changing series of dynasties of gods. And the question before the civilised world to-day is, Must one more religion go into the libraries of the past ?—must the temples of our time become ruins, like the temples of religion after religion before them ? That is one of the most profound and moving questions, I think, that is being discussed in every civilised

nation to-day. We are treating that subject to-night from a particular point of view. We are treating it from this point of view—we are raising this question: Suppose mankind is forced by honesty, by intellectual considerations, to part with its Christian dogmas, will there be a loss?—will there be some signal deterioration of the human race? Choose, on their merits, between Christianity and Secularism: which is the better for mankind? And I fully accept what Mr. Lee has said, that the simple test of which is better is: Which has done, is doing, and will do most for the human race? Let me first of all just demur slightly, not to the definition of Christianity, but to that of Secularism. Secularism is not materialism, it is not atheism, and it is not pessimism. Secularism is the cultivation of human character and human interests on a purely human ground; it is the running of this planet by men, for men, without any reference whatever to religious beliefs, either for or against them. Secularism says that men, when they take into their own hands their own affairs, may set on one side—it does not matter whether they doubt, deny, or accept, but they may set aside—their religious ideas; we can run the affairs of humanity on purely human grounds. That is Secularism. (Applause.) My time is short, so please allow me to have the whole of it. Mr. Lee said that Secularism was pessimistic; it lays aside certain men as hopelessly corrupt, and dooms them to destruction. It does nothing of the kind. No great Secularist ever said that certain men were hopelessly corrupt. Secularism is a scientific frame of mind, which says: When science has told you its last word—when, if ever, it does say that certain men are hopelessly corrupt—then we will raise the question as to what is the humane procedure with regard to them. But to-day there is not a single scientific man who says there is a single man, woman, or child in the world who is hopelessly corrupt. Secularism believes in education, finer environment, stimulation of a high character poured in as far as a more efficient system of education can reach. Try that experiment, and then you may begin to wonder whether there is such a thing as hopeless human corruption. Up to this time no one has said that there are men hopelessly corrupt and doomed to destruction. I demur, therefore, to that definition; and I say, further, that Secularism, instead of holding some hard-and-fast theory of the universe and of human life, is the system which says: We can cultivate character and every human interest on human grounds, and it does not matter to us whether the ideas or the institutions which we gather into the service of man come from Judaism or Confucianism, from Christianity, or from any creed or non-creed the whole world over. Whatever serves man, whatever helps to uplift man, if it can be transferred from the system in which it is found, we shall use it and hold it in the service of mankind. Therefore you will begin to see what is my main objection to the discourse which Mr. Lee has given us to-night. The question before us is not what in remote lands Christianity and Secularism have done; not Secularism as an organisation, but Secularism as a spirit. Am I to be asked to compare what Secularism has done in missionary work with Christianity, when Christianity boasts of its five hundred million people, and when Secularism numbers only about five



thousand people in this country? Where is the comparison, or the ground for the comparison? I have been asked, particularly and nominally, "Since China and Japan have received so many thousand missionaries, how many have you Secularists sent to China and Japan?" Not a single one; we know China and Japan too well ever to send a missionary to insult them. We have been listening here the whole evening to the superiority of Christianity over Hinduism, over the religion of the inhabitants of Tierra del Fuego, of New Guinea, of Uganda. What we came to listen to was what it has done in Europe. Here and now in England you have a secular idea and a secular spirit. What is the superiority of your Christianity over the secular and humanitarian spirit of Europe to-day? I think we will approach it in this way.

Mr. Lee said he did not wish to take you back to ancient Rome; yet he gave you so long a list of the errors and crimes of ancient Rome that I have not been able to copy them all down. But it is material that you should know something of Rome. Its civilisation lasted a thousand years, and there are writers—and speakers—who can gather together just the bits of black and crime taken from the life of a whole civilisation through a thousand years, and say: "That is Roman character—that is Roman life." I challenge every single word that Mr. Lee said in regard to ancient Rome. Ancient Rome, he said, was mastered by abominations; it was so corrupt that a pure religion, coming into Europe and pervading the Roman Empire, was a great advantage to humanity. When was this great corruption of the Roman Empire? I suppose there was a period of corruption; but remember there never was this period described by Mr. Lee—not in any single decade or century of the Roman world. How has he made up his picture? Noble women, he says, enrolled themselves on the lists of shame. I defy him to give more than a slight indication that more than a score of women in the whole thousand years of Roman civilisation did anything of the kind. Women, he says, were downtrodden in the Roman world, and Christianity came to uplift them. I say that women had a finer position, they had greater liberty and power, in the Roman world than ever they had in any other part of the world until the end of the nineteenth century—the age of Secularism. Women in Europe to-day are struggling for political recognition; yet I have wandered among the ruins of ancient Rome, and seen how, two thousand years ago, they signed election posters and used their influence in political work, right up to the last days of Roman civilisation. Mr. Lee says that chastity was unknown among the superior classes of Rome. Picture that world to yourself where chastity is unknown! Contrast it with the Christian world of your own times. I suppose you will be imagining some awful world, and imagining that Secularism will bring this state of things back upon the world. Does Mr. Lee know that, whereas there is no law in any Christian nation, and never has been, putting offenders to death for adultery, throughout the whole Roman Empire adultery was visited with capital punishment? Who was the first Emperor of Rome? Augustus. Does Mr. Lee know that Augustus condemned his own favourite daughter to banishment and imprisonment

for life for adultery, and that he condemned his own dearest grandchildren to death—to capital punishment—because of their adulteries and vices? Where in the whole range of Christian history will you find a king condemning his daughter to imprisonment and his dearest relatives to death for their adulteries and vices? Throughout the whole of the Roman Empire that law was never repealed; and you will find, if you read the records of Rome (and let me say that only lately I have had occasion, in writing a historical work, to read over every fragment of Roman literature for the first four centuries), that throughout the Roman Empire character was pretty much as it is to-day. There were just men and women and unjust men and women. But because in the calendars of the time some men and women figure as evil, they have been gathered up by Christian historians and represented to us as the character of Rome. Read the proper authorities on Rome; read Dr. Samuel Dill on Roman society, and you will find that he says that the Roman society of the time he is depicting was equal to the society of England in the nineteenth century. Let me read you one or two words from one or two of the real authorities on Roman life at the time. Dr. Dill says that before the end of the first century, “a period of almost unexampled peace and prosperity, a period of upright and benevolent administration and of high public virtue,” came into the Roman Empire. He says again: “The great Stoic doctrine of the equality and brotherhood of men as members of a world-wide commonwealth was openly preached in the reigns of Caligula and Nero. A softer tone—a modern note of pity for the miserable and succour for the helpless—makes itself heard in the literature of the first century.” Mr. Lecky says: “The Stoics taught in the most emphatic language the fraternity of all men, and the consequent duty of each man to consecrate his life to the welfare of others. They developed this general doctrine in a series of detailed precepts which, for the range, depth, and beauty of their characters, have never been surpassed.” That was this corrupt world pictured to you by Mr. Lee. Never until the nineteenth century, throughout the whole history of society, will you find any parallel to the character of the Romans. Never until modern times; and what in modern times has brought us back to the high pitch attained in Rome? The secular spirit. How did Christianity fare when it triumphed over the Roman world in the fourth century? Read an authoritative historian; read Dean Milman. I do not refer you to a Rationalist historian of Roman society. Read Milman, and you will find that, instead of this new religion uplifting the character of Europe, that character sank lower and lower every century, down to the tenth and eleventh century; until, as Dean Milman says, in a sentence which for irony approaches the most cutting sentences of Gibbon, “By the tenth century chastity was so rare at Rome as to be called an angelic virtue.”

I do not wish to dwell upon the horrors of the Middle Ages; but if you are asked to dwell upon the horrors of Rome—especially horrors that did not exist—I am bound to remind you of those mediæval times. The last generation of Pagans in Rome was comparable to the ladies and



gentlemen of modern times. In regard, therefore, to all these statements as to great vices, this appalling picture that Mr. Lee has given of Rome, I challenge every line of that picture, and I ask for competent historical authorities for those statements concerning Roman character. Mr. Lee said that marriage was a jest, or only an added zest to adultery, in the Roman world. There were hundreds and thousands of men and women put to death for adultery in the Roman world. You dare not say that this was done throughout the Middle Ages, when chastity was at a lower level than it ever reached in the Roman period.

Mr. Lee has spoken of how missionaries have gone to India, which assuredly had some vile and pernicious traditions from its old Hinduism. If all that Mr. Lee has said shows that Christianity is superior to Hinduism, I grant it; but I have not come here to discuss the superiority of Christianity over Hinduism. I ask, therefore, for proofs in regard to Roman society, and pass on to those four tests of Mr. Lee's in regard to missionary activity. Let me say incidentally that in missionary activity as such I have but little interest to-night. We Secularists have no funds, no organisations, for missionaries; but what we are urging upon the civilisation of Europe is this: Your missionaries have gone out over the world, and you pretend that they have borne everywhere the white man's burden—the labour of planting European civilisation on barbarous soil. We say that they have not borne that burden. Over vast areas of the world where they have gone there have been deterioration and death. This is especially true of the whole of the islands of the Pacific. I have seen evidence of it in Australia and New Zealand; and I know that out beyond, along that whole beautiful stretch of the earth, death is eating slowly and surely into some of the most promising races of the world. This was largely due to the injudicious interference of the missionaries in those countries. We Secularists say: You higher nations, who are beginning to speak of the brotherhood of men in modern Europe, ought to send missionaries and teachers, not to displace one superstition by another, but to take the culture of the modern world to uplift those childlike men and women. This great civilising work is the business of nations, not of individuals or irresponsible Church bodies.

Mr. Lee has claimed, I suppose, for Christianity that even in the field of intellect it is superior to Secularism. Well, Europe has had a very long innings of Christianity; Europe has been under its power for something like sixteen hundred years. What were the intelligence and intellect of Europe until modern times? What was England until modern times? In that appalling Roman Empire, by the third century, every single child except those of the slaves could read and write. Elementary schools were scattered from end to end of the Roman Empire. Secondary schools were provided, and in many instances universities, and youths were sent to them at the expense of the State. What became of those educational institutions when Christianity came into power? Why does that system vanish from the face of the earth? Why was it that only seventy or eighty years ago, eighty per cent. of the people of England were illiterate? If this is the superiority of Christianity over Secularism, do not tell me

that Christianity is superior in the realm of the intellect. What has brought about the greater intelligence of modern times? A hundred years ago, how many men in this city, do you suppose, could have come to a debate like this and followed it with intelligent interest? With eighty-five per cent. of the whole population illiterate, your audience would have been infinitesimal. Your working classes were shut out from culture, and correspondingly sunk in gross vices; and this after fifteen centuries of Christianity. What built the schools of England—those strings of elementary schools which, imperfect as they are, have at least opened the eyes of Englishmen to the great movements of the world? Was it Christianity? Was it not rather the new secular mood of the world, which said, "You priests have ruled the educational world long enough and badly enough. We citizens will now take the business into our hands"—and from the time they did it intelligence has spread over England as it never had done before. So it is in the whole domain of the secular spirit.

But I take a deeper subject. Mr. Lee will, with great confidence, claim that in the field of morals Christianity is superior. I wish Mr. Lee to realise that Secularists are not narrow-minded. If Christianity has invented anything of use to humanity, we cordially welcome it into the new humanitarian system of the future. It is nothing to us that it is of Christian origin, provided it be useful to humanity, and provided we can transfer it into the humanitarian system of the future. Mr. Lee's business was to show me that these best things in Christianity cannot be transferred from their Christian basis into the new life of the future. I have not heard one jot or tittle of proof that they cannot be. Somewhere in China, he says, some Christian scholar compiles a dictionary; somewhere in Japan some Christian scholar opens a university. Christianity might vanish to-morrow, and we could still write dictionaries and found universities; and we will found more of them than ever were established under Christianity, because we will make ladders of education, by which the poorest children shall rise to the universities. But at least in the field of morals it is felt that there is some anxiety, some concern. Mr. Lee says—and perfectly rightly says—that missionaries have gone to India and raised the moral tone of India. I agree; but the civil officials of England and of Europe would have raised the moral tone of India without them. It was not missionaries who destroyed the widow-burning of India; it was the lay officials. But let it pass. Who gave the missionaries those moral ideals that they have taken over the world? Mr. Lee reminds me of Japan. I know something of Japan. I know that it has its moral shadows. But when I am told that there are in Japan things which cannot be found otherwise outside of barbarism—when I am told that those things are the brothels—it seems to me that I have heard that there are such institutions even in London to-day. It seems to me, what is more important, that, whereas your police officials in London to-day will tell you there are some 20,000 or 30,000 unfortunate women in 6,000,000 people, a hundred years ago the head of the London police reported that there were 60,000 in a city of 1,000,000 people. Sixty thousand of those



women, after fifteen hundred years of Christianity, in London ! Mark you, there has been a vast and enormous moral improvement in England in the last hundred years. Class by class, every part of society has been raised morally—even on this one point, on which Mr. Lee dwells, of sexual morality. What is responsible for the improvement ? Go into those parts of the world where to-day there is no Secularism, where there is no humanitarian fervour brought to bear upon the Christian clergy. Go to the Portugal of yesterday, to the Spain of to-day, to the South of Italy of to-day ; and you will find how keen Christian clergymen are on sexual morality ! And a hundred years ago the clergy of this land were slumbering as regards the morality of the country. Read your earlier nineteenth-century writers ; read Traill's *History of Social England* ; read Leslie Stephen's account of the eighteenth century. You will learn how they enjoyed their fat endowments, while morality was at the lowest ebb. What has given those finer ideals which distinguish the England of to-day from the England of a hundred years ago ? What happened during the last one hundred years that did not happen during the previous fifteen hundred, to reawaken the national conscience ? Everybody knows what is the one new thing that has come into English life—Secularism, scepticism, criticism. Your clergy might have lived until to-day in the same supine indifference to their own duties and theories ; but there arose in England a body of critics who stood outside the Churches, and brought their shafts to bear upon the Churches ; and your missionaries to-day are carrying out to India, to China, and to Japan those more perfect moral ideas in which the humanitarian moral idealists of England—the Leslie Stephens and Herbert Spencers—have had as great a share as any clergyman or Christian teacher in the land.

Mr. Lee then said that Christianity is superior in the political world ; and here indeed I confess that I was surprised—when the announcement was first made that Christianity was politically superior to Secularism. What was the political aspect of Europe during those fifteen hundred years of Christian domination ? What is the difference—what has made life so different for the vast mass of the working people in our own time from the Middle Ages ? They have now entered into the political life of the world. They have had new and wider horizons opened out to them. Their eyes are opened. They have all that science has brought in the comfort of modern life. But I think the dearest thing to every thoughtful working man is the fact that at last he is recognised as a citizen—as one who contributes to the life of the Empire, and can have his share in controlling the fortunes of the Empire. Did Christianity give him that right ? Had it the slightest word in the movement to demand the political rights of the masses before 1840 ? I should like to hear what Christian body, and how many Christian individuals, out of the whole mass of the Christians of England, the clergy of England, fought beside the masses at that time. Even the French religious historian, Guizot, who says all that can be said for the Churches, says at last : “ Whenever it came to a struggle of the masses of the people against the clergy, whenever it came to a menace of that authority in favour of the rights of the people, never

will you find the Church on the side of the people." In other words, he says just what Gibbon, the "infidel" historian, had said. Gibbon, looking over the whole history of the world, said: "The banners of the Church were never seen on the side of the people." Let us come back from New Guinea and Tierra del Fuego. Let us ask, as a question more material for us, What has Christianity done politically in this country? What have the bench of bishops in the House of Lords done as regards popular education and emancipation? Two clergymen took part in this great movement for uplifting the mass of the people in England in the first half of the nineteenth century. I do not care how many there were in the second half—how many came in once the movement was great enough to terrify them with the prospect of empty churches. There were two, and two only, in the first half. Of these, one was Kingsley—one was the man who began in the 'forties, after the working men had been working for twenty years—who said in effect, "Here is a menace to our Churches. Let us form a Christian Socialism, or Socialism will become atheistic." The other, Joseph Rayner Stephens, was cast out with ignominy and degradation from his church in the North because of his sympathy with the masses.

My time is closing. I prefer to come back to Europe. I prefer to ask what Christianity has done there. And I think a proper answer to this debate is: Here are two systems before you to-day. Here is a creed that says, Every human interest can be cultivated on a human basis. Here is another creed that says, You cannot cultivate so well your human interests without our Christian dogmas. I submit that Mr. Lee has not shown one single reason why everything good in Christianity cannot be carried on after the distinctive Christian dogmas have gone. And once you have lifted those dogmas from the human mind, once you have shifted the mirage of another world, once you have fixed the whole attention and devotion of men and women upon man himself and upon the possibilities of this life, you will find humanity marching forward to its golden age far more rapidly than it ever marched in the whole of the past. (Great applause.)

The CHAIRMAN: Mr. Lee will now speak for fifteen minutes.

Mr. LEE: Mr. McCabe, in the opening portion of his speech, was good enough to give us a very interesting examination of some ancient civilisations long before the birth of Jesus Christ. I do not propose to follow him in that examination, but to come at once to grips with him on points which can be tested, and especially to the conflict between the two systems we are here to discuss. Suppose that Christianity were to go, what would man lose? That is the question Mr. McCabe gave to us. He proceeded immediately to take exception to my definition of Secularism, and tried to amend my view of Secularism by saying that Secularism really is a system which is going to run the affairs of men by purely human means. (Hear, hear.) Well, if you hear you will learn. Mr. McCabe immediately proceeded to say that he took exception to my

statement that Secularists had taught that man was hopelessly corrupt. I have in my hand one of the publications of the Rationalist Press Association, entitled *The Service of Man*, and on p. 112 I find : "Nothing is gained by disguising the fact that *there is no remedy for a bad heart*, and no substitute for a good one." On the page immediately preceding I find these words : "The sooner it is perceived that bad men will be bad, do what we will—though, of course, they may be made less bad—the sooner shall we come to the conclusion that *the welfare of society demands the suppression or elimination of bad men*, and the careful cultivation of the good only. This is what we do in every other department. We do not cultivate curs and screws and low breeds of cattle." A little lower down he says : "His mind is made up to choose the bad. But society, knowing its own interests, has a right to exclude him from its fellowship ; not only to prevent and punish his evil actions, but to *suppress him in some effectual way* ; and, above all, prevent his leaving a posterity as wicked as himself." I am afraid Mr. McCabe is sadly deficient in a complete knowledge of secular literature. On p. 53 of the Foote and McCann debate on "Christianity or Secularism" I find these words : "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 it not turn its attention to the best material ?" Because the worst material needs it most ! That is why.

Mr. McCabe denies that the secular view of man is a pessimistic one. Why, in his *Riddle of the Universe*, which he translated, on p. 87, I get this lively specimen of a view of man : "Our own 'human nature,' which exalted itself into an image of God in its anthropistic illusion, sinks to the level of a placental mammal, which has *no more value for the universe at large than the ant, the fly of a summer's day, the microscopic infusorium, or the smallest bacillus*. Humanity is but a transitory phase of the evolution of an eternal substance, a particular phenomenal form of matter and energy, the true proportions of which we soon perceive when we set it on the background of infinite space and eternal time." Man no more than an "*ant*" !

Our friend went on to say that whatever serves men Secularism can take over from any other system to help in its work. But the question is not what it can take over, but what has it taken over ? What has it done ? Our friend says : "To compare what Secularism has done with Christianity, with its 500,000,000 of professed followers !" Ah, but, Sir, there was a day when Christianity had not five followers, when it had a whole world against it ; and it faced that world and battered it down in a way that Secularism is not likely to do with the Christian world to-day !

Then our friend went on to say that, as to my representation of Roman society, he would challenge every word of it. Does our friend know anything of Mommsen ? Does not Mommsen say distinctly that there never was a period in which society had fallen to such a low and corrupt level as it was in that day ? And Mommsen, I presume Mr. McCabe will allow me to say, is a man of at least equal ability to himself.



But Mr. McCabe went on to speak of the question of women, which is a very interesting question, especially the position of women under Paganism. He quoted me as saying that chastity was unknown. I said nothing of the sort; I said it was practically unknown, which is a very important difference. (Laughter.) I suppose you are able to distinguish the difference between two phrases. If you can't, I am afraid your secular education is not complete. But our friend went on to challenge my statement about society and the depravity of women, and he referred to Augustus and to the putting to death of his daughters—for what? For “*adulteries and vices.*” Now then, Sir, if the Emperor on his throne had to put his own daughters to death for their “*adulteries*” and their “*vices,*” what must have been the condition of the lower classes? Perhaps Mr. McCabe will give his attention to that. Our friend will refer to Dill. I do not know what the Secularists to-day would do about Rome if it were not for Dill. Dill has managed to read Christian ideas and sentiments into his interpretations of Rome, and so he is regarded as a treasure by most Secularists when dealing with this subject. Mr. McCabe went on to say: “I have not come to discuss the superiority of Christianity to Hinduism.” No, I know you have not; but what you have come to discuss is whether Secularism is superior to Christianity. And if Christianity has proven itself, as Mr. McCabe seems to admit, superior to Hinduism, what has Secularism done to prove its superiority to Hinduism? Our friend says: “Talk of your missionary work! Over vast areas of the world, even where missionaries have gone, desolation and death reign.” He referred to New Zealand and to Australia. I know something of those countries, too; but I have to say—and I challenge him now to dispute this matter: it is a point of great importance—that in New Zealand there is a race known as the Maories. That race, as well as the Australian Bushmen, were among the lowest. Why? Because the trader had gone there with his gin and his other degrading commodities. But the Christian missionary comes, and the Maories are saved. (A Voice: “Are they not dying?”) The Christian Maories are as healthy as any man in this room to-night. Not only has the religion changed the Maori's thought, it has purified his life, and there is nothing in life that he cares for more than purity. But Mr. McCabe says: What about Europe, after sixteen centuries of Christianity? What had Christianity done in the Middle Ages? He was depicting the horrors, the iniquities, the vices, the immoralities of that time. But does he not know that in his own translation of Haeckel's book, Haeckel, speaking of that very period, says that the *people in places of power* were “*atheists*”—that these abominations were not the outcome of the pure teaching of New Testament religion? They were the outcome of those secular forces which allow a man to use his money or a woman her life as they please, instead of looking to a great moral ideal which tells you that the body is the temple of the Holy Ghost. Then our friend went on to say: “We won't talk about India and China and Japan, as to what Christianity has done in those countries by way of education. We will come to our own country, and will ask what it has done for education

there." Does not our friend know that for generations and generations there did not exist in this country a single parish church without its school? Does he not know (if not he could easily learn) that the Christian universities of this country were founded by men who believed in more than secular teaching? Does he not know that, when Secularists were allowing the people to drift in ignorance, these schools and colleges were working might and main, that all over the land the clergyman was doing his little best trying to open the minds of the people to a higher sphere of thought, while the Secularist was allowing them to go on in their own ignorant way? Mr. McCabe said that in the field of morals Christianity might vanish to-morrow, and what will you lose by it? (A Voice: "Nothing.") "Nothing?" Would you not? You would lose the great norms of purity, you would lose the great norms of self-sacrifice, you would lose all those impelling motives which have made Europe what it is to-day. But Mr. McCabe came down in his last few moments to the question of politics, and referred to two men in the past century who had done something for the uplifting of the people. He never referred to John Bright or to Mr. Gladstone. He might have come down to this day and to Lloyd George, who is doing more for the uplifting of the people than all the Secularists in England. Our friend spoke of the eighteenth century. He forgot to tell you that in the closing years of that century two great men arose, Wesley and Whitefield, to call people back to ideals of righteousness and Christian living, and that with them came a quickening of social, intellectual, and moral life in the community. And wherever the Christian Church has gone in its workings, or Christian people have gone, the same uplifting has taken place; and it is simply folly and prejudice to try and be blind to these things. Our friend, in his closing moments—(great laughter)—in his closing words, thought that he would be able to leave upon your minds some things that would break the force of my opening speech; but that speech remains, and its arguments remain, absolutely untouched; and as we go along in this debate we shall be able to judge this more effectively for ourselves. (Applause.)

The CHAIRMAN: We are now to hear Mr. McCabe for fifteen minutes.

Mr. McCABE: Madame Chairman,—The substance of my objection to Mr. Lee's speech was that the question we are seriously fighting out to-day is: If we have to part with Christianity, how shall we suffer—or shall we suffer at all? We Secularists say that we shall not only not suffer, but we shall gain; there will be a human advance. That it is my task to prove to-morrow night. To-night the task is for me to rebut Mr. Lee's assertion that we shall lose—that Christianity is doing so much that we shall lose; that it is a dangerous thing to part with Christianity. I have said that I did not see one single argument in his speech showing that we shall lose if Christianity passes away. He says it has done certain things in this and that country; and I say there is not a single one of those things that cannot be done by the lay civilisation of Europe. Has he proved the contrary?—or shown any reason why we could not educate India



intellectually and morally, why we could not make dictionaries in China and open universities in Japan, if we thought it necessary? Has he shown any reason why we could not teach good habits to the Maories, where they need good habits? We shall go on with the civilising work of the world when every single dogma of the Christian creed has been buried in oblivion. I want reasons why we cannot hope to continue that civilising work if we are compelled to part with Christian dogmas. Let me, then, take the points as they arose. A large part of Mr. Lee's time was taken up with proving something of not the slightest consequence—whether any Secularist ever said that some men are hopelessly corrupt and given over to destruction. He quotes Cotter Morison. I never heard that Cotter Morison was a Secularist. If I had mentioned Morison in this connection, Mr. Lee would have strongly and violently repudiated it. He brings in my—*my*—*Riddle of the Universe*. Because, out of some thirty or forty books that I have published, this translation happens to be one, I am told that it is “my” *Riddle of the Universe*. Am I bound by everything in that book? Not for a moment. But Haeckel never said—and it was not in the passage read to you—that any men were incurably corrupt. Mr. Foote was then quoted as saying how Christians have devoted too much time to the irredeemable ones, and that they ought to have devoted more to the redeemable ones. But Mr. Foote has nowhere said that you should take certain people in the existing social order and *devote them to destruction*; that was the phrase to which I took objection. Let us pass on, to see if we can find something more important. I asked—because serious charges have been put before you, and I may assume that the majority of you have not leisure to learn for yourselves the character of Roman society—I asked for the authorities for that indictment that was put before you. What have I received? I am told that Mommsen says (and his words were not given; I should like to hear his words) that no society was ever so corrupt as Roman society. I should like to hear those words of Mommsen, because he is one of the very men who have pointed out that, whereas the man in Rome had a terrible power of life and death over his wife and children, yet during four centuries that power was never used, so strong and elevated was the common-sense and good feeling of the Roman Republic. But I may go further. Mommsen has written on the Roman Republic, and that was not the world into which Christianity came. Christianity came into the Roman Empire; and most of the Empire's vices had been corrected by the Stoic lawyers and emperors long before it came. Mr. Lee spoke of Augustus having put his daughters to death for adultery. Augustus had only one daughter, and he did not put her to death for adultery; he put her into prison. Then Mr. Lee asks us: “If such was the morality of the Emperor's family, what of the working classes?” Sir, we can say a great deal about certain monarchs in Europe; but you can go down, and you will find that the working men and women would set those monarchs a lesson in chastity and sobriety. If Mr. Lee is going to judge the Roman Empire by the Roman emperors, I should like to ask him whether he prefers the Christian emperors of Rome. Does he prefer the first emperor of Rome who came under the influence of Christianity,



who brutally murdered his wife, his son, and his young, innocent nephew? Does he prefer the second Christian emperor of Rome, Constantius, who in one day murdered his two uncles and seven cousins? Does he prefer the third, Valentinian I., who had two great bears near his chamber, and fed them on human beings time after time; who divorced his wife, that he might marry a beautiful woman, in defiance of his Church? Does he prefer Valentinian III.? I would ask him to glance over that string of Christian emperors who came before Rome fell; and I say that he will find that, whereas one-third of the Pagan emperors of Rome were bad, five out of six of the Christian emperors were worse. With regard to woman under the Roman Empire, no authority has been given us, and we have heard no new facts whatever. The Stoics raised woman to a magnificent height in the Roman world, and woman fell from that height to the position she was in in the Middle Ages. I should not have expected any claim for Christianity to be based on what it did for woman. Mr. Lee says I admit that Christianity proved itself superior to Hinduism, but that I did not prove that Secularism was superior to Hinduism. Why should we trouble to prove it? What call is there in the whole civilised world for us to compare ourselves with this old religion? Where in the whole civilised world is there anybody who doubts the superiority of the moral and humanitarian culture of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries to the old practices and traditions of India? There is no need for us to copy India, or match ourselves against its civilisation. Mr. Lee then turns to New Zealand, which he says he knows. "There," he tells us, "you have the Maories, who were at the lowest level, like the Australian Bushmen." There is a whole scientific world between the Maories and the Australian aborigines. I confess I felt glad there was not a Maori in this room when Mr. Lee put together the Maories and the Bushmen! The Maories belong to the same stock as ourselves, as most of the Pacific Islanders do, and they are capable of the civilisation we have in England to-day; but we have thrown them on one side, and they are only now individually fighting their way back to civilisation. Mr. Lee says we have taught them purity and chastity. Only some six months ago, talking in New Zealand to the greatest living authority on the Maories, I spoke to him on this question, and he said: "Any Maori in New Zealand will tell you that they never knew what immodesty was until Christian missionaries came into the country." Then we come to the last and, I think, one of the most important points; that is to say, I asked how in this country, or in Europe, Christianity has proved so powerful and so serviceable that we dare not displace it. I have taken Mr. Lee's tests in education, in morals, in politics; and he turns on my tracks in regard to education, and says that "for centuries every parish had its little school, and the clergy have been working as hard as they could for the education of the people. Our universities were founded by men who were not Secularists; and during all that time, while your Secularists were doing nothing, the clergy and these Christians were trying to educate the people." Surely Mr. Lee will admit that if any Secularist had been in England when Oxford and Cambridge were founded, he would have been burnt at the stake. Who

are these Secularists who were doing nothing during these centuries? There was no body of Secularists. I should say that almost the first Secularist in this country was Robert Owen. The moment one man came with some ability and with the ideas that I hold to-day, he set England aflame with a zeal for educating the children of the working classes. He started nearly every social reform in this country. It was only because he and Lancaster started a movement for secular education that the clergy were scared into starting education on religious lines. And after all these centuries in which the clergy had been educating the children, after all these centuries, so late as the 'fifties of the nineteenth century, from eighty to eighty-five per cent. of the men and women of England were totally illiterate! From that time, during half a century, we have reduced it, until we have one of the finest averages in the whole civilised world. I put it before you, who have come to-night to hear debated the relative merits of Secularism and Christianity; weigh those 1,500 years of Christian education in the scale against the last fifty years of secular education, and then cast your verdict as to which is better for the human intelligence. Morally, Mr. Lee has said, we shall lose a great deal if we lose Christianity. We shall lose all the norms of self-sacrifice, all the norms of purity. Why, Stoics and Neo-Platonists taught even the finest norms of purity that are in the finest forms of Christianity, long before Christianity came into Europe. Mr. Lee says we shall lose the norms of self-sacrifice. Go out among the reform movements of to-day, go to any one of those great humanitarian movements that are trying to uplift mankind, to remove the evils from our civilisation, and ask the leaders in those movements: "Are you working for mankind because they are mankind, your brothers, or because you believe in God and are going to be rewarded in another life?" They will cast back your question with disdain, and they will say: "We love mankind, and are working for mankind on purely human grounds." There never was, except in the old Roman society under the Stoics, so much idealism and philanthropy and love of men in the whole world as to-day; and it is the manifestation of a secular spirit. Why was it absent during all the intervening centuries? Mr. Lee complains that I take my ideas of the Roman world from Dill. I do not; I know its literature from one end to the other, and I take my information from the Roman writers themselves. But if you reject Dill, what authority will you introduce instead? Who is the greatest living authority on Roman life? Will you take Boissier, the greatest French authority? Line for line he says what Dill says. Take Lecky, Gibbon, Professor Bury, of Oxford—any authority you like—and I challenge you to prove, not under the Roman Republic, but under the Empire, that the social order was any worse than the order anywhere in Europe in the nineteenth century; and I say it was infinitely better than that social and moral order which was contemporaneous with the domination of Christianity in Rome. Mr. Lee turns again to the political world, and quarrels with me for not mentioning John Bright and Mr. Gladstone. But what I asked was: During the first and most arduous half of the nineteenth century, in the time when you took your life in your hands if



you went to work for the working men—when Cobbett was hounded through England—when you were an outcast from society if you ventured to say one word on behalf of the Unionists and Chartists—where then were your clergymen and your Christian leaders? I have mentioned the only two who can be mentioned—one who goes to save the masses for Christianity, and one who goes because he loves the masses; and he was immediately an outcast—the one Christian clergyman in England during the most difficult time who dared carry into practice the doctrine of the brotherhood of man. I say, therefore, that where in recent years you have had some real progress, whether it be in intelligence or enlightenment, moral or philanthropic, these improvements have had to wait for the humanitarian spirit of modern times. And as those reforms have been growing as the humanitarian spirit grew, I can regard with the utmost complacency the passing of those old dogmas and institutions; because I see that the progress which has made modern idealism will go on making it, until the world realises the greatest dreams that break upon the human imagination. (Loud applause.)

The CHAIRMAN : Mr. Lee will now address us for fifteen minutes.

Mr. LEE : Mr. Chairman, Mr. McCabe, Ladies and Gentlemen,—*First* will you allow me to make a quotation from a chapter in Mr. Charles Watts's pamphlet on *Secularism in its Various Relations*, entitled "Secularism in the Past": "Although the name Secularism is comparatively new, the principles it embodies were recognised and influential long before the birth of Christianity." Therefore Secularism as a body of principles was in the world long before Christianity appeared. *Next* I want you to allow me to refer to what I have here by my side, Mr. McCabe's *Life of Holyoake*, in which it is carefully pointed out that you must distinguish between *secular* and *Secularism*. Now, the whole of the appeals to which Mr. McCabe has been directing your attention have been appeals to secular work, and not to the work of Secularists. Therefore, according to the teaching of his own book, they are not the outcome of Secularism. They are the outcome of secular agencies; but the meaning of "secular" is not the same as "Secularism." This word originated in connection with the clergy—certain clergy having the right to minister within the churches, and those that were sent to minister outside the churches. Our friend points that out in his book, and I repeat that every one of the alleged benefits which he has been lauding so much are the outcome of *secular* agencies and not of *Secularism*. Therefore, as Mr. Holyoake knew, and Mr. McCabe points out in his book, Christians and others may take up this secular work and do it well. And, of course, being Christians, they are not Secularists; they are doing it as Christians—secular work for the benefit of men. I want that carefully taken note of. *Thirdly*, I want to direct attention to Mr. McCabe's question: "If we have to part with Christianity, shall we suffer any loss?" Now, I want you to ponder this question. Mr. McCabe asks us to consider what would be the

likely effects of the disappearance of Christianity from our life and our action. But, Sir, *the only way in which we can test the likely action of any system in the future is by testing its actual action in the past*; and when we apply the test of action in the past to Secularism, which was in the world before Christianity, we find it has been a system which has not done any real good for man. Mr. McCabe up till now has not given me one single illustration of any number of Secularists being sent forth to any body of degraded people to try and lift them into higher and holier habits.

Our friend said that my quotation from Mr. Cotter Morison was not a quotation from a Secularist. I do not know whether Mr. Cotter Morison was a member of any Secular organisation; but I do know this—that his book is anti-Christian; it is an attack upon Christianity. I turn to Mr. McCabe's book, the *Life of Holyoake*, and what do I find? That Mr. Holyoake ultimately came to see what Mr. McCabe believes—that *the work of Secularism consists in antagonism to Christianity*. That is my argument; that is my point. Now, Mr. McCabe, if Secularism consists essentially in being an attack upon Christianity, Mr. Cotter Morison, writing this book—this attack on Christianity—is undoubtedly, by that test, a Secularist. Therefore he as a Secularist teaches that there is no hope for certain men with bad hearts; that, just as you would not think of cultivating a "screw" in the animal world, so you must not attempt to allow these men to go on in their way, but you must exterminate them somehow, arrest their action and their progeny. I want you to consider another thing. Our friend says that Mr. Foote was not correctly represented by me; but Mr. Foote tells me, on page 111 of this very debate—and, mind you, Mr. Foote is the ablest man in the Secular ranks to-day—" '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." That means that a man who betrays another deliberately is done with, for that other, for all time. *That is hopelessness*. Christianity says that that man who deliberately injures you may be taken hold of, made to repent, and caused to amend his ways; it lifts and regenerates that man, makes him a new man—a good, honest member of society. Mr. McCabe challenged the statement about the inability of certain forces obtaining in the heathen world—the Roman world—to do what Christianity was alleged by me to have done. On page 387, Vol. I., of his *History of European Morals* Lecky says: "In the midst of this movement Christianity gained its ascendancy, and we can be at no loss to discover the cause of its triumph. No other religion, under such circumstances, had ever combined so many distinct elements of power and attraction. Unlike the Jewish religion, it was bound by no local ties, and was equally adapted for every nation and for every class. Unlike Stoicism, it appealed in the strongest manner to the affections, and offered all the charm of a sympathetic worship." In the same volume, page 389, he says: "Christianity was not merely a moral influence, or a system of opinions, or an historical record, or a collection of wonder-

working men ; it was also an institution, definitely, elaborately, and skilfully organised, possessing a weight and a stability which isolated or undisciplined teachers could never rival, and evoking, to a degree before unexampled in the world, an enthusiastic devotion to its corporate welfare, analogous to that of the patriot to his country." And in Vol. II., page 4, Lecky goes on to say : "*Philosophy was admirably fitted to dignify and ennoble, but altogether impotent to regenerate, mankind.*" That is an absolute contradiction to Mr. McCabe's allegations this evening. But we will proceed to one or two other considerations. Mr. McCabe pleasantly referred to my suggestion that the *Riddle of the Universe* was his, and he said that, though he has translated that and a great number of other books, he does not bind himself to everything which the book contains. That is not the point. (A Voice : "What is?") The point is not whether Mr. McCabe is the sum and substance of Secularism, outside whose ideas there is no Secularism ; but the point is, Does Haeckel make that statement? Does he make it as one who is attacking Christianity, in a book issued by the Rationalist Press Association, which exists to get rid of Christianity? If so, then by the laws of reasoning in Mr. McCabe's own writings, he is a Secularist. Now Haeckel compares man to an "ant"; and if that is not pessimistic, and a degradation of man's being, I do not know what is. My friend asked me to give him Mommsen's words. I give you Mommsen's words, as I have them in my friend Rev. A. J. Gun's little book on *The Religion of Women*. ("Oh, oh!") You need not be afraid to accept it—I have tested the reference. I cannot bring every book I want here. "The criminal statistics of all times and countries will hardly furnish a parallel to the dreadful picture of crimes, so varied and so horrible and so unnatural, which reposed in the bosom of one of the most respected families of an Italian country town." He is referring to a time, I know, preceding the Roman Empire ; but all those things to which he is referring continued to be, and indeed grew in their terror and their oppression. Having now shown Mr. McCabe what Mommsen says, though my opponent may not be satisfied with the words, I will ask you to notice that Mr. McCabe actually reflected upon the truth of my statement (in his opening speech) that women, at the time of the Roman Empire, married in order to give a greater zest to adultery. He questioned that ; but that was practically almost a verbatim quotation from Seneca—his own authority, a Stoic, a man who would, I presume, have large humanitarian ideas. When speaking of woman at that time, he said that a great number of these marriages were entered into in order to add a sort of zest to adultery.

Mr. McCabe says that we are not here to discuss the relative merits of Secularism and Hinduism ; and proceeding from that he went on to challenge some statements which I had made about the Maories, and said that while he was on the other side—down below—(laughter)—he was talking to the greatest authority (I think those were his words) on this subject, and this authority said that the Maories are fighting their way back to purity. How? Because the missionaries are there ; that is how. (Laughter.) You may laugh at it ;



but you have not got a single Secularist working among them, and there are Christian missionaries working among them. But our friend has been good enough several times to say that I have given you statements without names. Who, then, is this great authority? (Hear, hear.)

Our friend challenged my statement as to what we are likely to lose of the great norms of purity, self-sacrifice, and such-like, if we get rid of Christianity. Well, one would have thought that that would have been pretty well seen and recognised by the fact that wherever Christianity has not been, wherever its work is unknown, there these ideals, these norms, are practically non-existent. Purity, in its large, high meaning, does not exist. To-morrow night, perhaps—perhaps even to-night—Mr. McCabe may challenge that statement. Our friend went on to say that “We do not ask whether God wants us to do this or that, but we do these good things” (Secularists do these good things) “because we love mankind.” Yes; but, curiously, these good things, these wonderful redemptive works, are not to be found outside Christendom. You have no orphanages in heathen and unchristian lands; you have no Barnardo’s homes for the boys and girls of our streets in non-Christian lands; you have got no Mrs. Booth trying to save her fallen sisters in Japan, no Mrs. Booth trying to do that in China and India—only Christians do *that*. And therefore these things have to be counted with; they are forces at work for redemption here and now; we do not want high and wonderful expressions of ideals in words—we want to see some concrete examples. When we get those, then we shall be satisfied. Just one word, and I have done. In this half-minute which still remains to me I want to remind you that so far we have been dealing with Christianity. *We have had no word as yet to show that Secularism, as Secularism, has done, is doing, or is likely to do, any good.* We have had numerous references to secular works which have been done and can still be done by Christian people. But we have not had one single, solitary example of any work done by any organisation of Secularists or by any single Secularist. (“Oh !”) I know what I am talking about; I want not “secular,” but *Secularism*, debated—which is a totally different thing. And I hope that Mr. McCabe will see to this in his speech when he rises. (Applause.)

The CHAIRMAN : Mr. McCabe will now deliver the closing speech for this evening.

Mr. McCABE : In the course of any debate which lasts an hour or two, many trivialities are apt to be introduced. Permit me to sweep aside three or four trivialities before I come to a specific message. How much it matters in your minds what Mr. Foote said, or Mr. Cotter Morison said, or Professor Haeckel said, on bad characters I don’t know. But remember that what I said from the start was this : Mr. Lee declared that Secularism taught—Secularism, not some Secularists—that a certain section of men and women were hopelessly corrupt, and must be given over to destruction. He quotes Mr. Foote, who says something apparently approaching the earlier part of that statement; but not one word

from any of them to justify the second part, which is what I particularly attacked. Morison does not say that these people are to be given over to destruction; but he says—and it will be recognised by everybody in touch with modern thought—that they are to be prevented from bringing another generation of the same kind into being. That is one of the most respectable reforms of the twentieth century, the Eugenics movement. Let us put that on one side. Further, Mr. Lee begs it to be understood quite clearly by me that there is a difference between “secular” and “Secularist.” Most assuredly there is; but it does not apply in the slightest degree to the present question. Your Christian and your Secularist may deal with the things of this world; they are dealing with secular things. But what I had in mind, and said clearly, from the start was: When someone did something in this world, was it for men’s sake or on Christian grounds? If he did it for the sake of men, it was on a Secularist, a humanitarian, impulse. Because the question we are so apt to forget in the wandering of debate is always: If you have to set aside your Christian dogmas, have you sufficient inspiration left in human life to carry on the work of humanity? That is the serious question, and on that account I have spoken of a number of things that have been done under a Secularist impulse. I have spoken of the work of education, of the work of humanitarian moralists of the nineteenth century; but I have said from the start—I do not lead the debate to-night; I lead it to-morrow night, and to-morrow night I will, I think, avoid trivialities; I will go to the kernel of the question, with this difference, that I will bring an indictment against Christianity such as, I trust, will reconcile any person to parting with its dogmas; and I will show what Secularism has done—that is, the secular impulse; for, while Mr. Lee sometimes talks of Secularism as humanitarian feeling, he sometimes identifies it with atheism or scepticism. I don’t know whether he expects me to pledge myself that the National Secular Society is better than Christianity. Every organised body of Secularists has been puny and small, and they are altogether out of the question. Mr. Lee has not realised what we claim. We claim that it is not the work of private organised bodies of individuals to do these works of philanthropy and reform; it is the work of all of us as a body of citizens. If there are to be missionaries, they must be national missionaries. We want our children uplifted, and we want other nations brought into the sphere of civilisation. But we will do this through the State; we will never attempt it as little tiny bodies organised for a particular purpose. Mr. Lee asserts that I have said in the *Life of Holyoake* that Holyoake came to recognise that Secularism was an attack on Christianity. Never have I said anything of the kind about Holyoake; never have I said anything of the kind. I knew Mr. Holyoake well in his later years. From the beginning of his life to the last he said that Secularism is the running of the affairs of this planet on purely human grounds, apart from theological opinions. That is the opinion I have followed to-night. Therefore on those points of definition I hope we have come to something like an agreement. Let me pass on to one or two other small points. A picture

of the Roman Empire was put before us : I challenge its veracity in every line. It is a caricature and a gross misrepresentation of the character of the Roman Empire. Mommsen was mentioned as an authority for it. You heard his words, and you found that Mommsen mentioned one single family in the Roman Republic ! During five or six hundred years one family is singled out, out of millions upon millions, and held up as having no parallel in the civilised world ! Mommsen never denounced Roman society as a whole, or said it had no parallel for corruption. You will find no scholar in all civilisation prepared to use the language used by Mr. Lee, to-night, or to endorse that language. He read from Lecky some statements in regard to what Christianity had done when it came into the world. Now, just keep some sense of proportion in your minds, and remember that during an enormous number of centuries "Christianity" meant the whole of Europe. Should I venture to come here to-night and represent that Christianity had never done any good in Europe when it represented, not only the millions, but all the finest minds and hearts in Christendom ?—because, remember, they would have been done to death if they had not subscribed to the creed of Christianity. I gladly admit—and surely I have never said any otherwise—that you will find an immense amount of good done by Christianity. But the question before us now is not whether here and there some good has been done, but whether men and women as a body worked for their fellows. Here is a body that for fifteen centuries ruled the world. What did it do with its power ? How did it purify men ? I will answer that question to-morrow, and we shall come to the conclusion that the advance belongs to the later, or humanistic, period. In regard to woman, no authority has been given to me. Mr. Lee says his assertion is *almost* a verbatim quotation—I don't know why, but he did not give the literal words—from Seneca. But all it came to was a general assertion that Seneca had accused some women of marrying to add a zest to adultery. Now, over the heads of those women of Rome was the law—a law that might be put into force at any time by some embittered rival—saying : "You will lose your head, or you will be tortured or poisoned, if you commit adultery." It was a law that has no parallel in Christian legislation. The Roman women were as noble a body of women as the women of England ; certainly nobler than the body of women in England in the eighteenth century ; and all that these writers have to proceed upon is the fact—which anyone will recognise and understand to be perfectly natural—that there was in Rome a smart set, just as there is in London to-day. There were in Rome women so rich and idle that they fell into corrupt ways. Don't you know women of that type to-day in New York and London ? Was there ever a civilisation in the world in which some wealthy women did not commit adultery ? That is no distinction of Rome. If you want scientifically to indict the character of a civilisation, you must not only give a few examples, but you must give some authority for the statement that the nation was lower as a body than the civilisation with which you are comparing it. No authority has been given you to-night for the grave and formidable statements made in regard to Roman society. Let me



say this before I come to the last point : Mr. Lee asked : " Where are the redemptive works that are being done by Secularists—by any organised body of Secularists, or by any single Secularist ? " I have spoken only twenty minutes ago about the time when redemptive work meant in England that you carried your life in your hand. Who did the redemptive work in those days ? Robert Owen, George Jacob Holyoake, John Stuart Mill. There is a work written by a clergyman—the Rev. Ramsden Balmforth—on *Social Pioneers in the Nineteenth Century*. In that list of a dozen typical reformers, selected by a clergyman, only two are orthodox Christians ; only one is a Christian minister. There are the Secularists—there they are on the roll of honour, in every great humanitarian movement in England in the nineteenth century. Whereas, remember, there were at that time twenty million Christians in England, those Secularists could be numbered only by their hundreds or thousands. For in the England of that day, if you were a Secularist, you were socially ostracised ; you might expect no justice in a court of law ; you might be insulted or reviled—and you could expect no legal redress—right down to the middle of the nineteenth century, as Secularists constantly found. You might be hounded out of society. Under those circumstances, a few thousand men were bold enough to say, " I do not believe these things," and they became Secularists and humanitarians. If you will study the proportion of those men and women on the roll of honour, and then study the proportion of the few clergymen that you will find in the list, compared to the vast thousands and tens of thousands of clergymen throughout the world, you will find that Secularism shows magnificently in comparison with the Christians of the early part of the nineteenth century. In conclusion : Mr. Lee has made a great point of asking me, since Mr. Charles Watts says that Secularism existed before Christianity, surely I have some ground for saying what it has done or failed to do. Yes, precisely ; that is what I am going to do to-morrow night. I am going to put in the scale the Secularism of the world—not the National Secular Society, but the work done on humanitarian grounds at any period of history—and I am going to put beside it the work done in Europe since Christianity came to full power. I shall study how we came to the position of comparative enlightenment and civilisation that we have reached to-day. And when we have studied how much has been done by Christians on Christian grounds, and how much has been done by humanitarians on humanitarian grounds, I trust you will see that we may part cheerfully with every vestige of that outworn creed, confident that humanity will then go on with its great work of redemption, as it is doing to-day, far more effectively than it did during those fifteen hundred years of Christian domination. (Loud applause.)

Mr. LEE : Ladies and Gentlemen,—Just one moment, please. You will not desire to leave this meeting without expressing your thanks to Mrs. Bradlaugh Bonner for so ably and fairly presiding over our proceedings.

Mr. McCABE : I have much pleasure in seconding that vote of thanks, and I am sure you will be quite satisfied if I merely assent to Mr. Lee's

statement. The conduct of the meeting to-night is a sufficient compliment to our Chairman.

The vote having been carried by acclamation,

Mrs. BRADLAUGH BONNER said: Ladies and Gentlemen,—I have to thank you very much for the way in which you have made my task to-night so easy. In concluding the meeting, I will ask you to listen to an announcement which I have been asked to make. It will interest those of you who are not already surfeited with the idea of a debate to know that another debate will take place on March 30 and 31 at the Caxton Hall, Victoria Street, between the Rev. Dr. Warschauer and Mr. G. W. Foote, on "Atheism and Theism."

The proceedings then terminated.

## SECOND EVENING—MARCH 10

*Chairman*—THE REV. C. L. DRAWBRIDGE

THE REV. C. L. DRAWBRIDGE: Ladies and Gentlemen,—It gives me very great pleasure to take the chair to-night, because, like yourselves, I am exceedingly interested in these debates, and I think they do a great deal of good. I think both sides ought to hear what the other has to say, otherwise our opinion does not seem to me to be worth much. And I think it is an education to us to perceive how other people can play the game on an occasion like this, and keep themselves in hand, and leave the two combatants alone to debate with each other. I should like to draw your attention to the publications of the Rationalist Press Association, which you have on the table there, and to the North London Christian Evidence League publications, which are outside the door. (Mr. Drawbridge then again announced the Warschauer and Foote debate.) I think it is important on an occasion like this to realise that it is only courteous and fair that people should come early, so as to hear the opening speech, and that they should not go away before the concluding speech is finished. The procedure will be just the same as last night; that is to say, each of the speakers will have half an hour to begin with, and then each of them a quarter of an hour, and each of them a quarter of an hour again after that. I would remind you again of what the subject is, because I notice people, after a debate is over, sometimes say, "So-and-So never mentioned"—something which he was not supposed to deal with. Now the subject to-night is not "Is there a God?" nor "Can we know anything about Him?" but "Which is the better for mankind—Christianity or Secularism?" I will not take up any more of your time, but will ask Mr. McCabe to be good enough to speak to you. (Loud applause.)

MR. McCABE: Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen,—In opening the debate on the second and final evening, I have considered the responsibility which lies upon me, since no subject can be introduced into the debate on this last evening which is not introduced by me. I have, therefore, endeavoured to surmise what can be the interest of this audience in coming to listen to the debate, what aspect or what interpretation you have put upon the published subject of the debate which has drawn so many people together with such great interest; and, if I may paraphrase a well-known saying, I should say that in plain English the issue is, Christianity or no Christianity: that is the question. Suppose we are compelled to dispense with the historic creed of Europe, shall we suffer in Europe? Are we so rooted in our civilisation that we can go on advancing as we are advancing to-day, and dispense, without any damage, with those old creeds of our fathers and grandfathers? To-night I am going to consider that question; and the way in which I approach it is, as I say,



the one in which I think the majority of the audience would wish me to approach it. It is one, indeed, agreeing with Mr. Lee's suggestion last night—that if you are weighing two alternatives, Christianity or no Christianity, if you are wondering which will be the better for humanity, if both those alternatives have made their impression on history, search history, and find which has done or is doing the most for humanity; then you will have some material for recording your verdict. Where I differ from the procedure of last night is that, while the greater part of the evening was occupied in dealing with what Christianity had done in other lands, I am to-night going to confine the issue to Europe. I am going to ask, What has Christianity done or failed to do in Europe during its long centuries of power and domination? What had been done in Europe before Christianity came to power? Did Christianity sustain the civilising work that had been done in Europe when it rose to power? Is the great advance of civilisation in these later years due to any Christian influence, or to what is broadly called a secular, humanitarian, or non-Christian influence? I believe I shall have met the interest of the vast majority of my audience if I confine the discussion within those limits to-night. Further, I will agree with Mr. Lee in accepting the tests, or nearly all the tests, that he applied last night. That agency, that creed, that spirit does good to mankind that elevates and enlarges the intelligence; that creed which elevates the character; that creed which does political good, or controls and elevates the political world. Only in the fourth place, instead of saying, as Mr. Lee did, that set of influences which elevates a man spiritually, not knowing precisely what idea I may attach to the word "spiritual," unless it means moral elevation and refinement of character, I propose to say that the fourth great test is, What have those ideas done for man's social life? I am therefore going to test to-night what was the civilisation of Europe when Christianity came to power, what Christianity did with the power that was entrusted to it by Europe, and, in regard to our own time, whether the great progress of modern times is due appreciably to Christian ideas, or to the non-Christian, humanitarian spirit.

Let me describe the world into which Christianity came. It was a world of great advance, great progress, great civilisation. It was one of the most superb civilisations that had yet come upon the planet. There had been older and great civilisations; but the Roman civilisation, with all its faults, will live in the calendar of human history as one of the most massive and generous efforts ever made to lift up mankind towards that higher and then unseen goal to which the race is attaining. Examine it in the light of our four tests. What had Rome done for the intelligence of humanity? By the time Christianity came to power in the fourth century, Rome had spread a system of schools over the whole Empire which it dominated. Rome, remember, was no selfish body of citizens entrenching themselves in the City of the Seven Hills by the Tiber. Over a radius of a thousand miles they had scattered such seeds of civilisation as they had inherited from the older civilisations of the world. Rome founded the civilisations of Britain and of Spain;

Rome founded the civilisations of France and of Germany; Rome extended whatever it had in the way of civilisation over more than one-half of Europe and over a great deal of Asia. What was that civilisation? And, first, what did it do for the intelligence of men? I say that by the fourth century Rome had elementary schools in every town and village of her Empire. The child of every free man in the Roman Empire learned to read, to write, and to cipher. There was no illiteracy in the Roman Empire of that time. Moreover, Rome had a system of secondary schools scattered, again, throughout the whole of the Empire. Both in the elementary and in the secondary schools the teachers were subsidised, and sometimes entirely maintained, by the municipality or from the Imperial treasury. Rome had high schools or universities in all the larger cities of the Empire. These schools also were endowed from the Imperial treasury, and youths were drafted from all parts of the Empire to them at the expense of the municipality or of the State treasury. That was what Rome did for the human intelligence. It was promoting such culture as Greece had bequeathed to it; not only in Greece, but latterly in every territory over which the power of Rome had spread, whatever was good or scientific in Greek culture was being rapidly developed in the fourth century.

That was the intellectual state of the world when Christianity came to power. I need not quote authorities. There is no history or manual of education in any language that does not acknowledge every one of those facts. Secondly, what had Rome done from the political point of view? Rome had advanced municipal institutions all over its Empire—institutions that are an excellent model, or were an excellent model, for municipal administrators in later Europe. But Rome had made one great political blunder. It had destroyed its Republic, in which every citizen could register his vote in the concerns of the Republic, and had passed into an Empire; and this great blunder had taken the responsibility from the men of the old Roman Republic and cast it upon the chances of a dynasty, upon the chances of corruption and anarchy, of soldiers placing some indifferent or utterly incompetent ruler upon the throne. Now what had Rome done socially? Many of you, I suspect, have never read anything about Rome except what you have seen in Christian literature. Many of you imagine the Roman Empire as a world in darkness, into which the angel comes in the shape of Christianity, and then Rome suddenly begins to climb to a humanitarian level. Many of you think the phrase "The brotherhood of men" was not known until Christianity brought it. It was on the lips of every serious Roman two or three centuries before Christianity came. Cicero talks constantly of the love that should embrace the whole human race, and of "the solidarity of the whole human race." He encourages the ideal that through those vast peoples over which the Empire was flung there should reign one common feeling, one common bond of human interest and welfare. By the first and second century, by the time when Stoicism had come to power in the Roman Empire, the very words "Brotherhood of men" were on the lips of every teacher and almost every legislator and

administrator in the Empire. We had last night words from Mr. Lecky and Dr. Dill—Dr. Dill, who is the one authority in English literature to-day on Roman society—both saying that you will find nowhere else in history a range of humanitarian precepts which, for their beauty and their depth, so perfectly carried out the doctrine of the brotherhood of man. What was done for the helpless children of the Roman Empire—that Rome in which many of you imagine the child was a mere atom in the hands of the powerful, to be dashed aside? In the Roman Empire in the first century more than 300,000 orphans were educated and reared in orphanages in Italy alone. In the second century emperor after emperor founded these orphanages. In the Empire of the second century there were institutions for the aged and for widows—the whole of that massive scheme of philanthropy which is described to us to-day by the great French writer, Boissier, and the great English writer, Dr. Dill; one great spirit of philanthropy had gone from end to end of the Roman Empire. All this in the Roman Empire of that time in which you have been taught, so many of you, that there was no moral feeling! What is the origin of this idea that Rome was so corrupt and debased? Examine your books, in which you have seen some attempt at least to show why this slander has been made so persistently in regard to the Empire that gave us civilisation, as it gave it to nearly the whole of Europe. You will find references to a poet named Juvenal, who describes his fellow men and women as appallingly corrupt. I doubt whether you know that Juvenal is describing only a narrow class of women in the city of Rome—that he is contrasting that small clique of rich women with the vast number of his own class, which he holds to be perfectly respectable. You have been reminded of Cicero's speeches in court in regard to criminals. Were you ever asked to read his Letters, which exhibit, in the tender way of correspondence, the whole social feeling of the Roman Empire? It is a magnificent class of men and women—chaste women and strong, temperate men—that we read of throughout his letters. Read the correspondence of Seneca with his private friends, and that of Pliny (in the second century) with his private friends. Read the correspondence of Symmachus, of which we have a large volume, in the fourth century. There you will find the antidote to the fierce sarcasm of Juvenal and the other satirists of Rome. You will find a healthy moral state of society, in which almost every single man and woman who figures could stand to-day on the same moral footing as the average society of our time. Do not, therefore, let your judgment be one-sided on the morals of Rome. Remember, we have in English a proverb which says that a man or woman must be above suspicion, "like Cæsar's wife." Possibly you know the episode to which it refers. A young man penetrated into the house of Julius Cæsar. Cæsar at once divorces his wife. She is convicted of no guilt; but Cæsar says: "I do not care for guilt—Cæsar's wife shall be above suspicion." Does that seem as if chastity was of no account in the Roman world, when a man, a leader of a party, divorces his wife the moment the slightest suspicion falls upon her? Octavian, the first emperor, ruled for forty-one years. During that period Octavian was as sober, as temperate,



as unselfish, as splendid a ruler as ever sat on a throne for so long a time. In the first half-century of the Roman Empire he lived for fifty years with his wife, and there was no question of divorce ; he fought against adultery, and decreed that adulterers should be put to death—in that Roman world that was so corrupt !

Let me say in two words, there had been bitter and dark periods in the thousand years of Roman existence. Time after time in that system some scoundrel came to the throne, and then all the worst elements of the Empire were drawn into the light. But let me tell you how to judge those periods. Let me warn you against those who take the age of Nero and Messalina, and say, "That is the character of Rome." During the first three centuries of the Roman Empire, until the coming of Constantine, the first Christian emperor—during those three centuries, omitting the emperors of a day (or those who reigned for less than one year), there were twenty-nine emperors. Twenty-one of those will challenge comparison with the monarchs of any history or any civilisation in the world. Eight of those only—and I am drawing the line liberally—are men that can be described as really vicious rulers. Only eight. Further, while those twenty-one good and great monarchs ruled for two hundred and forty-five years, those eight vicious monarchs ruled for only seventy-five years collectively. In other words, remember that for nearly two hundred and fifty years out of three hundred Rome was dominated by men who were fighting vice in every shape. Do not believe that the Empire was so corrupt as it has been described to you. It had, indeed, great blemishes. One was slavery. That cultured civilisation rested upon the basis of the lives of hundreds of thousands of slaves, who were doing the work of the more privileged classes. The Empire was torn to pieces and distracted with warfare—a second great blemish of its civilisation. And it assuredly had a large amount of vice and immorality in it, just as the British or the German Empire has, or the Austrian Empire.

Let some new power come into Europe, and you will at once ask : Does it carry on the work of civilisation of the Roman Empire—this great school system that Rome had founded, and the legislation of Rome, one of the finest bodies of legislation in the world ? Does it undo the errors of Rome, abolish and denounce slavery and war, carry on the great philanthropic mood that was brought into Rome by the Stoics ? Christianity came in the fourth century. Until the beginning of that century, it is agreed even by the most generous historians, Christianity had not converted ten per cent. of the Roman Empire. The latest and, I believe, most accurate student, Professor Schultze, says it had not converted two and a-half per cent. in that time. Suddenly it obtains the domination of Rome. Emperors become Christians, and bishops the tutors of emperors ; and emperors sign a series of decrees, and soldiers go and close the Pagan temples. There is no weighing of evidence against the Pagan gods. There is decree after decree that you shall suffer death if you worship them ; that all your temples shall be closed, except the Christian churches ; and the Roman

Empire is forced, by the pikes of the Roman soldiers, into the Christian churches. What happened in Europe then?

First, as regards the intelligence of mankind. I hardly need tell you that the magnificent and superb school system of the Roman Empire was trodden under foot; within fifty years not a vestige of it remained. Need I remind you that one hundred and fifty years ago—that is to say, after fourteen hundred years of Christian power—the proportion of illiterates in Europe was about ninety per cent.? Need I remind you that the Government return in England in 1845, after two great associations had been trying hard to educate the people of the country, said, “One man in six only can read in this country”? That is to say, so late as 1845 eighty-three per cent. of the men and women and children of England were illiterate. Eighty-three per cent. are illiterate in Portugal to-day; eighty-three per cent. in the South of Italy to-day; and at the dawn of the French Revolution there was one general level of illiteracy of eighty-five or ninety per cent. in the whole Christian world. What had Christianity done for intelligence during those years of its domination? How had it carried on the work of civilisation? How had Rome’s work been lost, until now we come once more, as men, as citizens, to rebuild again, after seventeen hundred years, what Rome had laboriously built so long ago? (Applause.)

Did Christianity abolish slavery? Slavery was abolished in Europe. Slavery came to an end, and serfdom took its place. Now I do not wish—I do not need—to go at any great length into the question. Let me quote one Christian writer, the late Dr. Emil Reich, who never said a word for Rationalism that he could help. He knew the Roman Empire, and he says: “It is a historical fact, supported by the most positive evidence, that slavery in the Roman Empire was mitigated by the noble philosophy of the Stoics, and that in all their teaching the Church Fathers never thought of recommending the abolition of slavery.” That is a mild statement of the facts, and is the one fact notable to those who say that Christianity abolished slavery. I challenge anybody to name one single Christian writer, during the whole of the first nine centuries, who ever said one word in favour of abolishing slavery. None ever did until St. Theodore, in the ninth century. That was Rome’s great crime. Do not talk of the smart set and its vices; those were mere peccadilloes. Here is this moral body coming to uplift mankind, seeing the whole Pagan world resting on slavery, and for eight hundred years not even the finest Christian teachers had one word to say in condemnation of slavery. The Pagans of the second century were condemning it every day. The Stoic lawyers of the second century—Ulpian, Florentinus, Dion Chrysostom—in the most fervent language, said that slavery was against the law of nature, and the law of nature was their supreme ideal. Slavery was then in a fair way to be abolished; and yet no Christian leader says a word in condemnation of the principle of slavery. It was, however, abolished at last. The slaves became the serfs of later Europe. I think most of us know what serfdom was. Most of us know what appalling rights the nobles of Europe claimed over their serfs. Slavery was abolished because the slave-markets at Rome had

been fed by the barbarian provinces that Rome had subdued ; and the moment those provinces become the rulers instead of the subdued the whole source of your slaves is dried up. Slavery was bound to disappear.

But did Christianity free the workers of Europe ? Down to the French Revolution, what was the condition of the masses of the nations of Europe ? Serfdom of the most appalling type. Mr. Bryce, in his work on *The Holy Roman Empire*, says : " There is no more appalling feature in the whole Christian world than the serfdom of mediæval Europe." The workers have freed themselves in modern times. How ? How many Christian leaders and Christian clergymen headed the revolt of modern times ? What was said when in the French Revolution, after fourteen hundred years of the teaching of the duties of man by Christianity, a revolutionist comes and proclaims the rights of man ? And from the time when that great movement first proclaimed them, the workers of the world have gone on, until at last they see before them the vision of all that they want. What did Christianity do in its fourteen hundred years ? What did it say to the great landowners and serf-owners, to the great industrial leaders ? What did it do in the way of freeing the workers of the world, and bringing them to the comparative enlightenment of to-day ? I have to omit the question of black slavery, which was introduced and set up in the middle of Christendom. Read Mr. Brace's apologetic, in which he says the responsibility rests entirely upon the Church as an organised body. I advise you to read the words of Theodore Parker, who said : " If the American Church dropped through the Continent, our anti-slavery cause would get on much better than it is doing."

Your Christianity did not promote the intellectual interests of mankind ; it did not promote the social interests of the mass of the people. Did it promote the morality of Europe ? There, I suppose, is the greatest argument in the minds of most of our Christian friends—the idea that it promoted the morality of Europe. Was there any change in the morality of the Roman world in the fourth century ? I have admitted that it was bad. Lecky says—and there is no other writer who will venture to dispute it : " The two centuries after Constantine are uniformly represented by the Fathers as a period of general and scandalous vice." Read Dean Milman if you like — read the first volume of Dean Milman's *Latin Christianity*. I think he begins on page 364 to deal with this subject. What was the moral influence in the fourth century, when Christianity obtained power ? He admits that it entirely failed—beyond a few chosen minds who needed no moral influence whatever—to inculcate any moral habits whatever in the mass of the people. From the fourth century the morality of Europe, instead of rising, as it is said to rise in this fairy-tale about the conversion of Europe, sinks lower and lower century by century. Read Salvianus on the morality of the Christians of his time, the fifth century. He says that they are far worse than the Pagans of their time. Gregory of Tours, our only authority on the morality of the sixth century, is one appalling record of vice, oppression, and crime from beginning to end ; and we see Europe going down to the depths of the Dark Ages in the tenth century.



I have not had time to develop my argument fully. Let me put the rest briefly. In the eleventh century Europe begins to rise once more. Why? It is because a hostile, a contrasting civilisation has been set up in Spain by the Mohammedans—by the Moors. From that time the schools of Europe begin to open once more, and science begins to be studied once more in Europe. Your Roger Bacons and Albert the Greats acknowledge the debt they owe to that Pagan civilisation, that Moorish civilisation, in Spain which lightens up Europe again. Two centuries later another impulse comes into Europe. The Greeks are driven from Turkey into Europe, and they bring with them the germs of their culture. Once more we have a rise—the Renaissance—the spirit of Paganism waking Christianity up into something like civilisation; and then there is only the same slow advance until you come to the French Revolution. And from that Revolution—from the time when Rousseau proclaimed the idea of rights instead of duties—the world has gone at a pace never witnessed in the history of mankind before, because it is the determination of men, apart from all theological controversy, that here and now they will make all they can of their life; they will have justice in their economic world, and power in their political world; they will have refinement and enlightenment brought even to the masses of the workers of the world. It is a humanitarian impulse. I believe that is why—let me say two words to conclude—that is why the world to-day is passing by the open doors of the churches as it is doing. You remember an old story of a Babylonian king, the heir of four thousand years of civilisation. One day, it is said, he was startled to see a hand writing on the wall of his palace, “Thou art weighed in the balance and art found wanting.” I believe that the concern you find through the whole clerical world of our time, the rustle of anxiety that fills the whole of Christendom, is because they see already, written on the walls of the temple of universal Christendom, that old and appalling message once more: “Thou hast been weighed in the balance, and art found wanting.” (Great applause.)

The CHAIRMAN: Mr. Lee will now speak for half an hour.

Mr. LEE: Mr. Chairman, Mr. McCabe, Ladies and Gentlemen,—In listening to the closing words of my friendly opponent, I was amazed to find that in his enumeration of the various alleged causes for the revival of modern Europe he had failed to recognise, or at least to direct your attention to, that great historical movement known as the Reformation. That is a movement which he cannot ignore in any seeking for causes of the revival of Europe. You will remember that last evening Mr. McCabe was good enough to deny that Secularism was in any sense a pessimistic system. You will remember that I directed his attention and your attention to the statement of Professor Haeckel in which he says *that man has no more value for the universe than the ant, the fly, or the smallest bacillus*. You will remember, too, that I quoted Mr. G. W. Foote, who has done more for Secularism than any man living in this country. (A Voice: “What about Bradlaugh?”) Mr. Bradlaugh is not living. Mr.



Foote says that there are certain people who are really "*irreclaimable*." I directed Mr. McCabe's attention also to a statement in Mr. Morison's *Service of Man*, and — (A Voice: "You are going back to last night!") Most certainly I go back to last night; most certainly. And in that reference, on p. 111, I quoted the words: "The sooner it is perceived that bad men will be bad, do what we will—though, of course, they may be made less bad—the sooner shall we come to the conclusion that *the welfare of society demands the suppression or elimination of bad men*." A little before this Mr. Cotter Morison says: "It will perhaps be said that this view does away with moral responsibility; that those who hold it cannot consistently blame any crime or resent any injury; that we should not on this hypothesis reproach a garrotter who half murders us; he is a machine, not a man with free-will, capable of doing and forbearing according to the moral law. (Interruption.) *It is no more rational to blame him than it would be to blame a runaway locomotive which knocks you down and mangles or kills you*." Mr. Charles Watts, one of the Presidents of the National Secular Society, when alive, tells us that there is no more difference between "virtue and vice than in the fall of a stone or the growth of a flower." (Uproar. Voices: "You have no right to go back to last night.") Mr. Chairman, I have debated now some thirty or forty times in this country with leading unbelievers, and I have never heard this objection before. Are you afraid to hear the truth?

Mr. McCABE: I will submit loyally to the chair. I understand that in debates (I am a novice at it, though) the one who leads introduces subjects, and the one who follows must not introduce new subjects. (Applause.)

The CHAIRMAN: You have heard what Mr. McCabe has to say. When you have heard what Mr. Lee has to say, you will afterwards hear what I have to say.

Mr. LEE: In thirty or forty debates that I have had with Mr. Foote and the leading unbelievers in this country, this objection has never been taken. If I am not allowed to refer to last night, Mr. McCabe's last speech goes unanswered. (Hear, hear.)

The CHAIRMAN: We all know which is in the majority in this audience. There is no good rubbing it in, and it will not have the slightest effect upon me, any more than it would on the Chairman last night if Christians had been in the majority. So listen to this: It is not allowed in a debate to introduce new matter into the last quarter of an hour's speech. Mr. McCabe has that in his mind, and imagines that no new matter may be introduced into Mr. Lee's present answer to his speech. I do not admit that. Now, Mr. McCabe confined your attention to Rome. Is Mr. Lee to be tied down to nothing but Rome? I do not see that that is fair. Therefore I rule that Mr. Lee is entirely in order in dealing as he likes with what Mr. McCabe has said, provided he keeps the rules of debate; and if anyone can point out in what respect Mr. Lee has not kept the rules of debate, I shall be pleased to hear it.

Mr. LEE: I am coming to Rome—do not be afraid of that! I now want to say that last night I distinctly told Mr. McCabe, in the speech to

which he replied, that he had confounded two distinct words, *secular* and *secularism*; that he had been appealing to various secular works, and regarding those secular works as being one and the same as Secularism. I now wish to urge as distinctly as I can that on p. 265 of Mr. McCabe's own book, the *Life of Holyoake*, he says: "In the first place, the reader is warned from the first that 'secular' is a very different matter from 'Secularist.'" That is Mr. McCabe's own book, and I protest in the strongest way I possibly can against identifying secular works, which in a later page he says can be done by anybody, with Secularism, which can only be professed by unbelievers. *But I now challenge Mr. McCabe's whole position on this question of Christianity and Secularism*, and which is the better for man. *I dispute absolutely his right to identify, in the ages which have passed, Christianity with the Roman Catholic Church.* He himself—(Interruption)—on p. 29 of *From Rome to Rationalism*, points out: "Still, even if we accept the actual Gospels as faithfully recording the words of Christ, a more glaring contrast between the simplicity of Christ's words and actions and the proud, ambitious Papal Court that is supposed to have grown from them can scarcely be imagined."

Now, if Mr. McCabe distinguishes between the teaching of Christ in the New Testament and the Papal system, they are not alike from his point of view—they are not one and the same Christianity. But our friend went on to speak of Rome—and here I begin to follow him in his speech of to-night. He has been giving you a picture—what he would have you believe to be a true, full, accurate account—of the life of the Roman people, of the Roman Empire into which Christianity came; but while Mr. McCabe has spoken a few simple words—(laughter)—about the existence of slavery and one or two other evils, he has altogether failed to give the proper proportion of those evils. Does Mr. McCabe deny that at the time of Claudius there were existing in the Roman Empire *sixty millions of slaves*? Does he deny that a very large proportion of those sixty millions of slaves were women? Does he deny that those women had no right to their purity, no right to their children, no right to their liberty, to their civic, their natural, their human claims to life; that they were shut off from all rights of citizenship, and from anything like what a human being ought to have? Does Mr. McCabe—(A Voice: "Rub it in!")—all right, I am rubbing it in!—does he deny that at this very time, in this very Empire of which he has been speaking, *infanticide had assumed gigantic proportions*? Does he deny that at the time when these so-called Stoics were preaching their humanity there were scores of thousands of men given over to death in the amphitheatre and the colosseum in order to amuse a morally exhausted people? Does he—can he—deny that *even naked women were made to fight in those arenas*? And then, Mr. McCabe, I want to know whether the theatres, resorted to by women as well as by men, were known for the purity of their plays—whether the representations in those theatres were not *simply reeking with pollution*? I want to know, Sir, whether the very houses in which the people lived, which women visited—

whether the decorations in those houses, whether the utensils used at the tables, were pure, and likely to appeal to a fine, sensitive, pure woman? You have heard of Herculaneum and Pompeii. Has Mr. McCabe ever visited either of those buried cities, now resurrected? Does he not know that in those very cities, resurrected from the grave of the centuries, there are portions into which women are not allowed to go, because the horrible, fiendish pictures on the walls of the houses are so abominable that no woman dare be admitted there? That was in a mere *province* of the Roman Empire. (Laughter.) I hear *women laughing*. I pity you if that is your feeling of secular purity! If that is your idea of woman's grandeur, I pity it! But I have not completed this picture of Rome yet. You have had a very fascinating picture of a world-empire of two thousand years ago. But I want to know whether, in that Roman Empire, with all those things to which I have directed your attention, work was looked upon as an honourable thing by the freemen of that time? *Was not all the work given over to the slave class?* And even the educational system—was not that largely, at the time Christ came into the world, in the hands of slaves? Where will you equal that, our friend will allow me to ask him—as I challenge still more closely his position—in the Dark Ages, for example—so dark, so dreary, to which he has been referring us this evening? Through all those ages Christianity wrought for purity and for womanhood. I will ask you to allow me to read *some extracts from Mr. Lecky, to whom Mr. McCabe has been appealing this evening, and of whom he spoke so highly*. I will ask you to allow me to read from Lecky's *Rationalism*, Vol. I., p. 213. In that place I read these words: "For the first time woman was elevated to her rightful position, and the sanctity of weakness was recognised as well as the sanctity of sorrow. No longer the slave or the toy of man, no longer associated only with the ideas of degradation and of sensuality, woman rose, in the person of the Virgin Mother, into a new sphere, and became the object of a reverential homage of which antiquity had had no conception. Love was idealised. The moral charm and beauty of female excellence were fully felt. A new type of character was called into being; a new kind of admiration was fostered. Into a harsh and ignorant and benighted age this ideal type infused *a conception of gentleness and of purity unknown to the proudest civilisations of the past*." I ask you now to allow me to read from the *Institutes of Justinian*, which is a standard work, edited by Sanders. On p. xxvi. of this standard work, the introductory portion, I find: "Augustus, for instance, procured the sanction of legislation to a series of measures which made a considerable innovation in private law. These measures were designed to repress and discourage the excesses and corruption of a *demoralised society*." Mr. McCabe denied that society was corrupt. But let us continue the quotation: "*The Lex Julia et Papia Poppoca* (A.D. 9), and others of a similar character, attempted to restore virtue to private life by a system of rewards and penalties, attached to the fulfilment or neglect of family duties, and consisting chiefly in the taking away of testamentary benefits from the unmarried and childless, and giving them to those married with children, and, in



default, to the Treasury. *They failed in their object.*" The corruption of Rome was so great that Augustus failed in his object of purifying it. But I ask you to allow me to quote from Lecky's *Rationalism* again. On p. 307 of Vol. I. I find this statement: "But the great characteristic of *Christianity*, and the great moral proof of its divinity, is that it has been *the main source of the moral development of Europe*, and that it has discharged this office not so much by the inculcation of a system of ethics, however pure, as by the assimilating and attractive influence of a perfect ideal. The moral progress of mankind can never cease to be distinctively and intensely Christian so long as it consists of a gradual approximation to the character of the Christian Founder. There is, indeed, nothing more wonderful in the history of the human race than the way in which that ideal has traversed the lapse of ages, acquiring a new strength and beauty with each advance of civilisation, and infusing its beneficent influence into every sphere of thought and action." On the next page he says: "Yet more and more with advancing years the moral ideal stood out from all dogmatic conceptions, and it is no exaggeration to say that at no former period was it so powerful, or so universally acknowledged, as at present." Then I want our friend to allow me to turn to Vol. II. of this same *History of Rationalism*, where, on p. 234, I find these words: "It was in this manner that the old civilisation, which rested on conquest and on slavery, had passed into complete dissolution, the free classes being altogether demoralised, and the slave classes exposed to the most horrible cruelties. At last the spirit of *Christianity* moved over this chaotic society, and not merely alleviated the evils that convulsed it, but also reorganised it on a new basis. It did this in three ways: it *abolished slavery*, it *created charity*, it *inculcated self-sacrifice*." I turn to this same writer's *History of Rationalism*, Vol. II., p. 240, and I will read what Lecky has to say there: "There is certainly no other feature of the old civilisation so repulsive as the indifference to suffering that it displayed." And on p. 241 he says: "Still there appears to have been no public refuge for the sick; the infant was entirely unprotected; and infanticide, having been—at least in the case of deformed children—expressly authorised by Plato and Aristotle, was seldom regarded as a crime....." "Very different was the aspect presented by the early Church.....When Christianity became the dominant religion, the protection of infants was one of the first changes that was manifested in the laws." Then he goes on to say that the gladiatorial games were constantly denounced, and he proceeds to illustrate the conquests of Christianity. On p. 372, Vol. II., of *Rationalism*, he says: "The history of self-sacrifice during the last 1,800 years has been mainly the history of the action of Christianity upon the world." Now, I took exception, Sir, to Mr. McCabe's delineation of the life and the wondrous power and purity of the Roman world; and, in order that I may indicate some of the things that blemished that world and illustrate the wonderful work that Christianity did, I am not going to trust to my memory in my quotations of great writers; I am going to quote from the pages of the various books to which I refer. And here, on p. 338, Vol. I., of Lecky's *Morals*, I find these words:

"That the greatest religious change in the history of mankind should have taken place under the eyes of a brilliant galaxy of philosophers and historians, who were profoundly conscious of the decomposition around them ; that all of these writers should have utterly failed to predict the issue of the movement they were observing ; and that, during the space of three centuries, they should have treated as simply contemptible an agency which all men must now admit to have been, for good or for evil, *the most powerful lever that has ever been applied to the affairs of men*, are facts well worthy of meditation." I turn from that to p. 389, and on that page I find these words : "Christianity was not merely a moral influence, or a system of opinions, or an historical record, or a collection of wonder-working men ; it was also an institution definitely, elaborately, and skilfully organised, possessing a weight and a stability which isolated or undisciplined teachers could never rival, and evoking, to a degree before unexampled in the world, an enthusiastic devotion to its corporate welfare analogous to that of the patriot to his country." And then, on p. 394, Mr. Lecky says : "No other religion ever combined so many forms of attraction as Christianity, both for its intrinsic excellence and for its manifest adaptation to the special wants of the time. One great cause of its success was that it *produced more heroic actions and formed more upright men than any other creed* ; but that it should do so was precisely what might have been expected." And then I turn to the second volume of this same Lecky, and on p. 4 I find—(A Voice : "Give him a rest !") —Oh ! I know you don't like Lecky, but you shall have more of him yet. On p. 4, Vol. II., I find : "Philosophy was admirably fitted to dignify and ennoble, but altogether impotent to regenerate, mankind. It did much to encourage virtue, but little or nothing to restrain vice. A relish or taste for virtue was formed and cultivated which attracted many to its practice ; but in this, as in the case of all our other higher tastes, a nature that was once thoroughly vitiated became altogether incapable of appreciating it, and the transformation of such a nature, which was continually effected by Christianity, was confessedly beyond the power of philosophy." I turn to page 20 of this same book. (Interruption.) Fair play ! I know you don't like it, but you have got to have it : "Now, it was one of the most important services of Christianity that, besides quickening greatly our benevolent affections, it definitely and dogmatically asserted the sinfulness of all destruction of human life as a matter of amusement, or of simple convenience, and thereby *formed a new standard, higher than any which then existed in the world*." And then on p. 25—yes, still Lecky : "Infanticide, as is well known" (Mr. McCabe did not tell you this, but I will), "was almost universally admitted among the Greeks, being sanctioned, and in some cases enjoined, upon what we should now call 'the greatest happiness principle.'" And I want to give you just one or two little illustrations from p. 63—(laughter)—it does not make a bit of difference to me how you laugh : "The two features that were most revolting in the slave system as it passed from the Pagan to the Christian emperors" (there were revolting systems, you see, under the Pagan emperors) "were the absolute



want of legal recognition of slave marriage and the license of torturing still conceded to the master." And on p. 65 I read: "Under Justinian.....in the *first* place, all the restrictions upon enfranchisement which had accumulated under the Pagan legislation were abolished; the legislator proclaimed in emphatic language, and by the provisions of many laws, his desire to encourage manumission, and free scope was thus given to the action of the Church. In the *second* place, the freedmen, considered as an intermediate class between the slave and the citizen, were virtually abolished, all or nearly all the privileges accorded to the citizen being granted to the emancipated slave. This was the most important contribution of the Christian emperors to that great amalgamation of nations and classes which had been advancing since the days of Augustus; and one of its effects was that any person, even of senatorial rank, might marry a slave when he had first emancipated her. In the *third* place, a slave was permitted to marry a free woman with the authorisation of his master, and children born in slavery became the legal heirs of their emancipated father." *That had not existed in the old world.*

Now I want to deal with one or two other points in Mr. McCabe's extremely interesting, but somewhat romantic, narrative. Mr. McCabe tells us that in this wonderful system which he has been referring to there were vast and wonderful works going on—schools, for example—all over the Empire. When? In the fourth century after Christ. Does Mr. McCabe wish us to think—does he want you, as intelligent men, to think—that for 400 years the Fathers of the Church, many of whom were most familiar with Grecian and Roman philosophical systems, had no love for education, and did nothing for education? Does Mr. McCabe forget that Julian the Apostate, when he issued his edicts against the Christians, to try and arrest this growing power—among the edicts he issued was one prohibiting the Christians from teaching classics in the schools? That was a lovely example of generous dealing! But it shows this, beyond all controversy, that the Christians were the teachers in those schools of the classic learning.

I cannot deal with every point our friend raised, but I am dealing with the main ones. He went on to say that in this wonderful system of his, this wonderful Rome, the Stoics were preaching the brotherhood of man 300 years before the coming of Christ. Then, Sir, they had 300 years in which to do away with those abominations, those sixty millions of slaves, which were in the world at the time of Claudius; but they never did it. Why? Because their words lacked fire and power. The fire and the power came from a higher source than theirs. It came from men like St. Paul, who, sending back an escaped slave to his master, said—(And I was amazed to hear Mr. McCabe say that in the whole stretch of literature up to the ninth century there was no person who denounced slavery in the Christian Church. Why, Sir, in the very first century of the Christian era our Lord gave to the world principles and laws of life which made slavery impossible. But wait a minute.) St. Paul, in sending back that escaped slave to his owner,



said : "Receive him not now as a slave, but above a slave, a brother beloved." And that doctrine, manifested by that man in that way, put into the meal of human life a leaven which spread and spread, until, as Lecky tells us, it was under the pressure and the power of this teaching of Jesus Christ that new and great and formative and revolutionary ideas obtained. Our friend Mr. McCabe referred, among other great Stoics, to Seneca. You will remember that last night he could not find words strong enough wherewith to condemn Constantine, whom he called the first Christian emperor. But here is a man, a Stoic, a moral Idealist in a sense, a favourite teacher to our friend Mr. McCabe. This man taught and wrote wondrously about *poverty*—and lived in overwhelming magnificence ! This man taught much about *purity*, but he was openly charged with carnal knowledge of Julia and Agrippina. This man, who was so high and so elevated, wrote the letter, we are given to understand, which Nero sent to the Senate, justifying the murder of his own mother. That is the man, that is the Stoic, that is the humanitarian ! Surely we want something better than that ! I don't wonder that Domitian said that that man's words were sand without lime. They were not only sand without lime, they were words without meaning ; for no word has real meaning unless it is carried into act. And when the word is carried into act, when it arouses fine and moving powers, then we get to the recognition of that doctrine which has made our modern philosophy so illuminating—that *that which is real has value*. And that which is real in human life is that which expresses itself in redemptive acts and glorious deeds for the benefit of our common weal. (Applause.)

The CHAIRMAN : Mr. McCabe will now have a quarter of an hour.

Mr. MCCABE : Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen,—My opponent has occupied the larger part of the time which was allotted to him this evening in proving one thesis. He has amply proved that thesis, and I yield it entirely. He has proved that Mr. Lecky differs entirely from me. He has proved that on a number of the points which I have put before you, Mr. Lecky tells you something different in his *History of Rationalism*. I put before you and Mr. Lee a string of definite statements. I said that Rome had done much for the intellectual development of man, and much socially and philanthropically for man. Rome had denounced slavery and given promise of abolishing it. During the Middle Ages, I say, the bulk of those reforms disappeared, and they have not reappeared until modern times. What rebutting evidence has he brought against that statement ? (A Voice : "Enough.") It may be enough for some of you ; but is it enough for the majority of you that he should read from Mr. Lecky certain statements tending to show that Christianity has done things that I have not told you ? Why not take me point by point, and show why the schools of the Roman world disappeared ? Does he deny that they did disappear ? He asks me whether I think the Fathers had no veneration for schools and culture. That has nothing to do with the point ; the point is that the school system

disappeared, and Europe sank into an abyss of darkness. Not until the French Revolution was there any recommencement of instructing the masses of the people of Europe. That historical statement has not been challenged so far to-night. Let me say one word on this famous Mr. Lecky who has been quoted so much. George Eliot once caricatured him as saying that "it is assuredly true that two and two make four, but you must not push the fact too far." Remember that when you are reading Lecky. He wrote at a time when your historian who wished to administer his powder of heresy had to wrap it up in a great deal of jam. To-day Mr. Lee fastens greedily upon the jam and utterly ignores the powder. I, on the other hand, have given you the powder; and I trust the combination will do you good. I have already read to you, in the words of Lecky, the most glorious description, not merely of the Stoic doctrine, but how in practice, in precepts which have no compeers in the whole range of history for their depth and their beauty, they carried out the brotherhood of man in legislation and in actual life. That is in flat contradiction to those other passages which have been read to you; and the contradiction does not help you. Take your dictionaries of Roman and mediæval affairs; take the articles in the *Encyclopædia Britannica*. On the point of intelligence, read any history of education you like, and you will find what was the school system of the fourth century. I choose the fourth century for two reasons: Firstly, because Christianity had no power whatever in the Roman world until the fourth century—that is the chief reason; and secondly, because the school system was perfected in the fourth century. It was gone by the fifth century, and does not reappear until the civic Governments of Europe began to erect it once more. Now let me run over some of the small details. I am not going back to Professor Haeckel and his ant and such things. I was, in my earlier days, rather religious. I put it to everybody in the room who knows religious literature that, whereas Haeckel says that in comparison with the universe man is a mere ant, for fifteen hundred years Christian literature has been saying that in comparison with God man is a mere worm. Now let us come to more serious matters. I have, unfortunately, to spend my time on a large number of details. You must estimate the proportionate significance of those details for yourselves. Take the final remark of Mr. Lee about Seneca. He wrote in great wealth about poverty. A great many Christian bishops, living in great wealth, have written about poverty. But what is far more serious, Mr. Lee tells you that Seneca was openly charged with licentiousness. I don't know how far his knowledge extends, but I will challenge him to quote one historical writer in Europe who will not say outright that that charge was known at the time to be a perfectly ludicrous accusation. Seneca had given some unpalatable advice to Nero; and Nero's associates—this is one of the platitudes of history—got up a perfectly comic accusation against Seneca, in consequence of which Seneca was banished. Further, as to my omitting to mention the Reformation: I mentioned that from the fifteenth century Europe began once more to rise. That included the sixteenth century, the period of the Reformation; and you must remember that by the time



I had reached the Reformation period I heard a fatal message, "You have two minutes more." Mr. Lee quarrels with me because I do not recognise that Papal Christianity is not Christianity at all. He says that I have drawn the distinction between Papal Christianity and the primitive Christianity of the Gospels. I have ; and I will draw exactly the same distinction between the Church of England, with its ritual and dogmas, and primitive Christianity, as I do between the Church of Rome and primitive Christianity. But what is the application to the subject? If I am to rule out of court the Roman Catholic Church, then where was this Christianity that was making the civilisation of the world? From the fourth until the sixteenth century, was there no Christianity in Europe? Who then had done the work that existed in the sixteenth century—with a great promise, indeed, of civilisation—before the Reformation came? Let us come to these details about Rome. Practically speaking, Mr. Lee only proved one thing in regard to Rome—namely, that there was a vast amount of immorality in it. I do not care, and I wonder if you count many of the statements he made. He says first that I have spoken—I have written down his words: "Mr. McCabe spoke of the wondrous purity of the Roman world." I did not ; I said that, as in the British Empire and the German Empire, there was a vast amount of immorality in the Roman world. His quotations do not contradict what I put before you. I admitted that the Roman world was immoral ; but I went on to say that your Christianity did not *improve* the morality of the Roman world. I have said, and the statement stands—and no platitudes of Lecky's will ever alter it—that from the fifth century, when Christianity obtained power, the character of Europe went down century by century, until the tenth and eleventh centuries. Will you show me some historian who says differently? If you want a Christian authority who knows the period, who is the authority? Dean Milman. In Dean Milman you will find every word I said verified. Lecky himself says that the two centuries following the triumph of Christianity were centuries of universal vice. You may reconcile the contradictions of Lecky ; they do not matter to me. Mr. Lee says I gave a wrong picture of the Roman world: "What about the sixty million slaves?" I had expressly made a point of that. I said: "There is the gigantic evil of the Roman world: What did Christianity do?" I challenged him to quote any single Christian writer who denounces slavery as such before the ninth century. The reply is: "Christ's great principles, which included the abolition of slavery." But remember that it took nine centuries—centuries which included men like St. Augustine, St. Ambrose, and St. Jerome—to perceive the bearing of the words of Christ! St. Paul sends a slave back, and says: "Now he is more than a slave." Of course, because he had become a Christian in the meantime. Is there any condemnation of slavery in those words? And if so, why did your Christian Church fail for nine centuries to see the elementary teaching of Christ and Paul? Why did the whole Christian Church in later times consent to black slavery? Why was that upheld by Christian bodies on the ground that it was not condemned in the Old and New Testaments? Mr. Lee went



on, and I think he made many ladies shudder at the terrible pictures he drew. He said that the women slaves of the Roman world had no right to purity, to the sanctity of marriage. I ask Mr. Lee when the Christian Church began to marry slaves, and I challenge him to show that it ever married a slave as it married a free woman until the ninth century. Milman says that it never gave its blessing to slave marriages until the ninth century. I remember reading a poem by a deeply religious Christian of the fifth century (when Christianity had been a hundred years in power)—Paulinus of Pella; and this man boasts of his chastity—"that is to say, I never had any relations but with my wife and the slaves of the household." That was Christian chastity in the fifth century! One of the most important provincial Councils of the early Church, the Council of Toledo, expressly laid it down—I am quoting from the Canons of the Council—that a man who keeps a concubine is not to be repelled from communion in the Church. That is the Christian purity and chastity of the Church at that time. I say, read the one authority we have on the morals of the Christians in the century after Christianity triumphed. It is a frightful period, and its history is worse than Juvenal. Read Gregory of Tours, the only authority on the morals of the following century. You will find in the Pagan annals nothing worse; you will find plenty of women as bad as M<sup>ess</sup>alina. Mr. Lee speaks of the gladiatorial shows, because I suppose he accepts that story of a monk throwing himself into the arena. Salvianus describes gladiatorial shows as being freely held in Gaul in 450—150 years after Christianity came to power. Gladiatorial shows were abolished, we know; but what happened in Europe? Were there no baitings of animals in Europe, right down to the nineteenth century? Of course there were—all over Europe. Were there no duels, were there no ordeals, were there no tournaments? In other words, was not the amphitheatre set up again, under a different form, throughout Europe? I am only showing you that where Mr. Lee descends from Lecky's generalisations he is wrong in every single detail. He said to you—I don't know whether he said that he had *seen* in Pompeii; I suspect not, because I have been in Pompeii and seen these things—but he asks you to believe that in Roman houses which women visited there were obscene paintings. There were not. The only two houses that have anything indecent on their walls are the two brothels of Pompeii. In Paris to-day you will find a hundred houses with paintings infinitely worse than those on the walls of Pompeii. Mr. Lee asks me to admire Justinian's legislation for the slaves. But who wrote the legislation of Justinian? Tribonianus, the philosopher and jurist; and, as Milman and every lawyer knows, Tribonianus so utterly excludes Christian sentiment from his legislation that he has fallen under the suspicion of atheism; and that is the first Christian legal reform of slavery. Remember, Justinian is not in the first century of Christian influence. He comes after 200 years of the full power of Christianity; and the first instance Mr. Lee can bring of the reforming influence of Christianity in the history of legislation is due to one who has incurred a suspicion of atheism. My time is up, and I have only dealt with a

fraction of the statements made. I put it to you that I have undone the bulk of those statements that I have dealt with, and I ask you to believe that if the time permitted I could undo the rest of his detailed statements just as I have undone these. (Loud and continued applause.)

The CHAIRMAN : I don't know whether that is an encore, but it is Mr. Lee's quarter of an hour.

Mr. LEE : Mr. McCabe, Ladies and Gentlemen,—It always amuses me, in contests such as this, to notice that when a disputant brings upon the platform an authority whom he thinks to be a mainstay of his position, and the opponent takes that very authority and uses him, and knocks down the position which the friend had tried to sustain, then the opponent begins to say, "Oh, what you have been giving are generalities from that author." I don't know whether that was intended for humour, or whether it was intended as a serious statement. To myself it seemed a little bit pitiful.

I will now come to Mr. McCabe's reference to the French Revolution, and to his statement that then—and not till then in the history of the Christian Church—were the rights of man proclaimed. I am rather interested in the French Revolution. I have read some of the literature dealing with that lurid period of European history, and I find in the narratives which have to do with that revolution descriptions of abominations that might well be carried back to the time of Rome. I find in that period not only thousands of innocent men given over to suffering, to imprisonment, and to horrible deaths; I find also women and little children given up to brutal and horrible abominations. I find women—pregnant women—shot down by the soldiery. And when the French Revolution came into the hands of those who had eliminated from their minds and from the thought of France, as much as they could, everything which bore the name of religion, then blood flowed like water in the streets. That was the doctrine of the rights of man! I personally prefer those peaceful revolutions such as Lecky depicts in his *History*, where he says Christianity did not come upon the scene and denounce slavery as an evil thing, but by its teachings sapped at its foundation and made it impossible. Mr. McCabe, as a student of classical literature, an authority upon the history of Rome, will remember that on three separate occasions before Jesus Christ came into the world, and the last occasion seventy years before the birth of Christ, there was an uprising of slaves in Rome which was only put down by awful slaughter on every side. Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace, did not come to preach revolutions of a bloody kind; He came to inject into men's minds and hearts principles of action which would make them recognise in every other man a brother—(interruption, and cries of "Speak to the point," which rendered the end of the sentence inaudible. The CHAIRMAN : "Play the game, gentlemen.") Our friend quoted Theodore Parker, the poet preacher of America, who was good enough to say, according to Mr. McCabe—I have not the words before me—that the Christian Churches of America were responsible for slavery in

America. But whether that quotation be accurate or not I do not know. I have not the exact words under my eyes ; I, therefore, do not accept them. (A Voice : " Oh ! ") They may be correct, but I do not know that they are. I know what I am talking about. But I do want to say this, that a greater than Theodore Parker, Lloyd Garrison, a Christian man, under the pressure of Christian teaching, set out to oppose and to shake that gigantic evil until it tottered to the ground. And while I am on that question of slavery, what about our own land ? Mr. McCabe likes to come near home, and I like to agree with my opponent when I can in matters of this sort, and so I will oblige him by coming to England. Who were the men in England that lifted their voices and agitated the minds of the community until slavery was ended ? (A Voice : " Bradlaugh. ") Bradlaugh was born a hundred years too late. Men like Clarkson and Wilberforce and Buxton—those were the men ; and before them away back to the early days of the Quakers. These were the men who fought this evil ; these were the men who stirred up the mind of the country, and they did not rest day nor night till that abomination had been swept away. (Some laughter.) Our friend referred to the disappearance of learning from Europe, and asked how it was that the wonderful school system of education in the fourth century of the Christian era had disappeared so soon after that period. Now, Mr. McCabe knows that just about that time there were a number of great movements in the world. He knows—for I have seen the references to them in his own writings—that from the North of Europe there came down those hordes which are known as the barbarians. He knows that those hordes overran Europe ; that those hordes changed great and flourishing tracts of country into desert places. He knows that they burnt and slew nearly everything that they came across, and he knows that for hundreds of years that sort of thing went on in Europe. And he knows that all scientific students of history are agreed that that was one of the great movements disturbing and upsetting all the ordinary customs and institutions of civilised life ; and that it was only as those hordes were taken hold of, influenced, quieted, built into the corporate life of the nations, that any opportunity was given for a healthy educational system to be established. Our friend also knows that, dark as were the periods known as the Dark Ages, the institutions which were the main causes of the preservation of the learning of ancient days were the institutions called Monasteries. He knows that those institutions carried over that vast and troublous sea of barbarian inroads and disturbances the ancient learning, and preserved it for modern times, and that the best historians of Europe agree in giving the credit to those Monastic institutions.

I would like to remind our friend that he has failed to appreciate until his last speech one or two points on which I have been laying considerable emphasis last night and this evening. I never heard him last night, I have not heard him this evening, say that slavery existed as a gigantic evil in Rome, until his last speech. (A Voice : " No ; you were reading Lecky ; how could you ? ") Well, my dear friends, you



may have heard it, but I did not; and the report which will be published will tell which of us is right; but I tell you I did not hear it. The slavery which existed was not spoken of, if my memory serves me rightly, as being in any sense the gigantic evil of sixty millions which I have been emphasising last night and this evening. Not until the last speech did Mr. McCabe refer to those sixty millions of slaves. Our friend was good enough to say, in reference to Mr. Lecky, that there are to be found in his writings jam and powder, and he said I had been wise enough to take the jam. Well, I should be a fool to take the powder. (Laughter.) The jam is the thing which appeals to the delicate palate which it is fed into. It is something to nourish one; and, unless a man has absolute need of powder for cleansing purposes, he must be a very foolish man to take it. I want to come a little bit closer to Mr. McCabe. (Laughter.) Oh! I am enjoying it very much. I want to know what great characters he, as a Secularist, can place alongside the Christian St. Patrick, St. Columba, the Cuthberts, the Ninians, and the Alfreds of the Christian Church; what women he can compare with Christians like St. Elizabeth of Hungary; what saints with Bernard of Clairvaux, Francis of Assisi, Thomas à Kempis; what heroic workers he can name like the Eliots, the Pymms and Hampdens of the seventeenth century; what names he can place alongside Carey—(some interruption, which made a part of the sentence inaudible)—Williams, Moffatt, Livingstone, Paton, and Harrington. Whom can he compare with Archbishop Langton, who faced a king and dared the power of the Pope in order to get the Magna Charta, which is the foundation of our liberties and of our institutions? Who among Secularists has done so much for education as Knox in Scotland? Where are your Florence Nightingales, your Sister Doras, your Agnes Joneses, your Catherine Booths? I want to know—I am out for serious business—where are your John Goughs, your Francis Murphys, your Earls of Shaftesbury, your Sir John Kirks, who are working for the children? Where are your university settlements, your associations for young men and young women? Where are your crusaders who go forth to fight the hydra-headed monster of iniquity? (Laughter.) Well, of course, you may take this as a joke—(The CHAIRMAN: "Please play the game")—you may take this as a joke; but these are high human concerns, and every earnest man ought to face them seriously. Let us see some of the practical results of your Secularism. Then we will listen; but until then we will say that your Secularism consists of high-sounding words, of boasts of a time that is to be. All around us are suffering masses of humanity, needing light, needing help, needing life. Have you got it? Then tell us where it is to be found. (Applause.)

The CHAIRMAN: Mr. McCabe will now have a quarter of an hour.

Mr. McCABE: Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen,—Permit me to interpret the feeling that I think exists in the audience, and is misunderstood by Mr. Lee. You were not laughing at the Christian men and

women who had done big things in the world; you were laughing because he was not speaking to the point. I submit to Mr. Lee——

Mr. LEE: On a point of order, Mr. Chairman, I submit that no disputant has a right to say whether an opponent speaks to the point. That is for the Chairman to decide.

Mr. McCABE: Allow me to say that as Mr. Lee has openly said that this audience is predominantly rationalistic, and has repeatedly insulted this audience to-night—only two minutes ago he——

The CHAIRMAN: Order, please. Listen carefully to both sides. Mr. McCabe says that Mr. Lee insulted this audience. If you listen, he will perhaps explain in what way Mr. Lee has done that.

Mr. McCABE: I have more substantial things to deal with. When the audience laughed, Mr. Lee said: "Serious people would take these things seriously." Now, if you do not regard that as an insult to the audience, no harm is done; I thought it was, and I therefore merely gave this audience—it was the whole point of my raising the question—an opportunity of assuring Mr. Lee that they were not laughing at Christian men and women, but that in their opinion he was not speaking to the point, and that was why they were making a noise. Mr. Lee sprang at once at the French Revolution. "Do not I know," he asked; and he has been asking me a good deal in the last quarter of an hour: "Surely Mr. McCabe knows"—this and that. No, Sir; I do not know a single one of the things that you put before us as facts. I know perfectly well that there were abominations committed by the Terrorists of the French Revolution. Mr. Lee says he knows the literature well. He knows then, if only from Carlyle, that there was such an appalling burden of injustice lying on France, after fifteen hundred years of Christian power, that the soul of the people was stung into violent revolution. He must know, too, that the men who founded the French Revolution were not the men who committed the atrocities of the Terror at all. He must know that such men as Talleyrand, such men as Siéyès, the men who formed the French Revolution, as soon as they had made a constitution, dissolved their Assembly, and enacted most solemnly that not a single one of them should take office for two years. They put all the best men of France out of the service of the country. They let in, by a serious blunder—a blunder due, however, to a high motive—the rabble and the demagogues of France; and it was a totally different set of men who committed the atrocities from those who committed the Revolution. Mr. Lee says that those men had eliminated all Christianity from their minds. But Taine, in his *Origins of Contemporary France*, says that the vast majority were Roman Catholics, even at the height of the Terror. Yet suppose, for the sake of argument, that they were Secularists: they had their day, and then Christianity had its day. There came a Napoleon who set them on one side, and then there came a Wellington who swept Napoleon aside;

and then the Christian monarchs and archbishops and clergymen came back to their thrones. Then came the White Terror, which lasted for twenty years, and the shame of which would absolutely blot out all that the Terrorists did. In Portugal alone, in four years, Don Pedro put to death 15,000 men and women; 15,000 were sent to the colonies of Africa, and 30,000 were put in gaol in Portugal. In Spain far more suffered; and in Spain bishops and monks helped the Government to pursue its brutal policy with their Society of the Exterminating Angel. In Austria and Northern Italy, in the Papal States and the Kingdom of Naples, the White Terror pursued its calamitous course. And in that Terror you do not get ignorant and outrageously wronged men avenging themselves. The French Terrorists were terrible men indeed—they were the product of fifteen centuries of keeping the people in ignorance and in cruel suppression. But those other Terrorists, those White Terrorists, those cultivated monarchs and statesmen like Metternich, those archbishops and bishops who counselled and sanctioned everything they did—what of the atrocities they committed in Europe, not in the interest of mankind, but for their own selfish interest, to guard their wealth and power, and keep the mass of the people in ignorance? That was the Christian reply to the French Revolution. Further, we came again to the question of slavery. Mr. Lee says that Theodore Parker may or may not have said what I quoted; I am not interested; it is stated in the only history that we have in England of slavery—Ingram's *History of Slavery and Serfdom*. The words are given there as I gave them. Mr. Lee brought in Lloyd Garrison in opposition to my contention. But the fact that Garrison—a layman—worked for the abolition of slavery does not in the slightest degree alter the statement of Theodore Parker, that if the Church had dropped through the Continent they would have got on faster. Man after man among the liberators said the Churches were opposing them. Ingram himself says that in the slave States the Churches used all their influence to prevent the abolition of slavery. That is a real authority on the point. In regard to the disappearance of learning, I am asked, Don't I know (I know very well, because Mr. Lee has obtained this from one of my own books!) that when the schools disappeared Rome was flooded with a wave of barbarism. I have said so in everything I have written. But what I asked in my speeches was not merely why the schools disappeared in a hundred years, but why they waited seventeen hundred years to be set up again. Mr. Lee says they had to wait till the hordes of barbarians were drafted into civilisation. One of those hordes, the Ostrogoths, became completely civilised within fifty years. Mohammedanism took in hand worse barbarians than those who conquered Rome, and in 150 years it made one of the most brilliant civilisations in Europe out of them. The religion that came long after Christianity lifted barbarians in 150 years into such a civilisation that they came into Spain and taught Europe how to have clean houses and schools, and to exercise the methods of science. Mr. Lee says that we owe to the monks of that troubled age the preservation of ancient learning. We owe to them the utter destruction of nine-tenths



of Latin literature, and we owe to them the preservation of scarcely a single work of Greek literature. It is well known to modern scholars that the whole of mediæval Europe, until the Moors brought it to them, had not one single work of Aristotle, and had possibly only one of Plato—the *Timæus*; and we would exchange the whole of the works of classical literature for Aristotle and Plato. They were in Europe when Christianity came to power. What happened to them? The whole of the literature came back from the old Greek sources by way of the Moorish civilisation. I do not thank those monks, who had the only places respected in warfare, because, while they received magnificent libraries of thousands of volumes (there were libraries of a hundred thousand books in the world when Christianity came), they have preserved just a meagre smattering, a handful, of the vast literature that the Latin and Greek worlds had bequeathed. I do not thank them for retaining the few, because I cannot forget that they have destroyed some of the greatest literary treasures of the world.

Further, on a verbal point, Mr. Lee has pleaded that I did not admit slavery as a gigantic evil. I expressly challenge him. I said that the greatest evil of the Roman world was slavery, because my purpose was to ask what the Church had done. I still wait for those Christians who condemned it in particular, as the Stoics did, before the ninth century. If I did not speak of the sixty millions, it is because that figure is hopelessly conjectural, and probably greatly exaggerated. There were most likely not more than a hundred million people in the whole of the Roman world at any period of its existence, and the sixty million slaves is probably enormously exaggerated. At all events, it is so precarious and conjectural that I should not have dreamed of putting it before you.

Finally, I was asked what great characters I am going to put beside the saints of the Christian Church. I respect all the Christian ones. I know perfectly well that there were splendid characters in those fifteen hundred years of Christian work and life, when—will Mr. Lee remember this when we acknowledge the fine character of many of his men and women?—if they had taken a different line, if they had said “I don’t believe these doctrines,” not a single one of them would have come down to us except as a person burned at the stake in the squares of the cities. When Christianity came to power it pushed everybody else off the planet; and now we are asked what these other people were doing during the fifteen hundred years! Take modern times—take the time when a man is free, as he is, happily, to-day, to come out and speak freely. I remember Sir John Robinson, reviewing my first book, said: “It is a good job he is writing three hundred years after the days of the Smithfield fires.” It is quite true. Take the world since men have been free to say whether they believe in Christianity or not; take it since the beginning of the French Revolution—the modern humanitarian period. Take the men and women in England who have said, “I do not believe your Christian dogmas”—men like Robert Owen, like Mill, like Holyoake, like Bradlaugh. You can, if you like, take the nineteenth century, when men were free. Take the whole number of those who specifically represented Christian

doctrines—the clergy, the leaders of the people. Compare them in numbers with those who were leading the little band of humanitarians, and I say that the proportion of the humanitarians in the reform movements of the time would, if drawn out, be a thousand to one of the leaders of the Christian bodies. Nearly every one of them stated that Christianity was perishing, and claimed not simply that we should set aside Christianity, but divert into the service of mankind all this great energy which had been wasted upon theological doctrines and controversies in the past. Robert Owen will take his stand side by side with any of your great characters in Christian history. I know your Catherines of Siena—I know the lives of all those saints. I probably had a larger education in them than Mr. Lee. I shudder, as I look back on those times when Francis of Assisi mortified his flesh, and those of his kind went through those ghastly penances during century after century. And Mr. Lee will admit that all that was a mistake—a hallucination. How much better it would have been for men if all this that was wasted on the mediæval ideals which the Protestant world says were illusions—how much better if it had been devoted to the upraising of mankind! If it had been, the world would not have had to wait till the nineteenth century for protests against war and against the horrible conditions under which workers and children were working in England.

What was England like less than a hundred years ago, when children of seven and eight were working twelve hours a day—when they were carried from the workhouses to the North to be worked twelve and fourteen hours a day, to be driven with scourges until the last ounce of energy was worked out of them? What was this appalling England, in which Shaftesbury and others—Christians—stood out? I quite acknowledge that they were Christians; but I ask, Why had we to wait seventeen hundred years for them? Why do you find so few of them till you come to modern times, when scepticism spreads, and when there is an independent body of critics abroad bringing pressure to bear on the Churches?

My time is almost up. I have put before you a claim that Roman, pre-Christian civilisation did an enormous amount for man, in point of intelligence, in point of civilisation, in social development, and gave a brilliant promise of remedying the great evils of the Roman world. I have put before you that during the seven centuries following the triumph of Christianity not a single one of those promises was carried out. Nearly every reform of the Roman world was trodden down and destroyed. Only as later, and generally humanitarian, stimuli entered into the life of Europe did humanity slowly climb out of the abyss to the same level as it had occupied sixteen or seventeen hundred years before. I say the only lesson you can draw from that is that Christianity has failed, and man has succeeded. The theologians discovered God; the early Stoic reformers discovered man; and these later Stoic reformers of our day have re-discovered man. They are pointing out that there is in this planet an almost inexhaustible wealth of happiness if you will develop it; and men and women, passing aside from the rituals and creeds of the Churches,

are saying to each other, "Let us make our heaven and our golden age here and now on the earth." (Loud and protracted applause.)

The CHAIRMAN : Mr. Lee will now have the last quarter of an hour. I hope all those who can will keep their seats and hear him out.

Mr. LEE : Mr. Chairman, Mr. McCabe, Ladies and Gentlemen,—It appears that among the many abilities possessed by my friendly opponent is the ability of thought-reading. That is, he knows why you laughed when I was speaking; and interprets that to suit his own convenience. If he has interpreted your thoughts aright, I do not think it redounds very much to the credit of your principles of free thought or your love of fair play. Our friend, in his second speech this evening, referred to the Council—the name of which escapes me for the moment—which taught that it was right for a man to keep a concubine. Now, Mr. McCabe knows, or he ought to know, what are the actual facts concerning that Council. And therefore he will be able—though he cannot to-night, he will be able in any correspondence he likes to make—to correct me on this matter. That Council dealt with a condition of society which had come to this pass : in that society there were men occupying, as we should say, high social positions in life, and there were women occupying low positions in life. Now, Mr. McCabe knows that the law of Rome forbade that man occupying that high social place from marrying that woman occupying that low place. Therefore, even if a man loved a woman, according to the Roman law he could not marry her—she was not in his station. The only thing he could do was to live with her. Now the Council to which Mr. McCabe referred overrode that iniquitous Roman law, and said, "We will regard you as though you were really man and wife." Now, if all Mr. McCabe's other references to Church history are as trustworthy as that, I do not think much of them. Then Mr. McCabe came to the French Revolution, and he was good enough to say that I must know, even if I had read Carlyle, that there were appalling burdens lying on the people. Yes, of course there were. Revolutions do not break out without any reason, and there were very appalling evils which the common people of France were undoubtedly lying under. But our friend went on to give you a somewhat heated narrative of what he called the White Terror, which lasted for twenty years. But that White Terror is one thing, and the Red Terror of blood in Paris was another thing ; and there is all the difference in those two descriptions. Bad as these things were in Portugal and Austria, on the narrow plane of Paris itself there were iniquities which can only adequately be described as a sickening, red revolution. But our friend went on to speak of slavery, and my reference to Theodore Parker and my introduction of Lloyd Garrison ; and he said, in the most light and airy way possible, that this did not matter, because Garrison was a layman. What does it matter what he was, if he were a Christian? That is the point we are getting at—he was a Christian, and the moulding thing in his life was the power of Jesus Christ, His love for man, working in his life and



expressing itself in his speech and action. You might imagine from Mr. McCabe's references to this that no clergyman had anything to do with that movement against slavery. Does not our friend know that the spirit of the Rev. John Brown, one of the great outstanding historic figures of that time, was put into some lines which fired and flooded other men's lives with vigour and power to fight that iniquity?—

John Brown's body lies mouldering in the grave,  
But his soul goes marching on.

Our friend then tells us of the disappearance of learning, and the waves of barbarism which swept over Europe for a hundred years. I think that was the phrase he used—a hundred years. Does Mr. McCabe wish this audience to believe that this wave of barbarism was limited to a hundred years? (Mr. McCABE: "I never said it.") I apologise; my memory seriously betrayed me. I accept Mr. McCabe's statement that he did not use that word. I will, however, say this: these invasions of barbarians were a *series* of successive, ruinous invasions, which upset the then existing civilisation, and, as Hume points out in his history, reached even to this land of ours, until monks and churches and everything else went down under their pressure and their iniquitous devilry. But Mr. McCabe went on to tell us about the Moors, and their bringing in the writings, I think he said, of Aristotle and others. Now, Mr. McCabe knows that these Moors, who are accredited with all this wonderful classical learning and such like, had to depend upon Christians for their translations.

Mr. McCabe quarrels with the idea of there being sixty millions of slaves in the Roman Empire, and he says—on what authority I have not the remotest idea—that there were not more than one hundred millions of people in the Roman Empire. Why, Edward Gibbon has computed in the most careful way the population of the Roman Empire, and he gives this sixty millions of slaves as existing there; and I would rather credit the enumeration of Edward Gibbon, who was opposed to Christianity, and who had given his life to the study of Rome, than I would the statement made on this platform by Mr. McCabe. Then, when I ask our friend where are your heroes and such like, he says: "Oh, if in those days of the power of Christianity, in those ages to which you were referring, any unbelievers had dared to say 'We don't believe what the Churches say,' they would have been burned!" I see! I see! I understand now what freethought means. It means, according to Mr. McCabe, be a freethinker, but think of your own comfort first. But, Mr. Chairman and Ladies and Gentlemen, the early Christians were faced with fire; but did they keep their opinions to themselves? No. They went forth, little companies of men and women, and faced the multiplied power and might of Imperial Rome. They were given up to prison, to the arena, and to wild beasts; but the blood of the martyrs became the seed of the Church. You freethinkers, who think so much of the glorious doctrine of freethought that you won't express it lest your skin should be singed—

that is a glorious idea, is it not? I want no clearer demonstration than that of the weakness and the poverty and the immoral ideas to be found in freethought. *It is immoral for a man to refuse to speak that which he knows to be true lest he should suffer for it.* Oh, my dear friends—(laughter)—I like you very much; I like your theory of freethought; but if that is how you put it into practice I would not pick it up in the street. Our friend wants to know what was the condition of England a hundred years ago, when children were made to work for twelve and more hours per day; and, lest the thought of Lord Shaftesbury might have darted into my mind, he refers to it. Who brought in, who put the new law upon the Statute Book of England—(A Voice: "Robert Owen.") Did he? He did not. (Interruption.) It is very amusing, Mr. Chairman, to see how very impossible it is for these good people to control themselves. I know you don't like what I am saying, but I really thought that you people believed in free speech. Why, you would really do very well for Roman inquisitors. No, it was Lord Shaftesbury who agitated in this country until, on the Statute Book of England, was a law which made it impossible for a child to work in a factory for more than ten hours a day. Now, Mr. McCabe tells you that he has given you a series of pictures of Rome, and that I have given you some different ideas from what his ideas have been. I admit that that is so. But will you remember, please, that every statement Mr. McCabe has made about Rome has been made in a twofold way; he has talked to you in generalities, he has quoted no actual authority, he has referred to few people by name—we have not seen their books, and we have not been able to test them for ourselves. I, on the other hand, have my books on the table. I have not quoted an author, so far as I know, this evening, unless I have had the book under my eyes. But, Mr. Chairman, shall we for one moment allow the heat of this debate to cool down, and will this audience for one moment try to listen to the final words of the one who is to close this debate? I see before me to-night two men, earnest, thoroughly persuaded of the truth of their position. I also see those two men seeking to seed the thought and the life of this audience with ideas which they hope you will put into practice. I see in these two men illustrations of two contending principles; and, looking at the past, as I have been trying to do and as Mr. McCabe has been trying to do, I have no hesitation in saying that what has happened in the past will happen again in the future—that those who try to live a life which does not reach upward to God will have a cramped and disappointed life. (Applause.)

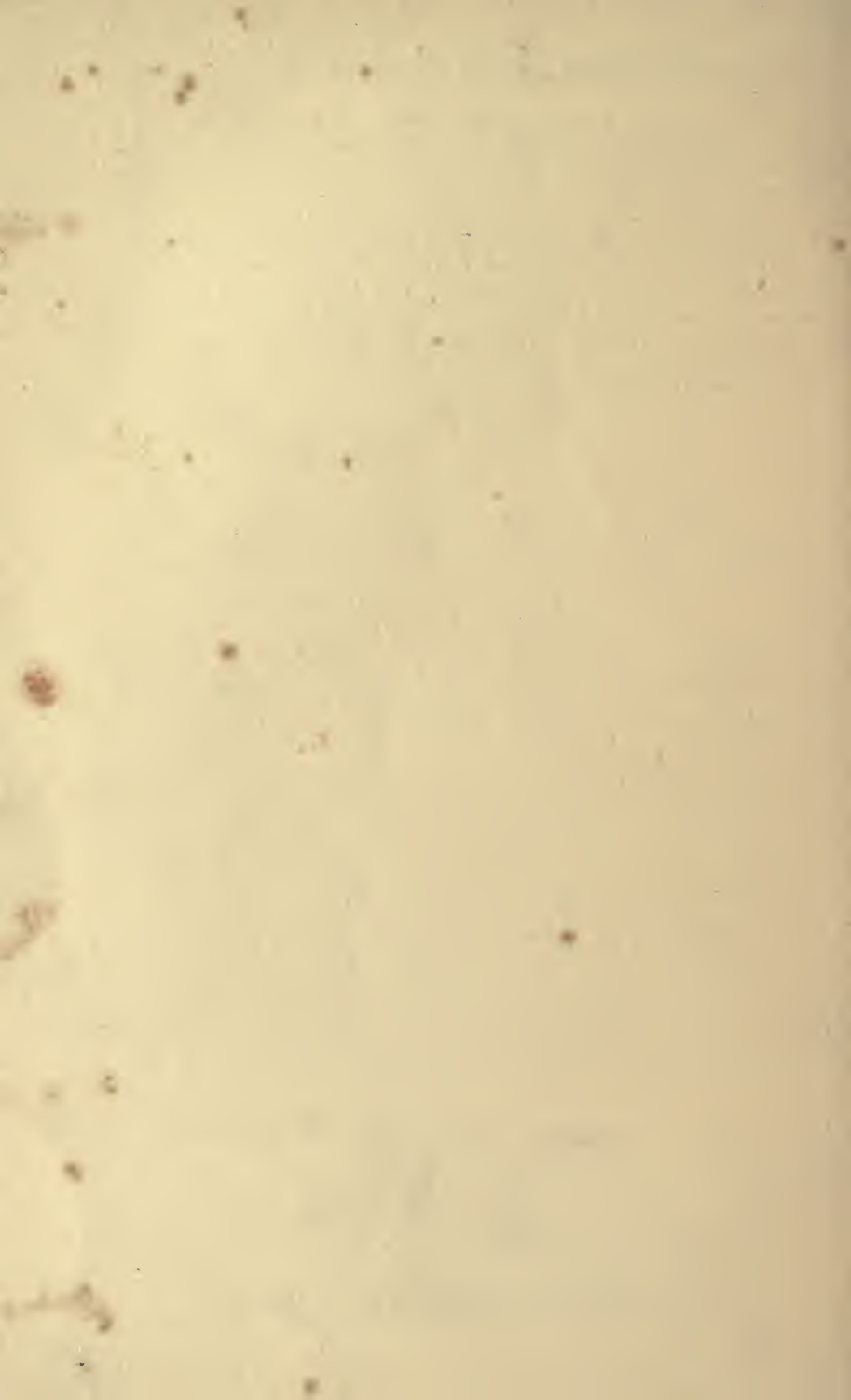
Mr. McCABE, who rose amid great applause, said: I am really beginning to suspect that this was a packed jury all along. Allow me to say one word. The tickets for this meeting were, I understand, evenly distributed between the two bodies, and we cannot help it if the majority of our friends came. The Chairman to-night has done his work admirably under some difficulties, and I therefore very cordially and very sincerely move a vote of thanks to him for his conduct.

Mr. LEE : I have the greatest possible pleasure in seconding this vote of thanks to our Chairman. He has been a strong man, he has ruled well under difficult circumstances, and I hope we shall now all give him a hearty vote of approval.

The CHAIRMAN : Mr. McCabe, Mr. Lee, I thank you very much for your very kind remarks. I consider it a very excellent audience—this and the one last night. Our passions run high because we are enthusiastic for our side. I think the audience has behaved exceedingly well, and it has given me no trouble at all under the circumstances.

The proceedings then terminated.





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