

the Lord had opened to *give heed to the things that were spoken by Paul.*"

It remains for us to observe the remarkable *fulfilment* of names of localities mentioned in the Book of Jesus, which is to be discerned in the record of Acts in dealing with this Macedonian journey.

E. C. SELWYN.

## SCIENTIFIC LIGHTS ON RELIGIOUS PROBLEMS.

### V.

#### IS NATURE MORALLY INDIFFERENT?

WHAT is the prevailing impression suggested to the mind by the contemplation of Nature? I think with most people it is a sense of being in the presence of a power which is indifferent to us. Perhaps the impression is most felt in the hour of sorrow. In seasons of joy we experience the poet's rapture—the sense of communion with wood and field. But in the time of grief, in the suffering of personal wrong or in the witnessing of public injustice, I think the most general sentiment is a feeling of being *overlooked* by the physical universe. I believe this is a far more common experience than the impression of an *angry* universe. Even in her stormiest moments Nature does not suggest that; if she did, her aspect would be less terrible. Analyze your thunderstorm, your hurricane, your tornado—what is it that invests the scene with an element of terror? Is it the dread that the powers of Nature may be your enemies? No; it is the sense that the powers of Nature are indifferent to you. Even the belief in their enmity would not be so bad. It is the sense of being overlooked that appals you. It is the impression that between you and the outside universe there exists no bond of interest whatever—that there is neither love nor hatred, neither pleasure nor anger,

neither peace nor war, but simply a separating sea—that sea of separation whose width is indicated by the portentous phrase, “Nothing in common.”

But perhaps it is in the moral sphere that men habitually feel this most keenly. Kant says that there are two things which fill him with wonder—the starry heavens above and the moral law within. But there is a third thing which has filled men with greater wonder still—the seeming want of congruity *between* these. Whatever be the relation of Nature to Man, it seems at first sight to be a relation indifferent to morality. The immediate perception of the eye can detect no connexion between the deeds of a man and the movements of the outer universe. The sun rises equally on the evil and on the good. We do not see the hand of the assassin paralysed in the act of committing his crime. The storm does not spare a ship because it is carrying a pious missionary. The lightning strikes down the useful life side by side with the useless. There are no moments of scepticism so deep as those in which we seem to behold the moral indifference of Nature. It is not her sternness that appals us. I think her stern aspects are often her least repelling aspects; we never experience such a sense of dissonance as in the physical illumination of a tragic hour. What disturbs us is the fact that, whether she smiles or frowns, her smile and her frown are to all appearance equally non-moral. We can see bright sunshine gleaming over a field of carnage; we can discern black clouds obstructing a beneficent journey. If the sunshine came uniformly to the latter and the clouds always visited the former, we should recognize in both cases a cause of gratitude. It is the apparent absence of congruity between Nature and Man that makes the smile seem insipid and the frown look meaningless.

But now let me ask, What has been the source of this impression? Has it come from science? No; not, at

least, from the latest science. It is the product of disappointed poetry; we have not found in Nature the poetic justice which we expected to find, and we have concluded that there is no justice. I venture to think that the latest science has contradicted the early poetry. I think that the doctrine of Evolution has disproved the assertion that Nature is morally indifferent. I think the process of evolution, as it appears in our world, is a distinctly moral process. When we speak of the dissonance between the starry heavens above and the moral law within, we are looking at the world through the old spectacles. We forget that, if the doctrine of Evolution be true, we can no longer accept such a view. Whatever morality exists on this earth has come originally from the stars, for the earth itself is an evolution from the stars. Prove that there is in *this* world a moral law, and you have connected the moral law with *all* worlds. This earth and all that is therein is the product of the heavens as surely as the fruit is the product of the tree. For all that is developed here below the starry spaces are accountable; whatever has its life on earth has its pedigree in the heavens. Dissonance is out of the question—it has ceased to be a possible thought. If you find a moral law written in your heart, and if you can trace that inscription to a process of earthly evolution, you will be bound to trace it farther back still; for the earth is itself the result of heavenly forces, and the terrestrial development has its root in the celestial glory.

Do we, then, find that what we call the moral law is the result of earthly evolution; in other words, is the scientific process of the present world a process of morality? I maintain that it is, and will try to prove it. But there is a preliminary question which must first be answered. What *is* morality? What *is* that law which man finds written in his heart? I will take the answer of science, and see if it squares with the answer of religion. Let Herbert Spencer

be the interpreter. In his great work, *The Data of Ethics*, he maintains that the root of all morality is sympathy. The word which in modern times is used to indicate this sympathy is "Altruism." Altruism is the opposite of selfishness or individualism; it is the term used to denote the life for others. To say, then, that sympathy is the root of virtue is to say that all virtue relates to Man's duty towards his brother man—not his conduct towards himself. In this view I entirely concur. I do not think that anything is entitled to the name of 'moral which has not a reference to the life of another. There are virtues which consist in personal self-restraint; but to make them virtues their motive must be *impersonal*. Economy is not a virtue unless it is prompted by altruism. If I am hoarding for myself, my deed is outside the moral life; I am still in this respect on a level with the earliest animal world. Or, take self-sacrifice. This too involves a personal restraint; but it is valuable just in so far as its motive is *impersonal*. Nothing makes self-sacrifice a virtue but its view to the benefit of another. If I give my body to be 'burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing. No amount of sacrifice, no amount of privation, no amount of toil, will lift an act one inch nearer to the standard of morality if that act has not been prompted by the motive of Altruism. The man who struggles for his own mutilation is not a whit higher in the scale than the man who struggles for his own pleasure. Nothing sanctifies the sacrifice of self but the desire to serve another—be that other Divine or human. Neither the Epicurean pursuit of gain nor the Buddhist pursuit of loss is in itself a state of morality. Either of them may *become* so. If I seek gain for another's enrichment, if I seek loss for another's salvation, I have lifted both states into morality—but I have done it by the power of Altruism.

Now, I wish to point out that in this identification of

morality with sympathy Mr. Spencer is at one with the great lawgiver of the Old Testament and the greater Lawgiver of the New. There are two documents which stamp respectively the moral attitudes of Moses and Jesus; the one is the law of Sinai, the other is the fragment popularly known as the Lord's Prayer. And these two are one in their main feature; they both found morality upon Altruism. Moses says, "Thou shalt love the Lord with all thy heart, and thy neighbour as thyself"; Jesus says, "*Our Father, which art in heaven.*" Moses expresses himself in the form of law, Jesus gives His code in the form of aspiration; but both strike one initial and common keynote—Altruism. It is more remarkable in the case of Jesus than in the case of Moses. Moses is dealing with the relation of man to man, and therefore it is natural that Altruism should be emphasized. But Jesus is dealing with the most individual of all moments—the hour of prayer. Here, if anywhere, we should expect the man to be alone and divided from all beside. Such is not the case. The individual man is bidden to forget his individuality precisely in that act which is supposed to be his most private privilege. When he has entered the secret place of devotion and shut the door to be alone with God, he is commanded to reopen the door that his prayers may embrace the multitude. He is told to strike the note of Altruism, not Egoism. He is to say, "*Our Father.*" He is not to follow the common method of praying first for himself and then for others. He is to have no prayer for himself exclusively. Before he asks anything at all, he is to consider how the granting of his petition will affect other people. The document called the Lord's Prayer—professedly the Christian model for all prayer—is the most altruistic document in the world, and every time it is repeated in the Christian Church the Christian Church pledges itself to the cause of Altruism.

There is, then, a perfect agreement between science and

religion as to the identification of morality with sympathy. The Christian Church would say, "Sin is a transgression of the law of God"; Mr. Herbert Spencer would say, "Sin is a transgression of the law of Altruism." But, in the light of the Christian doctrine that God is Love, these mean the same thing. To the Christian Church and the modern scientist alike, sin is selfishness and morality is socialness. In the view of both, the best man is the most sympathetic man—the man best adjusted to his social environment. Here, then, is a common starting-point—*morality is sympathy*; and we are now in a position to advance. The next question is, Where does sympathy come from? How do we reach it? Is it an original element of life, or is it the result of education—of evolution? Is it born, or is it made? Is it a root, or is it a fruit? Has it been the sower of the precious seeds that lie within the heart, or is it itself the last result of the sowing—the latest flower of the garden?

On this subject there is a discrepancy between the popular view and the scientific view. The popular view is that we become social through sympathy; the scientific view is that we become sympathetic through society. The one holds that we are drawn into companies by a mutual feeling of regard; the other holds that we are drawn into companies by compulsion, and that mutual regard comes afterwards. The one says, "A hereditary bias has driven men into companionship"; the other says, "Men have been forced to unite by the necessities of life, and the union has created a hereditary sympathetic bias." The former is the typical view of the poet; the latter is the doctrine of Mr. Herbert Spencer.

As to which of these is right I will not here inquire. My personal opinion has undergone a change in the matter. At first I was strongly disposed to the poetic view; latterly I have gone over to the side of Herbert Spencer. But there is one point on which I have no doubt. I feel

quite convinced that the Altruism of the *New Testament* is based upon the Spencerian principle. Let us consider the facts. Christianity is professedly the attempt to establish a kingdom of Altruism—a kingdom in which love for others will dominate all selfish considerations, in which the least shall be the greatest, in which the one shall give his life for the many. That is the character of the kingdom which Christ designed to set up in the world, which to some extent He has set up in the world. But now I would direct attention to a very remarkable point. *How* does Christ propose to set up this kingdom of Altruism? Does He publish a manifesto inviting all the sympathetic men in Galilee to come together for the salvation of mankind? On the contrary, He does not make His first appeal to sympathy at all. He asks men to come together for their *own* salvation. He appeals to their personal need. He does not require a certain character as the condition of entrance into His kingdom. He only asks willingness to be enrolled. The first citizens of the Christian commonwealth come together for *worldly* considerations. They come through the hope of alleviating their earthly burdens, of finding rest from their labour and their ladenness. They come on the chance of being individually cured. In a sense they are "*compelled* to come in"—driven into fellowship as the cattle are driven by the storm. The earliest subjects of the kingdom of Christ are united in brotherhood by no other motive than the exigencies of life.

And yet from this unlikely beginning there has eventually emerged the most altruistic kingdom that has ever flashed before the human eye or floated before the human imagination—a kingdom which has almost heralded the *birth* of charity, which has found for the first time a place for the poor and needy, and vindicated against oppression the rights of man as Man. Christian sympathy has not originated

Christian contact ; yet it has been the result of that contact. Altruism has come from union. Men brought together by a common interest have remained together through a mutual interest. We become benevolent to the things which have blessed us ; we associate them with the joy of a special place and time. By-and-by the place and time are forgotten, and we love them for themselves alone. Man sought his brother for protection of himself ; he became benevolent to his brother on account of that protection ; he transmitted to his children the *feeling* of the benevolence without the memory of its cause. That is the Altruism of the Christian commonwealth ; that is the Altruism of Mr. Herbert Spencer.

Let us now see how, according to the doctrine of Evolution, the course of Nature has *developed* the kingdom of Altruism. If we give attention to the process, we shall dismiss forever the notion that Nature is indifferent to morality. And I would have you observe at the outset that Altruism is not the *original* law of life. By the admission of Mr. Spencer the original law of life is the opposite—individualism or selfishness. The first thing organic nature did was to pour forth a swarm of individual lives which had no sense of relation to one another. Each of the primitive creatures was an isolated unit. So far as consciousness went, each form was like Melchisedek—without father or mother or descent. Its life dwelt apart from other lives. It knew no tie—not even the rudimentary tie of parental instinct. The most prolific sphere of the world's inhabitants was precisely the sphere of the least Altruism—the sphere where each existence was an island—held within itself by the environment of a surrounding sea whose waves were traversed by no sail of sympathy.

Now, this is what I call the origin of evil ; that is to say, it is the origin of that which in the future was to be *termed* evil. The first condition of life was a condition of selfish-



ness ; and selfishness was in the future to become sin. Why in the future? Why would no man dream of saying that these primitive creatures were leading a mean and degraded life? Simply because there can be no valley where there is no mountain. Selfishness is not sin in a moneron. It is not merely that the moneron knows no better ; there is no better to be known. There can be no degradation where there is no height. Individualism was born, before Altruism ; and as long as Altruism was unborn, individualism was blameless—it was the law of Nature. Yet it was not the perfect law, the final law. There is a saying, “ Self-preservation is the law of Nature ” ; and I firmly believe it. But the whole question is, What is the *self*? The moneron’s self is the tiny life compressed within its own body ; the man’s self is co-extensive with his love. Self-preservation means something very different in the latter case from what it signifies in the former. Evolution does not propose to alter the principle of *self-preservation* ; it proposes to extend the dimensions of the *self* ; my definition of Altruism is simply “ the sense of a *larger self*.” That is what Nature has to create in the process of evolution. It exists not from the *beginning* ; individualism is first in the field. To be first in the field gives selfishness an advantage in the race—an advantage of which it has most powerfully availed itself. Evolution has found hard the task of overtaking it, of surpassing it. The progress has been slow ; and the difficulty of the journey tends to confirm my view of the alliance between Evolution and Morality.

Altruism, indeed, has not waited for the coming of Man. It has had its premonitions in the animal world. The first creation, as we have seen, was purely individual. But by-and-by the island life became bridged at certain points. The creatures began to gather into companies—some through fear, some for shelter, some for food. I doubt not that at first their meeting was conscious ; but heredity

made it instinctive. They would forget the original motive for their union—the dread of individual helplessness, the need of co-operation in their labours, the sense of safety in the sight of numbers. They would forget all this, and remember only as a united result the joy of animal brotherhood.

Every swarm of bees, every band of swallows, is to me a proof of the moral attitude of Nature—the altruistic attitude of Nature. Whatever perturbations brought them together, they are now complacent together—humming together, journeying together. And the proof is all the stronger from the fact that they were not always together. Their union is a conquest; they have won it. That which they possess of the kingdom of Altruism has been secured by war—by struggle. The first stage of evolution was opposed to their Altruism. It was a state of individualism, of separateness, of isolation. They have had to make their way *against* this difficulty, in the teeth of this difficulty. They have *made* that way; and the fact seems to me to indicate a purpose on the part of Nature. If it is a purpose at all, it is a moral purpose. It is Altruism. It is the effort to lead the individual out of his individualism. In the light of such an aim we can no longer assume that Nature is morally indifferent. We have not, indeed, reached the crowning proof of the contrary; that only comes with Man. But we see already the bias of Nature, and it is a significant bias. It is the tendency to set the solitary in families, to combine units into groups, to force separate lives to live in masses. Already, before the birth of Man, Egoism and Altruism are at war in Nature; the Life of Man continues the battle, but transfers it to a new field.

That field is the Human Soul itself. Hitherto the tendency to be gregarious and the tendency to be alone have been represented by two different sets of animals. But now these tendencies are to be represented in a single

life—the heart of an individual man. The human soul is the heir to both. On the one hand it has more need of Altruism than any other creature of the earth. Its long infancy, its protracted helplessness, its declining instinctive power, its comparatively slow attainment of its normal stature, its need to learn the road which previous generations had been able to traverse blindfold—all make it imperative that it should lean on the support of others. On the other hand it retains an individual will—a will to individualism. If it gets Altruism by personality, it gets selfishness by heredity. If present need impels it to come out into the life of others, the inveterate bias of the past constrains it to keep within its own life. There is a law in its members warring against the law of its mind. Yesterday strives with to-day; the old years impede the new hour; the influence of the ancestral stream resists the might of the coming wave.

And the result is that the journey of Man is to be an uphill journey. The kingdom of Altruism which stretches before him is to be slowly won. His progress to his rightful throne is to be no triumphal march; it is to be compassed with difficulties and surrounded with dangers. Not by instinct is Man to proceed to his destined goal. Instinct is against him. Instinct makes for the old régime—the animal régime. His advance into the kingdom of Altruism must be initiated by reason—worldly reason. Doubtless in the fulness of the time his Altruism will *also* become an instinct—the instinct we call Love. But the time is not yet. Man has to approach the multitude for the sake of the loaves. His sympathy is yet in a state of paralysis; he needs a material support; he has to be carried on a bed. He is to be drawn to his brother by a series of slow marches, each prompted by some exigency of his own; and the final stage of brotherhood is to be reached by the converging of roads that seem to lead to no goal.

And yet Man is to find a point of Altruism which is to place him practically in a new sphere of creation—a point of Altruism which is to constitute for him a unique pre-eminence among the creatures of the earth. Nature is to vindicate, in the man, that moral purpose which she has prefigured in the animal. Throughout the whole process the law of self-preservation will remain unbroken; but the self is henceforth to include its brother. The house which once consisted of many rooms is to be made one room by the breaking down of its interior walls. The process will be gradual; it will be slow; it will be resisted. The inner walls of the House of Humanity will not fall like the walls of Jericho—instantaneously at the blast of trumpets. The crisis will come by no blast, but by the reiterated knocking of the ages. None the less will the end be sure. The goal of Humanity is that Man shall love his neighbour as himself, that is, as a part of himself, as a member of his own body. It was a goal for which physical necessity might prepare, but which physical necessity could never constitute. The needs of life could bring the multitude together, but they could not feed the multitude. The feeding of that multitude with the Bread of Altruism implies “a Power not ourselves which makes for righteousness.” It indicates the fulfilment of a definite purpose on the part of that Primal Force which lies at the base of all things. The expansion of the consciousness of self demands the presence and the action of an agency beyond the physical. The nature of this expansion will be considered in the succeeding study.

G. MATHESON.