

Dep. Col.
Thesis

S63495

Copies to } Dr Stewart
 } Canon Murray

Thesis.

"The Problem of the Relation
of the Laws of God in
the Natural or Phenomenal
and Spiritual Worlds."

D. J. Small.

THESIS

"The Problem of the Relation of the Laws of God in the Natural
or Phenomenal and Spiritual Worlds"

Introduction

Chapter 1

Modern science is regarded as the great interpreter of Nature. Scientific inquiry has been traced to the religious nature of man. Prof. Windelband speaking of the origin of science says;—"Nevertheless the new endeavors leading to science grew out of the circle of religious ideas and thereby did science prove itself to be one of the functions which had been differentiated out of the original ~~life~~¹ religious life of human society". There are not wanting those who hope and believe that science shall yet become on the human side the great interpreter of the Spiritual World. Just as the first philosophic endeavors of the human mind prompted by religious feeling took the direction of mythical explanations of nature and the laying down ideals for the guidance of conduct,² so prompted by the same feeling many to-day are using scientific explanations to convince the world of the truth of the revealed word of Nature's God. Just as "The historic phyrecydes of Syrus a contemporary of the early Greek philosophers pre-supposed Zeus as the personality giving order and reason to the world and so in this day some of us believe that scientific thought, as it progresses, will show that the triune God works by the same order and reason in the creation of the worlds, and in the salvation of the souls of men. Pythagoras, the founder of what was, perhaps, the first religious organized society among the Greeks, prompted no doubt, by the Spirit of God, not only, "Protested against the social custom of the people of his time because these customs were weakening the moral bond, but also the spirit, in which he founded his school, was of such a nature that scientific interests could and did flourish in it".⁴ I have taken these cases directly from the original philosophers of nature to point out that there lies in the human mind the vital truths of the revealed world, viz;—a personal God ruling the world and a religious nature in man. But moreover it was always so; wherever an humble contrite heart was intelligently serving God, there not only the spiritual but also the intellectual interests of men prospered. Law and order evolved to stimulate and guide conduct and thought, throughout the whole circle of experience. Witness the effect of modern missions in heathen lands. Witness also the nations of Europe and America in contrast with heathen lands. The problem we have undertaken in this thesis, to set before our minds, shall we hope

1. History of Ancient philosophy, pg.35. 2. Ibid, pg.26; 3. Ibid, pg.27; 4. Ibid, pg.26.

emphasize the same thought, viz, that religion is a power which is inseparably associated with law and order and in if possible a more vital sense. I said "Set before our minds" for a demonstrated solution is not to be hoped for so long as we can only "know in part". The Concise Imperial Dictionary defines "Problem" thus:—"A question proposed for solution". The above is our problem,

It will be necessary to find some principle that may be seen to apply to both worlds. That is, we need a central conception through which we can work. It is true that almost every man who tries to get a glimpse at reality or to think along original lines, however insignificant or brilliant he may be found it necessary to find some fruitful conception, pregnant with truth, from which he might evolve his point of view or around which he might cluster his conceptions. Thus when it was found necessary to account for the law and order observed in the constitution of the world "Anaxagoras conceived a world-forming Intelligence, working with matter by design"⁴. Thus again we see the minds of men called by the constitution of nature to law and intelligence. And as knowledge advanced these concepts worked out more and more clearly till Aristotle at length evolved the idea of a personal spirit. Thus nearly all in ancient and modern times were aided by using a central thought.

The question is, can we find a conception operating in both worlds and at the same time suggesting the chief points in our problem. I have no hesitation in saying "Yes". Such a conception is none other than the old idea of change. As to the part played by this conception in the whole circle of experience, natural and spiritual, let us take a brief glance. In what we call the material world let science itself point us to our coal-bins, our power-driven commercial and war fleets, our railroad engines, the very bread we eat and the houses we live in, the land we walk on and cultivate, as all being evolved to what they are through change. As to the world of consciousness let anyone for a few minutes introspectively observe the changes in feeling in his own experiences. All human progress in any line involves this conception; our spiritual experience is no exception. The Christian's life is "As a light that shineth more and more". It is also held by many scientists that the whole world of conscious process may be accounted for through this conception operating in almost infinitely small changes at a time and through cycles of ages of duration.

4. Swegler's History of Philosophy, page 48.