Tapton
Sheffield – Aug 19

If you have forgotten—may I remind you to ask the Mother to admit me into the Hospital at once, which is not customary? I am afraid lest, in the multiplicity of things you must have to do, you should forget me.

I shall follow as soon as I can.

I do not think that the historical claim will do, in these days, in England. In Europe, in the 18th century, when Physical Science—and particularly astronomy—reached its highest point when Bailly, Laplace, D’Alembert, Diderot & Lavoisier lead the world,—men’s minds were versed in the laws of nature—and yet—not deeply enough to see that the laws of nature were only the mechanical equivalents for God’s thoughts,—nor forces in themselves. And Atheism naturally followed.

In the first half of 19th century, Physiology made a start—and the science of life was substituted for physical science—the organic for the inorganic system, a vital for a mechanical picture. And Pantheism followed (at least in Germany) which considers the Universe as a living thing, a self-developing principle. In England, Sir Robert Peel, & your friend Sidney Herbert are Pantheists.

Now in the latter half of the 19th century—in England, at least, where Mechanics are the ruling papism—Atheism is again, or will be, the ruling principle—if the spiritual feelings are not developed on a par with their intellects. Therefore I don’t think it will do for the Church to rest her claims upon the historic, but upon the scientific principle. The historic made Schlegel, as you say, a Catholic. But the English have never been historians, and he who presents religion to them must do it from the scientific point of view.

Instead of Saints they have had great Civil Engineers—instead of Sisters of Charity, they have had Political Economists: They must have a scientific God to make way against the strides which Science is making—or Atheism will make these strides too. People will make their God till they can find him.

The Ch. of England could not have stood in any country but England because she is such a poor historian.

I have always thought that the great theological fight had yet to be fought out in England between Catholicism & Protestantism. In Germany it was fought out 300 years ago. They know why they are Protestants. I never knew an Englishman who did & and if he enquires, he becomes a Catholic. We took our Protestantism from a king & kept it afterwards, because it suited our ideas of political independence & now we believe, (we don’t believe by Act of Parliament[])]. The Ch. of England is but a “school,” as you said.

But I fear religion must be taught on very different grounds from where it ever has been yet, for people to believe.

FN

Transcription developed by Ling Guo