THE "MYSTICAL" AND "SACRAMENTAL" TEMPERAMENTS.

THERE is a well-known remark of Coleridge to the effect that every man is born either a Platonist or an Aristotelian. And if we take these two terms as implying a difference, not of philosophy but of mental temperament, the distinction is exceedingly true. Plato, the great idealist, stands for all time as the accepted type of that class of mind which draws its knowledge from within—the introspective, intuitional, contemplative type, which, in its extreme form, becomes the mystic, dwelling with closed eyes upon the inner vision. Aristotle, on the other hand, is the great observer, the philosopher of experience, the student of detail, whether in physics or politics, society or art—the type, in a word, of all who draw their knowledge primarily from without—the parent, if at a long distance, of experimental science. These two methods are complementary and not mutually exclusive; both alike are present in all master minds. Plato himself could be at times a close and humorous observer, and Aristotle was a profound metaphysician. But as long as two worlds are before us—a world of thought and a world of things—there will always be an instinctive bias, a dominating tendency, either toward the inward or the outward life. We see the fact writ large upon the history of the world, as, for example, in the broad distinction between the Oriental and the Western mind; or, again, within the compass of a single nation in contrasts like that of the Dorian to the Ionian mood; while in our personal experience, however limited, we can

hardly fail to have met with men who were plainly born to think, born mystics or philosophers, and others who were as obviously born to see and feel, born to be in their measure men of science or of art. The distinction does not turn upon the subject-matter with which men deal, the objects of their interest, the occupations of their life, but upon the mental idiosyncrasy, the tone and temper with which they instinctively approach these things.

Now there is no department of life or thought in which this contrast is more clearly apparent than in religion. In all the great religions of the world we meet with two types of mind—one which feels the Divine presence mainly in the inner movements of the soul, and in order for its fuller fruition flies from the scenes of sense, the dweller in forests or in deserts, the ascetic, the mystic, the recluse; the other, which sees God more clearly in the visible creation, the order and the beauty and the wonder of the world, and worships Him in consequence with sacrament and symbol, solemn ceremonial and artistic rite. Sometimes, as in the Vedas, the two feelings are co-ordinate: sometimes one or the other gives a creed its predominant note. The Greek, for instance, with his temples and images, his ritual processions, his music and song, was struck by the subjectivity of the Persian cult; and the Roman felt a similar contrast between himself and the Teutons of the North, without temples, without statues, without pomp or circumstance of worship. But even when this is the case, we are sure to find, upon inspection, that both elements of humanity are present in every national religion. They may blend and intermingle, and give rise, in particular cases, to endless variations of personal practice and belief; but in themselves they remain distinct and distinguishable factors in the fashioning of human character, and therefore also of human creed.

But anything which is a general characteristic of religion

will naturally be found in Christianity. For we have come to realize of late years, with increasing clearness, how profoundly Christianity is the universal, the Catholic, religion,—as gathering up into itself and investing with a deeper meaning and a higher sanction all the elements of truth in antecedent creeds. "What is now called the Christian religion," says St. Augustine in a well-known passage, "existed among the ancients, from the beginning of human history till the day when Christ came in the flesh; and then the true religion, which had always been in the world, first began to be designated Christian." Accordingly we find that Jesus Christ Himself gives express recognition to both the aspects of religious life that we have described. "God is a Spirit," He says, "and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth"; and again, "the kingdom of God is within you"; "blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God"; while, on the other hand, He taught by parables, and used symbolic action and instituted sacraments with the necessary consequence of that external worship which sacraments involve. Not, of course, that in His teaching the two things were presented as separate, nor that they ever need be separate, when considered in themselves; for no religion can be too spiritual to express itself in external acts of worship; while external worship would, of course, be unreal without a spiritual core. But human nature, as we know it, will always have a bias, a tendency to emphasize one of the two elements in question rather than the other. And we soon notice this in the history of the Church. The Tübingen School indeed exaggerated the hostility of Petrine and Pauline Christianity, and seriously misread the Christian documents in consequence; but a distinction undoubtedly existed, by whatever name we call it, between those who laid stress upon the independence of the new spiritual life, its independence of times and

seasons and ordinances of the law, and those who felt its continuity with the older order, and loved to see it clothed in the ancient forms. And the course which Christian history thenceforth pursued was the resultant of these two forces; their mutual influence and interaction, their opposition and reconciliation, colouring and shaping the subsequent development of the Church. Both tendencies, of course, were present in all normal Christian life, but their stress and strain and emphasis were indefinitely varied, with a corresponding variety in the schools of thought and shades of opinion and modes of practice to which their perpetual play and counterplay gave rise. And what happened in the early Church has inevitably happened in all after ages. It is a familiar commonplace that the external side, the material aspect, of religion, was exaggerated in the Middle Ages till it threatened to destroy all spiritual life; and yet, when we look below the surface, the spiritual element was there. Not only were there hermits and monks and recluses, living in inward as well as outward detachment from the world, but even among the sacerdotalists, the militant ecclesiastics, the political Churchmen, the spirit of St. Bernard was by no means rare—Bernard, who once, we are told, journeyed the livelong day beside Lake Leman, and asked in the evening where was the lake, soul and sense alike absorbed in the unseen.

Then, at a later period, came the national groups of mystics, notably the Spanish, the German, and the French. Their attitude towards the externals of religion varied with the characteristics of their race; St. Teresa and St. John of the Cross, for instance, being far stronger sacramentalists than Eckhart or Tauler; but all emphasized the importance of the interior, the contemplative life; while the German school led on to Luther, justification by faith, and the Reformation. The Reformation, again, in its

obvious aspect, was a movement towards spiritual freedom, a reassertion of man's capacity for immediate intercourse with God; yet within its compass our two tendencies soon reappear, and sacraments and discipline assume as much controversial importance as the independence of the individual soul.

In a word, wherever we look, through the length and breadth of Christian history, we find an antithesis between two temperaments, or tendencies, or types, which, for want of better names, may be called the mystic and the sacramental. The two may at times coalesce, though not without an emphasis on one or the other; while, on the other hand, at times, they are sharply, decisively divided. The peculiarities of a race, or the circumstances of an age, raise now the one and now the other to ascendency. But both alike are human, fundamentally and radically human, ingrained in the very make and constitution of man, and the permanent suppression of either would be a psychological impossibility.

These considerations have an obvious bearing upon present controversy in the Church of England. For these two tendencies have always existed in the Church of England as elsewhere. But they are commonly described by various names, derived from the accidents of history—names which arouse prejudice and connote partizanship. And this fact has, unfortunately, tended to obscure in many minds the real nature of the distinction which they imply. For it is a distinction, as we have seen, that goes down to the roots of human character. No historic situation, no prejudice of party, no political or legal action, either created it or can annul it; its origin is older and its sway more permanent than all these things, and wherever religion is active it is bound to reappear. There will always be those within the Church of England, by whatever name we call them, who empha-

size the soul's immediate intercourse with God in a way and degree that makes all outward mediation, whether of priest or sacrament, a secondary thing,—a symbol, at the utmost, not a factor of the spiritual life. And, on the other hand, there will be those who think more highly of the realm of matter; they feel its importance in their moral experience; they know its reality as a scientific fact; and their religion must find issue in material expression before it can be regarded as in any sense complete. Life must for such have its external rules of discipline; sacraments be duly, ceremonially observed; and penitence poured forth, in human hearing, that pardon may be emphasized by human lips; while between these two extremes there will be countless degrees of combination, but still with one or other for a dominant note.

To say this, is not to imply that the majority of people could state their religious position in philosophical terms, or even recognise its statement philosophically expressed. On the contrary, they would, as a rule, attribute it to secondary causes rather than to its true psychological source. For the same reason they may tolerate, but cannot fairly estimate, modes of thought and practice which are alien to their own, for the simple reason that these rest upon wholly different first principles from those which they themselves, albeit unconsciously, assume. But this only makes it the more needful to keep first principles in view. For when disputes arise over points of detail, such as are at present in the air, it is important to distinguish what is accidental, and can be altered or abolished by authority, from what is ingrained in human nature, and cannot therefore be annulled, with a view to clearing public opinion upon the point. For though public opinion has neither legislative nor judicial authority in ecclesiastical disputes, it is an important factor both in their occurrence and in their ultimate solution. In saying

this, however, one must distinguish between two totally different things, which are often confused under the common name of public opinion. There is the opinion of those who, without caring for religion, or even knowing what it really means, rush into religious controversy, for personal or party purposes, or even for no further purpose than the excitement of its hue and cry. We cannot reason with such opinion, for it rests on no rational conviction, and there is nothing in it to which reason can appeal. But for this very cause it has no solidity, and cannot therefore carry weight. It may fan the popular passions into fiery outburst for a moment, but flames that owe more to wind than they do to fuel soon die down; however much they may scorch and blacken, they have nor time nor power to consume. Such is public opinion—*popularis aura*—in the bad sense of the term. But there is another and a nobler kind of public opinion—the opinion of those who are in serious earnest with their religion: they may differ widely in the degree of their own spiritual attainment, as well as on many details, both of practice and belief, but they agree in believing their religion and its paramount importance; they judge religious questions from a religious point of view; and they respect the religion of others, however diverse from their own, wherever they perceive that it is real. This class, though unobtrusive, is large, and, in the long run, influential, and constitutes the backbone of our national Church. And every influence which increases the mutual charity of its members, and assists its component sections to understand one another, will further the progress and intensify the power of religion. It is to this class, therefore—the religious public in the best sense of the term—that our foregoing considerations may be of use; for they tend to show that the different parties, as they are called, in the English Church have not only co-existed, as a fact of history, for the last three

centuries, but represent a distinction which is far older than Christianity itself, and must reappear, by a psychological necessity, wherever Christianity exists. And this throws light upon the true significance of that comprehensive or compromising tone, as it is often called, which is characteristic of our national Church. Our English love of compromise, our genius for compromise, is confessedly one of the causes of our social stability and political success. But this would not be the case if compromise were merely a negative thing, an inability to draw logical conclusions, a half-hearted hesitation between opposite alternatives, an unwillingness to commit ourselves, a lack of the courage of our convictions: it is nothing of the kind. Compromise, of the sort which is a power in the world, is only another name for comprehension. It is the popular, instinctive, unselfconscious recognition of the fact which the philosopher sees explicitly—that concrete truth, or reality, is a harmony of opposites; or, in other words, includes more attributes than any partial mode of expression can convey, and, to be grasped as a whole, therefore, must be regarded, like a stereoscopic picture, from diverse, independent points of view.

And this feature of our national character is inevitably reflected in our Church. There were two broadly distinct parties throughout the English Reformation, and the Church of England endeavoured to comprehend them both, not as a mere piece of political opportunism, but because both possessed elements of truth, which the national instinct recognised to an extent of which its temporary leaders, whether ecclesiastical or civil, were often themselves unaware. For there is a subconscious action of national genius, as well as of individual brains. Now one and now the other of these parties has been dominant; but both have alike persisted, and by their coexistence and interaction broadened and deepened the whole tone of our

Church. Each in its turn has been opposed, and has survived the opposition, and the exclusion of either would be detrimental to the fulness of truth.

But at the present moment the attack is not upon the mystical and personal aspect of religion, but upon its outward manifestation,' its sacramental side. Lawlessness in this direction, and disloyalty to the deliberate teaching of the English Church, wherever they occur, we are all agreed must be suppressed. But the outcry of the moment goes far beyond this, and attacks all sacramental religion. It is opportune, therefore, to remember that sacramental religion is no mere legacy of mediævalism, but is older than the Christian, older than the Jewish, Church,—as old as the earliest records of our race, and that it is so because it arises from a natural tendency of the human mind—a tendency whose power and permanence we have only lately been enabled, by our comparative study of religions, to appreciate. That tendency, moreover, is profoundly philosophical, for it rests on a sense of the intimate connection between matter and spirit, the action of matter through body and brain upon the spiritual life, and the need of spirit to find its utterance through material things—truths with which science and art are alike familiar. Nor does the fact that religion has become more spiritual with the progress of the ages imply that it has outgrown the need of sacramental expression. The music of Handel and Beethoven is more spiritual than that of barbarous races, but it is none the less dependent for its manifestation upon the medium of sound. And so with religion: as long as we think with brains and act with hands, and are tempted by the senses, and inspired by melody and art,—as long, in a word, as our body is an integral part of our personality, there will be those whose faith, however pure and undefiled will need to find expression in material form.

Moreover, there is a peculiar appositeness in sacramental

religion at the present time. For materialism, that ancient enemy of spiritual life, was never perhaps more rampant than to-day. It is true that as an intellectual system we believe it to be discredited,—more so than was the case perhaps some thirty years ago. But it is otherwise with moral materialism in its various forms. Luxury or the desire of luxury meets us on every side. Gold and jewels, dress and amusement, costliness in meat and drink, are now as eagerly pursued as ever in the bygone ages of the world; while their pursuit is even less tempered by idealism than it has sometimes been. The rich enjoy these things, and the poor envy their enjoyment, and both are alike materialized. Much, again, of our current literature makes in the same direction, by interpreting thought and emotion in physiological terms. The psychology, for instance, which is now so widely taught, may not be materialistic in a technical sense; but of the materialistic bias which it cannot fail to impart to half-educated minds there cannot be the shadow of a doubt; while many of our popular novels, whose ethical influence, though indirect, is at present immense, insinuate similar teaching in their every page. And in a sense all this is inevitable, since it is among the natural results of the commercial and scientific progress amidst which we live. For human nature being what it is, the development of commerce and physical science, noble as they are in themselves, must often lead to an ignoble estimate of the relative importance of material things.

But precisely because our modern materialism is founded upon this basis, because it arises from the perversion of things which are in themselves valuable and true, it can only be counteracted by restoring these things to their proper use. We, with the results of our commerce and our science all around us, can never regard the material world as an illusion, or as a thing to be ignored. And, if we

would correct the foul abuse of it, we must do so by exhibiting its nobler use—the power of beauty, and art, and wealth, and scientific invention, and political success, to alleviate sin and sorrow and further the spiritual progress of man. And one of the means by which such teaching has been conveyed in the past is, beyond question, the sacramental system of the Church, with all those external adjuncts which that system has gathered round it, pointing, like a great cathedral, through material to spiritual things. That system may at times, and in places, itself have sunk into materialism, but "*abusus non tollit usum.*" We do not condemn a thing that is useful for its possible misuse. Sacramentalism exhibits vividly and openly *coram populo* the fact that spirit is the final cause of matter, the end in which matter finds its meaning and truth. It is therefore in its essence a standing protest against materialism; and as such is as needful as ever in the world to-day.

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