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THE NATURE AND FUNCTION OF DOGMA

IN " SYMBOLO - FIDEISME "



THE NATURE AND FUNCTION OF DOGMA
IN THE " SYMBOLO - FIDEISME "
of the Paris School

By Gérard Moscherosch

Edinburgh MCMLII

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AM	represents	<u>Rapport Annuel</u> , 1921, by R.Allier
IC	"	Calvin's <u>Institution</u> , quoted from the 1539-1541 text as published by " <u>Les Belles Lettres</u> ", Paris, 1936. The first figure represents the chapter, the second one, the page.
JMS	"	<u>Un double centenaire</u> , by A.Jundt
MF	"	<u>Publications diverses</u> by Ménégos. The first figure represents the volume, the second one, the page.
sa	"	<u>The Religions of Authority and the Religion of the Spirit</u> , by Sabatier.
SD	"	<u>La vie intime des dogmes</u> , by Sabatier.
sd	"	<u>The Vitality of Christian dogmas</u> , by Sabatier.
sde	"	<u>The Doctrine of the Atonement</u> , by Sabatier.
SE	"	<u>Esquisse</u> by Sabatier.
se	"	<u>Outlines</u> by Sabatier.
SR	"	<u>Le Nouveau Testament contient-il des dogmes ?</u> by Sabatier.
VS	"	<u>Auguste Sabatier</u> by John Viénot.

NB.- The quotations from Sabatier's works have always been taken from the English translations, whenever they existed. Since some passages had not been reproduced in the English editions, they have been quoted from the French editions.

INTRODUCTION

"SYMBOLO-FIDEISME"

INTRODUCTION

" SYMBOLO-FIDEISME ". ITS SITUATION IN THEOLOGICAL THOUGHT

I. General characteristics

" Symbolo-Fidéisme " is a theological method resulting from the combination of two complementary teachings : " Symbolisme ", an epistemology professed by Auguste Sabatier (1839-1901) and a soteriology, " Fidéisme " , taught by Eugène Ménégoz (1838-1921).

Symbolo-Fidéisme cannot be identified apart from these two men, it is therefore necessary, if we wish to grasp to a full extent its genesis and development, to gather some information concerning their life and work.

Auguste Sabatier was born on the 23rd of October 1839, at Vallon, Ardèche, " of a very modest family of old Protestant tradition ". Under the penetrating influence of his mother he was, from infancy, marked

by the simple and intense piety of the " Réveil " (Revival), which governed his faith throughout his life. He studied Theology at the Faculty of Montauban, and as early as in the first months of his stay, experienced a grave religious crisis. The contact with the theological teaching of the period gave him the opportunity of reconsidering the whole of his doctrinal convictions ; he allowed himself to be deeply influenced by the findings of the German theologians, and, at the same time, by the conceptions of Alexandre Vinet. At the end of his theological studies at Montauban, he had resolutely taken side against orthodoxy.

He completed his theological training in Germany in 1863-64, first at Tübingen, and then at Heidelberg. In this latter University , Sabatier attended the lectures of the eminent professor Rothe, whose teachings made a profound influence on him. Once back in France, Sabatier, having overcome his last theological scruples and strengthened his faith, took charge of a parish at Aubenas, Ardèche. In 1866, he took his degree of licencié en théologie. At the beginning of 1869, he was appointed to the chair of Reformed Dogmatics at the Strasbourg Faculty of Theology. He lectured there until 1872. Then, the University of Strasbourg

having become German, Sabatier had to resign his professorship. In the meantime, he had become a Doctor of Theology in 1870, after writing a brilliant thesis on " The Apostle Paul ", a work of great value which constitutes an important step in the development of Pauline research.

In 1877, after several years of continuous efforts he succeeded, with the help of his former Strasbourg colleague, F. Lichtenberger, in re-establishing in Paris the former Strasbourg Protestant Faculty of Theology. Thus originated the present Faculty of Theology of Paris. At the re-opening ceremony in November of the same year, he delivered a remarkable lecture on Biblical Criticism. During the following years, Sabatier who was teaching Reformed Dogmatics revealed to a great extent his qualities as a professor, and foretold what was going to be his future work in various essays and pamphlets which he published. The chief of these works were : a conference " De l'Esprit Théologique " (On Theological Spirit) in 1878 ; a " Mémoire sur la notion hébraïque de l' Esprit " (Essay on the Hebrew Conception of the Spirit) in 1879 ; an opening lecture " The Vitality of Christian Dogmas and their Power of Evolution " in 1888 ; an article " Le Nouveau Testament

contient-il des dogmes ? " (Does the New Testament contain Dogmas ?) in 1892 ; an " Essai d'une théorie critique de la connaissance religieuse " (Essay towards a Critical Theory of Religious Knowledge), in 1893 ; a conference " La religion et la culture moderne " (Religion and Modern Culture) in 1897. That same year, 1897, saw the publication of one of his most authoritative and reputed works : the " Outlines of a Philosophy of Religion " , based on Psychology and History. His most important book " The Religions of Authority and the Religion of the Spirit " was completed in 1900. This work, however, was published only after his death . The last work to be published during his lifetime was the " Doctrine ~~and~~ of the Atonement and its Historical Evolution " , January 1901, a study which he himself described as a model of his dogmatic method. Until his death , Sabatier, who had become the Dean of the Paris Faculty of Theology, never ceased to deliver his lectures, nor to write numerous articles in the newspapers. At the same time he contributed to the " Encyclopédie des Sciences Religieuses " of Lichtenberger in which he wrote important and erudite articles, mainly on the problems of the New Testament. Overcome by illness, he died prematurely on

the 12th of April 1901, leaving unfinished the great work to which the "Outlines" and "The Religions of Authority and the Religion of the Spirit" were meant to be the Introduction.

Louis Eugène Ménégoz was born on the 25th of September 1838 at Algosheim, Haut-Rhin. Through his father, a minister devoted to the cause of Lutheran orthodoxy, he underwent the influence of the Pietist movement. He studied Theology at the Strasbourg Protestant Seminary and presented a thesis for the degree of Bachelor of Theology, on the conception of the Church, in which he proved himself a sound Lutheran. Then he travelled to Germany and visited the Universities of Erlangen, Berlin, Halle, and Marburg. At Erlangen, he attended the lectures of Thomasius, who exerted a deep influence upon him. After the defeat of 1871, he chose to become French, whilst remaining faithfully attached to Alsace. In 1877, was founded the Paris Protestant Faculty of Theology and he himself was entrusted with the Direction of the Seminary and appointed lecturer in German language and Theological literature ; a few years later, in 1882, he took the chair of Lutheran Dogmatics.

In 1879, he actually began his career as a theolo-

gian with the publication of the " Réflexions sur l' Evangile du salut " (Reflections on the Gospel of Salvation), a decisive turn in his religious evolution which led him from Lutheran orthodoxy to Modern Evangelical Theology. His vocation for exegesis , already awakened by the teaching of his professors at the Strasbourg Seminary was confirmed, the New Testament becoming more precisely the aim of his research . In 1882 he published a thesis for the degree of " licencié en théologie " on " Le péché et la rédemption d'après St Paul " (Sin and Redemption according to St Paul); in 1894 a Doctorate thesis on " La théologie de l' Epître aux Hébreux " (The Theology of the Epistle to the Hebrews) . These two books are still authoritative to-day. In 1901, he was appointed Dean of the Paris Faculty of Theology , after the death of his friend Sabatier, but he was compelled to resign after a few months owing to poor health. In the meantime, he had given in 1894 an opening lecture entitled " La notion biblique du miracle " (The Biblical Notion of Miracle) which caused a great sensation and started numerous controversies. From then onwards, Ménégos became involved in a great number of polemics and published numerous essays and articles, devoted chiefly to exegetical and

dogmatic problems. The complete collection of these can be found in a book entitled "Publications diverses sur le Fidéisme" (Various publications on Fidéisme). He retired in 1909, but never interrupted his polemical activity which was brought to an end by his death on the 29th of October 1921.

The first part of the present work will endeavour to deal completely with the theory of religious knowledge formulated by Sabatier as well as by Ménégoz. We shall therefore indicate briefly at this stage what is the meaning of the Symbolism of Auguste Sabatier (1). It can be summarized in two main statements. First of all, "the object of religion is transcendent ; it is not a phenomenon" (2). From that it follows that religious knowledge must express the invisible and the spiritual by the visible and the material. This is precisely the function of the symbol. On the other hand "the true content of the symbol is entirely subjective" (3), it is the manner by which the

1) Cf. p.133 sq.

2) se / 322

3) se / 327. Actually, the chapter of the "Outlines" from which are taken these two quotations was published almost in full, as early as 1893, in the "Revue de Théologie et de Philosophie" and in the "Revue chrétienne".

subject is conscious of his relation to God. Thus the epistemology of Sabatier is nothing else than a theory of the subjectivity of religious knowledge.

It was in 1879, in his famous "Réflexions sur l'Évangile du Salut", that Ménégoz defined Fidélisme for the first time as "salvation by Faith independently of beliefs"(1). All his life, he devoted himself to the exposition and defence of this doctrine. With the exception of his theses of licence and doctorate, the five volumes of "Publications diverses sur le Fidélisme et son application à l'enseignement chrétien traditionnel"(2) containing all the studies, essays, pamphlets and articles that he produced during his long career, are in fact but the development of this fundamental principle.

According to Fidélisme it is not by the acceptance of traditional Church dogmas that man can be saved, no more is it by the love of God and one's neighbour; it is by Faith alone: "sola fide". "We maintain, says

1) MF I/34

2) Fischbacher publishers, Paris 1901-1921.

Ménégoz, the "sola fide" with all its implications. With the "sola", we oppose the orthodox, and with the "fide", we oppose the liberals "(1)".

In fact, although Ménégoz has never omitted to state his disagreement with Liberalism, it was against the principle of Orthodoxy that his main attack was constantly directed. This is unmistakably evident from the second part of the formula of Fidélisme.

It is by the words "sola fide" that Ménégoz justifies his conviction when calling it Fidélisme -(2).

1) MF I / 34

2) Sometimes "Fidélisme" is referred to in the case of Roman Catholic schools absolutely foreign to that of Ménégoz. They are akin to the traditionalist doctrines of de Bonald (1754-1840) and Lamennais (1782-1854); the latter states that common sense is the criterion of certainty ; in other words the submission to the rule by which the Church fixes the " faith "- " Quod semper, quod ubique, quod ab omnibus traditum est ". He opposes " faith " to any certainty based upon individual reason. In the same line of thought, we find Father Ventura (1792-1861) who teaches also that reason is incapable of knowing the truth ; the faithful must rely upon the Church, trustee of the authentic tradition ; " faith " precedes reason. Equally dependent upon de Bonald and Lamennais is Philippe Buchez (1796-1886).

Nevertheless, the official teaching of Rome gives priority to reason : " Rationis usus fidem praecedat ", that is the reason why the Catholic fideists have been condemned by the Holy See. This was the case for Louis Bautain (1796-1867), who placed above reason " pure intelligence ", the fruit of the revealed Word, the Logos. Let us note also the names of Bonetty, condemned in 1853, of Ubaghs, condemned in 1866. Against them, Father Gratry (1805-1872) re-confirms the rationalism of Roman Catholic orthodoxy.

This "Faith" is a determination of the Ego in its wholeness (1), the surrendering of the heart to God (2). Ménégos severs himself completely from the Catholic and traditional point of view which tends to identify faith and beliefs, even creeds. However it would be wrong to suppose that he teaches salvation by a faith deprived of all beliefs; on the contrary he is convinced that there cannot be a Faith without an element of intellectual knowledge (3).

Furthermore, Ménégos does not teach doctrinal indifferentism, but lays emphasis upon the educational influence and role of doctrines (4)

Such is the precise meaning of the formula of Fidésisme.

That the Symbolism of Auguste Sabatier and Fidésisme might be complementary doctrines results not only from the casual encounter of the two men, but above all from the fact that there exists between the

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- 1) MF I/29I, etc.
 - 2) MF I/15-17, etc.
 - 3) MF I/25I, etc.
 - 4) MF I/39, etc.

two theories a quite inevitable agreement.

Yet, in his "Remarques sur le Fidéisme" published in 1912, Ménégoz stated emphatically that "Fidéisme as such, has no theory of knowledge". Each fidéiste may have his own theory ; if he happens to be a theologian, he tries to formulate it ; but Fidéisme is solidary with none of these conceptions. It is not a philosophy , it is a religion " (1). Further on, he added : "it is therefore necessary to distinguish clearly between religion and theory of knowledge" (2). He proceeds by stating that "Fidéisme is compatible with various theories of knowledge but does not find itself subordinate to any of them. My friend Auguste Sabatier had his own theory ; I found it very fascinating "...
 " I have also mine, which I have outlined several times. Of course, I think of it as excellent. But I could not become impassioned of any theory " (3).

This assertion seems at first very surprising, and in order to throw light on our quest , it is necessary to precise what Ménégoz means by the " theory of knowledge ". In the same pages, he states that Fidéisme

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- 1) MF 3/497, etc.
 - 2) MF 3/497, etc.
 - 3) MF 3/498.

" gives to the psychologists the task of building up a theory about the mental operations by which we acquire our beliefs and fit ourselves for the spiritual life. There can be different opinions on the working of these operations and yet an agreement on religious beliefs"(1). More briefly he says also " one thing is the Gospel of Salvation, and another thing the explanation of the psychological processes by which this Gospel gets hold of our spirit and of our heart "(2). It seems that for Ménégoz the theory of religious knowledge amounts only to the psychology of that knowledge.

But, as A.Charles Lelièvre showed, in an interesting article devoted to the "Relations internes du Symbolisme et du Fidélisme", Fidélisme as well as Symbolism is based upon a theory of the subjectivity of religious knowledge (3). In the field of religious psychology both theologians reach similar conclusions; however when studying in detail the attitude of Ménégoz, we can perceive some differences between that and the conception of Sabatier.

Thus, when Ménégoz says that Fidélisme as such

1) MF 3/497.

2) MF 3/498.

3) "Revue Chrétienne" 1898 t.II p.24.

has no theory of knowledge, he only means that it is not bound to any one theory of the subjectivity of religious knowledge.

However, the deep accordance of these two theologians should not be forgotten. Beyond variances of opinion on particular points of history, exegesis, criticism, or dogmatics, Ménégoz did not hesitate to admit that " he agreed with Sabatier, on the foundations, on the general orientation, on the essential conclusions, in one word on the conception of religion and theology "(1). But is it not precisely this^{with} which we are concerned ?

Actually, - we shall establish that point in our study, - religious knowledge for Sabatier is not only subjective, but equally teleological (2) and symbolical (3). This teleological character is essential to religious knowledge, and what religion brings to man is first of all the solution of the enigma of his life. In the domain of faith there are only teleological judgments. " It is not the essence of things, it is their reciprocal value and their hierarchy which interest religious

1) MF 4 / 121

2) Cf. p. 131 sq.

3) Cf. p. 133 sq.

faith " (1). What religious knowledge seeks in the notion of God, is the revelation of God's will to man. What it searches for, when explaining the world, is not the mechanical linking up of causes, but the discovery of an end.

As regards the third character of religious knowledge, that is Symbolism, it is interesting to point out some chronological facts.

It was in 1879, in his "Réflexions sur l'Evangile du Salut", that Ménégoz defined for the first time the formula of salvation and in his XLIV th paragraph, names it Fidélisme (2).

In 1893, Auguste Sabatier published his essay on a "Théorie Critique de la Connaissance Religieuse" and described his viewpoint as that of "Symbolisme critique".

In 1894, in the conclusion of his book on "La théologie de l'Épître aux Hébreux", Ménégoz expressed a symbolist position identical to Sabatier's (3).

In November 1894, in his opening lecture entitled "La notion biblique du miracle", Ménégoz announced

1) se/32I

2) MF I/36

3) Reproduced in MF I/85 and 89.

publicly his acceptance of the expression "Symbolo-Fidélisme", (1) already proposed in August of the same year (2).

In his turn, Sabatier published in 1897 his famous "Outlines of a Philosophy of Religion", of which the fourth Chapter of the third Book was a reproduction with some additions of his essay of 1893. Among other additions, there is a footnote in which he states that "by the combination of the findings of Mr. Ménégos and mine... the new school has been baptized Symbolo-Fidélisme. This name is perfectly fitting"...(3)

Furthermore Ménégos produced in 1900 the first volume of the "Publications diverses sur le Fidélisme". In the foreword we find indications useful in the solution of the problem about which we are concerned. Speaking of his "Réflexions sur l'Évangile du Salut", he says that the central teaching of these was Fidélisme : "All I have published since is but the development ... of this doctrine. All my dogmatical findings depend on it and are grouped around it. One of these conceptions is religious Symbolism, of which my dear friend and colleague, Dean Auguste Sabatier, made himself the cham-

1) "Eglise Libre" 1894, N° 31 and 33.

2) MF 1/148

3) SE/406

pion "..."Fidéisme aims more specifically at the basis; Symbolism deals mainly with the form ; but these two doctrines are inseparable... as has been clearly demonstrated by a young theologian in the "Revue Chrétienne" (1898, N° 7) (1), and he concludes by accepting the expression Symbolo-Fidéisme (2).

It is easy to discover in Ménégoz's works many places where he uses and justifies that word Symbolo-Fidéisme. It is as if he wanted to stress again and again this important idea so that it could not be possibly forgotten.

At last, in "The Religions of Authority and the Religion of the Spirit", also completed in 1900, Sabatier explicitly confirmed this agreement when he announced that the Religion of the Spirit would be "the living practical synthesis of "Symbolisme critique" and Fidéisme (3).

Thus, the first formulation of Fidéisme, and the usage of the word belong to Ménégoz. On the other hand and beyond doubt also, the first formulation of Symbolism, and the usage of the word belong to Sabatier. It

1) A.-Charles Lelièvre : "Relations internes du Symbolisme et du Fidéisme".

2) MF I/xv and xvi.

3) sa/339.

is important to remark that less than a year later, Ménégos fully adopted the vocabulary of Sabatier, and not only that but also his ideas which he defended and explained on innumerable occasions. We must not forget that he was the first one to accept in 1894 the alliance of the two words. Sabatier made his agreement officially known not earlier than 1897.

We have already noted that Ménégos claimed to reduce the domain of religious knowledge to psychology alone. In actual fact, his notion of Revelation, understood as the object of religious knowledge, holds undoubtedly the same teleological character as it shows in Sabatier's thought. To make a distinction between faith and beliefs is to issue an epistemological statement ; therefore we believe that Sabatier was perfectly right when he wrote : " all those who make this distinction with some logic and sincerity arrive at Symbolism " (1). Actually, this happened to be the course followed by Ménégos. This step was unavoidable.

It follows that Ménégos's refusal to associate Fidélisme with a theory of religious knowledge is absolutely fallacious . It is denied as well in theory as in fact. The only reservation that could be possibly admitted is that the theory of religious

1) SE/406 footnote I.

knowledge may vary and for instance be also a doctrine of religious experience, of the internal witness of the Holy Spirit, even of Illuminism. Yet, this reservation is extremely theoretical, and a rightful question may be asked : could a Fidélisme different from that of Ménégoz be conceived ? Could one study Fidélisme apart from the man who formulated, taught, and defended it with such conviction and tenacity ? It is absolutely impossible in this case to distinguish between the man and his message and doctrine. Auguste Sabatier's Symbolism and Eugène Ménégoz's Fidélisme are fundamentally bound together.

II. Philosophical and Theological antecedents common to Sabatier and Ménégoz.

If we now try to assign a place to Symbolo-Fidélisme in the history of the development of theological thought, we are bound to inquire into the influences which Sabatier and Ménégoz themselves received. These antecedents fit into two categories, some are philosophical, others theological; some are common to both theologians, and these are the more important ones;

others are personal, and these are chiefly impressions received in the course of their own training, or consents arising from their intimate experiences. They are a spiritual inheritance rather than an intellectual one.

Two names determine the elaboration of Symbolo-Fidéisme : a philosopher, Immanuel Kant and a theologian , Schleiermacher. The deep impression made by these two men on both Sabatier and Ménégoz is constantly apparent.

Kant's influence on Sabatier is of immense importance, in actual fact it is more than an influence. Sabatier is basically Kantian and does not conceal that he belongs to the Critical School.

The best example of this subordination is given in the third part of his " Outlines of a Philosophy of Religion " where in a very important chapter devoted to the " Critical Theory of Religious Knowledge " his views are expounded in all their completeness.

Before dealing with the problem of religious knowledge itself, Sabatier considers the theory of knowledge as a whole. First, he reviews what he calls the " obsolete theories of knowledge ", criticizing briefly

Dogmatism, Idealism and Sensualism. Having rapidly cleared the site, Sabatier does not leave his reader in suspense for long. According to his analysis, " thinkers may to-day be divided into two classes : those who date before Kant , and those who have received the initiation and so to speak the philosophical baptism of his critique " (1). Of course we must understand that he belongs to this latter and happy class (2). The affirmations accumulated in the following pages leave no doubt on that account. Thanks to Kant, says Sabatier, it is possible to carry on the critical examination of knowledge and above all to discover its limits. Man reaches a better understanding of himself. Thus philosophy has achieved a real progress.

The judgments which constitute knowledge are not all of the same nature, states Sabatier, using for himself the critique of pure reason. A distinction must be made between the a posteriori judgment which constitutes the matter of knowledge, and which is given by experience, and the a priori judgement , the form

1) se /282

2) cf SR/38

of knowledge, a rational element which comes from the thinking subject (1). With Kant, Sabatier asserts that the two elements of judgment must be combined in order to be fruitful. A judgment based only upon the data of experience cannot be taken as scientific knowledge. On the other hand, the rational judgment alone, establishes but " a knowing without reality " (2).

The critique of pure reason taught Kant that the subject was neither able to perceive things as they actually are, nor as they appear to him. They are no longer things, but only the phenomena of things. In conclusion, said Kant, the phenomenon is a product of reason. It does not exist outside the subject, but in him. In terms closely akin to these, Sabatier defends similar theses : " The Ego can only be conscious of itself and of its modifications " (3). These modifications come either from sensations , or from the subject himself. From thence proceeds the fundamental distinction between subject and object, between ego and non-ego. Starting from this analysis, Sabatier makes another distinction : is objective any knowledge which may be

1) se/284

2) se/285

3) se/294

attributed to the object alone, independently of the subject ; on the other hand is subjective any knowledge which implies identity of subject and object (1). Here, we reach a stage where Sabatier thinks that he is not in agreement with Kant. When Kant introduces a distinction between noumena and phenomena, and accepts beyond the phenomenal world the existence of a world of the noumena, realities beyond the reach of reason, Sabatier denies : " he that persists in distinguishing between the thing in itself and the phenomenal thing will never be able to give an account of the objectivity of the science of Nature ". In support of this denial, he refers to what he calls " the objectivity of science " or " the reality of science " ; he admits also " a power which science gives to man over Nature "(2)'. At the same time, and this is of great importance for us in this work, we shall notice that for Sabatier the object of religious knowledge is not of a phenomenal nature . The careful study of his theory of religious knowledge shows that it is deeply subjectivist (3).

As regards the rational subject, we have already

1) se/294

2) se/305-306

3) Cf.p. 81 sq.

noted that Sabatier insists upon its fundamental unity. Ha asserts it again in this affirmation, " the ego which knows is an acting ego "(1); yet according to Sabatier, as well as to Kant, liberty is not questioned by the will, it is an immediate datum of moral consciousness. Then he comes to the description of the tragic conflict in man divided between scientific determinism and moral obligation. The first is presented to him by pure reason as the law of the phenomenal world, whilst the second proves his personal liberty. It was then that Kant affirmed his conviction in the doctrine of the precedence of practical reason, in other words of the will. The authority of practical reason is superior to that of pure reason . Its testimony must be obeyed, and man must act as if it were proved that he is free and that a God, supreme judge of the moral order, exists. What has Sabatier to say about that ? " The solution , if there be one, can only be a practical one, a solution springing from the will " (2). It consists, thanks to an increase of the intensity of inner life, in the

1) ~~Gfwpwwwsqw~~. se/286

2) se/288

" affirmation in face of the universe of the sovereignty of spirit". That is to say " the conflict of theoretic reason and practical reason eternally engenders religion in the heart of man " (I).

Let us say also that for Sabatier, this essentially practical solution does not exclude another one, a theoretical one. He believes in a development of spiritual values ; he believes that gradually , as a result of continuous struggle, the spirit affirms its sovereignty. Thus he hopes that one day, the ego and the world, ethics and science, pure reason and practical reason will meet together in God, just as theoretically two parallel lines meet at the infinite.

Pursuing his study of the two orders of knowledge, Sabatier suggests a distinction between judgment of fact and judgement of value . Those judgments which belong to physical knowledge may be brought to bear only upon the relation of objects between themselves, notwithstanding the subject. They are primarily objective. With Kant, Sabatier holds that the judgments of fact have as their form the categories of space and time, necessary data of sensation (2), which con-

1) se/289

2) se/298

verge in the notion of number. The objective knowledge, as indefinite and imperfect as number, will always progress, without ever reaching achievement and perfection. On the other hand, moral knowledge, of which the subject himself is the object, or which considers the relation of object and subject, expresses itself in judgments of a nature entirely different from that of judgments of fact. Its form is not in the categories of space and time, but in that of good. This is the reason why he calls them judgments of value(1). There is no common ground between these two categories of judgment. If, on the one hand, space and time are the necessary forms of objective knowledge, the primitive intuition of reason, on the other hand, the category of good is an immediate datum of moral consciousness. "The form of moral judgments is universal and identical in every man", says Sabatier (2). This does not mean, of course, that the content of moral judgments is invariable. It is submitted to all the contingencies of periods and societies. Nevertheless,- and this is

1) se / 299

2) se / 301

again the belief in progress so dear to Sabatier-, there is a history of ethics, which gives an account of its development and evolution, as there is a history of natural science; but, whatever might be the contents of moral consciousness, he adds, the categorical imperative gives to it a form, both necessary and immutable (1).

To conclude his theory of knowledge, Sabatier recalls two principles which he holds as essential : firstly, one must distinguish clearly between the two orders of knowledge; secondly, it is necessary to conciliate them at the risk of attaining no more than a fruitless knowledge. Ethics, and therefore religion do not escape the necessity of fulfilling the synthesis with the scientific experience brought to the ego by sensibility. Spiritual life, according to Sabatier, is therefore comparable to an ellipsis, with its two focuses : " on the one side, the centre of receptive life, where all the sensations received are elaborated into phenomenal knowledge; on the other, the centre of active life, at which are concentrated all the revelations of the mind's own inner energy "(2).

1) se/301

2) se/303

Such are the premises upon which Sabatier builds his theory of religious knowledge. We shall see, when studying it closely, how much it is as a whole solidary to the teaching of Kant.

The influence of Kant upon Ménégoz is easily discernible, although it is not so deep and direct as on Sabatier. We have already indicated that in his writings Ménégoz is almost exclusively concerned with the content of faith, and scarcely deals with the theory of knowledge in general or even with the theory of religious knowledge. This might explain why Kant holds relatively little room in his works. However it should not be concluded that he disdains him. On the contrary, Ménégoz does not conceal that he attributes much importance to him.

In an essay entitled "Une triple distinction théologique", Ménégoz, starting from the principle according to which religion must be distinguished from philosophy and that theology should not at any price remain linked with obsolete systems, admits however that modern religious thought must rest upon a modern philosophy. Now, in our times philosophy is Kantian. "Neither Kantism is truth absolute. I do

not believe it is eternal, but to-day as it surrounds us with its atmosphere, our theology cannot withdraw from it "(1). Then, speaking of the renewal of theology, he thinks that " the initiator on the philosophical side is Kant, whose principles rule over the whole of modern theology " (2). One thing which is certain is that they rule over the theology of Ménégoz.

An excellent example is his agreement with the Kantian conception of the categorical imperative. Kant's arguments against the classical proofs of God's existence have retained all their value, states Ménégoz; it follows that God is not to be demonstrated. However, the moral proof keeps a great power of conviction. Ménégoz finds it in the existence of a moral consciousness, in which the distinction between good and evil is affirmed. The sense of duty and moral obligation, this imperious order to which man must surrender, this is what Kant calls the " categorical imperative "(3). Ménégoz attributes to God the origin of this categorical imperative, " it is the voice of God in conscience " (4). The personal experience of moral

1) MF 2/382

2) MF 4/39

3) MF 3/127-129

4) MF 2/233

obligation shows us that it does not spring from ourselves, although it speaks within ourselves. Only a personal being can give orders in such a way. The precepts of the inner voice are always perfect and pure, they can only spring from a perfect being, this is why the voice of conscience cannot be but that of God. This demonstration which does not possess the character of a scientific proof, nevertheless imposes itself on Ménégoz with sufficient authority so that he can state: " I must, therefore God is " (1). The categorical imperative is thus of great importance, as it is a universal and irrecusable testimony of God within the conscience of man. Thanks to it, " we are not completely immersed in darkness"(2). We can truly appreciate the importance attributed by Ménégoz to this idea, when he states that " the categorical imperative appears to us as the immutable basis of all theological constructions, present and future "(3).

Thus Ménégoz is directly Kantian. He is again a disciple of Kant through his acceptance of the critical Symbolism of Sabatier, and therefore of the Kantian

1) MF 3/129 : " Je dois, donc Dieu est ".

2) MF 5/225, cf. 5/210.

3) MF 5/45

premises on which it is built. He places himself again under the Kantian influence, when in his theory of religious knowledge he borrows some of their assertions from Fichte and Lotze. Finally, by means of an influence more properly theological, that of Ritschl, Ménégos finds himself under the dependence of the Kantian theory of knowledge. However, the borrowings of Ménégos from Fichte, Lotze and Ritschl are peculiar to him. We shall have the opportunity of dealing with this question.

Considered from the philosophical point of view, Symbolo-Fidélisme is indissolubly linked with Kantian critique, owing to the agreement (we are tempted to say surrender), which both Sabatier and Ménégos have so clearly given to it. This assent is not purely coincidental, much more is it the stamp of a period.

Schleiermacher's teaching constitutes the most important theological antecedent of Symbolo-Fidélisme. Let us see first of all what Sabatier says about it.

We know that one of the essential ideas of Sabatier is what he calls " the Religion of the Spirit ". He conceives it as the " religious relation realised in pure spirituality. It is God and man both concei-

ved under the category of the spirit, mutually interpenetrating and thus arriving at full communion " (1). The Religion of the Spirit is the religion of love, liberty and holiness. It is also a returning to the original Gospel, a permanent Reformation, a reaction against dogmatic orthodoxy (2). Lessing, affirms Sabatier, was the prophet of the Religion of the Spirit, however he was no more than a forerunner (3). "The Messiah of the new era was Schleiermacher" (4). Schleiermacher has taught us that the basis of all religion is in piety, in the intimate experience of the soul. Now, according to Sabatier, religious experience is the precise object of theology.

Although constantly in disagreement on other points, both rationalists and supernaturalists identified faith with an accumulation of traditional dogmas. There again, Schleiermacher has brought to us a new teaching, the important distinction between faith and dogmas. Faith is not a system of dogmas, faith is living piety, it springs from the religious

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- 1) sa/281
 - 2) sa/282
 - 3) sa/206
 - 4) sa/209

feeling itself. As we know, this distinction is a fundamental one in the symbolo-fidéiste teaching. Furthermore, Schleiermacher showed that "being an independent, original psychological fact, faith then becomes an object of observation and a fact of experience, not of individual experience alone, but of collective experience, a historic fact "(1). To study and give account of it will be the task of theology. There again the assent of Sabatier is complete.

By showing the sui generis character of religious faith and giving to the science of religion a special and independent object, Schleiermacher did theology an immense service, states Sabatier. It is indeed a revolution, of which he does not hesitate to proclaim himself an offspring. With Schleiermacher, Sabatier teaches that the basis of Dogmatics has been shifted, it no longer lies in the infallible authority of the scriptural text, it lies in the experience of faith (2).

In the detailed study which we will have to undertake on the theory of religious knowledge, we will be driven to record the extensive place given to "religious experience " by Symbolo-Fidéisme.

1) sa/310

2) sa/325

For Schleiermacher, the essence of religion lies in the consciousness of the finite and temporal being regarding the existence of an infinite and eternal being, in the feeling of dependence which man experiences towards higher powers. Therefore religion is a feeling, an intuition, it is the sense of the infinite. Schleiermacher bases his conviction of God's existence upon this sentiment of dependence. Sabatier follows more or less a similar path. First of all, he says, religion is that link which unites man and the higher powers upon which he is dependent. At the top of religious evolution, it will express the relationship between man and God (1). In any case, says Sabatier, " what does faith itself desire to say when it defines God as the Eternal and Almighty Spirit, except that man needs to affirm that his own individual spirit does not depend on any but a spiritual power like himself ? "(2). However, Sabatier thinks that the thought of Schleiermacher should be completed at this stage. He does not hesitate to speak of " that vague sentiment of absolute dependence which Schleiermacher

1) sa/370

2) se/321

erroneously makes the fundamental characteristic of the Christian consciousness " (1). This feeling does exist of course, but it is only a moment, an initial degree of the inner life, and Schleiermacher was wrong in satisfying himself with this passive element of religious consciousness. At this stage, Sabatier does not forget that he is a disciple of Kant. Man is destined to realize his moral personality. Moral obligation born in liberty is the active element of the religious feeling ; it is as equally essential as the passive element. " Religion, then, is a free act as well as a feeling of dependence (2). Sabatier goes even further in his process of synthesis of Schleiermacher and Kant, when he states that " the religious sentiment is fundamentally nothing other than the sentiment of the relation between the moral being and the law which governs him " (3).

There are other points of contact between Schleiermacher and Sabatier, for instance the doctrine of the infallibility of Jesus. Schleiermacher conceived it as absolute but restricted to the purely religious

1) sa / 372

2) se / 29

3) sa / 32I

domain. Sabatier concludes similarly : it is sovereign but only concerning the religious experience; to extend it beyond these limits is to alter the nature of the Gospel (1).

Finally, when we reach the study of the notion of dogma and dogmatics other links between the thought of Schleiermacher and Sabatier will be revealed (2).

Ménégoz too, hails Schleiermacher as the initiator of modern theology. In face of the progressive destruction of the literal authority of the Bible, it was vital to discover a new foundation for dogmatics. " It was Schleiermacher who offered the lifebuoy. He based dogmatics on subjective religious experience "(3). The influence of Schleiermacher was so profound that, according to Ménégoz, all the contemporary theologians with the exception of some conservative ones , owe much to him. Of course, it would be audacity on our part to classify Ménégoz among the conservative ones. Much more than Sabatier, we see Ménégoz developing the principles of the distinction of faith and dogmas. This is

1) sa/294

2) Cf. p. sq.

3) MF 3/363

the key to the fideiste soteriology; it can be said without exaggeration that the development of this principle runs through his whole work.

Regarding the infallibility of the teaching of Jesus, Ménégos while starting from the same affirmations as Schleiermacher's carries his assertions much further than those of Sabatier. Naturally he does not question the moral authority of the religion of Jesus. His teaching is the perfect revelation of the will of God. In him the inspiration of the Holy Spirit was so full that his word was the very word of God. Although Ménégos accepts with a joyful conviction this authority in the religious domain, he does not believe that " Jesus ever claimed any authority in the field of secular, scientific, historical or literary things"(1). In that order he shared the views and even the errors of his contemporaries, namely concerning the authenticity of some books of the Old Testament (2). At this stage, Sabatier who, as we know, restricted Jesus's authority only to the domain of religious experience, refuses to accept what he calls " the assumed line of demarcation " between profane and

1) MF I/171

2) MF I/65, 2/274

religious things. In the name of which criterion shall this line be traced ? This distinction, adds Sabatier is useless, " it is ineffective because it is false " (1).

Ménégoz rarely referred to Schleiermacher in his works. Actually, he did not claim openly to be his disciple as did Sabatier. Of course, he recognized him as the founder of modern theology and owed to him his general orientation. But except on a few points, Schleiermacher's influence remained an indirect one. However, as was the case regarding Kant, through his fundamental agreement with Sabatier, Ménégoz did not altogether deviate from the ideas of Schleiermacher. He met this influence again in the theology of Ritschl by which he has been so greatly inspired.

The teaching of Schleiermacher constitutes the main theological antecedent of Symbolo-Fidéisme. Both Sabatier and Ménégoz have thoroughly accepted his inheritance which brings to them essential principles : the foundation of theology upon religious experience and the emancipation from dogmatic authority.

1) sa / 265

Though Kant and Schleiermacher represent the two main sources of inspiration for Symbolo-Fidéisme, the contribution of other influences peculiar to Sabatier and to Ménégos should also be taken into account. All of them are not of the same importance ; some, however are determining ones. In the formation of an intellectual or spiritual personality there are so many diverse and often ill-known elements that it is difficult to study them in an exhaustive way. We shall therefore limit ourselves by noting the more important and more discernible of them.

III. Influences peculiar to Sabatier.

All those who have had the opportunity of meeting Sabatier during his lifetime have recorded his intense piety. He was not a dry and cold theologian, but a personality gifted with a strong faith and an enthusiasm sometimes juvenile which one can perceive in his most serious books, where often, stern chapters end with pages in which a burning religious emotion is expressed. Sabatier was brought up in this Huguenot spirit which belongs to the Cévennes tradition.

Furthermore, he received from his family the spiritual inheritance of the French Revival (Réveil) (1). As he states himself in an autobiographical fragment : " It is thanks to my mother that the piety of the Réveil entered into me. Since then, studies, temptations and experiences may have much modified my first religious ideas but the background of a sensitive piety has remained, the same " (2). Yet he has freed himself completely from the dogmatism and the moral legalism which characterized also the Réveil. It is important to remember this permanent background of piety in Sabatier, as sometimes when reading him one may experience a feeling of uneasiness. One may be inclined to ask whether his doctrine of the religious consciousness and of the internal testimony of the Holy Spirit is not, in the last instance, simply liberal rationalism.

In this domain of the intimate religious life, we

1) The "Réveil" was a movement of renewal within the Reformed Churches of France, which developed between the years 1815 and 1850. Among the promoters of the "Réveil" one can quote César Malan, Félix Neff, Amy Bost and also Adolphe Monod (1802-1856) who was perhaps the most famous of these fervent Christians. The influence of the "Réveil" was deep and can still be felt in the modern religious literature of Reformed churches as well as in the liturgy and hymnaries.

2) VS/181

must also mention Alexandre Vinet, whose thought made a deep and lasting impression on the soul of Sabatier, at the very moment when he was no more than a student at the Theological Faculty of Montauban . " At this time, he says, I was reading much of Vinet " (1). Through the medium of Vinet, he set himself again under the influence of the Réveil, and on the other hand threw himself wholeheartedly into the movement of modern theology. In it the revivalism of Vinet met the pietism of Schleiermacher , to affirm that the basis of all religion is in piety, and to substitute in theology the " internal proof " for the external and historical proofs. He discovered in Vinet, ideas which were already familiar to him and which were to remain essential for him. Whilst a student at Montauban, Sabatier summarizing the thought of Vinet, could already state : " What one calls the conviction of salvation , is God in the heart; it is this communion of will and spirit between God and man, that man cannot cause " (2). More than thirty years later, Sabatier will confirm that man " feels God to be active and present, in his thought under the form of moral law. He is saved by faith in the interior

1) VS/ 157

2) VS/ 155

God " (1). We must remember that Sabatier gave Schleiermacher the title of " Messiah of the new era " of theology . Now, of Vinet, he says that he is " the great prophet of the Religion of the Spirit in our age and country "(2). We know what price Sabatier quoted for the accession of the Religion of the Spirit . He could not have done better homage to Vinet than to have formulated such a judgment upon him.

Knowing the Huguenot antecedents of Sabatier , it is a matter of course to ask which share should be attributed to Calvin in the elaboration of his theology. It is a limited one , and yet a primary one. Indeed, if on the one hand, Sabatier places himself very willingly among the heirs of the Reformation by affirming that the task of the Religion of the Spirit, following the Reformers, is to recover the primitive Gospel with all its genuineness; on the other hand, however, he reacts violently against reformed orthodoxy , and particularly does not feel himself bound to the confessions of faith of the Reformation. The principle of Reformation has a permanent value within the Church . Borrowing a word from Vinet, Sabatier

1) se/290

2) se/283

asserts that " the Reformation is still to be done, and will be done endlessly "(1). He finds in Calvin a principle of immense and always valid range, that of the internal testimony of the Holy Spirit, which is a subjective criterion. Sabatier is a tributary to Calvin in the sense that he maintains in an absolute way this doctrine and gives to it a very important place in his theory of religious knowledge. When, after rejecting any external and infallible authority, he wants to define a principle of certainty which would enable every one,- theologian or humble believer-, to discriminate the Word of God in the Bible, he finds only one , " the witness of the Holy Spirit, as Calvin put in so strong a light, and which they have mistakenly abandoned, to take refuge in certain, as they believe, immutable results of criticism "(2). In a following chapter of the present work, we shall have the opportunity of comparing more closely the conception of the internal testimony both in Calvin and Sabatier. Let us only note at this moment that , apart from this doctrine , Sabatier is far from borrowing the dogmatical conclusions of Calvin. Indeed the loan is not negligible,

1) Vinet " Littérature au XIX^e siècle ", T.3 p.392, quoted in sa/283

2) sa/260

but it can be said that in spite of a general "Reformed" climate of the works of Sabatier, this loan is almost the only one.

We have shown in the biography of Sabatier, that at the end of his theological courses at Montauban, he went to Germany, first to Tübingen, then to Heidelberg. It is in the latter place that he had the opportunity of receiving the teaching of Rothe. There is, concerning the latter, a most precious statement of Sabatier, twenty years later : " The theologian Richard Rothe, whose lectures I have attended at Heidelberg in 1864, is the man whose thought has the most impressed mine. I willingly declare myself his disciple although I do not resolve exactly as he does all the problems of theology "(1).

Whilst placing himself under the influence of Rothe, Sabatier threw himself again into the great theological movement inaugurated by Schleiermacher. However, as he himself recognized, Rothe was quite independent of any precise school. In any case his overflowing imagination would have prevented him from being so. Sabatier was thus compelled to select from

1) VS/181

the many conclusions of Rothe. Numerous points of contact are nevertheless discernible between the teachings of the two theologians.

With Rothe, Sabatier sees the true centre of Christianity in the historic person of Jesus and in His teaching (1). Indeed the religious consciousness of Christ is the type of what must be the Christian consciousness. However, according to Rothe as well as Sabatier, Christ has not come to bring a new religious doctrine, but a new principle of religious life. His method of teaching is converse to that of the scribes, that is to say converse to the method of authority, and to attempt to deduct from His sayings dogmatic formulas would be purely superstitious (2). It is in the conception of Revelation that Sabatier owes the most to Rothe ; while not adopting it completely, he retains the essential elements of it.

First of all, Rothe insists upon the distinction which must be made between Revelation and the Bible, which is no more than the documentary record of

1) sa/ 334

2) sa/ 287

Revelation. In an identical way, Sabatier, while admitting easily that God speaks in the Bible and furthermore that the Bible " continues and perpetually maintains the revelation of God in the souls of men ", asks that it should not be idolized. " It is neither permitted nor possible to identify the Bible with the revelation of God "(1). With Rothe he recognizes in this discrimination one of the most important conquests of modern theology. The teaching activity of God reaches every people and nation, but it is only in the history of Israel that it takes the form of an appeal towards the renewal of religious consciousness, teaches Rothe. Sabatier outlines ideas very similar when recognizing a positive action of God in the history of the heathen. In all the ancient religions testimonies of the presence and inspiration of God may be discovered (2). But in the history of the Hebrew people, Revelation becomes more and more precise, takes a clearer form and prepares that of Christ. In order to arrive at a real understanding of Christianity it is therefore essential to study

1) sa/ 242

2) sa/ 268

the revealing action of God within the people of Israel (1).

At the centre of Rothe's doctrine of Revelation, may be found the distinction between the acts of God in the history of mankind, what he calls "Manifestation", and the words of God in human conscience, which constitute "Inspiration". In order that the divine manifestation might be actually understood and interpreted by man, God completes it by means of an inner action in conscience. Without inspiration the divine intervention would be deprived of significance ; without manifestation, inspiration would remain indefinite and aimless. The teaching of Sabatier on this point does not differ from that of Rothe; indeed he has not concealed his agreement with that theory which he does not hesitate to call "admirable" (2). With Rothe, he finds in Revelation two elements, an objective and historical one, and a subjective and inner one. With Rothe also, he believes that Manifestation and Inspiration are necessarily complementary. Therefore, if we want to understand the religious meaning of Christianity, we must not neglect

1) sa/ 269

2) sa/ 267

its historical side. Religious philosophy will be accordingly considered from the standpoints both of psychology and history (1). Is not the title of one of the main works of Sabatier precisely : "Outlines of a Philosophy of Religion based on Psychology and History"? Thus is undoubtedly confirmed the dependence of Sabatier on the master of Heidelberg.

Inspiration, the internal and subjective form of Revelation will appear under extremely varied forms, admits Rothe, but it will always be realized according to the laws of thought and spiritual life. Sabatier affirms a similar conception as he does not believe that an act of inspiration may be effected outside the conditions of knowledge (2). It is from this principle particularly that Sabatier deducts the theory of the symbolism of religious knowledge, with which we shall have to deal later on. On the other hand, Revelation is always limited by the historical framework in which it takes place; it cannot, according to Rothe, escape that necessary contingency. This is also the opinion of Sabatier who, however, goes further in that direction and reaches the notion of a progress

1) SE/ XV
2) se/ 332

in Revelation. Thus he speaks of the " successive revelations " of God (1). He can distinguish three main stages within the development of Revelation. He is even able to state that Revelation follows " the progress of the moral and religious life which God has created and developed in the midst of mankind "(2). Traditional dogmatics were much concerned with the problems of the criteria of Revelation , of the signs by means of which its authenticity could be verified. According to Rothe there is no problem of that kind, Revelation carries within itself its quality of evidence and does not require any other testimony. Sabatier draws similar conclusions and says that Revelation is, by nature, evident. To deny this principle would destroy the very notion of Revelation. It is true that Jesus in His teaching made frequent allusions to the mystery, but certainly not in the sense which has been given to that word by subsequent theology. The mystery which Jesus speaks about is by essence a revealed and unveiled one. In brief, evangelical Revelation does not need any other criterion than itself (2).

1) sa/ 369 sq.

2) se/56

When distinguishing between two elements in Revelation, Rothe did not seem to grant more importance to the one than to the other : Manifestation and Inspiration mutually complete themselves. Sabatier gives the first place to Inspiration, as after all " the manifestation of God in Nature or in History is always a matter of faith "(1). That is why he thinks that the distinction between Manifestation and Inspiration, although it may be true, has no more than a pedagogical value (2). From this it follows that the doctrine of Revelation is reduced for Sabatier to that of Inspiration, in which however the objective and historical element is not forgotten. The revelation of God holds three characteristics , it is inward, evident and progressive(3). When saying that it is inward, Sabatier takes the standpoint of Inspiration; evident, he uses an assertion of Rothe; progressive, he does not contradict Rothe as he develops his notion of historic contingency.

Through his analysis of the objective form of Revelation, Rothe approaches the problem of the miracle.

1) se/ 55

2) Ibid.

3) se/ 55-57

According to his system, miracle is part of Revelation, it is a manifestation of God. He does not hesitate to answer in the affirmative to the philosophical question: can there be miracles ? But as for deciding whether a particular event recorded in the Bible is authentic, it is to historical criticism to give the answer. Rothe distinguishes three kinds of miracles : first of all, the creative acts of God, immediate consequences of the divine causality; then, it is possible that God may manifest Himself through combinations of secondary causes, consistent with the laws of nature, but unexpected ; finally, there are what Rothe calls relative miracles, effects that man in the present state of his development cannot produce, but which result from forces pertaining to his own nature. Such are most of the miracles of Jesus. At any rate, Rothe does not allow himself to be frightened by the expression " laws of Nature ". Nature is organized, but it is not perfect. The creative activity of God works towards a development of the organical life of Nature and an annihilation of its imperfections. In short, Rothe believes that God is not limited and that He reigns over " the laws of Nature ", which He ordered Himself. In a similar way, Sabatier asks that any fact claimed as



miraculous, should be submitted to a rigorous criticism. However, the authentication of whatever miracle cannot be expected of Science. Science only knows secondary causes, it can no more affirm than deny miracle, it can only ignore it. Miracle is believed by faith as a positive intervention of God; it would be in vain to require from Science that it seized "in the course of these causes the immediate action of the First Cause"(1). However, as well in the working of laws of Nature as in more exceptional manifestations, nothing will prevent the believer from beholding the expression of the will of God (2). Without using distinctions as subtle as Rothe's Sabatier comes to a similar conception of miracle. This similarity of view is even more apparent when it is remembered that Sabatier, while denying the old dogma of a perfect and definitive creation, states that the creative act of God is perpetually continued both in time and space (3).

Such is, in its main characteristics, the doctrinal influence exerted by Rothe upon Sabatier. It is a

1) se/ 78

2) se/ 81-83

3) SE/ 322

contribution of very high value if we recognize the importance of the notion of Revelation in Sabatier's thought. And yet it can be rightfully asked whether Sabatier actually needed Rothe to discover this conception. Indeed, when in his book "The Religions of Authority and the Religion of the Spirit" he studies the origins of the modern theological movement he goes back to Lessing. A striking fact is thatⁱⁿ the analysis given by Sabatier of Lessing's theory of Revelation, it is not possible to discriminate between that which is actually taught by Lessing and that which is taught by Sabatier. The following principles may be found : one must distinguish between Bible and Revelation, the Bible contains Revelation but it is not the Revelation (1)². Revelation does not consist in an accumulation of doctrines formulated once for all, but it is continuous ; it may be discovered in all the historic religions. Furthermore, Revelation is the progressive education given by God to mankind (2). Finally the revealed truth does not need proofs, it possesses internal qualities of evidence (3). Actually, it is by Rothe that Sabatier

1) sa/ 207

2) Ibid.

3) sa/ 206

was directly influenced and not by Lessing. But through the medium of Rothe, Sabatier received the inheritance of Lessing.

Rothe was to do him an even greater personal service. In the course of his theological studies Sabatier experienced a serious and grave spiritual crisis. Leaving the theological college he remained assailed by doubts so heavy that he could not resign himself to become a minister of the Church. At his coming home from Germany, after having attended Rothe's lectures, all his scruples had been appeased. What had happened ?

As we have already remarked, Rothe refused to be bound to a particular school ; nevertheless he was considered as a member of a group of theologians which tried to find a middle way between the wild orthodoxy of Neo-Lutheranism and the excessive pretensions of the radical school.

A distinguished champion of "Vermittlungstheologie" Rothe had received a profound influence from Pietism by meditation on the writings of Zinzendorf ; at the same time he tried to preserve the right of scientific research. He knew how to ally an absolute faith to an unrestricted criticism. In himself he realized the

harmonious union of faith and science. The great teaching he gave to Sabatier was that it was possible to remain a Christian without denying the rights of thought. Coming home, Sabatier asked to be consecrated for the ministry and took charge of a parish.

Although one cannot speak of a direct influence, we must mention that Sabatier was very much aware of the work done by the German critical school, namely by Credner, Baur, Ritschl, Bleeker and Reuss. At Tübingen where he stayed before going to Heidelberg, he attended the lectures of Beck, another representative of the *Vermittlungstheologie*. Finally, Ménégoz affirms that Sabatier borrowed some inspiration from Lipsius (1). It is also probable that Sabatier owes, to a certain extent, to the philosophy of Charles Darwin and Herbert Spencer his ideas on evolution, development and progress, which are to be found so often in his works. Perhaps also it must be agreed that Sabatier borrowed from Hegel his dialectical framework. For instance, he explains the birth of religious sentiment by the contradiction which opposes theoretical reason to practical reason (2); in the same way, the conflict

1) MF 4/63

2) se/289

between collective consciousness and individual consciousness produces dogma (1); again, when the clash will burst out between antiquated conceptions and more modern ideas, a new synthesis will bring about a renewed dogma (2). The theological system of Sabatier thus rests upon typically Hegelian dialectics.

We have now reached the term of this brief study of the influences peculiar to Sabatier's thought. We have been able to remark that as a whole they result in an alliance of Sabatier to the movement of modern theology inaugurated by Lessing and developed by Schleiermacher ; in the philosophical domain they confirm his dependency upon the Kantian criticism.

IV. Influences peculiar to Ménégos.

Ménégos was brought up in deeply religious surroundings by his father, a thoroughly orthodox minister of the Lutheran Church, and furthermore, deeply marked by the stamp of Pietism (3). Ménégos owes to that

1) se/337

2) SE/402

3) " Pietism " was a movement towards the revival of religious life within German Lutheranism, which

typically Alsatian Pietism some elements of his own religious thought. Such is the importance given to the inner and individual experience and the acute consciousness of sin. One can also attribute to this initial print a marked inclination towards mysticism as well as the importance granted to the action of the Holy Spirit in the heart of the believer. This orientation will always remain underlying the theological conceptions of Ménégoz, in spite even of subsequent variations. It constitutes the permanent background of his religious life. As Maurice Goguel, who had known him for years, could say, it is in the inmost piety of Ménégoz that must be found "the inner spring, the real unity, and to sum up, the soul of his theology" (1). Maurice Goguel also added, "Ménégoz has retained, up to the end, the peaceful ingenuous faith of a child" (2). At Strasbourg during the course of his studies, owing to pastor Horning, Ménégoz was submitted to an even greater extent to an influence already received in his family, that of the most rigorous Lutheran confessionalsm. His thesis for the degree of Bachelor

began in 1674 and of which Jakob Spener (1635-1705) was the promoter.

1) "Revue de Strasbourg", 1922, p.91.

2) Op.cit. p.92.

of Theology, entitled " Etude dogmatique sur l'idée d'Eglise " (Dogmatical Study on the Notion of the Church) is a convincing proof of this influence. At the end of his studies at the Seminary of Strasbourg, we have already noted that Ménégosz undertook a trip to Germany. He spent some time at Erlangen, and there he had the opportunity of meeting a great master whom he would always remember , Thomasius. Thomasius, who was a distinguished representative of Neo-Lutheranism, united faithfulness to the traditional dogmas, to the independence of a modern scientific mind. Fifty years later, Ménégosz, having reached the end of his career, was to pay him this tribute : " I am especially grateful to Thomasius, whose religious soul and powerful honest thought have exerted a deep influence upon my heart and my mind, and have given to me a direct impulsion which I have but followed up to this day. Impressing on my conscience the certainty that salvation is in repentance and faith, he placed me at the very centre of religious life "(1). We must remark here that Thomasius was doing no more than teaching Ménégosz a fundamental principle of Luther. Ménégosz indeed has never satisfied himself with a second-hand

1) AM/2

teaching and always went back to the source, to the Reformer himself. If we want to understand well the main preoccupations of Ménégos's thought, it is absolutely essential to state his attitude regarding Luther's theology. This dependence is so clearly marked that Ménégos, when speaking of the Reformation and the Reformers, always means Luther, and only Luther.

First of all, says Ménégos, Luther has introduced a new principle which since then has remained the basis of Protestant dogmatics : theology is based upon the knowledge of Revelation, otherwise called " Word of God " (1). This revelation may be found in the Bible. Luther, when submitting the examination of the Canon to a subjective criterion(2) made himself the initiator of Biblical Criticism (3). Ménégos produces as evidence the severe judgment formulated by Luther against the Epistles of James and Jude, as well as his reticences concerning the Epistle to the Hebrews (4). Furthermore, Ménégos claims that Luther

1) MF I/425

2) MF I/431

3) MF I/433

4) MF I/435

has also put forward a distinction between the Bible and the Word of God, that he achieved a " sorting out"(1)". Stating more general conclusions, Ménégosz believes that the great work of Luther is to have stressed the fundamental principles from which subsequent theologians have been able to develop fruitful consequences. According to Ménégosz, " the only idea which seems to have been completely foreign to Luther's thought is the notion of an evolution of religious and philosophical conceptions, the conception of the historical development of dogmas (2). Of course, this idea was not foreign to Ménégosz, who under the influence of theological thinking and of historical criticism , rejected rather thoroughly most of the traditional dogmas held by Lutheran orthodoxy. He remained, however , attached to his Church by a strong sentimental link." It is not," as he said, " because this good mother has a few wrinkles on her face and a few infirmities that I would love her less " (3)! In spite of his doctrinal emancipation, Ménégosz strongly desired to remain attached to Luther in the theological domain. Accordingly, in an analysis,-typically Ritschlian-, he

1) " Triage ", MF I/437

2) MF I/460

3) Quoted by M.Goguel in " Revue de Strasbourg", 1922, p.91

does not hesitate to declare that " Fid isme remains consistent with both the material and formal principle of Luther...Luther taught the doctrine of salvation through faith alone, -sola fide-, and by the means of deeds. This was his material principle. He had found this doctrine in his free study of the Holy Scripture. This was his formal principle ". In the same way , Fid isme teaches salvation through faith alone, -sola fide -, and not by deeds. This doctrine reveals itself in the teaching of Christ, contained in the Scripture(1). " Thus, Fid isme applies the authentic and fundamental principles of Reformation and leads them to their achievement "(2). It is not our task to discuss here the validity of such a claim ; however it is to his deeply Lutheran upbringing that M n goz owes his faithfulness to the doctrine of justification through faith, which is the very content of the formula of Fid isme. This point should not be forgotten. M n goz owes to Luther another important element of his theological thought , the doctrine of the internal witness of the Holy Spirit, although he affirms that he has widened its signifi-

1) MF 3/5II-5I2

2) MF I/449

cance (1). We will have the opportunity of studying this point later on.

With regards to the properly philosophical influences received by Ménégos, in addition to that of Kant, two names will attract our attention, those of Fichte and Lotze . But actually these are very limited borrowings and not complete agreement with their systems.

In a highly significant "Réponse à Lobstein" Ménégos states how much he owes to Fichte. According to Fichte, knowledge is not as for Kant a partial product of sensation, it is the exclusive creation of the ego. The analysis of knowledge shows its three elements : affirmation of the ego by the ego, affirmation of the non-ego, affirmation of the limit between the ego and the non-ego. But the non-ego, the objective world, is not an obstacle faced by the ego, it is a limit that it gives to itself. The phenomenal world is after all, a product of the ego, the objectivized ego; therefore there is no other knowledge than of the ego. Ménégos tells us that this theory has been his, all his life, and that it has played a great part in the building up of his theology (2). However, he does

1) MF I/449

2) MF 4/87

not go any further, as does Fichte who denies the reality of a personal God. Much more he admits the existence of the phenomenal world in which, he says, the universal common sense believes imperturbably (1). Then, Ménégos does not hesitate in completing Fichte's teaching by the doctrine of the internal witness of the Holy Spirit which, he says, "harmonizes perfectly with the role of the ego as formulated by Fichte" (2). Yet, to go that way, Ménégos appeals to another philosophical authority, Lotze, who believed in the reality of the objective world, and according to whom the notions of a personal God and of the action of His Spirit were essential. Thanks to the immanence of God through His Spirit, there is a means by which the ego can know the non-ego, a link between the subjective and the objective (1). Such are the philosophical justifications which Ménégos thought necessary to superadd to his theology.

Through the medium of Ritschl, Ménégos received a double contribution, philosophical and theological, which did no more than to confirm him in his general orientation. Ménégos very willingly joined the modern

1) MF 4/88

2) MF 4/87

theological movement " to which Ritschl attached his name, and the doctrine of which, without being completely identical with ours, agrees with it on the principal points "(1). According to Ménégoz, the merit of Ritschl consisted of making the distinction, already foreseen by Schleiermacher, between religion and science, theology and metaphysics (2). We must remark that this discrimination does not imply that Ritschl had built a theological system independent of any philosophical conception. He only wanted to fight against Hegelian tendencies. But in spite of the relative influence of Lotze, the Ritschlian theory of religious knowledge is primarily Kantian (3). We have already remarked that this is precisely the path followed by Ménégoz when, having distinguished religion from philosophy, he bases modern theology upon Kantian criticism (4). In the actual theological domain, the agreement between Ritschl and Ménégoz on the conception of Revelation is clearly manifested'.

1) MF I /236

2) MF 4 /40

3) See on this point the interesting remarks of Maurice Goguel in his " Théologie d'Albert Ritschl ", p.7-10.

4) Cf. supra p.29

Ritschl teaches that the Christian religion finds its basis in the Revelation of God. According to Ménégos, religion is composed of two elements , the knowledge of the will of God and the knowledge of the conditions required for God's forgiveness (1). Furthermore, the high value of Ritschl's theological system is brought about by the energy with which he placed the person of Jesus Christ at the centre of divine Revelation. This insistence may be also found similarly in Ménégos. This affirmation exists already in the "Réflexions sur l'Evangile du Salut " in which he claims the testimony of Jesus to be the perfect revelation of God (2). This is why he calls Him " the Word of God par excellence, the incarnate Word of God (3). It is only in the "authentic Gospel of Jesus " that the divine teaching must be inquired into (4). At this stage we can foresee what importance will be given to Biblical Criticism. This is, again, also a concern for Ritschl. In his interesting controversy with Lobstein, "Notre Seul Maître ", Ménégos developed the consequences of his

1) MF I/4

2) MF I/I4-I5

3) MF I/343

4) MF 4/94

christocentric conception of Revelation (1). We shall quote it again in this work.

It is probable that Ménégos borrowed also from Ritschl his definition of Protestantism founded upon a distinction between the material principle and the formal principle (2). There are also, on a doctrinal level, many similarities between Ritschl and Ménégos. It is however difficult to record them completely as Ménégos never published a complete dogmatic system but only studies on specific points. We shall first of all note that the conception of Sin is almost identical in the works of Ménégos and those of Ritschl. Sin, states Ritschl, can only be understood if we consider it in regard to Good, the Kingdom of God, which is its opposite. An act in itself is not a sin unless it proceeds from an attitude such as indifference or disobedience towards God. Similarly, according to Ménégos, " sin is a fact belonging purely to the moral

1) MF 4/74 sq.

2) In this analysis which dates from the end of the XVIII th Century, a distinction was made between the "principium salutis" and the "principium cognoscendi". Ritschl expounded it in an article of his : "Über die beiden Principien des Protestantismus", in 1876.

order ". Basing his opinion upon the Bible, he sees sin as a transgression of God's will, a guilty rebellion (1). As for the dogma of Original Sin, Ménégos, as does Ritschl, rejects it. There are also similarities between both theologians concerning the doctrine of Justification. Ritschl, however, lays more emphasis upon reconciliation, whereas Ménégos stresses the importance of repentance. They both agree in completely renouncing the dogma of Vicarious Atonement (2). Finally, Ménégos as well as Ritschl emphasizes the importance of the recognition of God as a personal being (3).

It is undisputable that Ménégos owes to Ritschl some solutions on certain problems, but above all, it is thanks to him that his closer association with the Kantian theory of knowledge is brought about. Again, in the theological field, it is Ritschl who confirms him in his dependency upon the great movement inaugurated by Schleiermacher. This may explain why, in spite of quite a different education and formation, it was so easy for Ménégos to realize later the union

1) MF 2/ 435

2) See the study of Ménégos on this point, in MF 2/271

3) MF I/ 336

of his thought with Sabatier's.

We will have to examine the great importance granted by Ménégos to biblical criticism, prior to any dogmatical speculation. This may be easily explained as Ménégos was not only a polemist and a dogmatician but first of all an exegetist. This is shown by the subjects of his theses for the licence and the Doctorate of Theology which are respectively entitled : " Le péché et la rédemption d'après Saint Paul ", and " La Théologie de l'Épître aux Hébreux ". The first awakening of this taste for exegesis must be dated back to the time when, at Strasbourg, he was influenced by Reuss. As he said later, it was Reuss " who stimulated my critical mind and who created in me the worship of historical honesty " (1). In addition to that, two works of New Testament studies, " Der Paulinismus " by Otto Pfleiderer, published in 1873 and the " Lehrbuch der neutestamentlichen Zeitgeschichte " by Emil Schürer, published in 1874, made a deep impression upon him . It was after reading them that he decided to study the New Testament and soon he became an authority on the subject.

1) Report of Dean Raoul Allier, Nov. 1921, p.5.

Our survey of the influences peculiar to Ménégoz would remain incomplete if we were not to mention that of Auguste Sabatier. Because of the close association of these two theologians, this influence shows a more personal and intimate character than all the others. Ménégoz has paid great tribute to the work achieved by Sabatier. For instance, he speaks of the publication in 1897 of the "Outlines" (1), as "a theological event". When reviewing the "Religions of Authority and the Religion of the Spirit", he states that it is "a jewel of French theological literature" (2). At the death of Sabatier, he mourned for "the greatest Protestant theologian in France since Calvin" (3). He quoted him abundantly in his writings and always praised him. It is also true that Sabatier did not ignore Ménégoz either, and that sometimes he quoted him too, for instance concerning the conception of miracle (4). However, we are of the opinion that Ménégoz has given little to Sabatier, although he has received much from him. This may be explained not so much because one of

1) MF I/227 sq.

2) MF 2/I4

3) MF 2/I sq.

4) se/74-79

these two theologians was greater than the other, but rather by the difference which existed between their respective theological concerns. Indeed, if it is true that Sabatier's system may lead to Fidélisme through a logical development, it remains true however that Symbolism is complete in itself and can very well do without Fidélisme. The epistemological premises of Sabatier can lead to different conclusions. The converse is not so true. Fidélisme under its primitive expression such as we know it in the "Considérations sur l'Évangile du salut", was based upon a rather vague theory of religious knowledge (1). To strengthen his theology Ménégoz needed a well-built epistemology. A comparison will simplify this problem. Sabatier's Symbolism is like a tree whose roots are Kant's philosophy and Schleiermacher's theology, and whose fruit is the Fidélisme of Ménégoz. Should it happen that the tree bear no fruit and remain barren, it is nevertheless a whole, organized and alive. Conversely it is difficult to admit that the fruit might ripen directly on the roots. Without Sabatier, would Ménégoz have seen his Fidélisme ripen? Perhaps, at the best, we should have beheld the outcome of stunted

1) MF I/I-35

and under-developed fruits. Actually, Ménégos has found in the Symbolism of Auguste Sabatier the theory of religious knowledge that he needed for the backbone of his Fidéisme . As we have already noted, one year after the publication by Sabatier of his "Essai d'une théorie critique de la connaissance religieuse", Ménégos expressed in the conclusion of his study on "La théologie de l' Epître aux Hébreux", ideas extremely similar to those of the symbolist theories of his friend. In spite of the denials of Ménégos, the fallacious character of which we have shown, Fidéisme is definitively linked with a precise theory of religious knowledge, Symbolism. Such are the remarks which lead us to suggest that Ménégos was deeply influenced by Sabatier and owes much to him.

We have discovered, in the background of the building up of Symbolo-Fidéisme, the conjugate inheritance of Kant and Schleiermacher. It is, on the other hand, striking to see how, in spite of their formation essentially different but amazingly parallel, Sabatier and Ménégos have reached conclusions so closely akin. Sabatier, formed by the school of the "Réveil" and Vinet, in a Huguenot and Calvinist background,

undergoing a serious crisis while studying at the theological college following his encounter with the German Critical school , was taught by Rothe and thus could achieve a conciliation between the demands of piety and those of science. On the other hand, Ménégoz, brought up in Lutheran Pietism, then shaken in his orthodoxy by the encounter with historical criticism, learned from Thomasius how to harmonize the needs of the religious soul and the independence of the scientific mind. Both of them although following independent paths were guided towards a road common to both, that of modern evangelical theology, along which they continued together creating the synthesis of Symbolism and Fidélisme. This was the way opened by Kant and Schleiermacher.

V. " The Paris School ".

Very soon, Symbolo-Fidélisme began to exert a deep influence, and the group ~~soon~~ came to be known as the "Paris School". The leaders were unquestionably, Auguste Sabatier and Eugène Ménégoz. Both of them

were professors of the recent Faculty of Protestant Theology founded in 1877 to take the place of that of Strasbourg. The influence of the Paris School was felt for at least thirty years starting roughly around 1880. Among its members, were such distinguished personalities as Lichtenberger, Jundt, Matter, Ed. Vau-cher, the Stapfers, Massebieau, Raoul Allier, de Faye, Adolphe Lods, Wilfred Monod, Henri Monnier, Maurice Goguel. It has directly influenced men such as Paul Lobstein from Strasbourg, G. Tyrell (1), Alfred Loisy (2) and many others. It has stamped a whole generation of professors and ministers. However, since the death of Adolphe Lods, Maurice Goguel remains the only living professor, who has been both a contemporary of the Paris School and one of its most eminent supporters. On the other hand, a certain number of French pastors still claim to be more or less directly linked with the Symbolo-Fidéiste School. The chief representative of them is Georges Marchal, a minister of the "Eglise Réformée du Foyer de l' Ame", Paris.

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- 1) see, for instance, chapters VIII, XI, and XII of "Through Scylla and Charybdis", which are almost literally inspired from Sabatier's teachings.
 - 2) see, for instance, in "Simple Reflexions", p. 52, 58, 149 sq., etc, passages which are identical both in matter and form with some ideas of Sabatier's "Outlines".

On the other hand, Fid isme had not only friends and supporters but also some fierce opponents. The most vehement and probably also the least sincere of all, was beyond doubt professor Emile Doumergue, the author of two clumsy pamphlets , " Les  tapes du Fid isme " (The stages of Fid isme) and " Le dernier mot du Fid isme " (The Last Word of Fid isme). His main objections were that M n goz taught salvation through sincerity, on the one hand, and a faith independent of creeds, or even without creeds, on the other hand . M n goz did refute several times his contentions, but we do not feel that he had ever taken his orthodox adversary seriously. Another controversialist was Charles Babut who reproached the fid iste soteriology the teaching of salvation through love. We must also mention professor Vaucher who carried out with M n goz a very lengthy but friendly discussion concerning the role of creeds towards salvation.

A veru interesting case is that of professor Henri Bois, who at first had accused Fid isme of teaching on the one hand a faith without object, and on the other hand a salvation through love, and had criticized it wholly. After a slow and careful evolution he drew nearer and nearer to the principles of

the Paris School. Ménégosz did not abstain from remarking upon this transformation and stressing at every opportunity his agreement with Bois.

Among the diverse polemics which Ménégosz had to undertake in order to defend his position, we must quote the most important controversy which he had with professor Lobstein. It ended with a final letter in which Lobstein states his joy in finding himself in so complete a harmony with Ménégosz : " I have reached conclusions identical to yours on every point you have dealt with "(1). We also know that in his works devoted to dogmatical criticism, Lobstein showed himself as an ideal disciple of Sabatier. Although it cannot be said that Lobstein belonged actually to the Paris School, it is still true that in his method and findings he was very close to it.

Lastly, we must quote professor Fulliquet, from Geneva, the author of an interesting " Précis de Dogmatique ", a book which both Ménégosz and Lobstein described as thoroughly fidéiste (2).

1) MF 4 / II 8

2) MF 3 / 479 sq.

VI. Conclusion.

Symbolo-Fidélisme constitutes unquestionably a movement of reaction towards the whole of traditional Christian orthodoxy, Roman Catholic as well as Protestant . Furthermore, Ménégos wants to distinguish it clearly from Liberal Protestantism .

For Jean Réville, the basic principles of Liberal Protestantism are as follows : " The sovereignty of reason and conscience in religious matters as well as in all the other domains of spiritual life. The historical authority of the Bible, when freely examined by scientific means and beyond any confessional standpoint " (1). Its confession of faith is complete in this only teaching that " Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy soul, and thy neighbour as thyself"(2). Ménégos reproaches several teachings of Liberalism : first of all of holding the same definition of faith as orthodoxy, and through the confusion of faith and belief, of rejecting the doctrine of justification

1) " Le Protestantisme Libéral ", 1903, p.31.

2) Ibid., p.174.

through faith, and then of teaching salvation through the love of God and of one's neighbour.

Secondly, and this is a much more thoroughgoing criticism, Ménégos does not believe that reason is the foundation of religious conviction. The divine revelation of God through the medium of the internal witness of the Holy Spirit, and in the Bible, is exclusively infallible and sovereign (1). As long as what Ménégos calls the internal witness of the Holy Spirit is not a disguised reappearance of reason, we must admit that Liberalism and Symbolo-Fidélisme are divided upon the problem of authority in matters of faith. It would appear however that Sabatier who appeals unto religious experience exactly as do the Liberals, does not diverge so clearly from them. It is also true that in spite of these distinctions, Symbolo-Fidélisme has always been considered in French Protestant circles as the direct offspring of Liberalism. This is an assertion that the disciples of Symbolo-Fidélisme themselves have not always denied. Even to-day some of them do not object to being listed as, or even call themselves, " Liberals ", with the aim of simplifying the situation.

1) MF 3/I6I

At all events, Symbolo-Fidéisme was not satisfied with only a mere negative struggle against orthodoxy. It represented a constructive effort. As Sabatier has so authoritatively shown, it aimed at the elaboration of a truly scientific theology, whose sources would be psychology and history (1). It will be necessary for us to examine the results of this attempt.

It is whilst studying the problem of prolegomena of Dogmatics that we have been induced to undertake the present research. We wanted to know whether it were right or not that Symbolo-Fidéisme be no more than a form of agnosticism (that word being understood in the sense of doctrinal indifferentism) and accordingly, incapable of providing a basis for any dogmatical construction. The nature of dogma is the central problem. Once the notion of dogma be clarified, it only remains to study what is its function, or more precisely what is the consequent conception of Dogmatics. However, the notion of dogma can only be fully understood, particularly in Symbolo-Fidéisme, by means of a precise analysis of the theory of religious knowledge taught by this School. Thus, the plan of research that we have chosen is as follows. Firstly, we shall deal with the theory of religious knowledge,

then with the analysis of the notion of dogma, finally with the study of the notion of dogmatics. In the course of this investigation we shall try to observe the greatest objectivity, whilst setting ourselves within the same perspective as that of Sabatier and Ménégos, particularly by respecting their definitions and usage of vocabulary.

PART ONE

THE THEORY OF RELIGIOUS KNOWLEDGE

CHAPTER I

"RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE"

Symbolo-Fidélisme teaches that "religious experience" (1) constitutes the source and basis of religious knowledge ; the principle of certainty and authority being, as we shall see further on, the "internal witness of the Holy Spirit".

I. The nature of religious experience.

Neither in the works of Sabatier nor of Ménégot is to be found a precise definition of religious experience. Nevertheless it is possible to understand almost exactly what it means for them, since this expression is very frequently used, at least by Sabatier. Religious experience is fundamentally an act of trust and love, it is the consciousness of the presence of the Spirit of God in the spirit of man, it is the "inward religious fact" (2). However, Saba-

1) "expérience religieuse"
2) se/ 335.

tier admits frankly the vague and undefinable character of this notion. On the other hand he considers that it appears as a perfectly clear and bright moral reality to all those who have experienced the inner Christian life (1). In this respect it is interesting to observe that Ménégoz prefers not to give the divine action in conscience the name of "religious experience". This reticence is formulated in the first article of his answer to Lobstein, entitled "Le principe de la connaissance" (The principle of knowledge). Nevertheless it should not be forgotten that in an article dated 1911, "Le subjectivisme en dogmatique" (Subjectivism in Dogmatics), having recalled that Schleiermacher was the first to base Dogmatics upon the experience of religious consciousness, he found no difficulty in accepting ~~the~~ his train of thought and continuing along the same lines (2). Now, if Ménégoz gives up the usage of the term "religious experience", it is not with the intention of departing from the ideas of his colleague Sabatier, but it is in order to analyze more exactly the basis of religious

1) sa/36I

2) Cf. supra p. 36 and infra p. 317.

knowledge. He believes that the word " experience " can lead to a misunderstanding, since it holds several meanings. Therefore he substitutes the word " witness ", " which aims more directly at the divine action " (1). The " witness " to whom he is referring is the " internal witness of the Holy Spirit ". However since the precise principle of religious experience is that very witness which it records, the agreement of the two theologians remains undivided.

If we want to understand and analyse the development of religious life until its blossoming forth into the purest theologies and the most elaborate rites, we must start from the internal emotion which is its source. At the beginning, says Sabatier, there is the " first germ of religion " lying in the heart of primitive man. Then he considers the religious evolution of mankind as successive appearances of " religious germs " in the conscience of man. According to this theory , the most perfect religious germ, which appeared in the conscience of Jesus-Christ, is the foundation of the perfect religion, Christianity (2). We must remark here that, once more, Ménégos critici-

1) sa/ 361
2) SE/ 269

zes the terminology of his friend Sabatier. " I prefer not to speak as he does of a religious germ that God has sown in man and which grows, because I conceive religion as the result of a permanent action of the Spirit of God, immanent to the spirit of man"(1). But these are only nuances, he adds. Indeed this is true and these shades are so similar as to be indiscernible. Just before speaking of the " religious germ", Sabatier himself says that it is the inner revelation of God which creates subjective piety (2).

II. Its subjective and its objective character

Since religious experience exists in the inward life of the individual, it goes without saying that it is fundamentally subjective. Furthermore, because of the liberty of man and the infinite variety of spiritual and moral beings, the diversity of religious experiences has no limit, no more than has the doctrinal formulation which grows out of them. As Sabatier very truly remarked, if even the science of

1) MF I/234

2) se/235

Nature cannot be stripped of an insurmountably subjective character, "moral science and theology in particular, are subjective to a still higher degree", as the very object of their study, moral and religious life, is a creation of the free will of the subject (1).

However, says Sabatier, moral and religious life is not only individual but also collective and "an individual experience is only a part of the total experience of humanity" (2). It is absolutely necessary, if we want to appreciate individual experience, to set it in the social background in which each man finds himself. Individual religious life must also be included in the great linking up of the history of mankind. Of course, there are original experiences which are actually individual. But, there are also in the conscience of religious man phenomena which reflect deep movements, which never cease to be repeated in the rhythm of the life of mankind. Now, we know that according to Sabatier, history in the religious domain as well as in the others is characterized by a continuous evolution. Therefore individual religious experience must be studied in a twofold

1) sa / 350

2) sa / 340

perspective, a vertical one and a horizontal one.

" It is impossible to insist too much upon the organic and indissoluble bond which thus attaches individual experience to historic and collective experience "(1). From this comes a certain quality of objectivity in religious experience which belongs not only to psychology but also to history. If this theory is true, the objectivity of religious and moral sciences is due to this inescapable necessity which Kant called the " categorical imperative ", and which constitutes the law of religious and moral phenomena (2).

III. Religious experience as the source of religious knowledge.

Religious experience is, for Symbolo-Fidélisme, the basis and the source of religious knowledge. In order to give an illustration of this thesis, Sabatier takes a concrete example : how can we know God ?

It can be agreed, he says, that philosophers might have elaborated an objective science of God, at least as they believe. This however should not be considered

1) sa / 352

2) sa / 350

as religious knowledge " for, to know God religiously is to know Him in his relation to us, that is to say, in our consciousness, in so far as He is present in it and determines it towards piety "(1).

When religious knowledge becomes formulated , it does not cease for this reason to retain its subjective character. We shall see, when studying the notion of dogma that Sabatier distinguishes in it at least two elements, an intellectual one which is no more than the outer covering, the expression of the religious element which comes out of experience (2). This close link between religious knowledge and religious experience is made clear in a striking formula : " In relation to religious experience, dogmatic formulas are what words and sentences are in relation to thought "(3).

All that we have said concerning religious experience as a whole, may of course be applied to its higher expression , " Christian experience ".

1) se/ 310
 2) SE/ 304 cf. p. 133 sq.
 3) SE/ 301

IV. Christian religious experience

To know Jesus Christ religiously is not to possess a historical knowledge of his person, not to meditate as a theologian or a philosopher upon the nature of His being. It is to have undergone the religious experience of the efficiency of His word which reveals the paternal heart of God (1). Furthermore, to undergo Christian experience is to possess the perfect religion, the religion of Jesus Christ. That is - to have a religious consciousness identical to His, and "to live again within ourselves, the inner, spiritual life of Christ, and by the union of our hearts with His, to feel in ourselves the presence of a Father and the reality of our filial relation to Him, just as Christ felt in Himself the Father's presence and His filial relation to Him "(2). But we must not forget, as Sabatier reminds us, that the religious experience of Christ and of His first disciples, achieves and brings to perfection the less perfect experience of the

1) SE / 38I, footnote 1.

2) sa / 293.

Hebrew prophets which prepares it (1).

Thus the religious experience of a Christian consists rather in a kind of repetition of the experience made in the consciousness of Jesus Christ. Adding to that mystical description, Sabatier teaches that " this wholly religious and moral content of the filial consciousness of Christ constitutes and determines what is called in the language of Christianity the Spirit of Christ or the Spirit of God in the history of humanity ". He describes it as a " religious sense ", a " faculty of discernment "(2).

We must remark here that this definition does not at any rate deny the whole of Sabatier's teaching regarding the inspiring role of the Spirit of God. In particular, in a preceding chapter of his book on the "Religions of Authority and the Religion of the Spirit" he issued a warning against the abuse of the illuminists when they appeal unto the internal testimony of the Holy Spirit. He then said that " the Christian spirit can be nothing other than the Spirit of Christ" (3). However there seems to be some ambiguity in all this

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- 1) sa / 248
 - 2) sa / 362
 - 3) sa / 248

terminology, as Sabatier too, does not hesitate to appeal unto the internal witness of the Holy Spirit. Of course if one identifies " Holy Spirit " with " the Spirit of Christ ", which is quite natural, it can be well agreed that the Holy Spirit which was fully dwelling in Jesus Christ might inspire us too. From this follows the notion of the Spirit understood as an acting power, which through the medium of its testimony can grant us the certainty which we need, and be regarded as a criterion of religious knowledge. But now Sabatier seems to give also to the word Spirit an imaged meaning, that of an attitude . He speaks of it as a " filial consciousness ". This attitude, this " spirit " would give a faculty of discrimination which he would not possess naturally .

Through the medium of Christian experience , says Sabatier, " the religious and moral consciousness of Jesus is repeated, continued, diffused, and remains actually present and living in each Christian generation " (1). In this experience, he distinguishes three elements already present in the conscience of Christ and that we can appropriate now, if we are in communion

1) sa / 274

with Him : the experience of release from evil, the experience of filial union with the Father, the experience of the access to eternal life (1). Thus we can see that the notion of Christian experience is not so " vague and undefinable " as it might appear at first glance. In any case, Symbolo-Fidélisme while admitting the subjective and individualistic character of this experimental faith does not wish to give way to the wanderings of fantastic imaginations which would, rightly or wrongly , claim to be divinely inspired. There is a model, a criterion, a norm unique and absolute, accepted by the Christian conscience, that is the religious experience realized in the conscience of Jesus (2).

At this stage we attain the summit of the doctrine of Christian religious experience taught by Sabatier. The religious experience of Jesus is not only that of a man or even of a prophet among others. It has its unique value which places it above and beyond all the past and future experiences of religious men. Indeed, whilst God wanted to save men, yet it was not His will to bestow upon them a wisdom or a knowledge. He placed

1) sa / 294
2) SR / 37

in the centre of history a " power of life ", a " germ," able to change the world, it is the consciousness of Jesus whom God has chosen for His Son. Thus Revelation is not the gift of a catalogue of dogmas but the creation of a religious life. To put it in other words, " the absolute revelation of God is the absolute religious consciousness of Jesus Christ"(1).

V. The Bible and Christian experience

We know that according to Sabatier, although the divine revelation is achieved in the consciousness of Jesus, it has a history and a development. The religious and moral life of Israel shows this preparation and permits our better understanding of the religion of the Gospel. On the other hand, it is of primary importance to gather the first fruits of Christianity from the time of its outcome. Therefore the Bible is the document par excellence of the history of Revelation . The Bible informs as well of the religious experiences of the prophets and of the forerunners

1) SR / 37

of Jesus Christ, as of Christ Himself and of his first disciples. Naturally, the New Testament, the document of the perfect religion seems to Sabatier even more important. The New Testament, as the norm of Christianity, will be its strongest defense against subsequent traditions. This historical document will also preserve us from what Sabatier calls " the illusions and dreams of private inspiration " (1). It will be a safeguard against the fancies of the illuminists. That does not mean, it must be emphasized, that Sabatier denies the validity of the internal witness of the Holy Spirit, but only that this inspiration may be checked (2). Therefore, without being a code of dogmatics, the Bible remains a testimony, " the historic fountain of Christian knowledge " (3).

1) sa / 248

2) cf. supra p. 89

3) sa / 247

CHAPTER 2

THE INTERNAL WITNESS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

I. Immanence of the Spirit of God

An essential affirmation of the Paris School is that God, far from being a mysterious and hidden divinity reveals Himself permanently and through many channels. One of these ways is His presence in man by His Holy Spirit.

We already know, that according to Sabatier, God cannot be known by scientific means, as He is not a phenomenon . Sabatier's God is an inner one. Accordingly, when one speaks of inspiration, one must understand " the organic penetration of man by God " (1). There, Sabatier severs himself from Kant, or rather, completes Kant's teaching. According to Kant, God is exclusively transcendent, and there does not exist such a thing as an immanent action. In a moving passage of one of his works, Sabatier shows how troubled a disciple of Kant may become when his

1) se/90

knowledge of the world and consciousness of self clash.

There are good reasons to believe that Sabatier himself went through this painful experience. Seeking desperately for a solution of the struggle opposing the ego and the world, pure reason and practical reason, his last hope is the notion of a God : " he feels God to be active and present in his thought under the form of logical law, in his will under the form of moral law ". But this is an even more important statement : " He is saved by faith in the interior God, in whom is realized the unity of his being (1). On the other hand we must not forget the motto which is modestly hidden in the fly-leaves of the "Outlines" : "Quid interius Deo" ? Thus, from the start, Sabatier lays forth a teaching built upon the immanence of God in man.

Furthermore, Sabatier does not satisfy himself only with outlining the solution of a philosophical problem. In his works we find a highly precise development of this idea of an active inner God, and he considers this as a fundamental question. " The action and the presence of the Spirit of God within our own spirit , he says, is the mystery, but it is

1) se / 290

also the source, of religion "(1). Thus, the immanence of God in man appears to Sabatier under the form of the presence of the Spirit of God in the spirit of man. From this presence, man draws all his dignity and hope. The human being holds in itself a tragic contradiction. On one hand, there are his intellect, his reason, his conscience, all doomed by weakness and imperfection. On the other hand, in spite of this frail, incomplete and sinful exterior, a mysterious power manifests itself, and it is this power which is the spring of all his hopes. There is at the bottom of the ego, a " mysterious guest ", stronger and greater than himself and to whom he appeals when fallen, defeated and discouraged. " Est Deus in nobis " proclaims Sabatier with all his faith (2). We must not consider with indifference the words which Sabatier uses, for it is not by chance that God's immanence is so described : God who is present within man manifests Himself spiritually and it is actually as a "guest" that He stays there. His presence will not therefore be occasional but permanent.

1) se / 309

2) sa / 318

At the same time, Sabatier strongly reproaches the Church, Roman Catholic as well as Protestant, in other words all that represents orthodox Christian tradition. He denounces the " incredulity " which it showed when confining the inspiration of the Holy Spirit to a few men, particularly to the writers of the New Testament, whilst denying it to others (1). The gift of the Spirit, he says, is given to all Christians, and that is their privilege (2). Let us here remark that such a statement is not an isolated one in the thought of Sabatier. It is verily a pre-occupation that he had had since the very beginning of his studies. A proof of this may be found as early as 1862, in a letter in which he wrote : " In the Apostles' teaching there is a clear and constant affirmation, that is the universality of the gift of the Holy Spirit which is promised to all disciples of Christ, without exception " (3). Since that time, Sabatier took stand for the " Religion of the Spirit".

Finally, this dwelling of an inspiration of God is not intermittent. As Sabatier declared clearly :

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- 1) sa / 299
 - 2) sa / 302
 - 3) VS / 159

the revelation of God lies in " the immanence and continuity of a revelatory principle in the Christian soul, not in a book, but in the Spirit " (1).

To sum up, let us say that according to Sabatier, God is within man, immanent by His Spirit. This presence is offered to all men. This inspiration is permanent.

In the work of Ménégoz, the notion of the immanence of God holds as eminent a place as in that of Sabatier. Many developments of his writings deal with this doctrine. We need quote here only the most typical and explicit of these. As early as 1879, in the " Réflexions sur l' Ewangile du salut ", he wrote :
 " We must appeal unto a fact of the inner experience which can be felt but which cannot be proved : the action within our own spirit of a mysterious, spiritual factor, independent of our spirit and yet permeating it to such an extent that it becomes confounded with it. This factor is the Spirit of Truth, the Holy Spirit, the author and source of any true knowledge"(2).

1) sa / 312

2) MF I/3

It must be noted here, that for the one instance when in his written works, Ménégosz uses the word " experience ", he admits very willingly and as did Sabatier, that this is a fact unprovable on the objective ground, and that only those who have come by it, can understand its significance (1).

Moreover, Ménégosz gave this definition : " The Holy Spirit is the spirit of God immanent in the spirit of man. It exerts on the spirit of man an immediate action which is perceived in conscience " (2). There is nothing to add to this statement. Sabatier and Ménégosz are absolutely in accord.

Ménégosz and Sabatier developed their conception of the immanence of the Spirit of God to its utmost consequences.

According to Sabatier, the antithesis opposing pure reason and practical reason was resolved in the faith in the inner God, for it is that God who inspires both of them (3). Thus the immanence of the Spirit of God within the spirit of man is not limited to some of his activities for example moral or religious ones.

1) Cf. sa / 36I

2) MF I/4

3) se / 29I-294 . Cf. supra p.95.

It is unveiled in every faculty of the human spirit. Sabatier speaks of " the presence of God in the heart, the conscience and the reason " (1). This shows us, he says , that there will ~~be~~ never be an unsuperable conflict between the Religion of the Spirit and Science. There is no obscurity or doubt regarding this belief, in his teaching.

There is also, he says, an intimate affinity between religious and scientific inspiration. " They spring from the same source, they lead to the same end, and both manifest the same life of the Spirit "(2). Indeed their origin is in the love of truth. The spirit of piety and the scientific spirit meet and reach communion in the " religion of the truth "(2). In fact does not human science in its research itself tend to pay homage to God ? That is why Sabatier can truly state that the object of science is religious and conversly that respect of science is part of the "religion intégrale " . There is no conflict or competition between science and religion . To suggest the alternative between a profane science and an ignorant

1) sa / 317

2) sa / 343

religion is a twisting of the problem. Granted that they have a common source, why not bring about the reconciliation of science and piety ? Sabatier arrives at the conclusion that " science in piety is scientific theology " (1). This is the summit of his development of the notion of the immanence of God in man.

Ménégoz, for his part, goes very far too and does not fear to formulate statements marked with great clarity. However he settles the problem in rather a different way. Inspiration is not limited to moral and religious consciousness, but it plays its part in the whole of the ego and especially in intellectual thinking. He attributes the categories of thought and the operations of intelligence to the action of the Spirit of God. " Reason is a product of the action of the Spirit of God within our spiritual life "(2). One must not imagine that this affirmation is the only one of its kind in the works of Ménégoz. Indeed it harmonizes well with the whole of his teaching. He goes even further when declaring that the Spirit of God is as well manifested in religious revelation as in the

1) sa / 344

2) MF 3/380

operations of intelligence " therefore there cannot be any discrepancy between these two orders of knowledge"(1).

From these remarks we may realize how far Sabatier and Ménégoz are in agreement as regards the extent and consequences of the presence of the Spirit of God in the spirit of man.

With such bold statements as those we have quoted it was easy to accuse Ménégoz of being a rationalist and also to confuse the Paris School with Liberalism. This has been done in all thoroughness by superficial critics among the opponents to the new school, especially E.Doumergue (2). Non-discriminating or malicious readers may easily confuse one tendency for another, of the so-called left-wing theology. Apparently this happens very often even to-day. We have already shown that Liberalism and Symbolo-Fidélisme differed clearly on two primary issues, the theory of religious knowledge and soteriology (3). With regards to religious knowledge, Ménégoz always taught that it was not based upon the tenets of reason, but built upon Revelation, particularly under the form of an

1) MF 4/203-204

2) See for instance his " Etapes du Fidélisme " 1906.

3) Cf. supra p. 76.

immediate intervention from God, immanent in man by His Spirit. It is important to avoid any obscurity on this point.

It is one thing to state that we rely on the action of the Holy Spirit and that this inspiration cannot be in contradiction with the findings of reason, and another to affirm that we rely on reason alone. Ménégoz teaches that the authority and the lead belong to religious knowledge as given by the Holy Spirit, but it should not and could not disagree with rational knowledge, because of their common and divine origin. In other words, rationalist Liberalism holds that all knowledge comes from man whilst the Paris School teaches that it comes from God. In fact, if the symbolo-fidéiste doctrine of God's immanence were a static conception, the formal opposition by the Paris School to Liberalism would vanish away. Indeed, we could not see any real divergence, no more than a verbal difference between saying on the one hand that the basis of knowledge is human reason, and on the other hand, that it is reason as much as it is the gift of the Spirit of God, in the sense of a gift granted once and for all, and determining what one might call a second nature. Thus it would be

exactly the same to say that the source of knowledge is in man or in God. Actually, this is not true at all, because the affirmations of the Paris School are rather different. The immanence of the Spirit of God cannot be understood as the once and for all achieved improvement of human faculties, but as a continuous and renewed action. It is a dynamic conception.

Thus, according to the Paris School, reason and conscience are both ways of knowledge given to man by God. The one will always be competent for all profane and secular fields, whilst the other will be for the religious order. This teaching renders obsolete the old antithesis of reason and Revelation and opens the way for a synthesis of both notions. This synthesis was made necessary by the fallacious problem that whole generations of theologians carefully nourished. Ménégos simply declares : " There is no discrepancy between the findings of reason and the authentic Gospel. Both of them have their source in God " (1).

1) MF 3 / 212

II. The Internal Witness of the Holy Spirit as the basis of certainty.

The Paris School having thus postulated the immanence of the Spirit of God in the spirit of man shows now which are the ways of its action. First of all, this action is " immediate ", in the strict meaning of the word, that is to say , positively direct and without any medium, as Ménégoz has stated (1). This is made even clearer in this complete although rather condensed formula : " God is omnipresent. He is immanent in the spirit of man. He exercises His action in our conscience. This is the internal witness of the Holy Spirit " (2).

Sabatier attaches much importance to the action of the Holy Spirit in the conscience of man. He calls it " the light of the Spirit "(3). The Holy Spirit, he also states, seals the preaching of Christ's Gospel in the heart of the believer.(4) On the other hand, the internal witness of the Holy Spirit reveals to man his true nature. It compels him to look into his own heart,

1) MF 2 / 384

2) MF 2 / 409

3) sa / 268

4) sa / 274

to become conscious of his state and judge himself. The Holy Spirit makes man understand his sinfulness : " the sense of sin is born in us of the witness of the Holy Spirit ". Hence it is the basis of the " Religion of the Spirit ", of which Sabatier made himself the champion (1).

According to Sabatier, as we know, the immanence of God through His Spirit could be seen in the development of all human faculties, especially moral consciousness. But he goes even further. The "Christian " consciousness is not fundamentally different from moral consciousness. There is a difference of degree between them but not a difference of nature since both come as a result of the working of the same Spirit of God in the heart of men. The Holy Spirit as the author of religious and moral consciousness, - this is one of the chief teachings of Symbolo-Fid isme. As we will see, M n goz gives to it a highly exact significance.

Following this line of thought, Sabatier shows that the fundamental function of the internal witness of the Holy Spirit is to be the basis of certainty in the field of religious knowledge. Far from attributing

1) sa / 326

to human reason the ability of reaching certainty in these matters, Sabatier reminds us of this truth that faith itself is a gift from God. When the believer confesses religious or moral realities, it is only as a result of the "inward demonstration of the Holy Spirit" alone (1). This determines the sui generis character of religious certainty. He adds that the internal witness of the Holy Spirit is the spring of all true conviction. External elements such as tradition or custom will never create it as "the inward witness alone can give conviction" (2). The Christian faith is not constituted by an act of belief, although it is always associated with an intellectual element. It is an act belonging primarily to the moral sphere, an inner decision which does not accept the lead of any external authority. It is an act of confidence and love, the fruit of an inner inspiration which has no guarantee except its own evidence and no basis of certainty other than that of the internal witness of the Holy Spirit (3). From these statements we can appreciate the extent to which Sabatier carries his teaching. It is important to remember here that

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- 1) sa / 336
 - 2) sa / 322
 - 3) SE / 284

Sabatier was strongly mistrustful of all that resembled external authority. We must not forget either that when Sabatier constituted himself as the defender of what he termed as the " Religion of the Spirit ", it was precisely by reaction against all the orthodoxy contained in the " Religions of Authority ". The doctrine of the internal witness of the Holy Spirit has therefore a great value as being resolutely opposed to all ideas of an external authority for faith. Furthermore, Sabatier does not pretend to be an innovator in that respect. On the other hand he regrets that such a fundamentally Protestant teaching could have been often neglected in the past, and he refers constantly to the Reformers, and especially to Calvin.

To the critic, an immediate objection will present itself : how will it be possible to know whether an inspiration proceeds truly from the witness of the Holy Spirit, or if it is the fruit of imagination and fancy ? Sabatier gives a general criterion . Granted that there is only one Holy Spirit and that it was actually the one which dwelt fully in Christ, the enlightened " may judge the Christian character of their inspiration by its conformity with that of Christ "(1).

1) sa / 300

The conception of Ménégos regarding the doctrine of the internal witness of the Holy Spirit is much akin to that of Sabatier. The "Testimonium internum Spiritus Sancti" is the highest authority unto which we may appeal (1). It is the only principle of authority in the field of religious knowledge. As he so well states, the witness of the Holy Spirit is "the norm of our judgment in the religious order" (2). On the other hand we must remember that Ménégos maintained a continuous mistrust towards orthodoxies and dogmatical traditions. As a faithful leader of the Paris School, he knew too well that, with all Church institutions dogmas are temporary and changeable. And again how could the action and presence of the Holy Spirit possibly be limited? Therefore, he emphasizes that the witness of the Holy Spirit is direct, individual and independent (3).

Sabatier said that the existence of moral consciousness was to be attributed to an inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Ménégos goes even further: the moral law, the categorical imperative, are fruits of

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- 1) MF I / I3
 - 2) MF I / I5I
 - 3) MF 4 / I7I

the witness of the Holy Spirit (1). On the other hand religious life must also be considered as a result of the action of this divine testimony. Thus, in the moral and religious domains none of the faculties of discernment that man possesses belong to him in his own right. Their source may be found in a divine inspiration constantly renewed. As usual, Ménégos sums up his thought in a striking formula : " Our moral and religious consciousness is a product of immediate divine action "(2). One could not accuse Ménégos of obscurity in such a statement.

The use of intelligence and reason has a limited range. The results of deduction do not always impose themselves with much weight even to the one who produced them, hence much less to others. Something else is necessary to create conviction. The law of the spiritual word is fundamentally that of freedom. Therefore the acceptance of God, the hearing and discernment of His word, the reception of His revelation depend upon a criterion which must be also not only spiritual but individual. The certainty of faith although very different from scientific certainty ~~is~~ is equally

1) MF 3 / 384
2) MF 4 / 87

absolute, but does not rest upon the same basis. In the world of the spirit an appeal unto authorities external to conscience itself could not be accepted.¹ Indeed, even if the conscience agreed to obey such authorities, the doctrines accepted through this channel would not actually be the object of an inner conviction (1). The Holy Spirit alone can bring to the conscience the inner testimony able to promote moral certainty (2).

Like Sabatier, Ménégoz studied closely the possibility of formulating a criterion, both general and absolute, which could be applied to the internal witness of the Holy Spirit (3). In the same way he refers to Christ. Ménégoz does not deny that at Pentecost disciples received the gift of the Holy Spirit, as the fulfilment of the promise given by Jesus. But the Holy Spirit spoke and guided the faithful, century after century. However if their teaching is actually inspired by the Spirit of God it could not contradict the authentic teaching of Jesus Christ. " All that does not agree with Christ's word must be rejected "(4).

1) MF I / 9-10

2) MF I / 4

3) cf. infra p. sq.

4) MF 4 / 213, footnote 1.

For Ménégos this means several venerable orthodox dogmas which he believes that Jesus Christ not only never taught but which are even conflicting with His teaching . We must not think that this is a slight criticism on the part of Ménégos. He really wants to denounce what he considers the great delusion for which Christian tradition can be held responsible for centuries. All his work is based upon this criticism.

III. The Internal Witness of the Holy Spirit and Revelation.

Each time we find in the works of Ménégos the expression " internal " witness of the Holy Spirit, we must remember that the theologian does not wish to limit the action of the Holy Spirit to this conception alone. On the other hand, we owe to him the contribution to the Paris School theology of the teaching of a valuable element. There are, he says, two kinds of testimonies borne by the Word of God. First of all, there is the mediate, external and objective witness, which is especially that of Christ's Gospel (1). Then, there is the immediate, internal and subjective

1) MF I / 12 and I / 410.

witness. This last term is of great significance to Ménégos. This latter witness is that of the Holy Spirit. However, if it is right to say that Ménégos introduces here a kind of discrimination between the two testimonies, it would be wrong to conclude that he opposes them. Indeed when the Word of God is addressed to man under its external form, as soon as it is received by his spirit it tends to lose this character and become internal. Then there is no more distinction between the immanent and immediate testimony of the Holy Spirit (1). Through this double witness God speaks to man, calling him to repentance, to conversion and to the surrender of his soul. " This twofold witness is the only one divine testimony "(2). Man progresses along the path of truth towards a fuller knowledge of God's will by his borrowing alternatively from both forms of witness.

Although the internal witness of the Holy Spirit is regarded by Ménégos as " the highest authority "(3), when man is longing for divine truth he is not satisfied solely by this direct and personal inspiration. He tries to find in other men some testimony of the

1) MF 2 / 340

2) MF I / 13

3) Cf. supra p. 109

Holy Spirit, which for him appears as external. It is namely in books that he finds this external witness(1). This leads us towards a broader conception of God's Revelation.

This has been clearly explained by Sabatier although he does not judge it useful, as does Ménégos, to maintain such a distinction between external and internal witness. He even refuses to accept the difference, traditionally taught by theologians, between a supernatural and a natural revelation, an immediate and a mediate revelation, since he claims that Revelation has both characteristics. As for particular revelations they " enter into general Revelation as varieties into species "(2). On the other hand , Sabatier explains in the same way as Ménégos, how internal witness or the experience of religious people can become external testimonies of divine revelation, when translated first into words, they are later fixed in the sacred writings (3).

Therefore the relationship between the doctrine of the internal witness of the Holy Spirit and the

1) MF I / I3

2) se/ 65

3) se/ 60

notion of Revelation in the symbolo-fidéiste school appears clearly. We already know that according to Sabatier, Revelation does not consist in God's supplying ready-made dogmas to man, but it is to be found in the continuity and permanence of the action of the Holy Spirit in the spirit of man (1). More precisely Revelation comes from " the creative and fruitful religious experience which first arose in the souls of the prophets, of Christ, and of His apostles!"(2) We find again, yet in slightly different words, the famous doctrine of Sabatier concerning the religious " germs " sown by God in mankind in the course of History. On the other hand, if one of the essential features of God's Revelation is to be interior, this is the consequence of a principle dear to Sabatier i.e. that it is because God has no phenomenal existence and therefore He can only be spiritually revealed (3).

It is Ménégos who had the merit of having more clearly given a central place to the internal witness of the Holy Spirit in the Paris School theory of

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- 1) sa / 311-312
 - 2) se / 249
 - 3) se / 54

religious knowledge. After showing that Revelation brings the knowledge of God's will and then of the conditions of His forgiveness, and that this is the substance of Christ's Gospel, he comes to ask this question : how is Revelation enacted ? " The answer is a theory of religious knowledge "... " Modern evangelical theology finds divine revelation in the witness of the Holy Spirit "(1). In this formula we must remark upon two things , first of all, each time that Ménégoz speaks of " modern evangelical theology " he means nothing more than the Symbolo-Fidéisme of the Paris School; secondly, he does not say whether the witness is " internal " or not . Yet we know: that he is actually referring to the internal witness. This is not ambiguous at all and the context contains one of the oppositions of modern evangelical theology against orthodoxy which, he affirms, teaches a Revelation understood as " objective and external ".

We cannot avoid thinking that this is really a very precise tenet coming from a man who elsewhere claims that " Fidéisme as such has no theory of

1) MF 3 / 2II

knowledge " (1) !

The Paris School regards the Bible as the essential document of the mediate revelation of God. It is therefore very important to know what this school understands by the relation of the Holy Spirit to the Bible.

First of all, there is no identification between the Bible and Revelation, since the latter cannot be bound by narrow and definitive limits such as in a document or a particular institution. On the other hand Revelation is abundantly present in it. As Sabatier so appropriately states, " the Holy Spirit breathes through and animates its least important pages " (2)'. But what constitutes the unique value of the Bible is rather its ability to nourish the religious wants of man. In other words, it is one of the ways which the Holy Spirit uses when speaking to men's hearts. " The Bible continues and perpetually maintains the revelation of God in the souls of men " (3). The Holy Scripture is thus the source of inspiration for piety.

The authority of the Bible according to Symbolo-Fidéisme is not based upon an external principle such

1) Cf. supra p.12 sq.

2) sa / 249

3) sa / 242

as for instance the doctrine of literal infallibility. It finds its authority in itself (1). It holds in itself enough strength to make itself accepted without discussion by a soul engaged in a genuine search of truth. Of course, as is the case for all moral or religious certainty, this quality of evidence will be welcomed by the spirit of a man only if he has received the witness of the Spirit of God. Thus the authority of the Bible is not relying on an abstract dogmatical principle but on a living spiritual reality, i.e. the internal witness of the Holy Spirit. " The outward authority of the letter has given place to the inward and purely moral authority of the Spirit " (2). Hence a twofold relationship links together the Holy Spirit and the Bible : on the one hand the Holy Spirit speaks in the Bible, on the other hand the Bible draws its authority from the internal witness of the Holy Spirit.

1) sa / 242

2) sa / 259

IV. The Internal Witness of the Holy Spirit according to the Paris School and according to the Reformers.

If we follow Ménégos, we must admit that modern evangelical theology has broadened and developed the notion of the internal witness of the Holy Spirit as it was taught by the Reformers and by the theologians of the XVI th and XVII th centuries. The difference lies, he tell us, in the fact that nowadays a permanent action of the Holy Spirit in the spirit of man is fully admitted (1).

Studying Luther's conception, Ménégos thinks that although he has not formulated it, this idea was not foreign to the Reformer. In order to justify this statement he refers to the explanation of the third article of the Apostles' Creed as is given in the " Shorter Catechism ". However, we could not find in this text, no more than in the corresponding section of the " Larger Catechism " any indications sufficient to constitute a justification for such an interpretation. On the other hand, as Ménégos himself remarks, Luther teaches that the internal witness of the Holy

1) MF I / 449

Spirit is inseparable from the external witness of the " Word ". It is the medium to the Spirit which grants to it the power of touching and converting the heart of man . " God has sent and makes known to us His Word, in which He grants unto us the Holy Spirit "(1).

Permeating our conscience, the Word legitimates itself through the witness of the Spirit which it carries. This doctrine was absolutely necessary to Luther who had to debate with the Illuminists such as Münzer, who believed in the direct revelation of the Holy Spirit , disregarding the testimony of the Holy Scriptures. Ménégos seems to think that Luther would have preached a broader conception of the action of the Holy Spirit, if he had not had to fight against these excesses. Whatever it may be, we suggest that Ménégos was wrong to speak as a whole of what he terms as " the Reformers and the seventeenth century theologians " (2), whilst referring to Luther alone. Hence we are entitled to quote another Reformer, Calvin. For the latter the doctrine of the Holy Spirit holds an important place. We shall see that Ménégos has not said a thing which had not been said with an absolute

1) Luther's " Larger Catechism " , the third article of the Apostles' Creed.

2) MF I/449

precision a long time before.

Let us therefore give a brief account of the doctrine of the action of the Holy Spirit in man, as it may be found in the "Institution de la religion chrétienne" (1), the "Catéchisme de l' Eglise de Genève" and the "Confession de Foi de La Rochelle", all works attributed to the Reformer.

God has set in every man a sentiment of the divine, a "sемence de religion" (seed of religion)(2), an "estincelle de vérité" (spark of truth)(3). This is what we would call in our modern language, the universality of religious sentiment. Calvin draws a distinction between the "connaissance des choses terriennes" (knowledge of terrestrial things) and the "connaissance des choses célestes" (knowledge of heavenly things)(4). As regards to the first order, man, in spite of his corrupted nature possesses many a gift from God (5), as the Spirit of God must be held as a "fontaine unique de vérité" (sole source of truth)(6). Hence Calvin recognizes the

1) in the 1539-41 edition as published by "Les Belles Lettres", Paris 1936.

2) IC 1/43

3) IC 1/46

4) IC 2/115

5) IC 2/116-120

6) IC 2/118

validity of the science attained by the early lawyers, philosophers and doctors. On the other hand, when investigating the field of religious knowledge he admits only one source of truth, that is the "illumination du Saint Esprit" (enlightenment of the Holy Spirit)(1), without which reason cannot grasp what belongs to God.

The image of an illumination of the spirit of man by the Spirit of God is very frequent in the writings of the Reformer. He uses often terms such as "illumination", "lumière" (light), "soleil" (sun), "obscurité". The illumination of the Holy Spirit enlightens man's understanding and creates faith : " Faith is the proper and complete work of the Holy Spirit, by which, being illuminated, we acknowledge God and the great treasures of his goodwill, and without the light of which our spirit is blinded to such an extent that it cannot enjoy spiritual things"(2). This illumination makes man able to understand the Word of God (3). " The true intelligence of our spi-

1) IC 2/I22

2) IC 10/205

3) "Catechisme", I4 th section, and "Confession", art. 21

IC 2/I62, 4/I3, 29, 30, 31, 32, 37, II8, I20, 10/206, 207-209

rit comes from the illumination by the Spirit of God"(1). Calvin adds this further precision that the Holy Spirit is " master of truth, source of light, fountain of wisdom, knowledge and intelligence " (2).

Then he affirms the continuity of the work of God's Spirit in man : the faithful become a " temple du Saint Esprit ", " habitacle de Dieu " (house of God)(3). The Holy Spirit actually dwells in the heart of man, he stays there permanently. Its influence is not an occasional one (4). In Jesus Christ alone resided the fullness of the Holy Spirit, which " chose his soul as its own seat, in order to flow from it on us, as from the sole fountain "(5). This is the doctrine of the unction of the Holy Spirit.

The authority of the Scriptures must be founded upon the " internal witness of the Holy Spirit " (6). Only the " inner persuasion of the Holy Spirit " will create our confident certainty in the Bible (7). This is also the condition necessary for an acceptance of

1) IC 4/32

2) IC 4/119

3) IC 4/64, 119. " Catéchisme ", 14th section. I Cor. 12.

4) " Catéchisme ", 14^e section.

5) IC 4/83

6) IC 1/67 and " Catéchisme ", 45th section.

7) IC 1/71

the canonicity of the books of the Bible and their recognition as a rule for faith (1).

Finally, there is a criterion of the internal witness of the Holy Spirit. " If something not contained in the Gospel is offered to us in the name of the Holy Spirit, let us not believe in it "(2).

Such is the core of the calvinist doctrine of the work of the Holy Spirit in the heart of man. It does not seem that Ménégot has added in any way to the Reformer's teaching neither in its main features, nor in the particular problem of the permanence of the action of the Holy Spirit, nor again on its immanence in the spirit of man, in his reason as well as in his religious consciousness.

Sabatier behaves more unpretentiously than Ménégot. He aims only at placing himself in the train of thought of the Reformers. Thus he quotes sometimes Luther, Calvin or Zwingli (3). He refers directly to Calvin as regards the doctrine of the inspiring action of the Holy Spirit (4). His only notable difference with Calvin

1) " Confession ", 4th article.

2) IC I5/I70

3) sa /I60-I65

4) sa /260

is the notion of the Canon. He thinks that Calvin and his disciples have committed a serious mistake in applying without distinction the criterion of the internal witness of the Holy Spirit to all books received as canonic (1). Apart from this unimportant discrepancy, the doctrine of the internal witness of the Holy Spirit is identical in Calvin and Sabatier.

Thus, the merit of Ménégos was not as he believed, that he would have widened or developed the Reformers' conceptions. On the other hand we are indebted to him for his rendering in a language more modern and understandable to contemporary thought so important and valuable a teaching.

Returning to the former doctrine of the internal witness of the Holy Spirit and giving it a first place, the Paris School proved it has still a part to play in theology. It seems able to open a middle way between liberal Rationalism and authoritative orthodoxy .

1) sa / I63

CHAPTER 3

THE THREE CHARACTERS OF RELIGIOUS KNOWLEDGE

I. Its subjectivity.

Religious knowledge based upon religious experience which itself is sealed by the internal witness of the Holy Spirit, is deeply marked with subjectivity. As Sabatier showed, this characteristic is also a consequence of its special object. To legitimate that affirmation, Sabatier invites us to bear judgment upon the order of knowledge attained by natural science.

Kant, he says, was wrong in his attempt to promote a distinction between the world we see, the phenomenal reality, and the real thing, the noumenon. Indeed he provokes in this manner of thinking a serious question which renders scientific scepticism unavoidable. Actually, thinks Sabatier, although the external world is not fully known by us, still it is a real world. Therefore the kind of certainty given by natural science possesses to a certain extent some objectivity (1). On

1) se / 306

the other hand there is some truth in the assertion that natural science is to some extent subjective, since it depends upon our ways of knowledge. Nevertheless an essential unity remains between the laws of thought and the laws of the phenomenal world. This unity creates the objectivity of natural science. In contradistinction with them, it is easy to understand that religious knowledge cannot be but fundamentally different.

The object of religious or moral knowledge does not belong to the phenomenal order and cannot be grasped independently from the subject or out of it. Much more it is " immanent in the subject itself "(1). As Sabatier states, " God is not a phenomenon that we may observe apart from ourselves, or a truth demonstrable by logical reasoning "(2). We must remark that such an assertion not only states the subjectivity of the knowledge we may have of God, but also ruins from the beginning all the classical attempts of so-called rational " theology ". According to Sabatier, even if we admitted that an objective science of God could be attained, it would not be a true and genuine

1) se / 304

2) se / 308

religious knowledge of God. Religious knowledge does not exist apart from religious experience (1), it is but " the very subjectivity of piety " (2).

It is therefore very important that experimental science should not trespass in the domain of religious knowledge, but on the other hand it could not be admitted that religious knowledge invade the other order. It would be an abuse if by means of religious knowledge, for instance for various reasons of religious faith, one tried to hold judgments of facts which belong especially to historical or critical science (3). This remark of Sabatier proves how faithful he remains to the principle that there cannot be an incompatibility and even less a conflict between reason and faith, between science and piety, since they both hold their own in their own particular field. They are even able to realize a harmonious synthesis by completing one another (4).

We remember that Ménégos preferred the expression "internal witness of the Holy Spirit " to " religious

1) Cf. *supra* p. 87.

2) se / 310

3) se / 311

4) se / 414

experience ". Thus he proved himself definitely less a subjectivist than his friend Sabatier,- or at least, this substitution eliminated the suspicion of a hidden rationalism, or perhaps of a new rising of Liberalism which the term " religious experience " may create. In this perspective, Ménégos studies the problem of the transition from the subjective to the objective, from the ego to the non-ego, and more precisely from "individual thought to historical fact, from Christ's religious consciousness to the Bible and the Church"(1)'. An act of faith, he states, though a psychologically subjective fact, frees us from the subjectivity of our knowledge. Thus Ménégos goes further than Fichte and avoids the agnostic consequences of his philosophy. This act of faith is the belief in the doctrine of the immanence of God. It enables us to communicate with the outer world. " The Spirit of God which fills the whole universe is the link of the ego and the non-ego "(2). Furthermore the witness of the Holy Spirit takes place in the very centre of man's conscience. Yet one should not be satisfied with ascertaining the presence of that subjective element

1) MF I / 364

2) MF 4/ 88

while forgetting its origin. It is owing to his transcendent source that the testimony of the Holy Spirit is external to man, but it is in man that God speaks, thus the human reception of the divine message is necessarily subjective. In brief, religious knowledge is of a twofold nature, it is both objective and subjective (1). From the first element it draws its authority, and from the second its freedom.

Finally, when one uses the term "religious experience", one judges religious knowledge from a subjective point of view. On the other hand, by preferring the expression "internal witness of the Holy Spirit", one emphasises the objective source of this knowledge whilst retaining the subjective element in preserving the word "internal". Yet one may safely say that these are but nuances and that actually the agreement of Sabatier and Ménégoz on the theory of religious knowledge is without reservation. In addition to the numerous proofs we have given, it is enough to refer to the account given by Ménégoz on Sabatier's theology to be definitely convinced (2). There is also an agreement with Henri Bois after his

1) " Le péché et la Rédemption d'après St Paul ", p. 287.
 2) MF 2/ II-12.

evolution. If we believe Ménégos we cannot distinguish any divergence between this theologian and Sabatier (1).

From all these remarks we shall conclude by saying that according to the Paris School, the first character of religious knowledge is its subjectivity. It is founded on religious experience, it draws its authority from the internal witness of the Holy Spirit.

II. Its teleological character.

Sabatier establishes the second character of religious knowledge, its teleology, again from the antithesis with experimental science. Natural science, when studying phenomena aims only at formulating judgments of fact, based upon the principle of causality. On the other hand moral sciences seek to propose judgments of value. They can only meet that end by reference to final causes. There again, in order to avoid insolvable problems, it is necessary that their particular field be clearly separated. Only on

1) MF 3 / 100-103

this condition will they harmonize happily one with the other.

When science remains in the exact bounds of its research, namely refraining from trespassing in metaphysics, its purely mechanical explanation of the world cannot fail to be incomplete. It can explain the linking of secondary causes, but not the final one which is the subject-matter of teleology. Moreover, as Sabatier remarks, "every teleological affirmation respecting the universe is a religious affirmation "(1). Indeed, when one introduces the idea of an end in the interpretation of the universe, one appeals unto the notion of an order, hence of a Good. This means a getting beyond the materialist analysis and affirming the supremacy of the spirit. Such a step needs an act of faith, which will be unavoidably subjective and will suppose a judgment of value of a religious character.

Sabatier then goes even further by stating symmetrically that religious knowledge is essentially teleological (2). The aim and purpose of religion is to preserve man from the threats and dangers of the

1) se / 318

2) se / 320

physical world. It tries to give to man a solution of the enigma of the world . It succeeds by freeing him from the slavery of mechanical and material causes and announcing to him the triumph of the spiritual life. When religion tells him about God, it is in order to reveal to him His will, to let him know of a supreme Good, of an end. Religious knowledge is after all but a teleological judgment, this character being the consequence of the first one, the subjectivity.

The idea of the teleological character of religious knowledge does not hold a great place in the Paris School theology. Indeed, it is not an idea particular to Sabatier, it is no more than a development of Ritschlian thought.

III. Its Symbolism .

Religious knowledge is fundamentally symbolical. This is its third character which is derived on the one hand from its subjectivity and on the other hand from its particular object.

Sabatier recalls very rightly, it seems, that

" the object of religion is transcendent, it is not a phenomenon " (1). This is at first sight rather a surprising statement when one remembers that Sabatier affirmed also that this extra-phenomenal object is " immanent in the subject itself " (2). It seems too, that Sabatier here goes back to the distinction between noumenon and phenomenon, in which he appeared to have little confidence.

The ambiguity is due to the fact that Sabatier, whilst allowing much place in his system for the doctrine of the internal witness of the Holy Spirit, has not, like Ménégoz, studied particularly the problem of the linking of the ego and the non-ego. Indeed it is rather evident that for him too, there is a uniting principle which is the Spirit of God. Then the distinction between noumenon and phenomenon is utterly meaningless. In other words, God is undoubtedly transcendent, but He is not only this. He is equally immanent. He does not shut Himself up in his transcendence, He reveals Himself. On the other hand we must admit that whenever Sabatier describes the object of religious knowledge as both immanent and non-phenomenal,

1) se / 322

2) se / 304, cf. supra p. 127

he wants to oppose not so much the phenomenal reality and the essential thing, as the phenomenal reality and the spiritual world. Nevertheless when he says that the object of religious knowledge is both transcendent and non-phenomenal, the distinction between noumenon and phenomenon does not seem to be completely forgotten. It can be suggested that whilst Sabatier denies the relevance of this distinction to natural science, he is not so strict regarding the moral and religious science. Actually this is of no serious consequence as we now know that he firmly believes that the internal witness of the Holy Spirit is the necessary link between these two orders of reality. On the other hand such a distinction allows an easier demonstration of the symbolical form of religious knowledge.

Granted that the object of religion is transcendent and extra-phenomenal, the task of religious knowledge will not be an easy one as it can only use human means of expression. Its formulas are inadequate and incomplete; giving only in part an account of the truth they carry. Religious knowledge can only make use of images belonging to the phenomenal world. It is therefore " obliged to express the invisible by the visible, the eternal by the temporary, spiritual

realities by sensible images "(1). A sincere theory of religious knowledge leads the theologian, first of all along the way of humility, as it displays the immense gap of his own inability. Very frankly, Sabatier admits that all our representations of God are " miserably anthropomorphic " (2). He remarks on this point that in the French critical school some have tried to oppose Anthropomorphism and Symbolism. This was unsuccessful, he says, as after all, Anthropomorphism is but a blend of Symbolism, although sometimes rather naive and superstitious (3). Expressions such as may be found in the Bible describing God as a rock, a burning fire, or more simply our Father, constitute typical examples of human formulas used by faith for the rendering of divine truths, they are symbols.

According to Sabatier's analysis two elements are to be found in a symbol, a mystery and a revelation. Every time a symbol is used instead of an exact definition, it is because truth remains hidden or veiled, though at the same time the use of a symbol means an attempt at explanation. Nevertheless whilst symbols

1) se / 323

2) sde / I37

3) SE / 397 footnote n.1.

are understood by some, they may be an obstacle of discouragement for others. In any case symbol is meant for the soul and not for the intellect. Its object is to promote emotions and not to reveal a dogmatic system. Sabatier is very explicit : " Symbols are the only language suitable to religion " (1).

The content of a symbol is essentially subjective, it expresses the relationship of the subject to the object, the way religious man is touched by God. This is the reason why, if on one hand symbol tries to give an account of religious emotions or experiences, it is also certain that it will be able to create new emotions amongst those who receive it. It will bring them the revelation of that mystery which makes their intelligence stumble. Hence, the value of a symbol will be appreciated not after the quality of the image used but rather after its power of suggestion , the deepness of religious feelings it can arouse (2).

Beyond doubt all symbolical expressions are bound to contain a latent contradiction since ~~they are~~ but the inadequate translation of a transcendent reality. Sabatier thinks that it is dangerous to strive in order to suppress it at all costs. This is the attempt

1) se / 327
2) se / 329

of the intellect which with the help of abstraction tries to reduce as much as possible the metaphoric element. Every time the symbol is ruined, the revelation it carried is equally ruined. Indeed all religious reasoning must retain its symbolical character in order to remain fruitful and, beyond the formula, must be based upon a living faith.

Of course, Sabatier is well aware of the fact that this way of analysing religious knowledge may displease many people who are amazed that whilst it is spoken of as a divine revelation, it is unable to bring forth pure truths formulated in an exact manner. He answers by simply saying that their demands are excessive, that Revelation can only takes place under the usual conditions of knowledge, unless it be no Revelation at all, in which case we would be unable to grasp God's secrets(1). The only means of expression is symbol, and the Son of God Himself has shown the way by constantly using parables. Such is Sabatier's thought summarized regarding religious Symbolism.

On the other hand, Ménégos too showed his complete agreement on that problem, although he did not give much development to its study. In the concluding

1) se / 332-333

chapter of " La théologie de l'Épître aux Hébreux ", his attitude is particularly clear . He first recalls the well-known words of Saint Paul " For now we see in a mirror darkly " which he takes as his " theological motto ". Speaking of the theology of the Epistle to the Hebrews, he says : " The eternal truth is to be taken under its contingent and transitory form which is its symbolical reflection "(1). This very formula condenses very efficiently the entire teaching of the Paris School on the symbolical character of religious knowledge.

IV. Conclusion .

With these three characters, subjectivity, teleology and symbolism, religious knowledge cannot escape submission to the same contingencies and variations as those which mark all intellectual and spiritual operations. This theory of religious knowledge is built upon the fundamental distinction of matter and manner, of substance and form. Indeed, its foundation which is religious life , the relation of the indivi-

1) MF I / 85

dual soul with God cannot vary beyond certain limits. On the other hand, its form, its ways of expression which are symbols, dogmas and rites are essentially changing, always moving forward and evolving. That Symbolo-Fid isme distinguishes between a permanent substratum and a contingent expression does not prove that it wants to oppose them or to study them, one apart from the other. It would be a false interpretation to say, as often did the opponents of the Paris School, that it preaches a religion without doctrine or a piety lacking thought or expression. Sabatier himself vigorously protested against such a kind of theology, which he termed as contradictory (1). All the polemics of M n goz are full of denials, precisions and re-statements on that particular point.

In addition to all that we have already said, it must be noted that according to the symbolo-fid iste analysis, religious knowledge is not based upon an isolated experience, neither is it the generalisation of individual experience. Indeed its content would be too poor. Individual religious life must be grasped with all its development and on the other hand there is also a collective religious life, the evolution of

1) se / 336

which can be seen in History. Religion is much more than individual, it is a social and universal fact, and a scientific research and study may be undertaken in that field (1). The task of Dogmatics derives from this principle. It will study the traditions of the religious society from the point of view of Symbolism and seek to find under its various expressions the movement of its inner life.

Such are the principles which constitute the basis of the theory of knowledge of the Paris School. The title of "Symbolisme critique" (Critical Symbolism) (2), has been given to this theory. It is the fruit of a very constructive attempt. By distinguishing between matter and form two errors can be avoided. Firstly, the error of orthodoxy which ignores the symbolical character of religious formulas and considers them as absolute definitions whilst retaining the term "Symbole" for its confessions of faith. Secondly the error of Rationalism which, criticizing the language of symbols, ignores also their spiritual meaning. Finally, another error, that of

1) se / 337, cf. supra p. 85.

2) se / 340

the pagan tendency , of which, according to Ménégoz, Roman Catholicism is an ugly example, is corrected by Symbolism. By its rites, its dogmas and symbols it enslaves the matter to the form and materializes religion (1).

The theory of " Symbolisme critique " possesses two main qualities. On the one hand it allows a legitimate criticism, and on the other hand it gives the faithful the responsibility of finding in the traditional formulas the food necessary for their faith. As Sabatier said so clearly, " it permits the combination of veneration for traditional symbols with perfect independence of spirit " (2).

1) sa /338

2) se /342

PART TWO

DOGMA

CHAPTER I

Definitions : Doctrines, Belief, Dogma, Faith.

The symbolo-fidéiste distinction between matter and form in religious knowledge leads us now to study the nature of dogma. However, in order to prevent ambiguity we propose to give some precise information concerning the definitions.

We have previously stated the close relationship between the work of Ménégoz and Sabatier. We also know that the essential question for Sabatier was the problem of religious knowledge. His systematic epistemology can be found first of all in his "Outlines of Philosophy of Religion", then in "The Religions of Authority and the Religion of the Spirit". On the other hand, Ménégoz while not despising epistemology was merely concerned with soteriology. He was more interested in the analysis of the contents of religious knowledge than in its formulation. It is obvious that he almost entirely approved the epistemological findings of Sabatier. All these facts lead us to start from

the definitions proposed by Sabatier, when studying the Paris School notion of dogma. A few words are given a precise meaning. These are namely "doctrine", "croyance" (belief), " dogma " and " foi "(faith). The first three are understood by means of deduction each from the other.

The first step of a strict formulation of religious knowledge is that of "doctrine". Indeed there is a more primitive language which is mythology. Elementary religion consisted merely in emotions and feelings and called upon all the resources of imagination in its expression. On the other hand, in a religion which has attained a higher degree of evolution, - as this is the case for Christianity-, formulas although symbolical, carry many more ideas than mental images. Religious opinions tend to become more general, they appear under the form of doctrines (1). The task of doctrine is to interpret religious experience, and give it an intellectual explanation. Yet remarks Sabatier, religion cannot do without doctrine, it is a necessity. Indeed, religious faith concerns all the faculties of conscience, of thought, of sentiment and of will. It is therefore impossible that religion be

1) se / 236

not expressed in doctrines (1). In brief, doctrine is the intellectual translation of religious experience.

The second step in religious consciousness is "croyance" (belief). We will see later that in the symbolo-fidéiste system belief is absolutely distinct from faith. In his "Réflexions sur l'Evangile du Salut", Ménégos himself suggested a definition of belief in the restricted sense of "an adhesion of the spirit to the revealed truth" (2). Sabatier gave a definition in almost identical terms although more general: "that intellectual fact by which the mind gives its consent to a historic fact and to a doctrine" (3). From these two formulas we retain a common teaching. Belief is an intellectual consent, it is an act of the thinking mind. Of course, this does not mean that the will has no part to play. On the other hand we know that according to the Paris School, conviction and certainty are fruits of the internal witness of the Holy Spirit.

Finally, the general definition of "dogma" is drawn from that of "doctrine". Let us immediately

1) se / 240
 2) MF I / 30
 3) sa / 335

observe that the primary character of dogma is the element of authority which is attached to it. When one speaks of dogma, one means a bounden duty. Every time religious consciousness grants to a given explanation the respect which is due to the divine object that it seeks to describe, there is a dogma. Thus the formula seems to possess all the dignity and authority which rightly belongs to its content (1). Practically, whenever a Church imposes upon its members ideas or doctrinal interpretations, these tend to become dogmas. Hence the definition given by Sabatier : " Dogma is a doctrine, of which the Church has made a law "(2).

With regard to these definitions the following remarks are pertinent. First of all, it is evident enough that the notion of doctrine is the fundamental one. Since dogma is defined from this notion, all which is said concerning doctrine will have to be equally applied to dogma, at least every time the latter will be studied from the intellectual point of view.

On the other hand, the word "croynance" creates ambiguity, as it possesses two different meanings. When

1) SE / 280

2) se / 230 & SR / 23.

the expression "la croyance" is used, this means the intellectual agreement given to a statement of an idea, whilst "une croyance", or "croyances" refer to the opinion or doctrine believed and not to the act of belief in itself. In other words, in its second sense the word "croyance" is practically synonymous with "doctrine". Yet we have remarked that often "doctrine" was equivalent to "dogma". Thus it often happens that all these words "doctrine", "croyance", ("belief "), and "dogma" are used by Sabatier and Ménégoz rather indiscriminately. This is especially true for Ménégoz who, generally speaking, in his works or at least in his speculations on epistemology is never precise in his wording (1), and it is remarkable to note that he rarely uses the term "dogma". This, of course, is a consequence of his marked taste for soteriology. But whatever the words, when studying the conditions of salvation, the central idea remains the

1) For instance there are two places where, Ménégoz speaking of the pedagogical value of doctrines, assumes that they create "des croyances" (beliefs), MF 2/189 & 519. He says also that a "belief once formulated, becomes a doctrine", MF 1/299. Again we find the expression "croyances doctrinales" (doctrinal beliefs) in MF 1/299. It is not exaggerated to say that such a lack of precision in the use of words does not help to clarify a matter which is in itself complicated.

same, i.e. that man is justified by faith and not by the intellectual content of this faith. What he is really concerned about, is not doctrines as such, but the obligation, enhanced by orthodoxy as well as Roman Catholicism, of accepting them, as a preliminary condition for salvation.

We shall now be able to understand fully the symbolo-fidéiste conception of "faith". Faith is primarily an inner choice, the gift of the soul to God, an act of repentance, confidence and love, a permanent surrendering of the individual (1). Furthermore it is the determination of conscience as a whole. It affects the mind as well as the emotions and also the will. On the other hand, while traditional orthodoxy teaches salvation through a faith which is made up of "notitia", "assensus" and "fiducia", the Paris School announces a salvation "sola fide", "fides" being understood as "fiducia" (2). The symbolo-fidéiste doctrine of faith is therefore based upon its distinction with beliefs. This is quite an important point which has been strongly asserted both in the works of Sabatier and Ménégoz (3). Thus if we

1) Cf. for instance : sa/273 & 328, and MF I/15-17, 2/198.

2) MF 2/134-136

3) MF I/33, sa / 273, 327-28, 335.

wish to arrive at a correct interpretation of symbolo-fidéiste theology, we will have to renounce the usage of the word "faith" as is generally understood, which confounds the act of the soul and the act of the mind. Faith is a "consecration of the soul to God" (1). It is faith alone and not a supposed doctrinal righteousness which saves man.

Let us add that whilst a certain lack of accuracy may be found in the use of the words "doctrine", "belief" and "dogma", by the Paris School theologians, this is not the case with regard to "faith".

Finally, we must mention the short but valuable study on the origin and history of the word "dogma" found in the "Outlines" of Sabatier.(2) Giving an account of the successive meanings attributed to this word, he quotes the sense of political decree, received in the pre-Christian era, then the subsequent meaning of characteristic doctrine of a philosophical school. He remarks that the term dogma did not appear in the Christian vocabulary earlier than the second century, and yet with the latter sense, but with no application to the Evangelical message. There is no

1) MF I / 33 etc.

2) SE / 274 sq.

" dogma " described as such in the New Testament, except for a short passage in the XVth Chapter of the Acts of the Apostles. At first, says Sabatier, although the word dogma meant a precept it did not mean a truth. It is only later, with Athanasius that this word received the authoritative and ecclesiastical meaning it has since retained.

CHAPTER 2

THE GENESIS AND NATURE OF DOGMA

I. Dogma as the tongue of Faith.

Again the distinction between matter and form of religious knowledge will enable us to grasp fully the genesis of dogma. Indeed we find it already in the antithesis of faith and belief (1), we find it again in the opposition between religion and theology (2), and finally we meet it in the distinction between religion and dogma (3). The attitude consisting in a confusion of these terms is one of those deeply rooted prejudices against which the symbolo-fidélisme school strongly reacted. Such a confusion arises from the idea according to which dogma is the essence of religion, with the consequence that every time the theologian undertakes a dogmatical criticism he clashes with the idea equally held by believers and non-believers that an attack against dogma is an attack against

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- 1) sa / 335
 - 2) sa / 353
 - 3) SE / 299

religion itself. This misunderstanding is a result of a false psychological analysis which claims that religion is a knowledge. According to the Paris School if it be true that religion is completed by some element of knowledge, then this knowledge is neither its basis nor its centre. Furthermore a criticism of dogmas will often lead to a freeing of the living forces imprisoned in formulas (1).

The true source of dogma is religious life. In order to establish that link, Symbolo-Fidéisme calls upon psychology. Every mental operation tends to assume a material form and produce a representation or an image. Religious sentiment does not escape this rule. Thus, the emotion of piety seeks an expression, it creates a representation of its object and uses images allowing some kind of a fixing. It is hard to imagine what could be a religious life which remains unexpressed. This of course does not mean that these images of representations are adequate and exact ones. We have already taken note of their deep symbolism. In the same way that all thought or idea has a representation, any intimate religious move of the soul gives

1) sd / 18

birth to an image . When, at a further stage, the work of the intelligence and the speculation takes place, the image takes the form of a doctrine and later of a dogma (1). Religious consciousness reveals itself in the dogma. Dogmas have not been offered ready-made to men, but they originate from the spirit of man : " it is Faith which produces doctrine "(2). This is especially true of Christian doctrine. How shall we say whether a doctrine is specifically Christian or not ? It is not by analyzing its intellectual expression, but by studying the religious experience which it interprets . If a doctrine is rooted but not in a genuinely Christian religious experience, it is foreign to Christianity (3). In this criterion we find again all the Subjectivism of the Symbolo-Fidéiste School.

As for those who confuse religion and dogma, they forget this evident truth : religion produces dogmas and precedes them (4). Hence the most elaborate dogma remains lifeless since the inner piety which caused its birth has disappeared. A dogmatical construction or a - Confession of faith are no more than a fallacious

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- 1) sa / 353
 - 2) MF I / 289
 - 3) sa / 361
 - 4) SE / 299

assumption, and not the foundation of religion. On this point, Sabatier recalls an interesting idea found in the teaching of his old master Rothe. The latter distinguished in all religion an internal principle consisting of piety and religious sentiment, and on the other hand, an external principle which is represented in rite and dogma. These two principles are to be compared in their mutual completion, to a soul and a body, says Sabatier; one is indispensable to the life of the other. As regards the problem of the precedence of one element above the other, the answer is clear: subjective religion begets objective religion. This he assumes is again the great teaching drawn from Schleiermacher and Vinet by modern theology (1).

In our research concerning the Symbolo-Fidéiste conception of dogma we shall therefore retain that first point as it is clearly summarized in a quotation from Sabatier: "Dogma is the language spoken by faith" (2).

As we observed earlier regarding the genesis of doctrine, at the level of primitive religion, religious emotion expressed itself in myth. In the course

1) se / 232

2) se / 246

of the evolution of mankind, religion tended to appeal less and less to the imaginative language. Then, faith is expressed in more intellectual formulas, in opinions and finally in what, strictly speaking, may be called doctrines. But whilst mythology was a true cause of unity and melted the bulk of individuals in a common piety, reason exerts its rights when doctrines are involved. At the same time as doctrinal production increases, the individual scrutiny, exegesis and controversy are admitted. The collective conscience of religious society being threatened by individual criticism, a permanent antagonism will result. Its instinct of self-preservation will cause the community to react against the demands of individual thought and promote increasingly precise definitions endowed with an obligatory character . Dogma therefore results from the conflict between collective and individual consciousness.

II. Dogma as the tongue of the Church.

Religion, although based upon individual piety is nevertheless a social fact. If, on the one hand, opinions or doctrines can be at infinite variance, on the other hand, dogmas characteristic of the Churches are much less numerous, there being not so many different denominations. According to the definitions of the Paris School, a doctrine becomes an actual dogma, only when granted the seal of a Church. Therefore when one wants to speak of a dogma, a preliminary condition must be fulfilled,- the level of individual experience is exceeded, so that the formula describes the experience of collective consciousness. It is through the channel of dogmas that collective religious consciousness defines and characterizes itself. Dogma is " a phenomenon of social life " (1). As Ménégos remarks, unless one professes an exaggerated individualism, believing that all religious truth must be drawn from the ego, one cannot avoid to investigate the testimony of others (2). In this way, the wanderings of individual fancy will be avoided. At all

1) se / 229

2) MF I / 41

events the sociological character of dogma, as the visible link of the Church, remains a fact. Furthermore, since a religious society is permanent, it creates a dogmatical tradition and the crisis of dogma will break out when this tradition will represent no more than the remembrance of the past and have lost all ties with contemporary religious life. Whatever might be the depth of the life of the Church, it will always affirm dogmas which theoretically are the signs of common faith. Drawing a comparison between language and thought on the one hand, and piety and dogma on the other, Sabatier regards dogmas as the "theological tongue" in which a Church expresses its intimate life (1).

In the opinion of the Paris School theologians the authoritative quality attached by the Church to dogma distinguishes it from doctrine. On the other hand, Sabatier observes that all religions do not reach the stage of becoming true Churches. As he says, there is no true Church which is not a Christian one, and therefore no dogmas exist outside Christianity. Of course, when a Church becomes an organized society

1) SE / 301

of which one can become a member only by one's own choice, doctrine becomes more and more important. In order to be exhaustive it must be general and at the same time, precise enough to exclude all foreign elements. Whenever it happens that a reaction or a criticism springs from the individual conscience and threatens its unity, the Church weighs down the balance with all its authority, and the official doctrine is made a dogma. This is the basis upon which lies "orthodoxy" (1), the teaching which is both compulsory and regarded as true. Its antithesis is "heresy"; the individual doctrine, a non-conformist and therefore false teaching. Such is the meaning given to this word by the Paris School according to the general use. Let us regret that these theologians have preserved this acception of a term which etymologically has another meaning (2). Had they employed instead the word "heterodoxy" which describes more exactly what they term as "heresy", the sense would have been less

1) se / 238

2) The Greek word αἵρεσις, derived from the verb αἵρεσθαι, means a choice or option, hence a sect, a faction. Thus, heresy consists mainly in the promotion of a religious sect, built upon a particular point of dogma which is regarded as the corner-stone.

obscure. On the other hand, it is true to say that the orthodox theologians commonly use the word heresy to describe what is strictly speaking heterodoxy.

It is evident that the more authoritative that the Church is, the more contrasted, the antithesis of orthodoxy and heresy will be. It will be irreducible in the case of a Church claiming infallibility, but will tend to imperceptibility in Churches enjoying a living and changeable tradition such as those which have issue from the Reformation. On the other hand, each Church is compelled to promulgate a whole set of doctrines, taking the form of a dogmatic system, and not only isolated dogmas. In this way, as Sabatier notes, one comes to use the word "dogma" (singular) in order to describe the whole of a doctrinal system. For instance, one speaks of "Roman Catholic dogma", when referring to the group of dogmas taught by this Church (1).

Finally, in its attempt at defining dogmas, both in order to omit nothing and to remove all possible deviation, the Church reaches the final stage in a precise formula called "Symbole" (Symbol), or con-

1) SE / 372

fession of faith of that Church. There are also collections and records of the Church in which may be found all the documents upon which it bases its teaching, these are the "symbolical books" (1).

The necessity of dogma is clearly demonstrated by all these remarks. Even if in the future the Church comes to use them differently, it cannot do without doctrinal expressions. This is the reason why Sabatier regrets the attitude of those who, because of the abuses of authority by the Churches, tend to suppress all definition of the Christian faith. And this is the only instance when Sabatier does justice to orthodoxy, since it proclaims the necessity of interpreting faith by the means of doctrines, being thus in opposition both with Rationalism and Mysticism. A religious life without doctrines would be vague and indiscernible and moreover could not be the basis of this social body, the Church (2). When one remembers the innumerable controversies and polemics undertaken by Ménégot, one knows well that according to him also there is an absolute need for doctrinal formulations. Still we know that he was often accused of teaching a faith

1) SE / 373

2) se / 350

without belief. However, it should be carefully noted that it is not the necessity of dogma, so to speak, that Fidéisme professes, but truly the necessity of doctrine, and this is more than sterile arguing. We shall see later that the same school, even when retaining in a certain sense the word " dogma ", removes from it any authoritative significance. In actual fact it wants a Church without dogmas, but not without doctrines.

III. Analysis of Dogma.

We know that according to symbolo-fidéiste teaching , the notion of dogma is derived from that of doctrine, dogma being but a doctrine given an official stamp by the Church. We have shown that the source of doctrine lies in faith . These arguments allow Sabatier to offer an analysis of dogma.

There are, he states, three elements in dogma :
 "a religious element , which springs from piety ; an intellectual or philosophic element, which supposes reflection and discussion ; and an element of authority which comes from the Church"(1). This is

1) se / 230

perfectly clear and does not need any comment. On the other hand, a few pages later, Sabatier gives an analysis reduced to two terms only : " a mystical and practical element, the properly religious element, -this is the living and fruitful principle of dogma ; then, there is an intellectual or theoretical element, a judgment of mind, a philosophical proposition serving at once as an envelope and as an expression of religion " (1). Both quotations are taken from the "Outlines ". Finally in an article entitled "Le Nouveau Testament contient-il des dogmes ? ", he gives a third analysis, again with two terms, but not the same as those of the preceding analysis : " a doctrinal element produced by reflection and an element of authority coming from the ruling Church and which makes a law of a doctrine " (2).

If one studies carefully these three texts, one discovers very easily that there is no actual contradiction between them. Indeed the second analysis is made up of the first two terms of the first one, and the third analysis uses the last two terms of the first one. Therefore, one is allowed to suppose that the

1) se / 246

2) SR / 23

two last analyses are less complete because they are given in a particular perspective. We are inclined to prefer the first analysis as being more general and covering completely the definitions put forward by the symbolo-fidéiste school. In conclusion, there are three elements in dogma, an element springing from faith, an intellectual element, and an element of authority.

IV. The Bible and Dogmas.

The Paris School regards the Bible as the historical source of Christian knowledge. It is therefore quite legitimate to ask to what extent it can be also a source of dogma. As Frédéric Godet once wrote an article entitled "Le Nouveau Testament contient-il des dogmes ?", in which he gave an affirmative answer to that question, Sabatier took up the challenge and also published an article under the same title. This is why we are now lucky enough to have exact information on the Symbolo-Fidéiste school position concerning this problem.

First of all, Sabatier refuses the proposed

distinction between "biblical dogmas" and "ecclesiastical dogmas". He proves without difficulty how fallacious this attempt can be since, as soon as they discover biblical dogmas, theologians demand that the Church proclaims them compulsory, that they should become ecclesiastical dogmas. For Sabatier, this attitude is an example of the everlasting pretention of orthodoxy that its dogmas should be identified with biblical teaching (1). In order to demonstrate that the Bible and particularly the New Testament does not hold dogmas, Sabatier makes use of several arguments.

There is above all, a chronological impossibility, if the definition according to which a doctrine receives the quality of dogma through an authoritative decision of the Church, is maintained. Indeed if it is true that there was a Church before the definition of the New Testament canonical record, on the other hand, it is much later that it started promoting dogmas. Then, all the New Testament books were written. " There could not be dogmas in the Bible since the Bible is previous to the dogmatical production of the Church (2).

Then, the vicissitudes of the history of the Canon

1) SR / 20

2) SR / 27

display the fragility of the basis of authority of the dogmas alleged to be given by the Bible. The Canon itself was definitely closed by the Roman Catholic Church only as late as the Council of Trent.

In addition to this, the conscientious study of the various New Testament writings clearly proves the absence of a dogmatical purpose. Even the Apostle Paul, who in the Epistle to the Galatians throws anathema on anyone who would preach another Gospel than his, bases his certainty not upon an ecclesiastical title, but on the internal revelation of the Holy Spirit, which he experienced himself. As regards Christ's teaching, we know that His style itself is not only far from dogmatical form but also discourages all those who attempt at interpreting His words in order to make formulas. Nevertheless, His whole preaching and teaching is filled with precious religious truths which we ought to receive. Hence, the theologian must strictly guard himself against the temptation that his so-called " biblical " dogmas usurp an authority which belong properly to the Gospel itself. Furthermore, in his transmutation of the concrete words of Jesus Christ in abstract ideas and dogmas, the dogmatician must avoid two serious dangers.

Firstly, that of confusing the essential with the secondary, the deep truth and the means of expression, and secondly, through his abstractions of killing the life of this message. Anyhow, " there are no dogmas in Christ's teaching " (1).

Finally, the nature of divine Revelation displays the absence of dogmas in the New Testament. The Word of God does not consist in a supply of abstract and petrified formulas, it is not " a catalogue of dogmas"(2). On the other hand it creates religious experiences, it is a power of spiritual life, it inspires religious consciousness. Thus the Bible teaches with its authority, not ideas or physical or metaphysical conceptions and abstract notions, but the bases and principles of religious life. The New Testament, namely, brings to us the absolute Revelation of God, with the type of the achieved religious consciousness of Jesus Christ (3)'.

With all these arguments, Sabatier yet remains unwilling to go beyond his purpose. Above all he does not want to be accused of denying the authority of the New Testament. His aim is only to ruin the excessive

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- 1) SR/33
 - 2) SR/36
 - 3) SR/37

pretensions of orthodoxy when it attempts to refer to God Himself the authority of its dogmatical decrees. Moreover, Sabatier wants to substitute the authority of the Spirit in the New Testament, the authority of the truth for that of the written word. " The New Testament will not be a record of formulas, it will remain a living book " (1).

Such definite statements lead us to ask whether, according to Symbolo-Fidélisme, there is any relation between the Bible and dogmas and whether the Bible can promote dogmas, even if itself^{it} does not hold any precise dogma. In order to avoid confusion, Sabatier refuses the expression " implicit dogmas " as being contradictory (2). What is, indeed, an implicit dogma, that is to say an undefined and unlimited one ? On the other hand, Sabatier does not deny that there is in the Bible the beginning of a doctrinal thinking which paves the way for the ecclesiastical dogma. It is unquestionable that there are in the Bible " theologoumena ", but these primitive attempts at an intellectual

1) SR/38

2) SE/289-290

Sabatier could not accept statements such as the following one, borrowed from F. Godet, " dogmas without any dogmatical formula, dogmas unlimited or not theologically formulated ". (Quoted in SR / 19).

demonstration, belong to the time of the writing of the biblical books. Hence, the idea of transplanting obsolete formulas into modern theology could not even be considered (1). Indeed, none of these remarks contradict the fundamental principle of Symbolo-Fidéisme according to which the Bible is the historical document of primitive Christian experience. It is absolutely beyond doubt that all dogmas come from the Scripture, even at the cost of some distortions. This is true at least of any dogma actually Christian, since if a dogmatical expression were contrary to the "spirit of the Bible" and to primitive Christian experience it could not be regarded as pertaining rightly to authentic Christianity (2).

One can easily imagine how drastic might be the consequences of such principles, when applied for instance to the teaching of the Roman Catholic Church. Thus, all the primary elements of the contemporary Marian dogma would fail to come under the category of Christian dogma.

In conclusion, we shall remember that whilst the Paris School acknowledges theologoumena in the Bible,

1) sa / 359-360
2) sa / 360

on the other hand it denies that it contains dogmas. This would be not only contradictory, but also psychologically wrong and religiously false. But inasmuch as the Bible can nourish piety it can also lead to some sort of a dogmatical construction, which however will not escape the laws of the genesis of dogma as we have studied them.

CHAPTER 3

THE EVOLUTION AND LIFE OF DOGMAS

I. The Contingency of Dogmas .

The analysis of dogma reveals an intellectual element and a religious one. As Sabatier states, " the intellectual element is simply the expression or envelope of the religious experience " (1). The history of dogmas leads him also to the conclusion that the intellectual expression is closely related to the mystical element, and even subordinate to it. Moreover dogmas have always been promulgated under the pressure of circumstances, at times when an impending crisis between individual conscience and collective conscience of the Church threatened its unity. The theologians who spoke in the Councils were not mere theoreticians, but churchmen experiencing controversies and threats of schism. Thus the dogmatical definition aimed at maintaining order and tranquillity. The fact that

1) se / 348

dogmas have always been influenced by contemporary problems do not grant them a permanent character . Sabatier quotes the instance of those dogmas which once were used as a refutation of the Arian heresy and which later were considered as infected with the Monophysite heresy (1). The linking of dogmas with a practical obligation shows their historical contingency, but there is more than that.

Indeed, to a large extent, the matter of dogma remains permanent, but its intellectual formulation is essentially unsettled and transitory (2). This may be easily explained. Granted that the doctrinal formula is meant to be an explanation and a record of the experiences of the religious soul, on the other hand it must consist of intelligible ideas and words, that is to say it will depend to a large extent upon the degree of intellectual and cultural development attained by the society. Whenever it is only an individual explanation , many features of the intellectual personality of the author will be displayed. On the other hand if these dogmas are those of a group, of a Church , it is certain that they will bear the print of

1) SE / 306

2) MF 3/ 22

the preoccupations of this society, as well as of its intellectual and philosophical culture (1). Especially will there be much borrowing from contemporary philosophy. In many dogmas, may be also discovered an ensemble of cosmological, natural and medical notions strictly dependent upon the epoch involved (2). All these conceptions are of course shortlived and transitory, they rapidly grow old and make room for others which, in their turn, also fade away, and so forth. Thus we can see how deeply contingent dogma is. This is an absolute necessity. Unless religious knowledge is completely severed from secular science, one is led to admit that the external envelope of dogma must be eternally changing in order to answer the religious needs of men at all times in the course of history. Instead of regarding this necessity as a weakness or a blemish, and therefore seeking to ignore it, the imperious duty of Churches is to renew constantly their formulas in order to put them within the reach of all its members. The historical contingency of dogmas creates a serious problem which can be made even more difficult whenever one discovers in some of the great

1) se / 248

2) SE / 282

traditional dogmas heathen infiltrations under the form of superstitions or philosophical conceptions totally foreign to the authentic Gospel.

The Paris School firmly believes that the contingency of dogmatical formulas assigns to the Church a continuous work of revision and purging. Of course, by such a teaching it faces what Sabatier calls a prejudice, the belief in the immutability of dogmas (1). He adds that all the attempts made by various theologians in order to defend and maintain this principle have utterly failed. He states that this is true namely for the Church of England, for German Lutheranism, and for various Reformed denominations. Even in the Roman Catholic Church one admits that dogma has changed. This is further shown by the fact that men like Moehler and Newman have tried to apply the theory of Evolution to its dogmas (2).

1) se / 244

2) se / 245

II. The Evolution of Dogmas .

Whilst some persist in teaching the immutability of dogmas, it is easy to demonstrate the opposite view, not only with theoretical arguments but moreover by this simple fact that dogmas have their history. Far from being a mere invention the History of Dogmas has become one of the most important sections in the teaching of Dogmatics in many theological schools. One of the reasons why the Paris School granted so much importance to the vitality of dogmas, is that it was contemporary of the great theological movement, chiefly marked by the publication of Harnack's monumental "Lehrbuch der Dogmengeschichte" (1). The history of dogmas is no freer from variations than other histories. It is filled with controversies, conflicts, revolutions, hesitations of all sorts. This ruins the demands of those who claim the dogmas of their Church to be immutable and therefore infallible (2).

1) The "Lehrbuch der Dogmengeschichte" of Harnack was published in 1888-1890. Sabatier's lecture on "The Vitality of Christian Dogmas and their power of Evolution", is dated 1889. Cf. JMS / 12.

2) se / 245.

One of the findings of the history of dogmas is the constant appearance of new formulations,- this being the result of the permanent opposition of individual thought with the consciousness of the Community. We know from the Paris School that this antagonism is a source of dogmas. At every moment of its history, the Church found itself contradicted or troubled by the quests of individual thinking. Each time it had to impose silence on them and to that end it petrified its dogmas or sometimes modified them, the solution depending of course upon the weight of the majority. Thus, continually, the clash of thesis and antithesis resolved itself in a new dogmatic synthesis. This synthesis became in its turn a thesis facing another antithesis. This perpetual building up is described by the history of dogmas (1).

In order to understand the principle directing the inner life of dogmas, a distinction must again be made between their matter and form. Indeed, if their form only is studied, they soon appear as fixed and dead. They can answer the questions of the intellect but not those of the soul. In this line of thought, Sebatier

1) SR / 27

once asserted that creeds and symbolical books are the " graves " of dogma (1). The vitality of dogma will not be found in its letter, but through piety which is truly its source and which may also be created by it . Formulas are given a new life in the prayer of the faithful, in the sermons of the preacher and in the teaching of the catechist. Then one discovers the infinite variety of the interpretations that religious feeling can attribute to words and expressions hitherto apparently immovable. In order to demonstrate that truth, Sabatier gives an example. He imagines a service of worship where the word " God " is uttered and he quotes various meanings born in the mind and the heart of the congregation, according to their own particular mood and to their level of intellectual development. Thus, he says, in spite of these many interpretations God is present and living for all. But the word which describes Him is alive only because it expresses a piety which is experienced by all. Hence, " the life of dogma is in piety "(2). Dogma remains a dead word if failing to translate a background of a religious life. Following these conclusions, one is

1) SE / 302

2) SE / 304

led to agree that a dogma is not immutable, but varying and transitory and on the other hand mortal. It is easy to understand that because of its contingent nature dogma might not be for ever the answer to a religious need. The quests of piety are not constantly the same. They vary according to the way of living, to external events, and they also follow the impulses of philosophy and contemporary thought. Again, language itself is subject to an evolution and the meanings of words change.

If we agree with Sabatier, we must willingly admit the inevitable necessity of the death of dogmas, because it is an internal necessity. Sabatier compares the life of the Church with that of a plant, of which dogma is the seed. A plant which would not bear seed would be sterile, in the same way as a Church without dogma. This parallel must be drawn further. In order to be fruitful dogma must first be decomposed : " Except a grain of wheat fall into the ground and die, it bears no fruit " (1). The condition for a regeneration of dogma and for the continuity of its life, is therefore its renewed death.

In brief, the life of dogma is in the permanent

1) se / 242 cf. St John 12/14.

background of piety which vivifies it. Intellectual formula or expression must vary constantly, die and be born again.

The unsteadiness, the vitality and the evolution of dogmas can easily be perceived in the whole of the dogmatical life of the Church. This is a really important finding of Symbolo-Fidélisme. In teaching such a conception, the Paris School displays its belief in progress, in the religious field as well as in the others.

Dogma may vary in several ways (1). First of all it can fall into disuse that is to say that the formula which expresses it may cease to describe any religious reality. The idea it once held is either no longer needed, or even no longer rouses any response. In such an instance, there is a definitive death of dogma, a fruitless death which is in no way to be compared with the fruitful death of dogma of which we spoke previously. For example, demonology which is now completely absent in our religious teaching is a case of a dogma vanishing away because it is no longer used.

Another and more common way of evolution is what

1) se / 250 sq.

Sabatier terms as " intussusception " , by analogy with semantics. There is an intussusception when the formula of dogma remains in use, but willingly or not receives a different meaning. It may happen that a Church, while maintaining the same Symbols or Confessions of Faith, changes to a considerable extent its teaching. However when this procedure is not possible, it becomes necessary to promulgate new dogmas responding to the new demands of piety.

Indeed not a single dogma is brand new and the third way of the evolution of dogmas is in the re-birth of a desecrated dogma, re-claimed by the living faith of the Church.

The history of dogmas demonstrates strongly their evolution. The origin must be sought of course in the Gospel of Christ, which in spite of its specific and particular nature, does not escape historical contingency and is set in a typically Jewish and Palestinian frame-work. Then comes Paul the Apostle, who for the first time transforms Christian dogma by inserting it in the great movement of Hellenic thought. This influence will be exerted up to the time of the Great Councils and we can easily observe the great distance covered between the simple teaching of Jesus and the

ecclesiastical dogmas of the IVth and Vth Century. All the great Catholic dogmas spring from this amazing conjunction of the Gospel with Hellenic thought (1). In the Middle Ages, the Church tried to petrify forever this evolution by a deification of Aristotle and Plato. At the end of the Middle Ages, three great revolutions create a deep crisis of dogma and quicken its evolution. Firstly, the Reformation which overthrew religious life by the introduction of the fundamental doctrine of salvation through faith, and renewed the dogmatic teaching by its substitution of the Internal Witness of the Holy Spirit for any external authority. At the same time as the Reformation, the scientific revolution, starting in the XVIth Century utterly upset cosmology and hence threatened a whole lot of dogmas such as Creation, Ascension, the Descent into Hell, and eschatology. Finally, the accession in the XIXth century of the historical method, renewed the conception of the history of the world. Its application is unlimited and in the field of Dogmatics, the study of questions, hitherto considered from some metaphysical a priori, utterly changed. Such is the large picture of the history of dogmas as painted by Sabatier.

1) SE / 314

We know that although Ménégoz did not study directly the epistemological problem of dogma, yet he did not neglect it. On the whole, he but slightly modified these findings of Sabatier (1). With regard to the evolution of dogmas, he entirely agrees with him. He too distinguishes between the " spiritual, eternal and immutable groundwork of religion , and its form, contingent, varying, transitory and doomed to evolution " (2). He constantly uses this as a basic principle since he regards it as a mighty argument for its anti-orthodox polemics. His well-known "Etude sur le dogme de la Trinité" is a good example of his practical agreement with the theory of the evolution of dogmas (3). Indeed this whole work is based upon this conception and the conclusion does not contradict the premises . He shows how, based upon an identical faith in God, the dogma of the Trinity underwent a considerable evolution starting from its formulation in the great Councils up to the new expressions it has been given in the modern evangelical theology.

1) MF 3/23

2) MF 2/320 sq.

3) Ibid.

III. Conclusion .

In asserting the conception of the evolution of dogmas, the Symbolo-Fidéiste school does not innovate to a full extent. We already know the main influences exerted by Schleiermacher's thought upon Sabatier and Ménégos. Here we discover an additional point of contact. Indeed, as early as 1810, in his "Kurze Darstellung des theologischen Studiums", Schleiermacher attempted at preserving the rights of heterodoxy in face of the demands of orthodoxy. He claimed for the theologian freedom from the Confessions of Faith and taught dogma to be essentially a living and perfectible thing. However it may be rightly asked whether, in addition to this remote influence, the Paris School theologians have not submitted themselves completely to late XIXth century thought and especially to Evolutionism. This is not an unreasonable statement when one finds in Sabatier's works such expressions as the following. " In every department of knowledge the historic method has made the point of view of evolution possible and victorious "(1).

1) se / 256

On the other hand Sabatier defends himself rather strongly against the accusation of being an Evolutionist. His opponents, he says, would make him a disciple of Herbert Spencer's School which tried to explain moral realities in the same way as physical phenomena, according to the law of Evolution,- an attempt which would greatly resemble a materialist attitude. He asks us to believe that while he does not want at all to draw metaphysical conclusions, if one would try to find some of them in his works, these would be quite different from what they are alleged to be. On the other hand, he admits frankly that he likes using this word " evolution ". If he tries to study all phenomena according to their successive order, this is a method and not at all a metaphysical attitude (1). However it is rather peculiar to point out that he also states a close relationship of the physical world to the spiritual and moral one, a linking of the one to the other, an " advance, a real progress " of the living creation. This progress must be attributed to the permanent action of God the Creator (2). We cannot help remarking that although in his apology, Sabatier escape the charge of

1) se / 345

2) se / 346

being a materialist, he still asserts the idea of a necessary, inexorable and progressive evolution.

More strictly than Sabatier, did Ménégos limit the application of the principle of evolution to the religious field. Whilst, on one hand denouncing the attempt of modern science at explaining everything by evolution, he regards it, on the other hand as an anti-religious determinism. That is the reason why he wanted to show that while there are contingent elements in the form and the manner of presentation of Jesus Christ's teaching, yet at the same time the religious revelation, - His Gospel -, is utterly immutable and absolute. Above all, he refuses to insert it in the stream of universal evolution. Moreover, Ménégos also denies the principle of a universal evolution. He discovers in the spiritual and moral domain many facts which are constant, - for instance the ways of thinking, sin, good and bad passions of the human heart. None of these, he states, ever underwent an evolution (1).

- On the other hand it is interesting to see him criticizing from the point of view of the evolution

1) MF 3 / II3 sq.

of dogmas, the assertions of Newman regarding the development of the Christian doctrine. Indeed Newman attempted at showing that all the Roman Catholic dogmas already existed, although but undeveloped in Christ's teaching as well as in the apostolic Church. At the same time he stated this expansion to be now completed(1). Ménégos criticizes strongly this affirmation as, he says, one cannot understand why the evolution of dogmas should ever stop. Actually, Newman is not a true evolutionist, his theory is but a clever apology of Roman Catholic orthodoxy (2).

What is, then, the actual relation between the Symbole-Fidéiste school and Evolutionism ?

Let us say, first of all, that Ménégos was less a slave to this theory than was Sabatier. Of course, he accepted the principle of an evolution of dogmas, but no more than that. He is definitely opposed to the materialist determinism which is the unavoidable term of the Evolutionist doctrine. He strongly believes that contingency is a law of the spiritual world as well as the physical one. He also believes in an evo-

1) Newman : " Essay on the development of Christian doctrine ", 1845.

2) MF 3/24 sq.

lution, a variation and an adaptation to new conditions of doctrinal formulas. On the other hand, the notion of a progress seems missing in his conception of dogma. One can suppose that this idea is not foreign to it, but it is never positively stated. With regard to Sabatier, one is compelled to admit that in spite of his denials he was strongly influenced by the Evolutionist school, although, on the other hand, we have noted that he does not indulge in materialism. But he regards evolution as an almost mechanical necessity which it seems that nothing can stop. Therefore he asks himself whether it is wise to allow this evolution a free development. For him there is not the slightest hesitation, not only must the evolution not be tempered with, but it must also be aided. This co-operation is an urgent task for the Church which will thus avoid many a painful crisis and at the same time will maintain its vital strength (1). We know also that according to Sabatier the religious development of mankind is equally subject to a law of evolution, to which is attached the idea of progress. We shall have to deal with this point later (2). It seems therefore proved

1) sd / 77-79

2) Cf. p. 255 sq.

that Sabatier did not only pay a tribute to the contemporary movement by introducing the term " evolution" in his vocabulary, but also received a deep influence of Evolutionist doctrines. However with some restrictions in the case of Ménégos, this may be said of the Paris School as a whole .

CHAPTER 4

THE NOTION OF DOGMA

I. The Roman Catholic Notion of Dogma

A fair knowledge of the difficulties encountered by the Paris School allows a better understanding of its conception of dogma. It is precisely because of dogma that it had to fight against orthodoxy. The hostile and fierce attitude of Ménégos is worth knowing especially as it contrasted sharply with the serenity and moderation of Sabatier. It must also be observed that nowadays the term " orthodoxy " has lost the particular meaning it held at the end of the XIXth century and at the beginning of the XXth. At this time, the " liberals " and the " orthodox ", grouped into fighting parties divided the Protestant Churches of France. The traditional and permanent meaning of " orthodoxy " is another thing than an ecclesiastical party, it describes a doctrinal attitude.

Ménégos wishes very eagerly to see this acception maintained and he strongly condemns those who want to

soften the historical and practical meaning , by reference to etymology. Of course, it is true that, at first, " orthodoxy " means a correct and true doctrine. Hence every man who believes that he has found the truth believes also that any other opinion is surely an error. This attitude is usually termed as "esprit d'orthodoxie" (spirit of orthodoxy). But in the Protestant theological thinking, the usual acception of the word " orthodoxy " is even more precise, it is the adhesion to certain traditional doctrines (1). For instance, Ménégoz sets the example of christology : whosoever forsakes the decisions of the Ecumenical Councils concerning the Trinity and the person of Christ, - all these decisions having been solemnly ratified by the Confessions of Faith of the Reformation-, has no longer the right to call himself an " orthodox"(2). These decisions mainly consist in the Apostles Creed, the Nicene Creed, and the so-called Athanasian Creed (3). Of course, we know that if Ménégoz wants thus to confine the orthodox in their own field, it is not with the aim of joining them afterwards ! The Athanasian

1) MF I / 30

2) MF I / 240

3) MF I / 384

Creed is regarded as the very type of orthodoxy. Its formulas of anathema, as well as the doctrines to which they apply rouse the deep and renewed indignation of Ménégoz. Innumerable instances may be found in his works (1), and also in those of Sabatier, although less frequently. Above all, Ménégoz accuses orthodoxy of regarding the official dogma as a condition of salvation. This is why he terms it as a " wicked tendency " and also as an " evil leaven " (2).

Sabatier showed that all orthodoxy rests upon a similar conception of authority in religious matters. Whatever might be this authority it is considered as divine. From this dogma spring all the other dogmas that are imposed on the members. In the case of a highly authoritative Church the notion of " orthodoxy " is at the same time accompanied by the correlative notion of " heresy " (3).

To the Paris School theologians, orthodoxy appears guilty of several grave errors.

Firstly, according to Sabatier it leads to a dualist conception of Christianity, as it considers

1) Cf. for instance, MF I/221, 252, 256, 260, 266, 276, 321, 2/75, 95, III, 132, 137, 3/48, 5/258, etc.

2) MF/I/278

3) sa/xxxiv-xxxv, cf. supra p. 159.

that the Gospel of Salvation consists, on the one hand in determined historical and doctrinal beliefs, and on the other hand, in faith. This dualism contradicts the monist conception of justification through faith alone. Since the monist conception is regarded by the symbolo-fidéiste thinkers as being that of Jesus Christ Himself, the accusation of being dualist amounts to that of a deviation from the authentic Gospel (1). We have already observed that Ménégos holds similar views. In spite of appearance, by confusing faith and beliefs, orthodoxy tends to substitute for the doctrine of Salvation through faith a deeply dualist soteriology(2). Moreover, orthodoxy is dangerous for another reason, - because by continually granting more and more importance to dogmatic righteousness, it comes to neglect the religious element. As Sabatier puts it, one " may be orthodox without being pious " (3). On the other hand, one may be pious, - and this is the most important -, without being orthodox.

The second charge against orthodoxy concerns its desire of petrifying for ever dogmatic formulations,

1) sa / 374
 2) MF I / 30
 3) se / 34I

attributing to them an absolute value and forgetting their individual and historical contingency. Orthodoxy teaches the immutability of dogmas and denies their evolution (1). We already know how important is this principle for the Paris School, so we will not speak again about it. Nevertheless we will remark that, being based upon such grounds, this constitutes a very serious criticism.

Ménégoz who already calls orthodoxy a " wicked tendency ", now accuses it in even stronger terms. There is in the background, he says, a " hidden scepticism " (2). Since it appeals not unto the true certainty of faith, which is a joyful and free adhesion of the soul , but unto an external authority, it fears some difficulties. If orthodoxy had an easy conscience it would allow the truth to gain its place through its own resources. Moreover, " truth makes us free, any moral enslavement horrifies me ", he states (3). Thus is definitely marked the contradiction of doctrinal freedom and orthodoxy, of the religion of the Spirit and the religions of authority. This unavowed scepti-

1) se / 339

2) MF I/156

3) MF 3/510

cism explains well why on the one hand orthodoxy refuses to pay attention to the results of criticism and of history, and on the other hand tries, for instance, to study miracles by appealing unto the last discoveries of science. It tries to show that miracles are possible as they belong to the natural order. This is truly denying the miraculous character, and shows a clearly rationalist intention. In other words, the latent scepticism of orthodoxy goes with a blind rationalism, says Ménégoz (1). Sabatier reaches the same conclusions and regards rationalism as the "brother and the enemy of orthodoxy" (2). If we want to understand fully this criticism, we must not forget that the Paris School always proves to be the open enemy of any rationalism, not only the liberal but also the orthodox one.

Finally, orthodoxy is guilty of legalism. Indeed, it is not the same legalism as that of the religion of Israel, but a metamorphosis and a transposition of it. As well as the Jew was obliged to enslave his moral consciousness to the law, so the Christian must enslave his religious consciousness to dogmas. Instead of

1) MF 2/367, footnote 1.

2) se / 339

material oppression there is now a spiritual oppression. But Ménégoz thinks that doctrinal legalism is less tolerable than moral legalism, as it was possible to practise an external observance without doing violence to thought (1). To conclude with this trial of orthodoxy by the Paris School we may quote the following thought of Ménégoz, " the submission of intelligence to dogma or to any kind of teaching, submission which is regarded as beneficial, this is but the open door leading into superstition " (2).

Orthodoxy, with all the anathemas, dooms and persecutions it promoted, caused innumerable sufferings. And this is precisely the fundamental tendency of Roman Catholicism. " It introduced in the Church a poison that the Reformation has not been able to clear out completely "(3). Here we meet again on a question dear to Sabatier, that is the fight against the Roman Catholic notion of dogma.

When analysing dogma we took note of the definition given by Sabatier, " dogma is a doctrine of which the Church has made a law " (4). In the Roman Catholic

1) MF 3 / 190-191

2) MF I / 31

3) MF I / 298

4) Cf. supra p. 147

perspective it is an absolute law (1). Sabatier tries to demonstrate that this position is a logical consequence of the Roman Catholic notion of the Church. Indeed, he states, there is a close relation between the notion of authority and the notion of dogma. When dogma is supposed to be indisputable, the Church which proposes it is regarded as infallible. Furthermore, the authority claimed by the Church is considered as divine, therefore in promoting dogmas it claims to explain the very thought of God. Hence, when issuing anathemas and condemning heresy the Church believes it obeys a sacred duty. In the course of history we can follow a very logical development of the notion of the authority of the Church. As early as the second century, Sabatier, reminds us, the authority of the bishop is the warrant of an authentic transmission of the trust of the Gospel. This authority is more and more confirmed and the bishop becomes the judge of orthodoxy and heresy. On the other hand, it was necessary to avoid the coexistence of several orthodoxies. The Church was led to grant authority to the Councils and hence to the Pope himself. This development was achieved by the

1) SE / 381

dogma of the Pope's infallibility which puts an end to the discussion of dogmas,- still possible under the authority of the Councils. Through the means of a sole and indisputable authority, the absolute dogma is saved, at least apparently.

There is a very interesting remark of Sabatier on this point. The historical development of Catholicism confronts us with a " colossal vicious circle " (1). At the beginning, dogma is the basis of the power of the Church which is its trustee, then the Church completes the dogma and seals it by its own authority. Actually it is useless to speak of the dogmas of the Church as, after all there is but one central dogma, the dogma of dogmas, that of the divine authority of the Roman Catholic Church. All the other dogmas are derived from this one.

As a result of the Roman Catholic notion of dogma, the faithful are limited to an " implicit faith ". Nothing is demanded them, save a blind acceptance of the authority of the Church, which is the sole judge of what they must believe (2). We remember the famous answer of Brunetière : " What I believe, go and ask it

1) SE / 279

2) SE / 328

to Rome ". The Roman Catholic faith is a free hand given to the Church by the faithful. Sabatier reproaches two things to this conception of dogma,- in addition to the charge of being orthodox.

First of all, if an unrestricted obedience in matters of faith is required of the believer, it leads to the simple " lack of a personal faith " (1). Moreover, if the believer must entirely surrender to his superiors in the Church on all that concerns doctrines which are said to be mysteries out of the reach of reason and human experience, dogma loses all link with the individual consciousness. In these conditions it can no longer be spoken of as a living dogma(2). In its attempt at preserving dogma Roman Catholicism kills it.

If on the one hand there is a Roman Catholic orthodoxy there is also on the other hand a Protestant orthodoxy, which the Paris School denounces with the same eagerness. Indeed, Protestant orthodoxy is parallel to Roman Catholic orthodoxy in that, similarly, it appeals unto an external authority which it regards as divine and upon which it bases its dogmas,-this is

1) SE / 283

2) SE / 329

the dogma of the infallibility of the Bible. Sabatier has unveiled with some humour the weakness of Protestant orthodoxy when compared with the Roman Catholic attitude. The Church considered as an authority has the mastery over the Bible, as being a living body fit for an evolution, whilst the letter of the Bible remains shut up in a book. Furthermore the abstract system of Protestantism does not possess the greatness of the religious empire established by Rome (1).

Let us remember this fact, that Symbolo-Fidélisme attacks Protestant orthodoxy only because its conception of dogma is but a variety of the Roman Catholic one. In both cases dogma is an absolute law. In contradistinction with this principle, the Paris School proposes the new Protestant conception of dogma.

II. The Protestant Notion of Dogma

The Protestant conception of faith differs essentially from the Roman Catholic one. It is primarily individual, it is based upon a moral experience legitimated by the internal witness of the Holy Spirit.

1) sa / 183 sq.

Hence the inner conviction of the believer is absolutely necessary. In his religious life he finds a basis for examination and criticism of all the teachings which can be offered to him. There is no undue submission to any external authority, but only to the sole authority,- both transcendent and internal-, of the Holy Spirit. It results that the Protestant notion of the Church is very different from the Roman Catholic one. The Church is not a supernatural institution, it exists only inasmuch as is realised the spiritual communion of the believers. Its visible and social form does not avoid errors and evolution. For this reason the Protestant Churches regard their own authority in a way fundamentally opposed to that of the Roman Catholic Church. " They grant to themselves but a pedagogical and relative authority (1). Such are the grounds upon which Sabatier bases the Protestant notion of dogma.

Protestant Churches do not pretend to be infallible and therefore do not promulgate immutable dogmas. They cannot give the dogmas they formulate more authority than they give to themselves. Even the dogma of the

1) SE / 286

authority of the Holy Scripture, which founded the fallacious hope of Protestant orthodoxy, is subject to freedom of interpretation for the simple reason that no Protestant Church pretends to supply an official and compulsory exegesis of the Bible. On the other hand whilst it is true that the Bible holds some elements of a doctrinal construction, it is the Church which promotes dogmatical definitions (1). These are given but a very limited authority and the believer will always have a right to verify himself and go back to the sources. Indeed, the Reformers themselves did not foresee all the consequences of the revolution they started. Actually, says Sabatier, they believed that they substituted true dogmas for false ones. The history of the Protestant Churches since the Reformation shows what has become of this attempt. In the modern Protestant conception there is no room for absolute dogmas.

At this stage, Sabatier asks whether it is still possible, on the ground of Protestant theology to retain the word "dogma". Very honestly he says that if the word maintains its Roman Catholic meaning, no Protestant dogma can exist. On the other hand he thinks

1) SE/290, cf. supra p. 164 sq.

that after all Roman Catholicism is not the only Christian form , and that the meaning of a word may vary. Anyhow, whatever might be the word used to describe them , Churches will always have symbols, " signs of a common faith " (1), characteristic doctrines which permit a delimitation of spiritual families and groups. This acception of the word was precisely that of the old philosophical schools. Hence Sabatier suggests the following definition : " Dogma in the Protestant sense, means the doctrinal type generally received in a Church, and publicly expressed in its liturgy, its catechisms, its official teaching, and especially in its Confession of Faith " (2).

III. Conclusion

As regards to the problem of dogma, the Symbolo-Fidéiste school supplies precise data, which allow a just appreciation of the value of this position. On one hand, we have the analysis of dogma in three

1) SE / 291
2) se / 239

elements : a religious element which springs from piety, an intellectual and symbolical element which is the form and the envelope of the first one, and finally an ecclesiastical element of authority which applies to the whole. On the other hand the definition of dogma describes it as a doctrine made law by the Church. It is easy to see that this definition is a logical deduction from the above analysis.

In these conditions, the question of knowing whether the Protestant notion of dogma regarded as a " doctrinal type generally received in a Church ", is legitimate or not, may be very seriously asked. We know that Sabatier said that Roman Catholic dogma was erected as an absolute law. But is this not a pleonasm, speaking of an absolute law ? Does it not pertain to the very nature of the law that, whether scientific, moral or legal, it be absolute ? Even the fact that there might be exceptions does not contradict the law since they are anticipated by it. The same is true in the religious domain. If a doctrine has become a dogma it is not because it is more or less generally received, but because the Church with all the weight of its authority has made it compulsory. Yet Protestant Churches demand for themselves but a very

limited authority in doctrinal matters, therefore they cannot decree laws. Thus it seems that the suggested definition "doctrinal type generally received in a Church" cannot have a significance greater than that of the words it uses. According to the very definitions of Sabatier, it cannot be applied to dogma.

In conclusion, we shall say that the Symbolo-Fidéiste school does not truly admit a Protestant notion of dogma, since according to its own teaching, there could not be Protestant dogmas. There could only be characteristic doctrines of a Church.

1) In the subsequent pages of this work we shall however use the word "dogma", with the aim of simplicity. But in any case this term will be given the new meaning, so-called Protestant, suggested by Sabatier.

PART THREE

DOGMATICS

CHAPTER I

THE PEDAGOGICAL VALUE OF DOGMAS

In the preceding chapters we have studied in full the influence of piety in the genesis of dogma. Dogma explains the experiences of religious life. However, the relation of faith to dogma does not proceed one way only, from faith to dogma. Dogma also takes part in the development of faith. Indeed, confronting the excessive trespasses of Roman Catholic dogmatism, some wanted to deny the usefulness in itself of dogma. It seems neither desirable nor possible to the theologians of the Paris School to go so far. They are convinced that dogma fulfils in the life of the Church a task of building up and propagation of religious life which should not be underestimated. To use an image of Sabatier, dogma plays in the Church the part of the seed in a plant (1). Dogma like seed, carries the promise of a future life, it is the warrant of the perpetuity

1) Cf. supra p. 178

of the Church. At the same time, since it seeks to preserve the essential distinction of faith from beliefs, the Paris School displays the close solidarity which unites them. There is, states Ménégoz, a reciprocal interaction between faith and dogma. It is therefore useless to reproach him, as has often been done, of contradicting himself by saying at the same time that faith produces doctrine, and that doctrine produces faith (1). Sabatier and Ménégoz agree that the preaching of the doctrine contained in a dogma may help and even create religious life but this does not mean that it would produce unavoidably, automatically, faith in the strict sense of a justifying faith. Indeed there can be an intellectual conversion, a doctrinal conviction without an inner decision meaning repentance and the gift of the heart to God, which only can save him (2). Ménégoz insists upon the distinction of the "objective conditions" and the "subjective conditions" of salvation (3).

The teaching of the truth is a psychologically important fact. The religious and moral consciousness

1) MF I/289

2) sa / 353-354

3) MF I/249

of a man is neither neutral nor passive towards the influences it may receive. True and exact ideas have a salutary effect, they work towards the Good. False doctrines are nefarious, they beget evil (1). But there again we must not forget that doctrinal righteousness is not sufficient,- it is but a condition preliminary to the determination of the ego. On the other hand orthodox theologians make a serious mistake in believing that according to Symbolo-Fidélisme the importance of dogmas and doctrines towards the creation of faith would be smaller than according to the traditional orthodox conception. Indeed this is a psychological principle entirely independent from any particular theology. Of course, with regard to soteriology, the Paris School theology severs itself radically from orthodoxy since it does not require the adhesion to some determined doctrines,-however time-honoured they may be,-a subjective condition to salvation. In other words, while the Paris School agrees with orthodoxy upon the necessity of a sound theology, it does not claim for itself what it denies to the others, the right of enclosing, of limiting the contents

1) MF I/120 & 122

of Dogmatics.

These remarks lead to the important conception of the Paris School regarding the pedagogical function of dogma. Dogma being stripped of its authoritative character, its usefulness and its function consist essentially in the creation of the objective conditions which precede the determination of faith in the heart of man. If we believe Ménégoz, the pedagogical action of religious doctrines upon conscience is a way of the action of the Spirit of God. It is internal and therefore mediate and for this reason must not be confounded with the internal witness of the Holy Spirit which is immediate, as we noted previously. " This twofold divine action, mediate and immediate, is actually but a single one. It invites the ego, and gives birth to the salutary faith to the one who accepts it "(1). One may easily understand that in order that doctrines may be used as a channel by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, they must be as true and faithful as possible. We are thus far from the agnosticism for which the Symbolo-Fidéiste theologians were so often reproached.

As Sabatier states, " the Church has a pedagogic

1) MF 2/516

mission to fulfil "(1)". In this task , dogma is a tool which it cannot do without, for it is the tongue which it speaks. On the other hand, although the Church is endowed with a pedagogic and educational authority, it is not infallible , at least according to the Protestant conception. Its teaching will be received with some respect but not with blind submission, especially because according to the same Protestant conception, the task of the Church is " the making of free men, adult Christians " (2),- that is to say men able to make the free choice of faith. Since the Church has only a relative authority and since its dogmas have only a pedagogical function, how will it be able to fulfil its mission ? This problem is so much the more serious since the Paris School has clearly demonstrated the importance of doctrinal truth. What therefore will be the teaching of the Church, if it wants to avoid falling back on to the stumbling block of orthodoxy ? Sabatier and Ménégos answer : " the authentic Gospel of Jesus ". This is the perfect pedagogical instrument, the most apt to arouse and develop religious life, for its truth is absolute : " The word of Jesus reveals us the heart

1) se / 242

2) Ibid.

of God " (1). Being the very Revelation from God, a unique source of knowledge, the Gospel must be preached with all possible faithfulness. Its purity must be preserved at all costs. Its fidelity to the Gospel is one of the most characteristic features of the Paris School. It is rather paradoxical to emphasize this point, while those opposing the School,- defenders of traditional tenets-, always made use of the name of the Gospel, claiming to be its only authentic champions, and trying to monopolize the " evangelical " label. Anyhow, it remains true that entire chapters of the works of both Sabatier and Ménégoz are devoted to the study of the Gospel of Jesus. One of the expressions used by Ménégoz to describe Symbolo-Fidéisme was indeed "théologie évangélique moderne". One of the problems met by biblical criticism is : how can we strip the " authentic Gospel of Jesus " of all foreign elements ? We shall deal later with this question.(2)

To sum up, we may say that according to Symbolo-Fidéisme, dogmas,- that is to say doctrines taught by the Church,- have a pedagogical value and function deriving from their ability to partake in the awakening

1) MF 3/420

2) Cf. p. 231sq.

and development of faith. In order to fulfil its missionary calling, the Church will use in its preaching, doctrines of which the truth and efficiency will be dependent upon their consistency with the primitive and authentic teaching of Jesus Christ. Knowing these conclusions we shall grasp and appreciate more easily the conception of Dogmatics according to the Paris School.

Sabatier gives a lengthy analysis of what he terms as "Scientific Theology", and practically identifies it to Schleiermacher's "Glaubenslehre". A careful comparison of these two elements of the works of Sabatier displays the identification of "Science of Dogmas" and "Scientific Theology". It is most probable that this must not be regarded as a mere verbal coincidence but rather as the result of a consistent orientation of his thought. Dogmatics as the "science of dogmas" is no longer a chapter among others of Theology,- it is Theology itself. All the other means of inquiry such as for instance, biblical criticism, exegesis, history, philosophy aim at answering the quests of Dogmatics. In the following pages of the present research we will therefore remember that the expressions "science of dogmas" and "scientific theology", or even "theology" are to be regarded as synonymous.

In addition to this, the most important chapter of the "science of dogmas" is necessarily critical. That is why the expression "dogmatic criticism" is used also very often, instead of "science of dogmas". Finally, it is interesting to observe that when Sabatier proposes a constructive draught of Dogmatics he describes it as the "Système de la doctrine chrétienne",

and there again he substitutes the term " doctrine " for the words " dogma " or " Dogmatics ". Knowing as we do his notion of dogma , we believe that this latter choice of expression is preferable.

There are not many remarks to be made concerning the definitions of Ménégos. We know that this theologian was not much concerned with the theoretical problem of Dogmatics, but with working on practical dogmatic issues.

II. The Subject-matter and aim of Dogmatics

The Paris School wants Dogmatics to be a science. Two conditions are necessary for this, states Sabatier. First of all, it must possess " a positive and definite object of study " of its own. Then, it must have a method based upon observation and experience (1). At this price only, will dogmatic theology find its place among other sciences. Roman Catholic Theology which has been always governed by the way of authority is not scientific. Moreover it annexes and enslaves the

1) sa / 345

other sciences. This is not the case for modern Protestant theology. Mainly through the channel of Schleiermacher it possesses its proper subject-matter. The German theologian has definitely established the specific character of Christian faith and religious life. Dogmatics understood as Glaubenslehre is a positive science, studying namely the faith professed by the Christian Church. This faith, as we know, mainly consists in a religious feeling, in the relation of the believer to his God, in an experience. It is explained and described in doctrines and dogmas which reflect the development of religious consciousness in the midst of the Christian Church. In this way, Dogmatics is the science of the doctrine preached in the Christian Church. This conception of Schleiermacher preserves Dogmatics from a double danger, - firstly that of Rationalism which, since it pays no attention to the particular character of the Christian faith would make theology an appendix of philosophy, then that of supernaturalism which tends to divinize dogmas (1).

1) Cf. Schleiermacher's "Der christliche Glaube nach den Grundsätzen der evangelischen Kirche im Zusammenhange dargestellt", Berlin 1821.

The Paris School goes along a similar path. Indeed, as Sabatier states : " the proper object of theology is the study of the religious phenomenon in general, and the Christian phenomenon in particular "(1). The Christian experience expressed itself in dogmas, following the evolution of the life of the Church. This is the reason why Sabatier regards Dogmatics as the science of dogmas. It is also meaningful that when Sabatier presented his lecture on " The Vitality of Christian Dogmas and their power of evolution " he wanted it to be an introduction to his teaching on Reformed Dogmatics.(2) We know on the other hand that Ménégoz described himself as a disciple of Schleiermacher, because like him, he wished to base Dogmatics upon religious experience (3). A further proof of this agreement is given by the sub-title itself of the complete edition of his works on Fidélisme "...et son application à l'enseignement chrétien traditionnel " (and its application to traditional Christian teaching) That means that Fidélisme does not offer itself as a theology descending directly from heaven but as a

1) sa / 348

2) SD / I7

3) Cf. supra p.36 and p.82.

principle of criticism of the faith of the Church.

It is equally worth while remarking that which such a position, Symbolo-Fidéisme takes part against Ritschl in spite of the agreement realized on other questions. Ritschl, unlike Schleiermacher, does not teach that Dogmatics is the science of the dogmas promulgated by the Church. Its positive task is the giving of a systematical exhibition of the contents of the Christian Revelation.(1) The gap which separates these two conceptions seems hard to fill up.

Since the subject-matter of Dogmatics is the science of the dogmas as transmitted by the Church, what is its aim and function ?

The task of dogmatical criticism is twofold. Firstly it ought to grasp and explain the religious content of the dogmas which are proposed by the tradition of the Church. It must try to make them intelligible, to extract their permanent matter, by studying them from a symbolical point of view. It is therefore necessary to examine carefully the historical and contingent conditions which have determined their formation. Dogmatic criticism will thus have to operate

1) M.Goguel, " La Théologie d' Albert Ritschl ", p.14

through its analysis the very important distinction of the matter and form of dogma (1). Sabatier points out very rightly that the criticism of the form of dogma, in spite of its drastic appearances, is often good for the dogma itself as it helps its development, in the same way, he says, as the pruning of trees favours their growth (2). Dogmatics must not be limited to the study of the final form of dogma, but must aim at explaining its genesis, its development and its evolution. Furthermore it must give help and collaboration to this evolution which it describes, and prepare new expressions for the living principle they find in dogma. (3) This leads to the second function of Dogmatics, a positive one : " It is not enough that theology shall make clear the senility of the old forms of religion. Its task is to create new forms, and bring the Gospel of Christ into more immediate contact with the consciences of men of modern society "(4). It seeks to harmonize religious truth and the demands of modern culture (5). This conciliation is made necessary by the fact that

1) se / 336-338 and sa / 354-358

2) SE/300

3) sd / 80

4) sa / 359

5) sd / 82

dogmatical formulas grow old rapidly. This is an indisputable truth. Because of the life of the Church, it happens soon that the dogmatical expression ceases to respond to the religious needs of the conscience of the community. Dogmatic criticism alone can give a solution to that crisis and re-establish the balance. Often attacked because of its disturbing old habits, it is alone able to recreate peace in the Church by continuing the chain of tradition and by giving dogma a renewed life. The spirit of continual reform which inspires Protestant Churches is the basis and the foundation of dogmatic criticism.

Ménégoz calls " trriage " ("sorting out"), the discrimination operated by Dogmatics among the doctrinal traditions of the Church. He points out that this trriage leads to quite different results according to the schools to which theologians belong. Moreover, experience shows that there are not only specialists who discriminate in that way. One must admit that "every Christian operates his own " trriage " (1)". If one agrees with the Paris School that Christianity is a historic religion, one cannot question the necessity

1) MF I / 70

of a dogmatical criticism, the task of which would be to distinguish its religious elements and its historical ones. Dogmatics must therefore carry out a new classification of the value of doctrines and attribute to the essential ones their due place, while rejecting the secondary ones in the background. Secondary teaching has so often taken in the Church a place which rightly belongs to more essential elements, that one would be led to conclude wrongly that dogmas of a lesser importance are completely without value, or even utterly false. " The task of operating the "triage" between truth and error, is assigned to theologians " (1).

Sabatier, in an interesting passage of his works, has unveiled the twofold nature of Dogmatics. Indeed, as there is in dogma a permanent religious element and a philosophical and contingent form, the science of dogmas must necessarily follow on the one hand the life of the Church and on the other hand the changes of philosophy. It is tributary to the Church as to the matter of its study, but it depends upon philosophy as to its method and its means of expression(2).

1) MF 3/460

2) se / 259

Actually this apparent enslavement creates its freedom and its originality. " It seeks to connect moral and religious experience with the rest of the experience of mankind "(1). Indeed, it promotes a philosophy of religion and especially a philosophy of Christianity. On the other hand, inasmuch as it draws from the tradition of the Church the subject-matter of its criticism, it ceases to depend upon philosophy. In the same way, when borrowing from philosophy its ways of analysis and discussion it frees itself from the tyranny of the Church (2).

With the background of a Protestant conception of the Church, the relation of Church and Dogmatics creates a serious problem. Actually, according to Sabatier, Dogmatics " does not formulate new dogmas,- that is the business and the right of the Church "(3). However, criticism must be free in order to be truly scientific. Furthermore, inasmuch as it is positive and aims at a progress of dogma, it can be legitimately operated only by a theologian who remains in the communion of the Church. Therefore a principle of

1) se / 260
 2) se / 261
 3) sd / 82

dogmatic criticism which can be both used in an objective way by the theologian and welcomed by the Church, must be found. This principle cannot be but that of Christianity. It is not a dogma, it is a religious experience,- the experience which is unveiled by Christ's Gospel(1).

With regard to the relations of Dogmatics and Philosophy, we have already pointed out that, since theology has acquired its own field of study, it is independent of Philosophy. Above all, it will refuse to be influenced by any kind of metaphysics (2). On the other hand, since it claims to be a science, it will not neglect a philosophical criticism of its ways of knowledge. Dogmatics will therefore be preceded by a theory of religious knowledge (3).

From the dual nature of Dogmatics regarded as the science of dogmas, derives the choice of its method and criterion. It is now our intention to study this question.

1) se / 267

2) se / 271-272

3) se / 275

III. The Method of Dogmatics.

As a consequence of its theory of religious knowledge, the Paris School Dogmatics will be oriented in the perspective opened by Symbolisme critique. In this way, it will be able, without denying the necessity of external forms, to re-attribute to the religious element of dogma all its value. Whilst studying the tradition of the religious society from the symbolical point of view, it will regard it " as the objective revelation of the inner life of the Church and of its piety "(1).

Following this line of thought, Sabatier added that positive Dogmatics will always be regarded by religious consciousness as but a " higher symbolism ", a form which would be worthless without the presence of a living faith (2).

Science of dogmas, we pointed out, is a " Glaubenslehre ". Its exclusive field is the analysis and explanation of Christian religious experience. Being an independent science it is none the less isolated from

1) se / 338

2) se / 331

other sciences. Because of its specific object of study, it must borrow from their results. Schleiermacher considered it as a historical research since its subject-matter is supplied by history. Sabatier wants even greater precision. Religion being by all means a social phenomenon, theology should be rather considered as a sociological science (1). Let us remark that this precision does not rouse a serious problem as the question is actually to decide which of these two sciences, sociology and history, depends upon the other. It is not our task to discuss this here, and indeed, whatever the solution might be, the conception of Dogmatics remains unaltered. On the other hand, Dogmatics, by its bearing on individual religious phenomenon, draws near to psychology. All these remarks demonstrate the close solidarity of dogmatic theology and the other human sciences.

The science of dogmas has a method of research mainly based upon two scientific instruments : psychology and history. They are the "deux mamelles toujours fécondes de la théologie" (" nursing mothers of a sound theology "), states Sabatier (2).

1) sa / 357

2) sa / 341

This is again a consequence of its particular field, the Christian religious phenomenon. In order to grasp fully the value of this method, let us, for a while, follow the necessary path of any dogmatic criticism.

If we desire to study a particular dogma, we must first of all seek its first formulated expression; to that end, we have to appeal unto history. Then, we must use religious psychology in order to isolate the religious experience which is described by this formula. Then again, we must go back to history in order to follow the evolution and development of the dogma. Finally, having arrived at the point of positive criticism, that is of suggesting a new formula more consistent with the present religious needs, we shall have to inquire after the religious experience of the other believers on one hand, and on the other hand, our own experience. This again belongs to the field of religious psychology. Thus, at every stage the science of dogmas depends upon two sources of knowledge, history and psychology. Sabatier shows very strikingly the close relation between these two departments of research, in any dogmatical enquiry. "Religious phenomena are psychological facts, which everyone discovers first in himself and then in the past. Theology

therefore has two sources - psychology and history, and their union must constitute its entire method of observation- direct and indirect. History is psychology going back to the past as far and as fully as the documents permit; psychology is history carried down to the present moment and into the personal experience of the thinker " (1).

According to Sabatier, Christian theology possesses three instruments towards the fulfilling of its task. First of all, an historical document - the Holy Scripture. We know that Symbolo-Fidéiste theologians, while denying that the Bible may contain dogmas, still admit that it contains theologoumena (2). All Christian dogmas spring more or less directly from the Bible. Although modern theology cannot use biblical conceptions without a careful examination, it finds in it very ancient expressions of piety and must pay much attention to them. The Bible is " the authentic document of primitive Christian experience " and is a criterion both historical and religious (3). The science of dogmas disposes also of a philosophical tool, the

1) sa / 348-349.

2) Cf. supra p. 164 sq.

3) sa / 360

scientific spirit which supplies all the necessary means of investigation. Above all, it gives the experimental knowledge of the physical world, of the history of mankind, and of psychology. The scientific spirit will allow Dogmatics a serious and objective criticism of the intellectual form of doctrine. Finally, it can use a means of religious discrimination which is given by Christian experience. We know that it is the basis and principle of certainty of religious knowledge and allows one to appreciate whether a doctrine is Christian or not (1). We will see later to what extent it could also be regarded as the criterion of Dogmatics.

It is easily understood from the above remarks, how great is the importance of biblical criticism in all dogmatical study. Whenever a theologian wants to achieve a truly scientific work he must set the origins of Christianity in the great movement of universal history. Therefore Bible criticism will take into great account the historical environment in which it has been constituted. While some conservative circles are very reluctant with regard to biblical criticism

1) Cf. supra p.88 sq.

the Paris School theologians are very enthusiastic. Thus, Ménégot, using a word of Sabatier saying that criticism was " providential ", does not hesitate in claiming that God takes part in the development of the Church. Granted that the building up of the Canon must be attributed to God's Providence, the work and progress of biblical criticism are fruits of the same inspiration (1). Furthermore, far from being an impious activity, biblical criticism is a sacred duty imposed by God upon the scholars of the Church (2). " It would be sheer unfaithfulness to neglect this criticism "(3), since our ministry claims it of us, and since the prosperity and progress of the Church demand it. In Churches which place the Bible in the very centre of their teaching, as is the case for Protestant tradition, criticism is the " professional duty " of the dogmatician (4). His task is not negligible as it must prove the authenticity of the authorship of biblical writings, of the facts recorded, and of the words spoken. Moreover, it allows often the revaluation of teachings vital for our faith, but

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- 1) MF I / 213
 - 2) MF 2 / 378
 - 3) MF I / 216
 - 4) MF 3 / 277

hitherto veiled under imperfect forms of expression. Finally, whilst distinguished and cultured people are disheartened by this rough envelope, criticism attempts at displaying the Word of God which is conveyed in the Bible. Thus, far from being destructive, its task is a definitely constructive one. Since it achieves a harmonious conciliation of both the demands of piety and scientific spirit, it must be regarded as a much more positive attempt than the appearances would show. Through its thorough criticism of the form, it throws a strong light upon the living power which lies in Christian dogma. Therefore, it does work against tradition, but much more it is the "re-establishing and the demonstration of the true tradition, now freed from errors and legends which obscure and distort it"(1). In order to cover all its field of research, biblical criticism may be divided into three main parts.

At the first stage, it is a "Textual Criticism" dealing with the letter of the Scripture. It is completed by "Historical Criticism", also called "Special Introduction", which studies the particular formation and the circumstances of the writing of each book.

1) A. Sabatier : La Critique biblique et ses origines en France, Paris 1877, p. 24.

Finally, it is crowned by the " History of the Canon " which describes the constitution and evolution of the sacred records. Thus, Biblical Criticism is not limited to a subjective and arbitrary criticism of the Bible, as it is often believed, but it is really an objective science (1).

In conclusion, we may say that owing to its rigorous and objective method, applied to a domain which truly is its own, the conception of Dogmatics defended by the Symbolo-Fidéiste School well deserves the title of " Science of Dogmas " which they ascribed to it.

IV. The Criterion of Dogmatics

The Paris School theory of religious knowledge finds a direct application in the quest for a principle of dogmatic criticism. Prior to any kind of a rational criticism, there is a practical criticism which springs from the piety of the believer himself. As positive criticism of dogma cannot be based upon an external

1) A. Sabatier, op.cit.p.26-27.

criterion, but upon the subjective criterion of the religious faith, Sabatier strongly points out that no valid work could be achieved by a dogmatician who would fail to experience himself this religious principle (1). Similarly, Ménégoz states that there is no other criterion save the "religious consciousness" given by the Creator to His servants. Whether we like it or not, this principle is given to us, and we have therefore the right to use it, just as in the field of natural science we would exert our reason (2). Thus the principle of dogmatic criticism is essentially subjective, it is religious experience, based upon the subjective authority of the internal witness of the Holy Spirit (3).

Yet this subjective principle is also subject to an objective and absolute criterion in so far as the latter too will be defined. Any doctrine which would not be rooted in the true principle of Christianity ~~it~~ would remain foreign to it. The principle of Christianity is none other than the religious experience of Christ Himself. Christ's religious consciousness is the norm

1) SD / 85

2) MF I / 340

3) Cf. supra p. 128-131

of any Christian consciousness. " Never will a man find himself in conditions so highly favourable, as did Jesus Christ, for the clear and pure reception of the witness of the Holy Spirit "(1). His teaching is the very Revelation of God. The Gospel of salvation through the faith of the heart is the content of the filial religious consciousness of Jesus Christ. It constitutes objectively the foundation of Christianity (2). Thus, when a theologian wishes to operate the criticism of dogmas, he finds at his disposal the indisputable criterion, the word of Jesus Christ which " in the religious and moral order is the word of God " (3). As Ménégos states, " our only Master is Jesus Christ "(4). This assertion with all its dogmatic consequences is the subject of the most important controversy he had with Paul Lobstein (5).

To sum up, we may state that according to Symbolo-Fidéiste theology, the absolute criterion of Dogmatics is Jesus Christ's Gospel, which controls the subjective principle of individual religious consciousness. In

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- 1) MF I / 14
 - 2) se / 267
 - 3) MF 3 / 458
 - 4) MF 4 / 75-76
 - 5) MF 4 : 72-121

other words, the criterion of Dogmatics is the testimony of the Holy Spirit , under both its mediate and immediate, external and internal form (1).

The promotion of the external criterion of Dogmatics leads to important consequences. In the Holy Scripture, the first place must be assigned to the testimony of Jesus Christ. It is therefore necessary to discriminate between the authority of the word of Jesus and that of His disciples and His apostles . According to Ménégos, one must avoid " assigning the same value to both kinds of teaching " (2). This is the distinction, now traditional, of an " Evangelium Christi " and the " Evangelium de Christo " (3). As distinct from the primitive Gospel which contains the actual teaching brought by Jesus, one may find in the New Testament writings, and later in the tradition of the Church, considerations on the person of Christ, christologies and complementary doctrines which obscure the Gospel. Therefore, the first duty of Dogmatics is to restore " Evangelium Christi ". Biblical criticism

1) Cf. supra p. II2

2) MF 4 / 74

3) This distinction was proposed for the first time by Harnack, in a lecture delivered at the Conference of Liberal Christianity in Berlin, 1910. It was entitled " The two Gospels "

will help towards this end¹.

The aim of this criticism is to discover, by historical considerations alone, the authentic words of Jesus among all those which are attributed to Him in Apostolic writings and especially in the four Gospels(1)'. Ménégos frankly admits that with the sole resources of contemporary criticism it is impossible to identify the " authentic words of Jesus ", and especially because His teaching was a verbal one and He did not leave a written word. This would most certainly not be a sufficient ground for renouncing the search for the " authentic thought of Jesus " . " We can succeed in establishing with absolute certainty the fundamental ideas of His preaching of the Gospel " (2)'.

This authentic Gospel is essentially a soteriological teaching, a doctrine regarding the entrance into the kingdom of God. Starting from this principle, on the one hand with the help of a historical and exegetical study of biblical literature, and on the other hand of the conclusions of the history of dogmas, one is led to the certainty that " orthodoxy is a deviation

1) MF 4 / 139

2) MF 4 / 94

of the authentic Gospel of Christ " (1). The initial error of Dogmatics as traditionally taught by the Christian Church, was to confuse the two Gospels and even to substitute the secondary for the essential, and particularly christology for the Gospel.

1) MF 3 / I3I

CHAPTER 3

SOME PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS OF THIS CONCEPTION OF DOGMATICS

I. The " triage " of Ménégosz

Let us firstly examine some of the results attained by the so-called "trriage" (sorting out) of Ménégosz. Having studied some " secondary " dogmas, usually taught in Protestant and Roman Catholic Churches, Ménégosz strikes out as being contrary to the preaching of Jesus the following : the deity of Jesus, the substitutive Atonement, the Trinity, the Virgin Birth, the Immaculate Conception of Mary, the invocation of Saints, the infallibility of Peter and his successors, sacramental magic, damnation on grounds of heresy (1). Let us point out that, if in this listing are found simultaneously Roman Catholic dogmas proper, and on the other hand, dogmas received by traditional Protestantism, the reason is that according to Ménégosz, in both

1) MF 4 / 94-95

cases, these are orthodox dogmatical teachings . These doctrines, says Ménégoz, which have not been preached by Jesus, are not contained even in germ in His authentic thought. It seems rather that the doctors of the Church have tried to achieve what according to them was missing in the primitive Gospel. However, it is true, he states, that " these supplementary doctrines are more numerous among Roman Catholics than among Protestants, even those thoroughly orthodox "(1). This probably comes as a result of the work of purification undertaken by the Reformers. One can be amazed that they could even go so far; but there is still more to be done. They have left untouched some doctrines which had been introduced in Christian tradition under the influence of heathen philosophy, so that " by the introduction of these doctrines in Confessions of Faith understood in the Roman Catholic sense, the Reformed Churches founded new orthodoxies : the Lutheran, the Calvinist, and the Zwinglian orthodoxy "(2).

On its positive side, modern evangelical theology aims at achieving the work started by the Reformation. In the place of antiquated ecclesiastical dogmas it

1) MF 3 / I33

2) MF 3 / I57

restates the " simple and pure Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ ". If we want to know what Ménégosz really means by this statement, we have only to take practically any of the essays and articles gathered in his "Publications diverses sur le Fidéisme". The authentic Gospel is the preaching of Justification through faith. If it be true, as it was said, that Ménégosz wanted to " strike out all that he believed he could not retain "(1), it must be admitted, on the other hand, that at least with regard to the dogma of Justification through faith, he proved very conservative. This, of course, is easy to explain when one remembers that this doctrine leads to his famous principle of salvation through faith independently from beliefs, that is to say, the very basis of Fidéisme (2).

The "Etude sur le dogme de la Trinité" (3), sets a rather good example of the working of the dogmatic method of Ménégosz. Let us therefore present a brief analysis of this essay.

Ménégosz starts by stating the aim and purpose of

1) Quoted by Delcourt in "Le Fidéisme", Paris 1914, p.22.

2) MF I/53

3) MF I/320 sq.

his research. Confronted by the dogma of the Trinity, he will try to "clear off the eternal and true matter from its contingent and transitory form "(1). Then he quotes the full text of the dogma according to the formula held in the Symbol attributed to Athanasius.

After a short criticism exerted from the point of view of psychology and philosophy, Ménégos refers to the Bible and points out that no more than the Old Testament, does the New Testament teach explicitly or implicitly the doctrine of the Trinity.

Then he explains the genesis of this dogma by setting it again in its historical frame-work, and indicates the line of its evolution.

Finally, in a more developed synthesis, Ménégos tries to show the true and permanent teaching which is hidden under the dogmatic formulation. In this construction he presents a conception of the Trinity which strongly differs from the traditional interpretation. He denounces the distinction of three persons or three hypostases and teaches a doctrine akin to that of Sabellius. There are three manifestations of the One God," the Father is the transcendent God, the

1) MF I / 32I

Son is God immanent and made objective, the Holy Spirit is God immanent and subjective. These three are but one " (1). The criticism of Ménégos must therefore be regarded as a positive interpretation of a received dogma. It is essentially based upon psychology and history .

In the course of his career, Ménégos dealt with very numerous dogmatical problems. Let us here quote some of them according to the chronological order. First of all, there is the very important " Réflexions sur l'Evangile du Salut " ; then, the authority in matters of faith; the biblical conception of Miracle; the dogma of the Trinity; the Bible; the dogma of the Atonement; the subjectivity of Dogmatics; the very interesting controversy with Lobstein, in which there are studies on the principle of religious knowledge, the " triage ", the " authentic thought of Jesus ", demonology, eschatology, soteriology, free examination ; the notion of the Kingdom of God ; and the Word of God.

- It is quite amazing that in spite of the great diversity of the subjects studied by Ménégos, he did

1) MF I / 348

not build up a complete dogmatic system. In the concluding chapter of his book on "Le péché et la rédemption d'après Saint Paul" a very peculiar passage is to be found in which he defends the Apostle against those who deny to him the quality of a dogmatician, because he did not write a treatise on Dogmatics. "What makes a dogmatician, is not the book of Dogmatics... What makes the dogmatician is the dialectical, systematic and speculative thinking ". For Paul " the system existed complete, in his mind ". The Epistle to the Romans gives the outlines of this system (1). Now, it is true that like the Apostle, Ménégos wrote abundantly but always in a casual way, and he never composed a complete Dogmatics. Thus we are in a way invited to regard Ménégos as a dogmatician since we grant the same title to Saint Paul ! Indeed we cannot deny him this quality. It is permitted however, to ask whether Ménégos decided not to produce a dogmatic system,- whether the absence of such an elaboration is intended or not. This problem is more than a bibliographic one, as the real question is precisely to know whether it is practically possible to build up

1) E.Ménégos : "Le péché et la Rédemption d'après Saint Paul", Paris 1882, p.286-287.

systematic Dogmatics upon the principles of the Paris School theology. If we had but the works of Ménégos, the answer would still be doubtful.

II. Sabatier

It is not easy to get accurate information concerning the results attained by Sabatier's dogmatic criticism since he left very few publications strictly devoted to Dogmatics. His two main books deal only with prolegomena. We know that he held the chair of Reformed Dogmatics, but his lectures have never been published. There remains only students' notes which are rather fragmentary and incomplete and which have not been published on account of their lack of reliability (1). From these notes one can still get a rough idea of the findings of Sabatier concerning certain theological problems. Here are some of his conceptions.

— Speaking of God, Sabatier maintains fully the

1) A theologian, H. Dartigue, attempted to make a synthesis (still unpublished) of notes taken down by listeners of Sabatier's lectures on Reformed Dogmatics. It is from this essay that we borrow the following indications.

first article of the Apostles Creed. Regarding the problem of evil, he completely rejects the notion of Original Sin. Evil is a trial desired by God with the purpose of effecting man's spiritual progress. With regards to Creation, it is not completed since the creative action of God is a continuous one.

Sabatier lays more emphasis upon the prophetic function of Jesus-Christ. The Holy Spirit is God within us. Sabatier gives also a new significance to the antiquated dogma of the Trinity and attributes to it exactly the same meaning as does Ménégoz. The Trinity is - God in Himself, God in Christ, God in us.

Dealing with the problem of the Church, Sabatier retains the traditional Protestant doctrine and particularly the important distinction of the Church visible and the Church invisible.

There are two kinds of means of Grace,- the Word of God and the Sacraments. The Word of God is immanent in the Church through the channel of the Holy Spirit. It may be found also in the Bible which is the norm of the Religion of the Spirit. Sabatier refuses the word "sacrament" as it appears to him deeply involved in heathenism. He also denies the doctrine of the "opus operatum" as well as the Calvinist doctrine

of the sacrament regarded as a sign of Grace. If one wants to be logical and consistent, one must apply the Reformation up to its final consequences, and follow the Zwinglian conception which regards sacraments as enacted parables,- that is purely symbolical acts. The Quakers who have no sacrament are nearer to the Gospel of Jesus than are the Roman Catholics with their Mass.

The charter of the Kingdom of God is to be found in the Sermon on the Mount which however must not be interpreted in too legal a way. Sabatier strongly rejects the chiliastic notion of a Second Coming of Jesus Christ.

Finally, on the subject of eternal life, Sabatier teaches the doctrine of conditional immortality. There can be a spiritual death which is the sanction of sin. Similarly, eternal life is linked with justification and regeneration. Sabatier gives but a purely symbolical meaning to the notions of the resurrection of the body and the Day of Judgment.

These brief and alas incomplete elements are all that we know of Sabatier's teaching. Happily we have a small but precious book, his study on "The Doctrine of the Atonement and its Historical Evolution". This is very important for us, since Sabatier himself invites

the reader to regard it as a model of his method of dogmatic criticism.

In the foreword, Sabatier presents his work as " an attempt at a systematic application of the historical method to the study of religious beliefs and doctrines ". He adds that " to investigate the inevitable transformations they undergo is the safest way to criticise them objectively and scientifically " (1). Then, in an introductory chapter, he announces that his criticism of the doctrine of the Atonement will start with the research of the origin of the conception, then, of the main stages which mark its evolution. Finally, he will try to foretell which will be the ultimate term of this necessary evolution.(2) The work consists of two parts and a short conclusion.

The First Part is a study of the various biblical notions of the Atonement. A short synthesis gives a summary of the research and shows in the Bible two main groups of conceptions : a ritualistic conception and a doctrine of the Just One suffering for the people.

1) sde / 8

2) sde / 15

The Second Part studies the various ecclesiastical doctrines, from the Fathers of the Church up to modern theologians.

In a short conclusion, Sabatier selects three main types of dogmatic explanation : the notion of a ransom, the notion of satisfaction and finally a modern conception of salvation understood as a basically moral fact, taking place in the individual consciousness. These three conceptions occur in Chronological order.

There is also a general conclusion which begins with Sabatier's promise to liberate the dogma from its " time-worn trappings ". Actually, by means of essentially ethical considerations, he wholly rejects the notion of the Atonement. " God, he says, has no need to be brought back to man and reconciled with him , but it is man who needs to be reconciled to God"(1). The aim of the work of Christ is to create in man repentance which is the one indispensable condition of the forgiveness of sins. In order to fulfil that task, Jesus has not only set the example of a life completely pure, but wished also to suffer and die in order that

1) sde / I25

so great a love might touch the hearts of men and "conquer those whose minds had not been won over to His teaching "(1)". Thus the Passion and Death of Christ constitute a powerful preaching of repentance. " The cross is the expiation for sins only because it is the cause of repentance to which remission is promised". " In the moral world, and before the God presented to us in the Gospel, there is no atonement other than repentance "(2).

Let us point out that Sabatier, strips completely from any dogmatic significance the notion of the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ. On the other hand, he takes side resolutely for the common liberal interpretation of the life, work, and death of Christ, the Prophet. If he retains the word " atonement ", it is only with negative conclusions. Therefore it may well be asked why he still uses this term.

The example of dogmatic working which is set by that study on the dogma of the Atonement is of capital importance. Indeed, on the one hand, it is applied to a venerable and respected teaching of the Christian tradition, and on the other hand it demonstrates that

1) sde / I26
2) sde / I27

to Sabatier " the rights of criticism are unlimited "(1).

We have indicated in the first pages of the present work that Paul Lobstein, a professor attached to the Theological Seminary of Strasbourg, could not be, strictly speaking, recognized among the members of the Paris School (2). Nevertheless, there is not only a complete agreement, which has been mutually acknowledged and which is especially demonstrated in the controversy with Ménégos, and in the excellent " Introduction à la Dogmatique Réformée ", but there is also a practical application by Lobstein, rather striking, of the method of dogmatic criticism suggested by Sabatier. A famous example is his essay on " The Virgin Birth of Christ ", which is dedicated to Sabatier. We consider that it merits some reference in our work.

In a brief introduction, Lobstein explains the aim and purpose of his study. Since the dogma of the Virgin Birth seems, on religious grounds, to bear judgment belonging to the historical domain, he will be strictly objective. It is unquestionable that this dogma satisfies a genuine religious demand which

1) sa / 270

2) Cf. supra, p. 75

deserves respect. Yet it must be proved whether in fact Christian faith bears a precise opinion on the birth of Jesus. Lobstein wishes all his readers to understand that " criticism is for me a means only and not an end, and that my sole endeavour and only ambition are to lay bare the real and living kernel of the christological dogma ", with the purpose of preserving the eternal substance of the Christian faith (1). The book is composed of four main sections.

In the First Part, the traditional doctrine is studied from the point of view of exegesis. Criticism displays the weakness of New Testament testimonies, and does not allow a legitimation of the dogma.

Then, Lobstein undertakes the analysis of the historical genesis of the dogma. He finds three groups of explanation of the divine filiation of Jesus Christ, the theocratic conception, the metaphysical theory, and the physical notion. This last explanation is found in the Gospels according to Matthew and Luke, and is derived, by way of comparison, from conceptions common in the religion of Israel. The results of historical criticism achieve the negative conclusions of exegesis.

1) " The Virgin Birth of Christ ", p.38

In the Third Part, the Virgin Birth is examined from the point of view of its alleged dogmatic necessity. Lobstein again discovers three types of solution. One bases the necessity of the dogma upon the holiness of Christ, another upon the Incarnation, and the third one upon the typical nature of the person of Christ, regarded as the Second Adam. None of these interpretations legitimates the dogma.

Having thus demonstrated the fallacious character of the three traditional bases of the doctrine, Lobstein in a Fourth Part tries to show the religious truth it holds. This is the affirmation by the Christian consciousness of the divinity of Jesus Christ and therefore of the necessity of a special intervention from God, so that His Revelation might be manifest on earth in the person of His Son. The orthodox formula is dangerous, as it bases the divinity of Jesus Christ upon a miracle and thus tries to materialize the notion of His divinity.

Finally, in his conclusion, Lobstein shows his purely negative attitude regarding the dogma of the Virgin Birth. He wants to remain faithful and obedient to the sole Gospel of Christ which does not establish His divine Sonship upon a supernatural birth.

Another striking example of the same dogmatic method may be found in another of Lobstein's "Etudes christologiques", his essay on "La doctrine des fonctions médiatrices du Sauveur".

Lobstein begins with a foreword in which he precises the boundaries set forth for the problem he wants to study, that is to judge the truthfulness of the distinction proposed by some theologians, of three offices of Christ. This conception of a "munus triplex" seeks to rely upon three kinds of testimony, that of the Scriptures, that of tradition, and that of internal evidence. This threefold attempt determines the threefold research undertaken by Lobstein.

Thus, in a First Part, he uses exegesis and displays the weakness of the biblical basis of the "munus triplex" dogma which ultimately relies upon the belief in the literal inspiration of the Scriptures.

In the Second Part of the essay, Lobstein shows the scarcity of patristic testimonies in favour of the dogma and states that it was Calvin especially who laid emphasis on it. Save in the thought of Calvin, many a variation can be discovered in Protestant Theology. The doctrine of the threefold mediatory function of Christ does not belong to "the tradition of Christian

Dogmatics "(1).

In the last part, Lobstein places himself in the true dogmatical field. He discovers first the weakness of traditional terminology. Then he deals with the elements of the proposed distinction and finds that since it is based upon a fortuitous typology it undermines the doctrine of the Atonement. Furthermore it is at variance with the notion of the double state of Christ, the "status inanitionis" and the "status exaltationis". Moreover, while on the one hand it is true that the words Messiah and Christ lead unquestionably to the conception of the kingship, on the other hand, the use made by most theologians of the other "offices" of Christ, means usually that one of them only is emphasized, whilst the other ones are almost forgotten. Finally, Lobstein remarks that whenever one systematizes the work of Christ in these three categories, one encounters great difficulties.

In a short conclusion, Lobstein denies the quality of dogmatic rigidity that some theologians want to give to the "munus triplex" doctrine. It is but a useful symbol for preaching and teaching, but there is no

1) "La doctrine des fonctions médiatrices du Sauveur", p.17.

place for it in the systematic explanation of the Christian faith (1).

Thus, we find that the dogmatic method used by Lobstein is so amazingly identical with Sabatier's, that one could easily take the one for the other.

All that we know of the work of Sabatier and Ménégoz proves clearly that while there is a close agreement between both theologians on the object, the method and the criterion of Dogmatics, there is also in practice an actual identity in the way they apply these principles, and equally in the results attained. It would be true however to say that the comparison of studies as typical as that on the Trinity, by Ménégoz, and that on the Atonement, by Sabatier, cause us to find in Sabatier's speculations more mastery and more care than in Ménégoz's.

We have noted that Sabatier did not leave many written works. There is no dogmatic synthesis. In his case, it is well known that this blank is not due to inability, or to a matter of principle, but to his unfortunate death before his work was achieved. Even

1) Ibid.p.28-29.

his great work " The Religions of Authority and the Religion of the Spirit " was not published in his life-time. Indisputable testimonies (1) prove that if Sabatier had the necessary time, he would have certainly undertaken the publication of a treatise on Dogmatics. A further proof is the fact that in the last pages of " The Religions of Authority and the Religion of the Spirit ", is to be found the contents of these Dogmatics, presented under the name of " Système de la doctrine chrétienne " (2).

III. Sabatier's " Système de la doctrine chrétienne "

The building up of the system is based on several theological principles. Firstly, Sabatier refuses completely the old distinction between a material and a formal principle in Protestant Christianity. This dualistic conception must be abandoned and replaced by that of the unity of the religious principle. The experience of Christian consciousness which is already

1) H.Dartigue quotes among others, letters addressed by Sabatier to Ch.Babut and to Wilfred Monod.

2) sa / 375 sq.

the basis of dogmatic criticism will be the organising principle of the synthesis (1)'.

This consciousness is made up of two antithetical elements, the opposition of which creates its life. These elements are on the one hand the consciousness of a mortal separation from God as a consequence of sin, and on the other, the consciousness of reconciliation in forgiveness and of access unto new life. The result is that the Christian life is never a peaceful one but a state of crisis and a permanent strain (2). Furthermore, states Sabatier, religious consciousness is not of a different nature from moral consciousness,- it is but its deepening in the perspective of faith.

In addition to the moral conflict created by sin which separates man and God, a metaphysical antithesis takes place which opposes the finite and transitory being to the Infinite and Eternal Being'. Therefore religious consciousness is not composed of two elements only; but of three. With these three elements correspond three stages of the development of religious consciousness. The first stage is that of the consciousness of

1) sa / 365
2) sa / 367

the metaphysical opposition between man and God, the following stage the consciousness of sin, and the third one the consciousness of reconciliation with God.

In the Christian consciousness may be found elements of these three stages which are also the phases of the religious and moral evolution of mankind. " It is the duty of Theology to explain, and by explaining to produce this entire evolution taking place in the Christian consciousness "(1). Let us point out that Sabatier reaches this conclusion by remaining faithful to his method of research based upon the data of both psychology and history. We must also note that once more, one of his dearest ideas - the evolution is directed towards progress.

The three moments of religious consciousness determined three successive forms of religion. At the first stage, man disabled by the metaphysical abyss which separates him from higher powers, takes refuge in a religion based upon interest. This is the case for religions of Nature which all take more or less a mythological form. Then comes the appearance of the ethical consciousness, the knowledge of good and evil,

1) sa / 369

and of the notion of the efficiency of human effort. This is the religion of the Law. Finally, Jesus introduces a new religious relation, relying on an affective tie linking man to God. The filial consciousness of Jesus, the model and norm of all Christian consciousness, is the foundation of the perfect religion, - the religion of Love (1).

If these three types of religion have taken place, it is because of the fact that God revealed Himself in a progressive way. He first made Himself known as the Mighty God, El, then as the God of the Law of Alliance, Yawheh, and finally as the Father (1). Therefore, according to Sabatier, the building up of the "système de la doctrine chrétienne", must closely follow the movement of the progressive evolution of religious consciousness.

The plan of Dogmatics is divided into three parts, each of them operating the positive criticism of the traditional dogmas which belong to its domain (2).

1) sa / 374

2) The detailed contents of Sabatier's system will be found in sa / 376-377.

First Part

" The Religion of Nature, or the elementary consciousness of God. Metaphysical opposition between God and Man."

Second Part

" The Religion of the Law, or the moral cognisance of God. Moral opposition between God and Man ".

Third Part

" The Religion of Love, or the Christian cognisance of God. Salvation by redeeming love ".

It must be remarked that this last part contains a final section modestly entitled "Metaphysical dogmas" which contains four subjects of study, Predestination, Christology, The Trinity, " God all and in all ". We may rightfully ask why Sabatier discards as if they were rubbish, these four dogmas, of which in other Dogmatics, the first three at least would be in the central place. Unfortunately we are unable to state anything but mere hypotheses since, in his book, Sabatier made no comment on this point. Perhaps it would be right to say that according to him, these doctrines do not belong to the authentic Gospel of Christ, and that in spite of the importance attributed to them by the great majority of the Christian traditions, they

deserve but a negative criticism. However, this is, let us repeat, but a mere hypothesis.

Nevertheless, we shall remember the appreciation given by Sabatier himself on his plan of systematic construction : " Thus understood, theology abides in its own domain, which is the study and explanation of Christian experience "(1).

1) sa / 377

CONCLUSION

C O N C L U S I O N

The aim and purpose of our work was to discover whether Symbolo-Fidéisme which is the teaching of the Paris School, can lead to Dogmatics, and under what conditions, or on the contrary, whether it is not but a disguised form of agnosticism.

In order to understand Symbolo-Fidéisme, it seemed to us necessary to set it again in the frame-work of the history of Philosophy and Theology, and particularly to state precisely its antecedents. Thus we have been led to discover that the two overwhelming influences were those of Kant and Schleiermacher, although they often have been exerted through indirect ways. To the line of the Kantian thought belongs the theory of "Symbolisme critique" asserted by Sabatier. On the other hand, the influence of Schleiermacher can be seen in the importance given by the Paris School to subjective experience in the working of religious knowledge. Furthermore, similarly to the twofold fight undertaken by Schleiermacher against Rationalism and Supernaturalism, the theologians of the Paris

School have been led to react both against Liberalism and Orthodoxy. In face of the demands of Liberalism, they re-state the worth of the knowledge attained by religious consciousness, and this allows them a refusal of the spiritual authority of Orthodoxy. In this way, the Paris School appears as a conciliation between the two extreme positions. Since it remains in the "juste milieu" between the two groups, it is an important factor towards the peace and unity of the Church.

The study of the theory of religious knowledge permits one to attribute the central place to religious experience. Religious experience however, does not open the way to the fancies of an excessive individualism, since on the one hand, it must be linked with collective religious experience - that is to say with the tradition of the Church, and on the other hand, it is strictly controlled by the testimony of the Holy Spirit, manifested both externally and internally.

When examining the notion of dogma, we have observed that the application of "Symbolisme" and of the idea of an Evolution, founded the capital distinction of the religious kernel and the intellectual form. Moreover, we found that a new Protestant conception of dogma, which hitherto had an authoritative meaning, was

suggested. Dogma no longer means but a characteristic doctrine of the Church. Finally, in a positive way, the Symbolo-Fidéiste theology insists upon the pedagogical value and function of dogma, and never forgets the importance of truth in teaching. The function of dogma is to create the objective conditions of salvation.

A criticism of those dogmas accepted in the Church tradition is therefore necessary. It is subject to a double criterion, the external criterion of the authentic Gospel of Christ, completed by the internal criterion of the testimony of the Holy Spirit within Christian religious consciousness. In its analytical phase as well as in its constructive and synthetical effort, dogmatic criticism appeals unto two orders of knowledge, religious Psychology and History.

Since a new meaning is given to dogma, what will be the practical orientation of Dogmatics ? Dogmatics will be a science of dogmas, essentially an analytical, encyclopaedical, historical study and not a tool of authority. They will not be Dogmatics which would only affirm and re-affirm, but Dogmatics which after having reconsidered every question in an objective examination, will tend to preserve all that can be still retained

of the old teaching. When one knows how Sabatier and Ménégoz proceed, as we have seen in their studies on the Atonement and on the Trinity, one is rather inclined to think that the results do not fulfil their intentions. Indeed, under the pretence of distinguishing between matter and form, and criticizing the formula in order to show the truth it contains, they retain the word which names the dogma while they give to it a significance completely different from that of the tradition. As a matter of fact, while it is true to some extent that the name of a dogma is a formal reality, there should not be any misunderstanding as to what the Symbolo-Fidéiste theologians call formula and what they mean by the kernel or the matter. Form is the interpretation of a given Church at a given time. Matter or kernel is the religious demand, the feeling of religious consciousness, the life of faith which, at the origin, gave birth to dogma. Dogmatic criticism will therefore consist, when confronting an obsolete or antiquated formula, in going back to the genuine piety it explains, and to compare that religious experience with that expressed in Christ's Gospel, and finally to give to it a new interpretation, a new formula, easily understood by men used to modern

culture.

This conception of Dogmatics is rather different from those which are promoted nowadays. It is not a ministry of the Church, the task of which being to "instruct the ignorant, to refute heretics, to heal schisms, to administer reproofs, to correct the interpretation of the texts" (1), in the name of some principles regarded as unquestionable since they are traditional, so that there can be for instance, a Lutheran Dogmatics, a Reformed Dogmatics, and others. We must point out that Sabatier and Ménégoz used the same dogmatic method and reached conclusions of which the great majority were absolutely identical. Nevertheless they were simultaneously holding, one the chair of "Reformed Dogmatics", the other the chair of "Lutheran Dogmatics". For both of them Dogmatics can only be Christian in the strict sense of the word, and therefore, Protestant.

Dogmatics is not a denominational instrument, it is an evangelical pedagogy.

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