

THE PRESBYTERIAN AND REFORMED REVIEW

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I.

WILLIAM HENRY GREEN.*

WILLIAM HENRY GREEN was born within thirteen miles of the college at Princeton, almost within sight of the belfry of Nassau Hall, that stands on the high ground across the plain to the north. The ancestry from which he sprang had been closely identified with the college from its inception. His grandfather's great-grandfather was one of the leading founders of the noble school and its first president. A nearer ancestor and also a great-uncle had been members of the Board of Trustees, and their combined trusteeship had covered nearly one-half of the period of the college's existence. Two uncles, one on the mother's side, the other on the father's, had recently graduated from the college, another was soon to take his degree there, and at a later date a younger brother would do so. One of his uncles was a merchant prince of New York city, whose interest in education ultimately found expression in part in two munificent foundations, the John C. Green School of Science belonging to Princeton University and the Lawrenceville School. His father was not college-bred. He was a manufacturer and merchant, and several of the remoter forebears were farmers; but this ancestry during its entire history in America gave many sons to the professions. Trace back his genealogy by almost any line or branch, it reaches either a judge or a clergyman. Three uncles sat upon the judicial bench,

* An address delivered at a service which was held in the chapel of the Theological Seminary at Princeton on Tuesday, March 27, 1900, in commemoration of the life and character of the Rev. William Henry Green, D.D., LL.D., late President of the Seminary and Professor of Oriental and Old Testament Literature.

II.

“SYMBOLO-FIDEISME.”

IT is not unlikely that the above word, or some equivalent for it, will find a place at the head of a chapter in any full history of Christian doctrine hereafter to be written. It is perhaps a word unfamiliar to the eyes and ears of most men in the present generation, and it has been characterized as an “ugly and hateful barbarism.”* The hope has been expressed that the spirit of sanity which leads the French people to reject all things obscure and barbarous will somehow find a better word to put in its place. But whether this hope be realized or not, for the present, at least, we are faced with a definite system of thought which has been conveniently and, we might say, descriptively given this curious name. And while we are dwelling on the name itself, it might be of interest to note that the word was coined by an opponent of the system and first used in criticism.† It was, however, at once accepted by the founders of the system as fairly expressive of their central thought, and although some force may be conceded to the objections to it, it is difficult to think of any better name as a substitute.

But what does the name signify? Very briefly and summarily it denotes a system of theology based upon the philosophy of religion which makes religion consist in an act or life of faith, developing in many and different expressions of belief. All these expressions are symbols of the same faith. Hence the name *Symbolo-fideisme*.

Symbolo-fideisme is peculiarly French. It has been propounded and advocated by a group or school of French Protestants, most of them professors in the University of France. The growth of this school which its adherents have called for want of a better name, *L'École de Paris*, was founded some ten or twelve years ago by a group of French Protestants, including the lamented historian Jundt, the Philonian scholar Massebieau, the journalist Frank

* In an otherwise sympathetic and commendatory review of Sabatier's *Esquisse d'une Philosophie de la Religion*, etc., by Prof. Lobstein, of Strasburg, in the *Theologische Literaturzeitung*, April 3, 1897.

† Anonymously in the *Église libre* (Aug. 3, 17, 1894).

Puau and the professors Auguste Sabatier, Eugène Ménégoz and Edmond Stapfer.* These theologians have from time to time given their views to the world, incidentally and sporadically, in the periodicals, *Revue de Théologie* and *Revue Chrétienne*. But within the last three years their system seems to have reached that stage of development which warranted its publication in works of a larger scope and more permanent form. Prof. Sabatier's *Esquisse d'une philosophie de la Religion d'après la psychologie et l'histoire*,† was the first and most significant of these more important works. In a notice of it, published in the *Revue Chrétienne*, Prof. Ménégoz pronounced this work "the most important doctrinal treatise issued from the press in France since the publication of Calvin's *Institutes*." He also predicted for the system propounded in it a speedy and easy victory over rationalism on the one side and traditional orthodoxy on the other, both of which he declared to be already moribund. Prof. Sabatier's work was followed by a series of three volumes on the life, person and work of Jesus Christ from the pen of Edmond Stapfer, already favorably known through his work on *Palestine in the Time of Christ*.‡

It is true the primary design of Prof. Stapfer in these volumes is not to expound the new system or to defend it, but the standpoint from which they are all written is so completely identical with that of the system, the postulates both philosophical and historical are so unmistakably the same, that no one will correctly judge the work who does not take into account Prof. Stapfer's theological views. Besides, Prof. Stapfer at the end of his second volume openly confesses his adherence to this system and indicates that his interpretation of the life of Jesus was undertaken from the new standpoint.§ Prof. Ménégoz, besides his review of Sabatier's *Philosophy of Religion*, has more recently written a brief treatise on the doctrine of the Trinity (*Étude sur le dogme de la Trinité*). These works, along with a pamphlet by Sabatier containing the inaugural lecture at the Protestant Faculty of the University of Paris for the session of 1897-98, and entitled *The Vitality of Dogma*, may be taken as our principal sources of information regarding the system. || For though they do not con-

* This school, Ménégoz tells us, was, upon its first appearance, greeted with sneers by the champions of the elder orthodoxy, but is now the source of chronic irritation to them which they lose no opportunity of expressing.

† English translation: *Outlines of the Philosophy of Religion*, by Auguste Sabatier. New York: James Pott & Company.

‡ (1) *Jesus Christ Before His Ministry*. (2) *Jesus Christ During His Ministry*. (3) *The Death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ*. Translated by Louise Seymour Houghton. Published by Charles Scribner's Sons, New York.

§ *The Death and Resurrection of Jesus*, p. 261 ff.

|| Other significant productions of the same class, but of minor importance, are

stitute the whole of the literature of the new school, they are fairly representative of it. Prof. Sabatier is its exponent on the philosophical side, Prof. Ménégoz on the exegetical and Prof. Stapfer on the historical.

The term “symbolo-fideisme,” as already explained, describes the two essential principles of the system. The first of these is that faith is an act of union with God, and therefore fundamental in religion. And the second, that faith as an internal and spiritual act must express itself in external forms, which, however, are nothing but symbols—that is, convenient signs to indicate its presence. The name is a combination, not only of the two principles, but of the contributions of its two principal expounders, for the doctrine of symbolism is peculiarly Sabatier’s thought and the doctrine of fideisme or Christianity historically as salvation by faith is Stapfer’s favorite idea.

If we look more closely at the two phases of the system contributed by Sabatier and Stapfer, we shall find that Sabatier makes the attempt to ground “symbolo-fideisme” in philosophical principles. Of these, the most important is the immanence of God, not only in the human soul, but in the universe as a whole. Apart from the consciousness of this immanence, the soul finds a duality and a conflict in the world. Nature and the human soul stand over against each other, the one headed toward one direction, the other toward the diametrically opposite one. To follow one logically is to deny the other surely and inevitably. Thus arises an antinomy, a fatal conflict. In vain does man strive to harmonize the antagonistic terms apart from God. And yet it is only an antinomy. It needs simply a third term in which the opposites may be resolved, and this it finds in the consciousness of the immanent God. Pure thought based on the phenomena of the world leads to scientific determinism. Pure thought based on the moral consciousness and the nature of the human will leads to moral liberty. The universe threatens to crush man with its inviolable sequence of cause and effect, but the soul of man declines to be crushed. In spite of appearances to the contrary, it believes that spirit is supreme over matter; but in order to do this, it must first postulate the supremacy of God. Thus it casts itself on God in a supreme act of self-surrender, and religion is born. But this

Sabatier’s *La Religion et la Culture Moderne*, being a paper read by the author at the Congrès des Sciences Religieuses at Stockholm, 1897; also Ménégoz’s *Du Rapport entre l’Histoire Sainte et la Foi Religieuse*, 1899, and *Le Salut d’après l’enseignement de Jésus*, by the same author. By way of criticism of Prof. Sabatier’s work, pastor C. E. Babut wrote his *Quelques Reflexions à propos des vues de M. Sabatier sur l’essence du Christianisme* in the *Revue Chrétienne*, April and May, 1898, to which Sabatier made a reply in the same *Revue* for June, 1898.

act of faith is not an act of reasoning ; it is the result of a practical need.

In fact, religion is something entirely different from, and independent of, any intellectual conceptions. " To conceive of religion as a species of knowledge is an error not less grave than to represent it as a sort of political institution. No doubt religious faith is always accompanied by knowledge, but this intellectual element, however indispensable, so far from being the basis and substance of religion, varies continually at all the epochs of religious evolution."* Faith, then, or religion, according to this representation is born a naked body which must be immediately clothed with some sort of garments, but the form, color and size of them may and does vary. The connection between faith and its intellectual counterpart must be thus conceived as that between a condition, and a result. But the nature of the result is not determined by the condition ; only its existence. There is no necessary correlation between the two. The same results do not issue from the same faith in different souls, whether by preëstablished harmony, or by causal connection.

This is true of all religion. It is also true of Christianity, for Christianity is nothing but religion developed to ideal perfection. Its perfection is evidenced by its essential feature, which is the realization of a perfect relationship with God. If asked to show how this is, the symbolo-fideist reasons as follows. Christianity takes its name from Jesus Christ, its Founder. It is the religion of Christ both subjectively and objectively. The distinctive element, however, in the personality of Christ was His consciousness of the filial relation to God. He felt that God was His Father and that He was the Son of God. Now, what is observed in the consciousness of Jesus is found also in the experience of all Christians. They are Christians in proportion as they realize the filial relation to God which was perfectly realized by Jesus. The unique but sufficient sign by which Christians are recognized is the confidence with which they call God their Father. " All whose inner life has been raised from the region of selfishness and pride to the higher realm of love and life in God—who have found in that profound conversion, together with the pardon and oblivion of their past, the germ of a higher life, of the perfect and by consequence eternal life, are the true religious posterity of Christ. They reproduce His spirit, continue His work, and are as dependent upon Him and as like Him religiously as are the descendants of an ancestor whose blood and whose life have not ceased for an instant to flow in their veins. This feeling, filial in regard to God, fraternal

* *Outlines of Philosophy of Religion*, p. 7, 8.

in regard to man, is that which makes a Christian.”* Each Christian becomes such “under the blessed influence of Christ in proportion as the Spirit of Christ, which is the Spirit of God, animates and penetrates him. This is the origin, the vital principle, the guarantee for the future of Christianity.”† Christianity is the absolute and final religion of mankind. Man can neither desire nor imagine a relation at once closer, more sacred, more joyous, freer, more truthful, than that inculcated in the filial consciousness of Jesus Christ. Furthermore, Christianity is a historical religion. Not in the sense simply that it has a history after it is launched out into the world, but that its antecedents and its very origin are observable phenomena. Its central principle, the Fatherhood of God, as illustrated in the consciousness of Jesus and His followers, can be located in time and place and human personalities. “It is not an abstract ideal, a theoretical doctrine, floating above humanity, but a principle and a tradition of new life, an inexhaustible, fruitful germ inserted into human life, not in idea, but in fact and form.” This history may be studied in all of its connections. The Christian Scriptures furnish an abundant and valuable record of the facts. They are inspired, not in any specific sense, or with the special design of becoming a rule of faith, but only as the prophets and apostles who composed them were penetrated and filled by the spirit of piety which is the Spirit of God. “The inner root of this inspiration is only found in the piety common to religious men. It differs from it not in nature, but simply in intensity and energy. Prophetic inspiration is piety raised to the second degree.”‡ Christianity must accordingly be deduced from the consciousness of Christians, not from the forms of expression used by inspired writers. It is an inner life inexpressible perfectly in any set forms. It is necessary, indeed, that it should be expressed somehow, and it has been and is expressed. But all expressions of it are figures of thought drawn from the surroundings of those in whom it lives. Such figures can have only symbolic value; they are symbols. They are the bodies of which religious experience is the soul, forms of which the substance is faith. §

* *Outlines of Philosophy of Religion*, p. 149.

† Ménégoz in *Revue Chrétienne*, February, 1897.

‡ *Outlines of Philosophy of Religion*, p. 90.

§ It will be remembered that the theory of Symbolism approximately as described above was proposed by Kant as an explanation of the Christian idea of redemption. Cf. *Die Religion innerhalb der blossen Vernunft*, 1794. In the following passage from Herbert Spencer's *First Principles* (Pt. i, Sec. 31), we find the same principle applied more broadly. “We shall not err so long as we treat every notion we thus frame (regarding the Ultimate Existence) as merely a

Such vehicles of spiritual life are necessary. They are purest and by implication most stable when they take the form of prayer; and more and more untrustworthy and mutable the more they run into scientific formulæ. The simplest symbols, such as those used in the parables of Jesus, have permanent value; but the more complex and elaborate they become, the less durable they are. And yet some symbolism is absolutely essential. In the lecture on *The Vitality of Dogma*,* Sabatier insists on this most strenuously. Drawing a parallel between dogma† and faith on the one hand, and thought and language on the other, he asserts that thought is unthinkable except in language. Yet thought and language are quite distinct. So are religious experience and dogma. When God comes in contact with the soul of any man, whether in the Bible or out of it, that man has obtained a certain religious experience. The expression of that experience is dogma. And although the man cannot conceive it even in his own mind without the expression of it in word or worship, yet the experience which is religion and the expression which is dogma, are ever quite distinct. Religious experience or the revelation of God to the soul, is itself and abides forever; the expression of it, which is dogma, is subject to continued transformation, or to use the words of Prof. Ménégoz, "Considered in its essence, religion is eternal; but in its concrete expression it assumes different forms conditioned by place and time. It is evolved with philosophic culture and the progress of the sciences. The more abstract the formula, the more liable it is to modification. Created to-day, it begins to grow old to-morrow. It is only the simplest and most elementary symbols, such as the images and parables made use of

symbol, utterly without resemblance to that for which it stands. Perhaps the constant formation of such symbols and constant rejection of them as inadequate may be hereafter, as it has hitherto been, a means of discipline. Perpetually to construct ideas requiring the utmost stretch of our faculties, and perpetually to find that such ideas must be abandoned as futile imaginations, may realize to us more fully than any other cause, the greatness of that which we vainly strive to grasp."

* English translation by Mrs. E. M. Christen, published by A. & C. Black, London.

† The word dogma as used by the French theologian needs some explanation. It designates, not as in the Roman Catholic Church, a *peremptory opinion* or belief, which members of the Church are obliged to accept by reason of the very fact that they are members—by the exercise of *fides implicita*; nor as among Protestants a *belief* embodied in a Confession because accepted as true by the Church; nor more broadly yet a religious *doctrine* generally believed: but rather a pure intellectual conception, either within or without the Bible, which is commonly held by men. Thus the cosmography of Paul is a dogma—the demonology of the period of Jesus in Palestine is a dogma. This usage is not, however, peculiar to Sabatier and his associates; it is approximately that of Bovon in his *Dogmatique Chrétienne*, etc.

by Jesus, that have any permanent value. These formulas, images or parables, engendered by the religious consciousness, have a certain educational potency. They have the power of awakening in their turn the sentiment that created them. Thus they play a fundamental part in Christian education. But they only retain this potency as long as they effectually enshrine the treasure of religion. When once the wear and tear of time has deprived them of their content, they are nothing but dry husks without kernels, powerless to nourish the soul.”*

Reverting, however, to Sabatier's exposition of the life and testimony of dogma in his *Vitality of Dogma*, we learn that some seventy years ago Jouffroy wrote his famous essay to show how dogmas end. He simply expressed the earnest belief that the age of dogma is past. Another philosopher, however, of the same school writes another essay to-day to show how dogmas revive. The truth is, they neither die nor revive—they are simply transformed. If we ask how? the answer is, in one of three ways. The first is the way of desuetude; interest shifts from subject to subject, from one part to another of the circle of religious thought. As it leaves one part of the circle, that part is apt to be forgotten, gradually it disappears from men's minds. As an illustration of this mode of the decay of dogma, Sabatier gives belief in demons. In the early Church belief in demons and demoniacal possession vast place. Men's minds were haunted by it. Its force was such occupied a that a class of priests arose whose chief business it was to drive the demons out. A whole ritual was devised to be used by these exorcists in their special work. One may read some of the formulas used by them in the writings of Tertullian. All this has disappeared, at least within Protestantism. Even belief in the personal devil acting supernaturally in life is dying, if not dead. Nay, the devil himself is dying. Luther, when he threw his inkstand at his head, inflicted on him a mortal wound. The ink had more effect to exorcise the devil forever than all the holy water used by the Church.

The second mode of transformation for dogma is *intus-susceptio*. This is a process of inward reception or the ascription of a new meaning to an old form of expression. This is the work of the theologian. He is constantly putting new wine into old bottles. There is no doctrine with a history of two or three hundred years behind it which is repeated with the same meaning as at the time of its origin. Inspiration, atonement, Trinity, miracles, the Divinity of Christ are all terms which Christians use to-day in a different sense from that of their fathers.

* Ménégoz in *Revue Chrétienne*. February, 1897.

The third mode of doctrinal transformation is that of renovation. This becomes necessary when *intus-susceptio* has done its best but failed. It becomes evident that the old bottles will not stand the strain of the new wine. New bottles are constructed to receive it. New dogmas are framed to express new experiences. An illustration of this is found in the Reformation of the sixteenth century. It gave to the Church the dogmas of justification by faith and of the universal priesthood of believers. But strictly speaking, these dogmas were not new, they were simply old ones rising in new forms and with new force.

Further, this system lays fresh emphasis on the familiar distinction between faith as trust in a person and belief as assent to a proposition. "Man is saved by faith, not by beliefs," is the simple formula to which Prof. Stapfer reduces it. "Jesus Christ," he adds, "does not ask us to believe like Him. He asks us to believe in Him. Jesus did not present Himself as a doctor, a scribe, teaching facts and ideas that neither the reason nor the conscience can grasp, or coming to communicate supernatural truth to the world. He came 'to seek and to save those who were lost;' that is, to modify our personal relation with God . . . Jesus Christ saves; that is, He enfranchises souls, He feeds and strengthens them by sanctifying them. The weary and heavy laden experience the power of the Gospel and the authority of Jesus Christ. In the mind of certain Christians revelation is the communication of facts and ideas which man could not discern by his own intelligence. Such Christians are in evident error. Revelation is the communication of the Spirit of God, which acts upon the conscience to sanctify and enlighten it. Therefore, I can never succeed in understanding those pious and believing persons who refuse to accept the formula: 'Man is saved by faith independently of beliefs.' A belief is an intellectual opinion and an intellectual opinion cannot save. There are two words, the word faith and the word belief; and since there are two words, it is apparent that there is some shade of difference in their signification. Was it not the pious Neander who said, 'There is a faith which saves; there is not a dogmatic which saves?' Well, we fideists, as we are called, say nothing else!"*

What has been said thus far may be deemed sufficient as a bare sketch of the nature and peculiarities of the system of "symbolo-fideisme." Its operation in the field of Christian theology may be illustrated by a single specimen of the theological thinking of its exponents. We select this from the works of that one of its adherents who has been least cited thus far—we refer to Prof.

* *The Death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ*, pp. 265-267.

Ménégoz. This theologian, in a brochure entitled *Étude sur le dogme de la Trinité*, undertakes to separate between the mutable and immutable, the essential and contingent elements of the doctrine of the Trinity as formulated in the Confessions. He begins with the Athanasian Creed and indicates the lines along which modern psychological science has created difficulties in the way of the propositions of the formula. He shows next that in the New Testament the doctrine of the Trinity is not formally expounded. Out of the data given, however, a doctrine may be formulated: “The Father is God transcendent; the Logos is God immanent in humanity, revealing Himself in history and manifested in His fullness in Jesus Christ; the Holy Spirit is God immanent in us giving testimony to our spirit;” or, to put it more concisely: “The Father is God transcendent; the Son is God immanent objectively; and the Holy Spirit is God immanent subjectively; and these three are one. But the three are distinct as we represent them in our thought, and in distinguishing them we conceive of all the three as personal. And each has his special role in relation to humanity. We represent them to our mind scarcely otherwise than the (Church) Fathers; but we are conscious that our representation is purely subjective and that, as a matter of fact, there are not three persons in God, but a single person manifesting Himself to our spirit under three different personal aspects.” The affinity of this doctrine to the Sabellian teaching is readily granted, but its identity with that teaching is denied.*

It is not the purpose of this paper to enter into a thorough-going criticism of the system thus far presented. It has been our aim rather to collect from these various sources and expound as succinctly as possible its salient features. The system as a whole can scarcely be said to have been elaborated in detail as yet. Prof. Sabatier's *Outlines of the Philosophy of Religion* come nearest being a complete statement of its various parts and their interrelations. And yet even this comprehensive work dwells more on the foundation than on the superstructure. And as its very title indicates, it is rather a sketch than a full exposition. Nevertheless, a few remarks in the way of an estimate of the value of it as far as developed may not be out of place.†

* The distinction made by Prof. Ménégoz between the Sabellian teaching and his own is that in the former the persons of the Trinity are regarded as successive manifestations of God, while according to his view, they are activities coexisting and running parallel at all times. *Revue Chrétienne*, April, 1898, p. 262.

† Prof. Sabatier recognizes the incompleteness of the *Esquisse* and announces his purpose, if strength and time permit, to follow up this treatise, which he concedes is nothing more than an Introduction to Dogmatics, with an adequate sequel on the great doctrines of sin, redemption, the person of Christ as well as the

First of all, then, it is easy to see its resemblance to Ritschlianism. Its theory of knowledge, involving what Sabatier calls "judgments of estimation or dignity," is similar to the Ritschlian theory with its value-judgments. Its doctrine of faith as an act of confidence and consecration to God is substantially the same as the view of Ritschl on this point. Its distrust of natural religion also coincides, at least in form of expression, with Ritschl's teaching.* The historical development of Christianity sketched by Sabatier reminds one of Harnack's representations of that subject. There was a double and mutual transformation as between Christianity and the pagan world, and it is hard to say whether the pagan world was more modified by Christianity or Christianity more deeply penetrated and invaded by the manners and the religion that it was supposed to replace. The dogmas of the Councils and the theology of the Fathers dominated by material derived from the Greek philosophy. There can be little doubt that at least Sabatier personally has been largely influenced by Ritschlian thought. How far the other members of his school have drawn from the same source it is not possible to say. The references found in their works to German theological literature are exceedingly rare, one might almost say, practically, they do not exist. On the contrary, their system emerges into view, to all appearances, independently in two parts—symbolism and fideism—and the combination or blending of these two constitutes it. The men who propound it are evidently unconscious of their indebtedness

authority of the Bible and the nature of religious societies, etc. Cf. *Revue Chrétienne*, June, 1898, p. 402.

* By natural religion, however, Sabatier does not mean exactly what is commonly denoted in that term. He uses the phrase in the sense in which it was used at the end of the eighteenth century by the Deists, and as it came to be used by others than Deists after that period. Natural religion is not the religion attained by man through processes natural to him, for in this sense all religion is natural. Faith is natural to man. Christianity is natural in its origin and development. Natural religion is rather narrowly the religion which upon the basis of nature outside of man is built up by the ratiocinative faculties. Its three doctrines are the existence of God, the immortality of the soul and the imperative nature of duty. It is this natural religion that Symbolo-fideisme eschews, as distinguished from revealed religion. The distinction between natural and supernatural in revelation does not exist. All revelation is natural as to method, supernatural as to cause. But revelation is simply the response of God to man's faith. All religion in this sense has an element of revelation in it. Christianity is not a specific revelation, it is the last and final product, the flower and fruit of natural aspiration, therefore also the ultimate revelation. Along the same line the repudiation of rationalism by the adherents of this system is based upon the narrower construction of the term as equivalent to the attempt to attain certainty in religion through the reasoning process rather than through reason in its breadth. If rationalism is the subjection of all religion to the reason at large, it is impossible to see how this system can wage any warfare against rationalism.

to outsiders. They do not seem to refer to Ritschl or the Germans as to teachers.* They are, moreover, men of vigor of thought and clearness of presentation. Whatever they may have taken from others, they have refashioned and reproduced it in their own forms. Upon the whole, while recognizing the affinities of “Symbolo-fideisme” and Ritschlianism, we do not deem it just to call the former a mere French echo of the latter. The usual polemic of evangelicals against Ritschlianism, therefore, must be modified materially when directed against the new French theology.

Secondly, it will be easy to confuse the issue between this system and the Reformed system of doctrine, of which latter it claims indeed to be the legitimate offspring and successor. It presents a number of features, each of which might be mistaken for its distinctive and central idea. It insists, for instance, on the separateness of the intellectual and spiritual elements of the religious life, on the difference between faith and beliefs. But this distinction is one which Christian thinkers, at least those who stand on the historic platform of the Reformed Creeds, have never lost sight of. It would not be difficult to cite passages from the works of Reformed theologians from the days of Calvin to those of Hodge and Shedd in which special emphasis is laid on the difference between what Stapfer calls faith and beliefs. The new French theology cannot and must not be allowed to claim its insistence on this idea as a distinguishing characteristic or peculiar excellence. It holds the idea in common, not only with Ritschlianism, but with evangelicalism in its largest sense. Faith is imperishable; intellectual conceptions are ever changing and being adapted to new situations. We all believe in this proposition. Stapfer himself reminds us that “the pious Neander” held and taught the same view. Then, if the “fideists say nothing else,” as Stapfer says, it is difficult to see wherein lies the revolutionary importance claimed for their system by Prof. Ménégoz.

But Symbolo-fideisme insists further on the distinction so Scriptural and necessary between faith as an act of trust in a person, and beliefs whose essential character consists in assent to propositions. We are saved, not by beliefs, but by faith. And this distinction is liable to be put into the position of a central and governing idea. As a matter of fact, however, it is an idea which has its place in every correct interpretation of the Gospel. And its place cannot be secondary or subsidiary in any working conception of Christianity without loss of power and effectiveness in the

* Ménégoz, in his review of Sahatier's *Esquisse* above alluded to, concedes the resemblance but claims independence and specific character for the doctrine of the French School of Paris (*Revue Chrétienne*, February, 1897, p. 87).

work of propagating the Gospel. Not only the evangelical theologian, but the practical evangelist, in fact the preacher as such, must insist on faith as the supreme act of self-surrender to God, if he shall hope for the acceptance of his message by men. It has always been the practice of evangelists to present Jesus as the personal Redeemer to be immediately accepted and absolutely trusted by the soul for salvation. We should therefore accept the declaration of Stapfer that "Jesus does not (formally) ask us to believe like Him; He asks us to believe in Him," so far as it means that the chief object of Jesus was not to teach us doctrines, but work out redemption and draw men to Himself; while so far as the declaration implies that what Jesus believed is of no consequence to the Christian, it is contradicted by the fundamental position of Symbolo-fideisme already cited that Jesus Christ's realization of the true relation of God to man is duplicated in the consciousness of every Christian, and that as a consequence of the fact that Jesus Himself thought and believed as He did. To this extent surely Christians believe and are constrained to believe as Jesus did, whether he explicitly demands this or not.

Another tenet of the new French theology which it would be easy to mistake for its essential and distinctive feature is the teaching that the essence of Christianity is a true relation and inner relation between the soul and God, mediated in some way through the person of Christ. What has been said by the exponents of the system in this direction contains elements of truth commonly recognized by all Christians. Christ had the consciousness of an ideal relation to God. That relation was the purest and absolute filial relation. He did claim to reveal the Father as no one could know Him apart from Himself (Matt. xi. 29). He did bring into full view, did illustrate in His own life and make possible the realization of this relation by all men, and to the extent that men realize it are they shown to be true disciples, or as Sabatier would say figuratively, His true children. But in all this, stripped of the particularly inadequate views of the personality of Christ with which it comes intertwined in this system, there is nothing new. It has all found expression in the old evangelical doctrines of the prophetic office of Christ, of the mystical union and of sanctification.

Thirdly, if we turn away from these illusive searches for the distinctive feature of Symbolo-fideisme and fix our eyes on its doctrine of symbolism, we shall find what we are looking for. According to this doctrine there is no correlation between faith and belief. Not only are faith and belief distinct and separate, but between them there can only exist an arbitrary or conventional connection.

When the term symbol is used ordinarily, it denotes a sign fixed, as a rule for the sake of convenience, to represent an object with which it has no further necessary relation. In a sense language has symbolical value. The sounds articulated, or the signs written down or printed have no necessary connection with the thoughts represented by them. They are different in different languages; they may change in the same language from period to period. Further, all language, when it is pressed into service to designate invisible and impalpable realities, makes use of imagery drawn from the visible and material world. But it is not this sort of symbolism that the advocates of the theory under discussion have in mind when they use the term. It is not the mere words that are the symbols and images of the faith, but forms of thought also. In fact, forms of thought are no more essential to reality than signs of algebraic notation are to the quantities they are made to represent. Beliefs are symbols of faith, just as words are symbols of thought and algebraic signs are symbols of quantities and relations in mathematics. It is in this view of the relation of belief to faith expressed in the doctrine of symbolism that the pith and point of Symbolo-fideisme is to be found.

Upon this point it is worth while to call attention to the multiplication of untrustworthy elements it assumes in the formulation of all science, especially of religious science. If thought is but the symbol of reality, and reality cannot be known as such; and if language is the symbol of thought; then language is but the symbol of a symbol. And further, science which must be couched in language is nothing more than the illusive expression of an illusive conception of a reality whose existence is certain but whose nature can never be known. This may be the true state of things, but all science and philosophy in assuming validity for their content plant themselves upon a different understanding. Symbolo-fideisme, therefore, must settle accounts here not with the elder evangelical theology alone, but also with science and philosophy. Prof. Sabatier does undertake to do this, indeed, but his effort we think will hardly be deemed satisfactory except by that special school of semi-agnostic philosophy whose epistemology he has adopted. It is along this line that some severe criticisms have been offered against Symbolo-fideisme. Prof. Henri Bois, for instance, of Montauban, charges the system with illusionism, or, in other words, with reducing the whole world of religious truth to a structure built out of the human imagination. The realities in which men have believed and do believe cannot be known to be realities; they are mere projections of the mental acts of human beings under the influence of a subconscious power whose nature

is an impenetrable mystery. Prof. Lobstein, of Strasburg, with much greater sympathy suggests that in Sabatier's system the hunger of the soul appears to manufacture the nourishment necessary to appease itself.

The realities of religion, according to the new French philosophy, are apprehended by faith. But what is faith except the sum of the mental powers of man put in exercise upon one class of facts? Human nature has no special faculty for the discovery or apprehension of religious truth. The facts of the spiritual world, like all others, make their appeal to reason. There is no other special sense to which they can appeal. The Reformers of the Calvinistic type did indeed speak of a "natural faculty of divine things,"* but they did not mean by that phrase a faculty that comes in contact with the realm of spiritual realities independently of the other faculties of man, but through them. Otherwise their doctrine of the working of the Divine Spirit ordinarily through the Word and only extraordinarily apart from the Word (but not necessarily apart from all means) cannot be understood. The Reformed doctrine, which on this point is believed to be based on the soundest philosophical ground, plants faith upon an intellectual act. Symbolo-fideisme makes all intellectual conceptions of spiritual realities subsequence to and the results of faith. It is quite possible to misconceive and mistake the Reformed position so as to make all faith the result of belief. This would be a gross error. The Reformed position is simply that before faith can exist there must be a perception of the object in which faith shall rest or upon which it shall cast itself. This perception is knowledge. Such knowledge must be correctly conceived in order that living faith may spring up. After faith has arisen it may and always does lead to a readjustment of the intellectual sphere of the individual and consequently to beliefs or articulated conceptions of the various relations into which it is put. In other words, a belief, or intellectual perception, precedes and conditions faith; and a system of beliefs follows and is determined by it. Undoubtedly there exists a difference between the intellectual elements which precede and condition faith and those which follow and are conditioned by it. The latter are pervaded and colored by faith; they are in a measure variable, progressive, subject to the law of development. As the human mind sees an increasingly larger section of the whole world of being and strives to correlate its new and more accurate knowledge to the content of faith, it must readjust its beliefs; it must change the perspective, put some things into places of lesser emphasis, raise others into greater

* *Naturalis divinitatis sensus*, Calvin Inst., i. 3.

prominence, omit some and add others; thus systems of religious belief undergo changes and there is progress in theology. And yet, even here, it would not be true to say that beliefs are of no consequence to faith or that they are so distinct from it as to be unaffected by faith, or unable to affect it. Faith and beliefs are not related to one another as the stream and the pipe through which it flows, but as the vital principle and the organism into which it develops. But just as faith is the life which determines the outward body of beliefs, so it is itself determined by the intellectual acts of perception and assent that it presupposes. If the act of apprehension is firm and clear, if it grasps the realities of the spiritual world as they are, the result is faith of one kind; if instead it misses the realities and seizes upon delusions, the faith resulting must necessarily be of another kind; and as the faith is in each case, so the systems of belief that grow out of it must be. The acorn can only grow into an oak and the grain of wheat only into a stalk. So a correct apprehension of God, of sin, of redemption from sin, can only result in a saving faith (a personal trust in Jesus Christ). Whereas a failure to realize these facts must necessarily issue in spiritual delusion or despair. This certainly the Symbolo-fideists allow, at least by implication, in making the culmination of religious life or faith the realization of God's Fatherhood as Jesus realized it. It is in not carrying out this central thought into its logical correlatives that they come short.

Fourthly, upon their inadequate and inconsistently applied philosophy of knowledge it was inevitable that the Symbolo-fideists should build a system of Christian doctrine which the Christian consciousness is destined to reject, if we may judge this system from those elements of it which have been presented. To say nothing of the specimen of theologizing already referred to on the doctrine of the Trinity by Prof. Ménégoz, this system will appear to commit a capital offense in reducing the Bible to a mere record (trustworthy in some parts of it, untrustworthy in others) of a gradual process of discovery of God the Father by man, rather than the Word of God, the authoritative revelation of God to man, given indeed “at sundry times and in divers manners,” but given as the direct speech of God “in time past unto the fathers by the prophets” and “in these last days unto us by His Son.” According to the Reformers, the Word of God evidences its own divine authorship and its nature as an authoritative revelation directly to the spiritual nature of man. And the Reformers did not impose this doctrine of evangelicalism, but simply voiced the experience of believers of all ages. It is not likely that the

experience of believers will be shown to have been delusive on this point.

Furthermore, the Symbolo-fideists will find it impossible to persuade evangelical Christendom that Jesus Christ may be taken as a trustworthy revealer of the divine sonship of man but not a trustworthy teacher on any other subject. Christ did not characterize His work as the mere revelation of the fact that man is the child of God. He makes the claim that He has come to reveal this, but He also describes His work as that of a ransom for many. If the only vital element in Christ's life on earth was the consciousness of a unique filial relationship, how comes it that His immediate disciples make so much of His death and resurrection? How comes it that the Gospel is, even by Himself, clothed in the figure of the kingdom of God, and by the Apostle Paul so soon afterwards represented as a way of salvation from sin by the cross? Either Jesus had a correct conception of His own mission, or not. If not, the reproduction of His consciousness in His disciples was a doubtful gain. If He did, His representation of His work must be accepted. So must also His testimony to the effect that under the influence of the divine Spirit bestowed upon them supernaturally, after His departure, His disciples should transcend His own teachings and interpret His death, resurrection and ascension, giving these facts their true place in the world of realities He came to reveal. Upon what ground shall we accept the authority of Jesus when He tells us that God is our Father and reject it when He tells us that He came to give His life a ransom for many? If it is said, because the former statement runs through His teaching, whereas the latter is incidental, alone and subordinate, we would point to the testimony of Jesus to the incompleteness of His own teaching. His death was necessary before that cycle of thought which He began to reveal could be completed, and He further taught that it should be completed under an influence equal in authority to His own. He was giving His conceptions at a stage when only a portion of necessary revelation could be apprehended. When the apostles took up the work of telling the world what He did, they claimed that under His guidance they were giving a section of His work that He could not explain in full, evidently because the events about which it centered had not taken place.

It will be unnecessary to point further to the elimination from, or at least subordination in, Christianity as conceived by the Symbolo-fideists of the fact of sin, with its correlated idea of forgiveness which plays such an important part in the teachings of Jesus; or to the obscuring of the idea of Christ's divinity and

many other thoughts which have been accepted as essentials to the life of Christianity by all Christians hitherto. The attempt to put all these into the category of dogmas we think cannot succeed. They are more than dogmas in any legitimate sense of that word. They enter into the experience of believers and in different forms of conception and expression issue in dogmas, but they are at any rate elements of spiritual life, and the new system must reckon with them as such.

Upon the whole, Symbolo-fideisme, while possessed of some charms that may recommend it to many, is far from winning the easy victory claimed for it, because it fails to be self-consistent. It is based on a shaky philosophy of knowledge, and does not satisfy the Christian consciousness at the points where it is absolutely necessary it should.

CHICAGO.

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