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RELIGION SYMBOLISM *and* MEANING

A critical study of the views of Auguste Sabatier

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Introduction

IN this book I have tried to find some answers to a few of the questions that have recently been asked about religious language by examining the thought of a French protestant theologian, Auguste Sabatier, and applying some of his principles to the present controversy. But the suggestion that Sabatier has any light to shed upon some of our present theological and philosophical controversies is not one that is likely to be greeted with widespread enthusiasm, for Sabatier was an advocate of 19th-century theological liberalism; and this has been so scornfully dismissed by disciples of Karl Barth and, in the different shape of Roman Catholic modernism, so thoroughly suppressed by the church of Rome, that there might seem to be no point in trying to disinter anything that has the appearance of being irrevocably buried. And when even those who call themselves liberals speak of post-Barthian liberalism as something different in kind from its earlier namesake, it would appear that we have arrived at just that moment in time when liberal protestantism, like late Victorian furniture, is far enough away to be old-fashioned but not antique.

Much of Sabatier's mature work, however, is on the subject which has become the centre of the main controversy between Christians and sceptics at the present time, namely the meaningfulness or otherwise of religious assertions or, as Sabatier normally expressed himself, of religious dogma. Now if anyone thinks that an understanding of the way in which religious language works is not of crucial importance for an understanding of religion itself; or that the criticisms of religious assertions developed by such sceptics as Flew are of no account, then he should either read such criticisms again, or drop this book immediately, for it is written in the belief (a) that such criticisms need answering and (b) that the attempt to answer them is likely to have a wholesome effect upon Christians' understanding of their faith. In the next few paragraphs, without

aiming to give any consecutive account of the way in which the controversy over religious language has developed over the last fifty years or so, I wish to try to isolate those questions which seem to me to be the main ones at issue at the present moment.

During the present century, language has been exhaustively studied and many questions about it have been asked from the point of view of the philologist, the philosopher and the poet amongst others. This book is not concerned, except perhaps incidentally, with general questions about the origin of language, the meaning of "meaning", the status of poetry, etc. I assume that human beings do, as a matter of fact, manage to make many assertions which have meaning and that communication often takes place. Given this rather large assumption, it seems that there is still a particular question about religious assertions, which is: given that it is possible for a man to make some assertions which convey information which other men can understand, is this true of religious assertions? The fact with which this book is mainly concerned is that many English philosophers would today answer "No". What then is the special problem with regard to religious language?

Put very briefly it is this: it would appear that any word which we apply to God does not mean the same thing as when it is applied to man. One could loosely say that all words are therefore applied symbolically to God. Now if the words when applied to God mean something totally different from what they do when applied to man, then obviously the knowledge of what they mean in a human context will not elucidate their meaning in a religious context. On the other hand, if one says that there is some similarity (not necessarily identity) between, say, human and divine love, one faces at least two difficulties. (1) The more one emphasises the similarity the more one loses the sense of the transcendence of God and the nearer one approaches to anthropomorphism. (2) The more one emphasises the difference between human and divine qualities the more one tends to fall into agnosticism. Moreover there remains the difficulty of saying precisely where the alleged similarity lies (which is a good deal more difficult than saying where the difference lies). It is not the discovery of modern philosophers that these problems of religious language exist, but because of the prevailing "positivist"

temper of mind they have raised them more acutely and persistently than heretofore.

When logical positivists began their criticism of religious language they had divided all propositions into two categories: (1) analytic propositions such as, "a cob is a male swan", which were true or false by definition; and (2) synthetic propositions such as, "there are 50 swans on this lake," whose truth or falsehood could be determined only by observation. Now whether analytic propositions are true or false, they are not necessarily speaking of anything that exists. One could, for instance, give a correct definition of a centaur, but no amount of correct detail in the definition would ever enable anyone to conclude that such a being existed. To assert the factual existence of such animals would involve somewhere a synthetic proposition which was open to verification only by observation and not by consulting a dictionary. It was further maintained that, analytic propositions aside, one could determine whether a sentence had any meaning by asking how one could verify it. And if it was not verifiable in any way whatsoever, one could conclude at least this, that regarded as a synthetic proposition it was meaningless. The question was then asked, "What sort of observation could be made to verify such assertions as, 'God exists', or, 'God is loving'." When it was maintained that there were in fact no observations which could possibly serve to this end, it was speedily concluded that religious assertions were literally without any meaning.

Later, however, it was seen that this wholesale condemnation of religious language was too sweeping. The verification principle might be a good litmus paper for detecting statements which had scientific or commonsense meaning, but perhaps there were other things which human language could legitimately be expected to do besides state scientific or common sense propositions. It then became incumbent upon the upholder of any language other than scientific to say what sort of a "language game" he was playing, and what sort of logic governed the use of words in his game. There followed a number of attempts to analyse religious assertions in their normal context to determine the meaning and logic of religious language from this study of its use. It was suggested, for instance, that all

religious propositions were really statements of moral decisions; that the meaning of such a statement as, say, "God is love", was something like "I believe that I and all men should try to maintain a loving attitude towards all creatures." Naturally this and many other such attempts to give meaning to religious discourse were quite unacceptable to those who wished to maintain a religious belief in anything like a traditional form.

It seems to me that the first thing that any upholder of the meaningfulness of religious assertions still has to do is to say what sort of "language game" he is playing, what the rules are which govern the use of words in this game, and how propositions made in this game can be tested for their truth or falsehood.

Anyone who answers this first question, as I have tried to do in this essay, by saying that all religious language is symbolic, has then another question to face, which is: does the symbolism which is employed in religious discourse have any objective reference, or does it refer simply to feeling-states or emotional attitudes on the part of the speaker or writer? In other words, are all meaningful assertions about God reducible without remainder to equivalent assertions about man, and particularly about the man who made the assertions; or can they seriously be taken to have reference to a being other than man?

The two main questions that are discussed in this essay are therefore:

(1) what is the logic of religious assertions?

(2) do these assertions have any objective reference?

What has been said so far probably gives the impression that any discussion of religious language takes place solely between Christians and sceptics. Such is obviously not the case. Anyone who takes it upon himself to try to defend the meaningfulness of religious assertions is almost certain to be criticised by fellow Christians for having conceded too much or too little to the sceptics' attacks, and will certainly be retreading ground which had been very well covered before modern scepticism was thought of. It is pertinent to point out that in Sabatier's case he could not have taken up his point of view in deference to the attacks of logical positivists or their successors, for he wrote before their position was expounded in its

present form. His views on the language of religion were adopted for what might be called religious reasons, not in answer to modern forms of scepticism. In expounding Sabatier's ideas, I shall therefore have to consider not merely the criticisms that a modern sceptic might make of his ideas, but also the criticisms that might be, and have been levelled against him by Christians of other traditions, particularly by exponents of the Thomist doctrine of analogy.

The contents of this book therefore fall into the following categories:

Chapters 1 and 2, an exposition of Sabatier's ideas;

Chapters 3 and 4, an examination of these ideas in the light of the Thomist doctrine of analogy.

Chapters 5 and 6, an examination of these ideas in the light of some of the arguments of modern empiricist philosophy.

Quotations

I have put the quotations from French authors into English where they have been included in the text of the book; where I have thought it necessary to do so, I have included the French original in the footnote. The references in the footnotes are all to the original texts, as I have assumed that anyone who was interested enough to look up the contexts would be capable of reading French; in any case, with regard to a number of sources quoted no satisfactory English translation exists. I have relegated a sizeable amount of material to three appendices as it seemed to me that if it were included in the main body of the book it would unduly break up the flow of the argument. In the appendices, too, I have left the quotations from Sabatier in French.

Abbreviations in the text

Outline = Auguste Sabatier. *Esquisse d'une philosophie de la religion d'après la psychologie et l'histoire.* (Librairie Fischbacher, 1898, 5th ed.)

The Religions = Auguste Sabatier. *Les religions d'autorité et la religion de l'esprit.* (Librairie Fischbacher, 1904, 2nd ed.)

Abbreviations in the footnotes

EP = the same as "Outline" above.
RA = the same as "The Religions" above.
S. = Auguste Sabatier.
Pen. = Abbé M.T.-L. Pénido. *Le rôle de L'analogie en théologie dogmatique.* (Paris 1931.)
KS = Karl Barth. "The knowledge of God and the service of God." (Hodder and Stoughton, 1938.)
CD = Karl Barth. "Church Dogmatics", Vol. II (1). (T. & T. Clark, Edinburgh, 1957.)
NPT = "New Essays in philosophical theology." Ed. A. Flew, and A. MacIntyre. (S.C.M. Cheap Edition, 1963.)

I

The religion of spirit:
A general examination of Sabatier's liberal protestantism

THE present widespread rejection of liberal protestantism springs at least partly, I think, from a misconception of its ideas. Possibly the most common view of liberal protestantism is that it was really only a morality, and that if religion as distinct from morality entered into the picture at all, it was simply to give an emotional colouring to what might otherwise have made a very drab appeal to human nature. The phrase of Matthew Arnold—"morality touched with emotion"—is often thought to characterise liberal protestantism, particularly by those expounding the views of Harnack, and Vidler seems to imply that Sabatier also might have regarded this as the "essence of His [Christ's] religion".[1] It is difficult to see how a careful reading of the Outline, one of the books to which Vidler was referring at this point, could lead to such a conclusion with regard to Sabatier. The whole tendency of the book, it would not be too much to say, is in the opposite direction. Sabatier's Outline is rather in that line of liberal thought that leads to Rudolf Otto's book *The Idea of the Holy*; Sabatier attempted to understand and elucidate man's consciousness of God, and while he emphasised the eventual perfection of both morality and religion in Christ, he, no more than Otto, confused the two. While Sabatier maintained, as would anyone else who wished to come within a mile of Christian orthodoxy, that the Christian religion was also supremely moral, and while he thought that religion and morality had now become one in Christ, he did not think that this was because religion had been reduced to morality but because it had been raised to its highest moral level.[2] This point perhaps needs clarification.

If we begin by assuming the unity of religion and morality in

Christianity we can think of this unity in one of two different ways: either we can regard religion as a primitive form of morality which has now been displaced by the real thing, much as a positivist thinks of religion as a failed science which is now dying out as science proper is established; or we can maintain that Christians have been taught and have come to see that their relationship with God, like their relationship with their fellow men, must also be a moral relationship and not one based on self-interest. In this way neither religion nor morality is reduced to the other, but each is raised to a new level. A perusal of pp. 127–8 of the *Outline* will quickly show that Sabatier thought that the latter, not the former was the case. It seemed necessary to insist on this at some length because Vidler appears to me to have given an unfair impression of Sabatier's views throughout his book *The Modernist Movement in the Roman Church.*[3] Besides attributing to him the belief that religion was simply "morality touched with emotion", he also quotes from him the phrase, "the happy feeling of deliverance, the inward assurance of salvation", as a definition of what Sabatier understood by religion.[4] If this quotation is referred back to its context,[5] it will be seen there to have reference not to religion but to religious certitude, and therefore to have a different implication from what it has in Vidler's use of it. If anyone were to want to quote a definition of religion from Sabatier he would do better to take the following words from the first book of the *Outline*: "a relationship into which the distressed soul consciously and willingly enters with that mysterious power upon which it feels itself and its destiny to depend. This relationship with God comes to its fullest realisation in prayer."[6] He goes on to add, "probably the best history of the religious development of humanity would be a history of prayer."[6] There could be found many other quotations which say more or less the same thing. Vidler also quotes Sabatier as distinguishing between "the purely moral essence of Christianity and all its historical expressions or realisations."[7] But in writing thus Sabatier does not intend to imply that the essence of Christianity is purely moral in the sense of being "nothing but moral, religion having fallen away." What he means is that the relation between man and God which Christ came to effect is one which excludes all immoral and amoral considerations

and is based on love. He writes that the work of Christ was not simply to transform the piety of the Jewish prophets "into a purely moral creation", but also, and this is what Vidler seems to refuse to see, to bring about "a genuinely new relationship with God."[8] Sabatier would have found himself very ill at ease with a gospel concerned solely with individual or social good works. He was as insistent as the most uncompromising Calvinist on the doctrine of justification by faith, and held that any form of Pelagianism, "any theory of salvation by works, any condition attached to God's grace (except simply that of the necessity of faith to receive it) can only be seen as one more collapse into the legalism and formalism of the Jewish Pharisaical outlook."[9]

A second common contention with regard to liberal protestantism is that it is based on an erroneous view of history. This attack also usually derives from an interpretation of Harnack, which runs something like this: Jesus preached a profound and beautiful gospel which was so simple that it is understandable by all men everywhere; it is concerned solely with the Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man[10] (Loisy reduces it to solely the former).[11] Unfortunately, mainly because of the early church's insistence on hellenising this simple Jewish piety, the primitive gospel became overlaid and corrupted by a mass of irrelevant and complicated dogma and ritual which have obscured it from that day to Harnack's. Our task must therefore be to shed the excrescences and revert to the primitive simplicity of Jesus' first utterance. Against this view the considerations usually urged are:

(1) Harnack looked into the deeps of history and saw, not the historical Jesus but a reflection of a 19th-century liberal European.

(2) The Historical Jesus was very little like this reflection at all. The harsher aspects of Jesus' Jewish preaching, such as the imminent end of the world and miraculous advent of the Messiah are conveniently omitted. The work of Albert Schweitzer in emphasising the apocalyptic elements in primitive Christianity is nearer to the truth.

For reasons such as these it is often contended by writers in the catholic tradition that the liberal protestant view of history is untenable. This always appears to me like an Indian Muslim rejoicing

that the Buddha disagreed with traditional Hinduism. Why any view of the historical Jesus which takes apocalyptic seriously should be supposed to be more favourable to catholicism than to liberalism I have never been able to understand. If Jesus preached the imminent end of the world and advent of the supernatural Messiah it makes it even more improbable than it might otherwise be that He also intended to found any institution remotely resembling the catholic churches. But in fairness to Sabatier it must be pointed out that which ever liberal protestants may have held the view of history outlined above, he did not. It would be more true to say that he anticipated Schweitzer's views rather than that his system is shattered by them. His conception of religious language as being not the enunciation of everlastingly true dogmas, but as the expression of religious experience, made it easy for him to accept apocalyptic as a temporal and temporary envelope[12] in which Jesus' piety was both concealed and revealed. Like Schweitzer, he asks whether we really expected Jesus to speak in some sort of absolute language[13] or with the speech and thought-forms of his age. "After all, should we be more surprised that He shared the contemporary point of view on this matter (i.e. the matter of apocalyptic) than we are by seeing Him adopt the contemporary point of view about demonic possession or the attribution of Psalm 110 to David. . . ."[14] As befitted the advocate of the religion of spirit, Sabatier singled out as the important features in Jesus' life the "purity of His devotion to God", and His "divine inspiration."[14] But he was always at pains to emphasise both the changeable thought-forms in which such piety and inspiration were first and later manifested in history, and also the fact that this piety could not be simply translated into any dogmatic formula, not even that of the Fatherhood of God.[15]

The third and main factor in the rejection of liberal protestantism, cause rather than reason, seems to me to have been the tendency over recent years for people to look longingly at various forms of authoritarianism. This desire for authority and certainty in philosophy and religion is the mental counterpart of man's need for security and comfort, socially and biologically. It is a fundamental problem in many areas of human life to bring security and freedom

into a satisfactory balance. What makes society veer in the one direction or the other at any given time is not a question that can be discussed here. But it seems fairly obvious, as a matter of fact, that there was a turning from freedom to authority in many aspects of European life during the first half of this century, and that this was bound to have some effect upon the acceptance or rejection of such differing theologies as liberal protestantism and Barthianism. In so far as this particular rejection of liberalism depended on a reason rather than a cause, it was based upon the argument that such theologians as Schleiermacher and Sabatier gave no real hope of certainty in religious knowledge, nor any way of escape from pure subjectivism. It is sufficient for the present to point out that however unsure the bases of Sabatier's religion might be, no flight to authority will ever improve the position, for one's subjective judgment has to be exercised at least once, namely in deciding which authority to back, and to gamble everything on one throw of the dice is no more safe or sure than to gamble on several.

If these are some of the present widespread reasons for the rejection of liberal protestantism, it is to be hoped that enough has been said to show that any condemnation of Schleiermacher or Harnack should not be held automatically to apply to Sabatier. Unfortunately this latter assumption has been only too common. When Barthians and Barth himself wish to state the liberal position in order to reject it, it is almost always to Schleiermacher that they turn. Catholics on the other hand usually fall upon Harnack. Sabatier, if he is mentioned at all, becomes assimilated to the one or the other, and there has been little recognition of the fact that he has a significant contribution of his own to make.

Perhaps part of the reason for the present neglect of Sabatier's works is that he wrote as a conciliator not merely between different ecclesiastical traditions, but also between religion and modern science. The age of specialised scholarship is not interested in such comprehensiveness. To spread oneself widely is to limit one's effect considerably. To write of the border territory between science, philosophy and religion with a sort of average educated public in mind is to risk being at best a nine day wonder, or, at worst, always unread. The case of Bultmann's essay on demythologizing is interest-

ing. It seems to have suffered precisely the opposite fate from the works of Sabatier. It was lucky, or unlucky according to one's point of view, to have aroused the opposition of some Lutheran theologians from the very first. There has been a fine theological battle raging ever since, some of it written in terms that are virtually indistinguishable from what might have been used in the 17th century, and the average scientific man is unfortunately unaware of all that is being done for his benefit.

Of course, this comprehensiveness could make Sabatier important for the present time. It is difficult to resist the impression that the church's never ending task of preaching the gospel to each generation in words and thought-forms that it can understand is more than usually difficult in our own day. It could hardly be hoped by the wildest optimist to find in Sabatier a system of belief that would compel the assent of philosophers, scientists, theologians and men of common sense all at once. To get them all to enter into a common field of discourse would be a major achievement. Sabatier certainly worked to this end in his own lifetime, and while some of the problems that he faced then are obsolescent now, there is this in common between his approach to the problems and that of many in our own day: the feeling that if we could clarify our understanding of how we know and of how we communicate, we should eliminate many of our disagreements about what we think we understand and what we think that we have said. It is in the field of religious knowledge and religious language that Sabatier has something to say to our condition.

It should not be thought, however, that a study of Sabatier restricts one solely to questions of the passing moment. Besides being a 19th century liberal he was also one of a much larger company. This statement might at first sight be doubted. He was nurtured in his youth in the atmosphere of "le Réveil", the French equivalent of the English evangelical revival, and he spent his student years at the university of Montauban, where, according to Viénot writing a biography of Sabatier's early years, the authorities consistently appointed professors of inferior academic quality in order to ensure that the teaching should be of the approved conservative evangelical pattern.[16] In his early correspondence, the style, sentiments, phrase-

ology and effusiveness are indistinguishable from those of any unoriginal evangelical writer. After he had learned, in later years, to throw off the uncritical and unintelligent aspects of his heritage, his thought changed more than his style, and he continued to express himself in markedly evangelical terms. He recognised, nevertheless, his kinship with many other forms of Christianity than with simply what might be called the "liberal evangelical".[17] The truly catholic as well as liberal nature of his mature thought can be seen as he sketches the course, "most often unseen and underground,"[18] of the religion of spirit from St. Paul to his own day, finding it in the most diverse places and traditions: the Shepherd of Hermas;[18] the Confessions of St. Augustine, in whom were two men, "the son of Monica and the orthodox bishop, the man of the spirit and the man of authority";[19] in "the ardent devotion of St. Bernard and Gerson, the theology of St. Victor and his disciples, the Imitation of Jesus Christ, in Tauler's sermons . . ."[20] All these were proofs that "the stream of divine inspiration has never run dry."[20] From Luther and Calvin, with his doctrine of the "internal testimony of the Holy Spirit", the stream flowed through the reformation to his own time. Occasionally Sabatier appears almost to equate the religion of spirit and mysticism; "as in a tree with the most desiccated and apparently lifeless bark, the sap nevertheless continually rises, so in the tree of catholicism there has never ceased to flow a rich and intense devotional life. . . . In it, mysticism has struggled continually against scholasticism, and the simplicity of evangelical piety against priestliness and ecclesiasticism."[21]

That anyone should try to put himself in a line of development which drew something equally from these seemingly disparate elements will doubtless appear surprising to many, for there is an odd belief among dogmatists of all sorts that there are only two major Christian traditions.[22] And these, along with the heretics and worldly men who from time to time assail them, are reckoned to have exhausted all the possibilities. It was Sabatier's contention not only that there was most definitely a third type of Christianity, but that this religion of spirit, despite the corruptions of the dogmatists who continually assailed it, was the only one that preserved in its purity the revelation of God given to us in the life of Christ. Just as

Barth can trace his "ancestral line which runs back through Kierkegaard to Luther and Calvin, and so to Paul and Jeremiah",[23] so could a liberal trace a pedigree just as long; only he, like Sabatier, without in any way wishing to score a cheap debating point in so doing, would certainly give the prime place in the list to Jesus. One could argue that this was because he thought of Jesus, like the other terms in the series, as simply a man. Even if this were true, there would still seem to be more real faith in Christ to be found here than in the act of one who confesses Him to be the Son of God and thereafter looks upon Him as an enigma or an "eschatological event", or turns away from His teaching to that of the church.

What then were the marks of the religion of spirit as Sabatier saw it? Before trying to give a positive definition of it, it would perhaps be as well to try to disentangle it from some other forms of liberalism which it is not. First, as already observed, it is the opposite of any form of religion which reduces religion to morality. Secondly, it should not be confused with Erastianism; in France, because of the minority position of French protestantism, this was not likely to happen; but in England, particularly since the Restoration, liberalism has been so often associated with broad churchmanship, latitudinarianism, and compromise with and subservience to the political exigencies of the moment that it is as well to make it quite clear that there is no connection between Sabatier's liberalism and this whatsoever. Sabatier would have nothing to do with a type of modern theology that might be called "reductionism"; i.e. a belief that some Christian dogmas (for example the ascension of Christ), because of the advance of scientific modes of thought, have become unbelievable to modern man and should therefore be dropped: the assumption being that the "essential" ones could be retained. On this view, the liberal would be disagreeing with the traditionalist not about the nature of dogmas but simply about their number. Sabatier, on the other hand, proposed a radically different understanding of the nature of dogma as such, maintaining that all dogma was a type of symbolism. He repudiated "reductionism" specifically: "This notion of a minimum of belief arises from the conflict between orthodoxy and rationalism, and from the irreversible defeat of the former. Not being any longer able to maintain a

complete orthodoxy, one is supposed to be content with it reduced and truncated, which is just about the most undefinable, unsatisfactory and useless thing that could be offered either to reason or to faith. . . . Is it not time to leave behind us this antiquated dualism and to rise to a theology which is at once more faithful and more scientific?"[24]

Having said at least some of the things that the religion of spirit was not, we must deal with its positive qualities as Sabatier saw them. First, it was a thoroughly empirical religion; that is to say, it was founded upon experience, the normative and seminal experience being the consciousness of God in the spirit of Jesus.[25] This, by His life, teaching and death He conveyed to, or brought to birth in, the spirits of His disciples, both the immediate ones of His own time and the subsequent disciples of later generations.[26] Secondly, the object of this experience or consciousness Sabatier admitted, indeed proclaimed, to be mysterious and indescribable.[27] He therefore ranges himself with that large number, mystics, positivists and others, who, for whatever reason it may be, regard religion as in the last resort unutterable. He did not, however, proceed to the pessimistic inference that Christians must remain silent, for he saw (and I think this can still be seen despite all that has apparently been written to the contrary since Sabatier's time), that they do, as a matter of fact, manage to communicate to one another what their religion means to them. Thirdly, Sabatier argued that this communication of religious experience was accomplished by means of religious symbols, and that without some form of symbolism we should certainly soon be reduced to silence in our efforts to speak of God. Since living symbols were always borrowed from among the ordinary words and thought-forms of the people and age from which they came, it followed that each age would have to re-edit or replace the symbols that it inherited. This, not from any cheap desire for novelty or iconoclasm, but because, with everyday language perpetually undergoing a natural evolution, the outer forms of religious expression had to be continually changing in order that the inner meaning might remain. This evolution of symbol and dogma would never cease; to try to arrest it at some supposed final version would be like trying to mummify a living person. The only im-

mutable dogmas were dead ones, and they began to die only when withdrawn from argument.[28] To imagine that there was some sort of verbal absolute was to think that God could be contained in a formula that our minds could grasp, or to identify the symbol with the thing symbolised, which, in the case of religion, was idolatry.

Finally, Sabatier saw that, in order to distinguish the genuine symbols from the false, the individual had, in the last resort, nothing on which to rely save his own inspiration and experience.[29] If dogmas really had to be continually evolving, was there nothing absolute or certain that could be relied upon in all this shifting mass of relativity? There was none, and we should seek for none, save the God Who, despite all our feeble efforts, remains beyond the range of our concepts and the power of our language, but Who reveals Himself to us in our experience. As the author of *The Cloud of Unknowing* writes, "I would leave all that thing that I can think, and choose to my love that thing that I cannot think. For why; He may well be loved but not thought. By love may He be gotten and holden; but by thought never."[30]

Perhaps Sabatier's best description of the religion of spirit is the following. "It is the relationship between God and man realised in pure spirituality. It is this relationship, where God and man are both conceived of as spirit, developing towards one of full communion of the one with the other. By definition bodies are mutually impenetrable in the sense that no two can occupy the same space; they can become distinct and individualised only by separating themselves and opposing themselves the one to the other; and they remain in a state of harmony only by a process of balancing themselves one against the other to arrive at a state of equilibrium. It is wholly different with the relationship between spirits. Their basic tendency is for each to live in the lives of others and for all to move towards a union in a common life superior to the individual life of any. As it is the force of gravity that brings about a state of equilibrium among physical objects, so it is love that brings harmony in the spiritual and moral sphere. It is love that is the vital energy of spirits. To go out from themselves, to communicate themselves, to give themselves, this is for them their means of

arriving at both individualisation and union. The religion of spirit is the religion of love."[31]

However neglected Sabatier and his religion of spirit may have been, there have always been some who were attracted by his calm and pious works and their combination of thoroughness, and occasional prolixity. There are sometimes passages of imprecision, but much more frequently of inescapable persuasiveness and smiling, but never malicious, wit. While champions of protestant and catholic orthodoxy not unnaturally dissented vigorously from Sabatier's interpretation of Christian history, a sensitive reviewer such as Dom Cuthbert Butler could write, "All will recognise that it (i.e. the religion of spirit) is the very essence of religion, and that real religion exists only in so far as this essence is present."[32]

Footnotes

1. A. R. Vidler. *The Modernist Movement in the Roman Church.* (C.U.P. 1934). p. 111.
2. EP, p. 236.
3. It should be emphasised that what is said here in criticism of Vidler refers only to this book. In his recent *20th Century Defenders of the Faith*, (S.C.M. 1965), Vidler's attitude to liberal protestantism, while still critical is considerably more sympathetic. See e.g. pp. 12, 13, and 31.
4. p. 109.
5. EP, p. 383. Vidler's reference is to the translation by T. A. Seed, (Hodder and Stoughton, 1897), p. 312.
6. EP, pp. 24-5. "Un commerce, un rapport conscient et voulu, dans lequal l'âme en détresse entre avec la puissance mystérieuse dont elle sent qu'elle dépend et que dépend sa destinée. Ce commerce avec Dieu se réalise par la prière." "Une histoire de la prière serait peut-être la meilleure histoire du développement religieux de l'humanité."
7. Vidler, p. 109. His reference is to Seed, p. 164. (See EP, p. 204.)
8. EP, p. 170. ". . . en une création purement morale," ". . . une alliance vraiment nouvelle avec Dieu." Note also that in the very passage that Vidler quotes, Sabatier goes on to say, "Si la religion est une vie interieure, un rapport réel et ressenti entre Dieu et l'homme . . ." (EP, p. 204.)
9. EP, p. 212. "Toute théorie du salut par les oeuvres, toute condition mise à la grace divine, autre que la seule foi pour la recevoir . . . doit être tenue pour une rechute dans l'esprit légal et formaliste du pharisaisme juif."
10. It is interesting to note S.'s comments on this type of religion. RA, p. 505.
11. Alfred Loisy. 'L'Evangile et L'Eglise'. (2nd ed. Chez L'Auteur, 1903.) Introduction p. 8. But see Vidler, *20th Century Defenders of the Faith*, p. 14.
12. EP, p. 226.

13. See EP, p. 57.
14. EP, p. 229. See also RA, p. 498. "Sa prédication et ses promesses ont une forme messianique et eschatologique, parce qu'elles ne pouvaient en avoir une autre. Mais ce n'est là qu'une écorce."
15. RA, p. 505.
16. John Viénot. *Auguste Sabatier. La Jeunesse.* (Librairie Fischbacher, 1927.) pp. 71, and 76–80. ". . . ce qui dictait le choix des professeurs, ce n'était pas leur compétence spéciale, mais la correction de leur dogmatique." (p. 76.)
17. See RA, p. 442.
18. RA, p. 483.
19. RA, p. 484.
20. RA, p. 485. See also EP, p. 243.
21. EP, p. 242. "De même que, sous l'écorce la plus rugueuse et la plus sèche, la sève monte toujours des racines, de même une vie religieuse très riche et très intense n'a jamais cesser de circuler dans l'arbre du catholicisme . . . Le mysticisme y a sans trêve lutté contre la scolastique, et le principe évangélique de la piété, contre le principe sacerdotal de l'institution ecclésiastique."
22. There is though, an important attempt by W. R. Inge to disprove this with regard to the religious history of England in the *Platonic Tradition in English Religious Thought.*
23. Karl Barth. *The Word of God and the Word of Man.* (Hodder and Stoughton, 1928.) p. 195.
24. RA, p. 414. See also his attitude to a reduced dogma RA, p. 505.
25. See EP, p. 177, also p. 187.
26. EP, p. 188.
27. For example, EP, p. 269.
28. EP, p. 265.
29. RA, p. 474.
30. Ed. by E. Underhill. (John M. Watkins, 1950). p. 77.
31. RA, p. 440.
32. Hibbert Journal. April, 1906, p. 491.

II

Sabatier's theory of religious language

SABATIER's theory of dogma is obviously closely affected by his conception of the nature of religious knowledge and of the way in which man comes to have such knowledge. It will therefore be necessary to begin with some exposition of Sabatier's deas about revelation before passing on to his view of dogma.

Revelation

To begin with, Sabatier denied that there was any possibility of a rational or inferential knowledge of god.[1] It is not that he anywhere gave a closely argued reason for rejecting the traditional proofs of God's existence; rather does he take for granted "their irremediable feebleness."[2] Any notion of proving the existence of God is quite out of keeping with religious knowldege as he understands it. "One gains nothing by trying to give an objective demonstration of God's existence. Such a demonstration is unconvincing to him who has no faith, and for him who has it is superfluous."[3] It is true that in the beginning of the *Outline* we find some words very reminiscent of Thomist thought; ". . . not being able to find, either within ourselves or in any series of individual existents, a sufficient reason for our existence, we are necessarily obliged to look away from ourselves towards universal being for the first cause and final end of our existence."[4] It will be observed, however, that contingency is not here a quality predicated of external finite existents, but a feeling discovered in ourselves. It is, in fact, the same thing as the famous "feeling of dependence", and this feeling, Sabatier does not argue but simply states, is that of "the mysterious presence of God within us."[5] It is true that the idea of God could remain quite indeterminate in our minds, so indeterminate in fact that some men may profess atheism; but the presence of God is a part of our ex-

perience, nonetheless. If there are any real atheists they are not those who deny God's existence, but those whose experience of life is shallow and attitude to it, frivolous.[6]

In so far as any of Sabatier's words constitute an argument for God's existence, it is an argument from religious experience. But really they are not to be regarded as an argument at all; rather are they a bringing to light of the fact that most, or all, men have some direct apprehension of God, whether they know it or not. John Baillie, in his book *Our Knowledge of God*, also argues along lines similar to these.[7] He points out, as a parallel, that a solipsist who denies the existence of the external world lives in it just as much as the men of common sense who affirm it. While, therefore, Sabatier was not ill-disposed toward natural religion in the sense that Barth is, he did not accept it in traditional terms, for he maintained that all our knowledge of God, including any that we might derive from the traditional proofs, comes not from man's reasoning but from God's self-disclosure.

In this he is supported by the majority of recent protestant works on the subject of revelation.[8] The old distinction between "natural" and "revealed" religion has gone. Barth rejected it by simply denying one tier of the scholastic two-tier structure. Others[9] have preserved a distinction, but between two types of revelation, often called "general" and "special". But, for whatever cause it may be, the old distinction between what could be attained by reason and what was added by faith has gone.

There is also wide agreement, and again among theologians of many different points of view, with regard to Sabatier's other basic contention about revelation, namely that what is disclosed is not a divinely guaranteed set of propositions about God's nature, but God Himself.[10] So the "word" of God's revelation must not be confused with the words of the Bible.[11] From God's revelation of Himself, Sabatier maintained, we derive what he variously called a feeling, experience or consciousness of God.[12] Since Sabatier's time, the phrase "religious consciousness" has come in for much critical scorn. It seems to have been conceived (chiefly, I would say, by those who wished to denigrate it) as a faculty of man's mind blindly casting around among aesthetic and mystical situations for some-

thing on which it could fasten, until, if it was lucky, it found God. Such a conception is certainly not in line with the way that Sabatier used these words. It is probably the form of the phrases "conscience religieuse" and "religious consciousness" which is at fault. It may give the impression that such a mental state could exist even if there were no God, much as a man could experience hunger in the absence of food. A reading of pp. 562–4 of the Religions will, I think, convince the reader that for Sabatier, the phrase "conscience religieuse" is a generic term covering three different things, all of which are different forms of man's awareness of God. There is first, "the religion of nature, or the elementary consciousness of God", secondly, "the religion of Law or the moral consciousness of God", and thirdly, there is "the religion of love or the Christian consciousness of God". From this it can be seen that, for Sabatier, a man has no "religious consciousness" unless he is conscious of God; just as, in the ordinary way, a man cannot be said to be able to see unless he can see something, nor to be conscious unless there is something of which he is conscious. Even the "moral consciousness", of which Sabatier often wrote, is not a faculty of man searching around for pious or moral truths to intuit; it is an apprehension of God *qua* lawgiver. This consciousness of God, like the others of which he was writing, could not come into being apart from revelation; it is the effect in man of revelation from God. It is not a faculty which might or might not have discovered God; it is an awareness that begins when God first reveals himself to man. Whether the religious consciousness can still be regarded as a faculty which, to begin with, is not so much non-existent as dormant is, to my mind, a question not worth asking. It is rather like enquiring what an inactive activity would be like.

Sabatier argued then, that all our knowledge of God came by way of revelation; but unlike many subsequent "revelationists", he did not arbitrarily limit the number of channels through which this revelation could flow. As seen above, he thought of these channels as being basically three: nature, through which man became aware of the power and greatness of God; law and conscience, through which man became aware of the righteousness of God; and Christ, through Whom he became aware of the love of God. In this he dis-

agreed fundamentally with Schleiermacher who he thought had wrongly tried to deduce the whole of Christian dogma from solely the first of these.[13] It was, for Sabatier, the last which was the ultimate purpose and highest norm of all of God's self-disclosure. This consciousness of and relationship to God as a loving father was the eternal life which Jesus brought into the world in His own Person, and which He evoked in His disciples by His contact with them; it[14] was the salvation which He sealed in them by the gift and indwelling of His Holy Spirit, and the new birth which made them true sons of God.

The basic fact of revelation, therefore, was a direct awareness of God, not a disclosed or intuited proposition, nor anything that came readily within the grasp of the intellect at all. This rather general description of the religious consciousness is, I think, all that need be attempted at this stage as a prelude to Sabatier's views on dogma. It would perhaps be as well to add, however, that despite the fact that Sabatier's phraseology is so redolent of 19th-century evangelicalism, he is not, in those sections of the *Outline* in which he writes of "the religious consciousness", restricting himself to a peculiarly evangelical type of experience, but believes that what he says has reference to the nature and development of religious experience as a whole. It is interesting to note that William James, in his *Varieties of Religious Experience*, quoted and adopted pp. 24–6 of the *Outline* as giving a satisfactory description of the meaning of prayer in general, not as the expression of a narrow evangelical viewpoint.[15] To my mind, the experience of which Sabatier was writing, when, in the *Outline*, he was analysing man's awareness of God is seen in its clearest and most fully developed form in mysticism.[16]

At this point it might be argued, as William Temple was later to argue, that, while it was true that revelation was not in propositions, it was still not primarily in states of consciousness or religious experience, but in something external to man's mind such as historical events. This criticism of Sabatier might be expressed by saying that he had confused revelation and inspiration and that he really had no place in his thought for any objective revelation at all. There seems to me to be little difficulty in defending Sabatier's views against this

charge. First, he does not deny that the revelation of God to the human spirit is evoked by historical events, the Bible, the sacraments, various forms of ritual, the written and spoken word and many other things external to man's mind. But what he did maintain was that these are all secondary revelations deriving from people who had received a primary revelation of God Himself. The rituals, words, events, etc., could only be revelatory, could only act as symbols of something beyond themselves because they had sprung from and were expressions of a consciousness of God which was prior to them. Temple maintained that "It is not the subjective consciousness of the prophets which is primary; it is the facts of which they were conscious—the Exodus, the division of the Kingdom, the rise of Assyria and Babylon, the retreat of Sennacherib, the Captivity and Exile, the Return of the Remnant, the rebuilding of the Temple, the triumph of the Maccabees."[17] Sabatier, in a passage which almost makes it appear that he had had a preview of Temple's essay, denied this absolutely. For him, there could be no *Heilsgeschichte* unless there had been a previous revelation to the spirit of man. "Religion has not therefore only two distinguishable moments, an objective revelation as cause and a subjective faith as effect; it has three which succeed one another always in the same order; the interior revelation of God, which engenders the subjective faith of man, which in its turn produces the actual form which religion assumes in history, its rites, doctrinal formularies, sacred books, and social institutions which we can know and describe as external entities or events . . . every revelation of God must necessarily traverse human subjectivity before reaching historical objectivity."[18] In this, surely, Sabatier is right. If we take, for example, the first of the events singled out by Temple as revelatory, it seems evident that the exodus would never have occurred but for some previous inspiration which came to Moses to make plain to him the evil of the situation in which the Jews were immersed, and to incite him to end it. Of course, it needed only a sensitive human being, conscious of the sufferings of others, to realise that slavery was unpleasant. But to grasp the fact that it was against the Divine will required some revelation of the nature of God. This revelation, the Pentateuch records, took place when Moses stood on Holy ground

beside the burning bush, and heard the voice of God command him, "Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, 'I AM hath sent me unto you,' "[19] From then on, the series of events which we collectively call the exodus were revelatory to later Jews and Christians because they were moulded, at least partly, by a man acting under an extreme form of divine inspiration. Whatever may have been the experience which is described as God speaking to Moses, it is evident that it is of a type that Sabatier would have called, rightly, interior or subjective.[20]

The position from which Sabatier started then, in his theorising on the nature of religious dogma, is that the primary fact of religion is a direct, supra-rational encounter with the divine. Religious language takes its origin from this experience. Put in this general way, the statement seems to me to be hardly contestable. But, contestable or not, it is continually forgotten. It is interesting to note, for example, the exasperation with which Daya Krishna, writing in *Religious Experience and Truth*,[21] greets most of the other contributions to this symposium, precisely because the authors seem to have forgotten that they are supposed to be addressing themselves to a piece of theological speculation based upon experience. He concludes that unless "theoretic reflection" is founded on "the autonomous validity of religious experience . . . all that goes on in any discussion about religion will appear completely irrelevant to those who are actually practising religion."[21] This certainly seems to me to be the case. Whether one is thinking of a genuine and developed mysticism, whether of a conversion experience and the assurance of sins forgiven, whether of man's sense of the numinous, or his feeling of creatureliness before the power upon which his being depends, one is thinking of only a few of the manifold varieties of religious experience. Even if one joins the Barthians and their conspiracy to maintain that all religious experience except their own is based upon man's experience of his own condition, one is simply saying that the vertical descent of God and His Grace is the only valid religious experience; which, even if it were true, contradicts Sabatier not because he based theology upon religious experience, but because he looked for it in the wrong place. For Sabatier, just as poetry and speech preceded grammatical theory, just as singing preceded musi-

cology, so, and for the same reason, religion, or man's experience of God must precede theology. Otherwise the theologian would have nothing upon which to reflect.[22]

Theory of Dogma

We are now in a position to consider Sabatier's theory of religious language proper. Starting from the contention that a direct encounter with the divine was the primary religious fact, he maintained that all the external phenomena of religion, its rites, ceremonies, sacraments, and written and spoken words were an outcome of, a reflection of, an expression of this fundamental fact.[23] The purpose of religious language, therefore, was to communicate an experience. This it does, not by describing an object, nor even by describing the experience, but by expressing it in appropriate symbols. These symbols, later, are thinned down to concepts, and then to dogmas. This is a bald statement of the central part of Sabatier's theory of symbolism, which must now be examined in greater detail.

In the section of the *Outline* entitled "The life of dogmas and their historical evolution",[24] which is a slightly amended version of his earlier small book *The evolution of dogma*, Sabatier sets out in detail how he understands the transformation from experience to dogma to occur. He considers a typical example of the "feeling of dependence". "Before a great spectacle of nature, man, made aware of his feebleness and his dependence upon the mysterious power which is there revealed, shudders with fear and hope. This shudder is the basic religious emotion. But this emotion necessarily implies, for man's intellect, a certain relationship between the subject of the experience and the object which engenders it. Now thought, once awakened, necessarily translates this relationship in making an intellectual judgment about it. So, wishing to express the relationship, the believer will exclaim, for example, "God is great!", underlining the infinite disproportion between his own being and the universal being which makes him shudder."[25] The basic religious emotion then, implies to the mind a relationship between an experienced object and an experiencing subject. It is in an attempt to find an image which is expressive of this relationship that a phrase such as "God is great," comes to be uttered. Sabatier goes on to sum up the

process briefly and precisely. "The religious emotion which is a feeling (that is to say a feeling as distinct from a sensation) is thus transformed in the mind into the notion of a relationship, that is into an intelligible idea which becomes an image by which it is expressed or represented." He concludes, "But it must be clearly noted that the intellectual idea and the religious emotion remain essentially different things . . . this must be clearly understood if disastrous confusions are to be avoided. With regard to religion and dogma, the intellectual element is simply the expression or envelope of religious experience."[26]

In a footnote to this passage in the *Outline*, Sabatier seeks to make it plain that he does not, as might be assumed from a reading of it in *The Evolution of Dogma*, wish to base the whole of Christian dogma upon such experiences of the "feeling of dependence" as there described. "It might be imagined that I am regarding this basic religious experience as the root from which have grown all Christian dogmas. This is not so. I was merely giving a particular example." He then goes on to show how he envisaged a parallel revelatory experience arising from a reading of the gospels. "The revelation which comes through nature is the basis of the religions of nature. Christianity has behind it another revelation and other experiences; the revelation of God and of a higher life in the historical appearance of Jesus Christ. Let a man dispose himself to attend to the gospel, to set himself to follow Christ, to listen to His words, to penetrate His spirit, and to understand His death, and he will exclaim "God is love," just as, in the previous example, the man who contemplated the forces of nature exclaimed, "God is great!"[26]

There are fortunately other passages in his work where Sabatier deals with the origin of dogma which enable us to fill in the above picture with more detail. From an earlier passage in the *Outline*, in the section entitled "The origin of dogma", we are enabled to expand the explanation given above in two important ways.

(1). He introduces the word "imagination"[27] which does not appear in the previous passage, and makes it clear that he regards this as the power which is mainly responsible for transforming the primary feeling into an expressive image. (Actually, he does use the word "imagination" on p. 305, but only as the faculty capable of

renewing the original feeling, not as something which is a part of the original process.) The imagination may, of course, express itself through gestures, rites, or dances and not through words at all; but Sabatier confines himself to a consideration of verbal expression. This will, in the first place, be in the form of "living poetic images" which Sabatier regards as superior to "abstract concepts" and "impassive thought". The important element of religion is too mysterious for abstract thought to grasp. "Christ expressed the mystery of the kingdom of God only in parables."

(2). He carries the process further. After the birth of the poetic image, a period of intellectual reflection may set in. The mind seeks greater precision. The image is submitted to a process of interpretation and is gradually refined into a concept. At first these interpretations of the image are highly individual; with the intervention of the church the concepts are discussed, defined, and given a degree of generality which makes them available for all. So the final stage is reached of the self expression of the church in dogmas which possess ". . . a degree of generality and of precision at one and the same time . . ."

There are two other passages that we should note where Sabatier deals with the processus of religious language. In the "Religions"[28] he says that the primary emotion is accompanied by ". . . an image representing to man's consciousness the object which engenders this type of feeling." The latter half of this sentence is strange and untypical, for he is usually careful to say that the image does not represent an object, but the relationship felt to exist between subject and object. As he is not here dealing with the question in detail, it seems best to take this passage as noting, in general, the relationship between object and image without particularising on the intermediate stages of the relationship in detail. In the chapter on symbolism in the *Outline* he gives a more precise and carefully thought out account of this relationship.[29] "It would be an illusion to think," he writes, "that a religious symbol represents God Himself . . . the real content of the symbol . . . is the relationship which the subject feels to exist between himself and God, or, better still, the manner in which he feels himself affected by God." As this distinction between the faith of the heart and the intellectual formulation of that faith in

beliefs is one of the fundamental aspects of Sabatier's thought, it would be impossible to go on examining his references to this subject one by one. The salient features of his exposition have now been enumerated and, at the risk of some repetition, it might be as well to collate them into one single exposition here.

The basic factor of religion is the revelation by God Himself to man. This produces in the human heart (coeur,[30] le moi[31]) a consciousness (conscience,[32] expérience,[33] pressentiment,[34] emotion,[31] élan de coeur,[34], sentiment,[35], piété,[33] élément mystique),[33] of God which implies to the intellect (esprit,[33] imagination,[34]) a relationship (rapport,[36], commerce[36]) which is expressed (exprimer,[33] envelopper, [33] traduiser[33]) by an image (image poétique,[34], image expressive,[37] image représentative,[38] parabole,[39] métaphore,[40] form mythologique[34]). By reflection (réflexion,[34] pensée rassise[34]) man interprets (interprète,[34] généralise,[41] atténue,[40] précise,[34] amincit[42]) the image, until it becomes a concept (idée,[41] doctrine religieuse,[34] conception abstraite[34]) which, after discussion within the church, may evenually be generalised still further and made into a dogma.

There are a number of corollaries of this view of religious language which may have become evident already, at least by implication, but it seems wise to note them explicitly here.

(1) The basic element of religious language being the poetic image, and everything else deriving from this, it follows that there is no word about God which is not basically symbolic in its status. However rarified or abstract the image may eventually become, this fact will remain unaltered. That all words about God are necessarily symbolic seems to be an idea that it is difficult for many moderns to accept. One is surprised, for example, by the way in which W. P. Alston discusses symbolism in *Religious Experience and Truth*. He criticises Tillich because in his thought the "personal creator of the universe and all His attributes and activities are lumped together with the sun, kings, mountains and bulls under the heading of symbols."[43] But how can the terms "personal" and "creator" possibly be regarded as anything but symbolic when predicated of God?[44] The trouble seems to be that we all have our particular ways of referring to and thinking about God which have become so familiar to us, that we forget that familiarity confers no more

authority on our symbols than it does on those of other people. Even if Alston puts together, as he appears to want to do, the words "personal" and "creator" into one image, this remains still only an image and not that to which it refers. And if he wishes to maintain that that to which it refers is, in some sense, a "personal creator", and not just "being", as Tillich wants to say, then the dispute now becomes one about which is the preferable image, not one about the possibility of dispensing with images altogether. Of course Tillich himself maintains that there is one word—"being"—which can be used of God non-symbolically.[45] I think that a good many theologians would be disposed to agree that if there were one such word, this would be it. Everything really depends on whether we wish to use the word of other things as well as of God, as, presumably, most of us do. If we say that physical things that exist have any "being", then obviously we must be using the word, as the Thomists would say, analogically. If Tillich or others were to maintain that, in fact, we cannot use the words "being itself" of anything but God, then we may admit that they apply only to God (if they say so), but in this case will have to point out that we cannot know what they mean; for if they are not being used analogically or symbolically we have no known referent from which to discover the way in which the words are normally used, and so no way of knowing what they can signify in a religious context. The only words which refer in some way to God but are not symbolic would seem to be those with a purely negative connotation, and those which are a sort of proper name which are used in addressing God in prayer. Examples of the latter are "Lord", "father", and the word "God" itself. Of course most of these words which, in some contexts, refer vocatively to God, in others take on a descriptive function. When this happens, symbolism enters once more.

(2) If we remembered that all religious language sprang from images in the way that Sabatier outlines, it would be possible to avoid the sort of misconceptions and confusions that almost always arise after the process of interpretation has been proceeding for some time. But, "A moment always comes however, when the image becomes detached from the feeling which produced it . . . while thinking about it, the mind transforms the image into an abstract

idea . . . then it takes this idea, for a representation of the very object of religion itself."[46] This has been no uncommon error in modern times. Sabatier continues with some comments that make it clear that he would not have been taken by surprise by the "death by a thousand qualifications" argument. Indeed, he foreshadowed it. "By means of progressive generalisation and abstraction the reasoning faculty attenuates the primitive metaphor, wearing it down as though upon a grindstone. But when the metaphorical element has disappeared, the original notion itself, at least in so far as any positive connotation is concerned, has disappeared also."[47] The purpose of religious language is to evoke an experience, not to describe an object, and "all serious apologetic must propose, as its basic aim, the awakening of the soul and its conversion."[48]

(3) This being so, the criterion for judging any religious writing is not how far it accurately describes a religious object, nor how far it has some sort of correspondence with metaphysical fact, but how far it is capable of awakening man's imagination and evoking the experience from which it sprang. (This is not to be taken to mean that the experiences themselves are thought of as exempt from evaluation. For Sabatier, the standard against which they would have been measured was Christ.)

(4) Sabatier's thought could therefore not unreasonably be styled a type of pragmatism, but care should be taken to distinguish what is later called his "religious pragmatism" from a number of other versions of this type of philosophy. For Sabatier, the ultimate value was not human happiness, but God. A belief which "worked" was one that led men to a consciousness of God. This aspect of his thought is expanded in Chapter V.

(5) It is possible to distinguish two types of human speech which we might label the "descriptive" and the "expressive". The former belongs to science and common sense, and is used to describe objects and events. The latter is the language of symbolism and poetry and is used to express personal states and to communicate insights beyond the grasp of language which is purely descriptive. Hardly anyone, I suppose, would deny to expressive language the first of these purposes claimed for it, but very many would doubt whether it has any genuinely propositional function other than that

of referring to interior states. This question becomes one of the main issues in Chapter VI. For the moment we can simply say that Sabatier regarded religious language as being of the expressive type; it came properly into the realm of poetry and should be criticised accordingly. To treat it as straightforward metaphysics (if there is any such thing nowadays) was an error leading to nothing but confusion.

(6) I presume that it does not have to be stated at length, here, that some assertions which appear in religious contexts, for example in the creeds, are of a straightforward empirical-historical type; but such a phrase as "suffered under Pontius Pilate", taken by itself, is not strictly speaking a religious proposition. Such statements lead on to others that are, or are given interpretations that involve making genuinely religious assertions; such as that what was suffered under Pontius Pilate was God's way of redeeming mankind. The status of historical assertions is not discussed in this essay.

From the above outline of Sabatier's views it will have become obvious that there is some similarity between his notion of symbol and the Thomist view of analogy. With these similarities and also the differences we shall be concerned in the next two chapters.

Footnotes

1. EP, pp. 379, 383, *et. al.*
2. RA, p. 562. See also EP, p. 26.
3. EP, p. 383.
4. EP, p. 20.
5. EP, p. 20. See also EP, p. 269. ". . . la piété n'est rien, si ce n'est Dieu sensible au coeur."
6. EP, p. 28.
7. (Oxford Paperback, 1963.) p. 51.
8. See, in general, J. Baillie, *The Idea of Revelation in Recent Thought*. (London, 1956.)
9. E.g. W. Temple, A. Richardson, A. Farrer.
10. EP, pp. 35, 44.
11. EP, p. 48.
12. *Passim.*
13. RA, p. 558.
14. EP, p. 177.
15. (Longmans, Green and Co., 1928). p. 464.
16. That this is not entirely out of line with S.'s own appraisal of mysticism can be seen from, e.g. RA, pp. 484–5; EP, p. 243.

17. In "Revelation", Ed. John Baillie and Hugh Martin. (Faber, 1937.) p. 96.
18. EP, p. 268.
19. Exodus 3, v. 14.
20. It should not be assumed that S. denied the value and importance of history for the Christian faith. See, e.g., RA, p. 422.
21. A Symposium. (Oliver and Boyd, 1962) p. 240.
22. See EP, pp. 36 and 265. RA, p. 514.
23. EP, p. 269 *et al.*
24. pp. 297–336.
25. EP, p. 304.
26. EP, p. 305.
27. For the whole of this paragraph and the next, see EP, pp. 269–71.
28. RA, p. 533.
29. EP, p. 394.
30. EP, p. 269.
31. RA, p. 533.
32. RA, pp. 562–3.
33. EP, p. 304.
34. EP, p. 270.
35. EP, pp. 20, 305, 396, etc.
36. EP, p. 24.
37. EP, p. 305.
38. EP, p. 353.
39. EP, p. 390.
40. EP, p. 397.
41. EP, p. 396.
42. EP, p. 37.
43. Op. cit., pp. 15–16.
44. Alston maintains, (p. 17), "In the traditional scheme symbolic language is at least partly dependent on doctrines expressed in nonsymbolic terms. A necessary, though not sufficient, condition for the appropriateness of using a shepherd as a symbol of God is the truth of the doctrine that God providentially cares for his creatures . . ." Now presumably, from the above, Alston thinks that the providence of God can be spoken of "nonsymbolically". How could he do this? Either he must say that God "provides for" or "cares for" His creatures in the way that creatures (e.g. human mothers) care and provide for their offspring, or that God does it in a different way. The first possibility is plainly false and the second just as plainly resorts to using "provide" and "care" (and any other words that Alston might choose to substitute for them) symbolically.
45. *Systematic Theology*, Vol. 1. (Nisbet and Co. Ltd., 1953.) pp. 264–5.
46. Ep, p. 396. "Un moment vient toujours, cepedant, où l'image se détache du sentiment qui l'a produite . . . En la considérant, la réflexion transforme l'image en idée . . . et prend cette idée pour une représentation de l'objet même de la religion."
47. EP, pp. 396–7.
48. EP, p. 35.

III

Criticism of Sabatier's views from a Thomist standpoint

HISTORICALLY speaking, the first people to make a radical attack on the views expressed by Sabatier were those theologians concerned to defend Roman Catholicism, and particularly the Thomist doctrine of analogy, against Roman Catholic modernism (henceforth called simply, for the sake of brevity, "modernism"), and other philosophies considered to be permeated by similar errors. The difficulty of dealing with many of these criticisms is that rarely do they mention by name the writers to whom they are opposed. It is said, jokingly no doubt, that after the official condemnation of modernism by the church in 1907, none of the leading modernists recognised their views in what had been condemned. In official formularies it is a matter of arguing against "symbolism" or "modernism". In some books of individual rather than collective authorship, however, the name of Sabatier sometimes occurs, and also ideas are criticised which are recognisably like some of those that he advocated, even if the critic had actually found them in other works than his. It is to some of these criticisms that we must now turn.

Whoever has read any of the Thomist literature on the subject of "analogy" will realise fairly speedily that here we have one of the most systematic and impressive attempts ever made to give a reasoned basis to theological discourse. One meets in such literature too, flights of that intellectual poetry or passion with which Plato alone is sometimes supposed to have endued philosophy. Unfortunately there is also much that is considerably less attractive. Distinctions, sometimes subtle and necessary, also are used as a means of confounding adversaries or as occasions for unnecessary pedantry. It is not surprising that Edwyn Bevan found in the doc-

trine of analogy as expounded by 19th and 20th century Thomists much confusion and nonsense, even if it is surprising that that is apparently all that a Gifford lecturer on the subject of Symbolism could find there.[1] The peculiar alternations of clean air and unpleasant fog in Thomism seem to me to be caused by the nature of the ground over which the wind is blowing. From discourse among Thomists one overhears felicitous conversation; from attacks on opponents, shrill argument.

Pénido, for example, can hardly be said to criticise Sabatier fairly, if, indeed, he can really be said to criticise him at all. What he actually does is to dismiss his views with great scorn but very little examination. He writes, "The divine nature, we are told, is an unknown quantity, and nothing can get rid of its lack of definition. As a compensation, religions supply us with fitting symbols with which we can amuse ourselves in our boredom."[2] Although it is not absolutely clear that it is Sabatier to whom reference is being made at this point, he is quoted a page later in the same discussion, and the implication of the whole passage is that the above criticism refers to him as well as to others. If it does, the statement is both untrue and uncharitable: untrue, because Sabatier spent most of the pages of the *Outline* trying to show how words and images could make God known: uncharitable, because the sort of doodling frivolity of which Pénido writes could hardly be further from his essentially serious, perhaps over serious nature. Furthermore, it is difficult to see why Pénido should be offended by the idea that God is, in some sense, unknown. He himself lays stress upon the fact that analogy is a type of equivocity and agnosticism, even if an "agnosticism of superabundance";[3] and Sertillanges, another 20th century Thomist, as well as quoting with approval Augustine's saying, "If you understand him, it is not God that you have understood."[4] also writes, "St. Thomas insists more than anyone, indeed more than certain Deists find pleasing, on the unknowableness of the divine nature."[5] Now it would obviously not be just to assume that Pénido must be prepared to accept the views of another writer simply because that writer styles himself a Thomist. As a matter of fact Sertillanges was not always accepted by other Roman Catholic writers of that time as a thoroughly orthodox one, anyway. But Thomists who veer too

readily to the agnostic pole of analogy are not castigated in such scathing terms as Pénido uses against "symbolism". And it is difficult to resist the impression that the unknowableness of God, referred to in two of the above quotations, is being used as a sort of smoke screen to confuse opponents. It seems that where it is symbolism that speaks of the "unknowable divine" we insist that analogy gives us some sort of objective knowledge: where it is a question of some who claim to know, we stress St. Thomas's agnosticism. The doctrine of analogy, of course, permits such oscillation between what might be called "gnosticism" and "agnosticism", for analogy is a species of likeness between things essentially different. It is not particularly commendable, however, if this oscillation is used as an excuse which enables one to avoid having to admit that the views of one's opponents are sometimes strikingly similar to one's own.[6] Whatever similarities there may or may not be between symbolism and the way of analogy, Thomists are all agreed that symbolism is a misleading and perhaps vicious theory, and one which must be denied at all costs. It is to these denials that we must now turn.

P. M. De Munnynck

Although those Thomists who have attacked symbolism seem to be agreed that it is a misleading theory, they are by no means agreed as to what the theory is. Sertillanges refers to it as "this dangerous mask of pure agnosticism",[7] and Pénido agrees that "symbolism is equivocity."[8] De Munnynck, on the other hand, finds symbolism "too realistic", and writes, "symbolism quite arbitrarily goes beyond analogical knowledge."[9] (It would seem that the predilection for dealing with "isms" rather than the views of particular writers, and the oscillation between the two poles of analogy can have its awkward, as well as its useful moments in debate.) De Munnynck finds symbolism too realistic because it affirms "as a postulate, the correspondence of the empirical world with the non-empirical."[10] If this correspondence really exists, he argues, then it would be possible to read off the secrets of the eternal from an understanding of the temporal, and "the littérateurs of the symbolist movement with their 'concordances' and their 'mystery' really believe that they can

give us the secrets of reality."[11] He continues his exposition of symbolism as something like the philosophy expressed by Baudelaire in his sonnet *Correspondances*, and adopted by the later "Symbolist" movement in French poetry. Analogy, he says, unlike symbolism, is based not upon some contestable ontological theory, but "on the very nature of our minds, their feebleness and their strength."[12]

Now while Sabatier and the French literary symbolist movement were contemporary, their theories were by no means identical; De Munnynck's criticism does not therefore apply directly to Sabatier in all its details. Four interesting points emerge, however.

(1) On the main point there can be very little real conflict between Sabatier and De Munnynck, for the whole purpose of Sabatier's *Outline* was to consider the philosophy of religion "based on psychology and history," as the full title of the book indicates. Vidler, indeed, goes as far as to accuse Sabatier of having thrown away metaphysics altogether in favour of psychology.[13] As Sabatier's views are obviously based upon psychological considerations at least to a large extent, (whether this implies that he dispensed entirely with metaphysics or not), there is nothing to be gained by labouring this point at any greater length. The next two points, however, follow directly from it.

(2) The question arises as to whether the Thomist doctrine of analogy is, in fact, based as exclusively on psychological considerations as De Munnynck implies that it is. Thomists have never been averse to elaborating a metaphysical system, or to basing further theories upon it when elaborated. It is the doctrine of analogy in its orthodox form which is based upon a supposed (or proved) relationship between finite and infinite, namely a relationship of creativity, cosmological dependence or whatever other name one chooses to give to the sort of efficient casuality envisaged by Thomist thinkers. It is because of this postulated causal relationship between Creator and created that the latter is said to share in some way in the divine perfections, and so the way of analogy becomes possible. Pénido expressed this in the following way: "Creation being a sort of fragmentation of the supreme perfection, there is no created being in which one cannot find some reflection of its fulness: there is therefore no created name which one cannot attribute to God."[14] In view of

this, it seems odd for a Thomist to have criticised symbolism on the grounds chosen by De Munnynck.

(3) The question might now be asked whether, in fact, Sabatier would not have to assume the sort of relationship between finite and infinite that is envisaged by both Thomists and literary symbolists. If he does not, how is it possible for anything temporal to serve as an image of the relationship implied in religious experience? It would seem that not merely Sabatier's thought, but any other form of theistic philosophy, at least makes it antecedently more probable that such a relationship between finite and infinite exists, for it is unlikely that any theist will suppose God's creativity to be of such an arbitrary or irrational kind that there is no connection whatsoever between the nature of the created world and the nature of Him Who created it.

In the thought of Sabatier, however, it must be emphasised that the relationship between our use of symbols and a supposed correspondence between finite and infinite is exactly the reverse of what De Munnynck takes it to be in symbolist thought. While De Munnynck thinks that a symbolist assumes the correspondence of finite and infinite and concludes from that that symbols drawn from the finite can therefore represent the infinite, Sabatier in fact argues in precisely the contrary direction. "Since nature as a whole can and does, both in religion and art, become a constant symbol of man's interior life and development, since it is susceptible of such a perpetual and glorious transfiguration by man's spirit, it is impossible not to admit the correspondence of the laws of nature and the laws of consciousness and to conclude that there is here a profound unity. There are, in fact, powerful hidden analogies which regulate and inspire symbolic creations."[15]

It therefore is apparent that while De Munnynck's arguments may be valid against the beliefs of the literary symbolist movement, they do not touch Sabatier's position at all. It seems to me to be important for a Thomist to realise that this is so, and why it is so. A great deal of criticism of symbolism by defenders of the way of analogy is undertaken with the normal Thomist presuppositions in mind, and the argument is then directed to considering whether, given these presuppositions, (that the infinite can be known only in relation to

the finite, that its existence, and, to a limited extent, its nature can be deduced from the finite, etc.), the way of analogy or symbolism is preferable as a means of speaking of the divine. In these circumstances there can be little doubt that analogy is preferable; it is hardly surprising that something developed as a native product of a self-consistent philosophy should be preferable to an import from another system altogether. What may not be appreciated, however, is that Sabatier began from quite different principles, the main one being that man experiences the divine in his own interior life or consciousness. His critical symbolism must be seen as emanating from a belief in revelation thus understood. The radical difference between the way of analogy and Sabatier's symbolism in this regard is underlined in the next point arising from De Munnynck's article.

(4) Analogy, in the eyes of most of its supporters, is regarded as "un mode de connaissance"; that is to say, a way of arriving at knowledge.[16] If symbolism were to be taken to be "un mode de connaissance" in the same manner, then a downright rejection of it seems to be the only course possible. If we begin with the two postulates (a) that there is some correspondence between things temporal and eternal and (b) that apart from symbolism we can know nothing of the eternal, then it is obvious that we are left in a position of complete agnosticism unless we have some other axiom to serve as a fundamental premiss. Otherwise we could deduce anything that suited our fancy from temporal facts. The peak of a mountain might remind us that we must strive ever upwards to reach the divine; it could equally well teach us that we must become more and more narrow minded to achieve this aim. The decay of leaves in the autumn might suggest that death assists the resurrection of life in the following spring; or it could remind us that all our summers will have their autumns and their eternal end. If we have no prior knowledge of the divine with which to begin, then we shall never get any help in the matter from a symbolic interpretation of the physical. Baudelaire asks what the poet can be "if not a translator, one who breaks a code".[17] But one who translates from one language to another must have a prior knowledge of both, and nobody can break a code if the ultimate purport of the message is meaningless to him. One can have some sympathy with De Munnynck at this point, faced, per-

haps with a whole spate of bizarre "correspondances" in the poems of the hangers on of the symbolist movement.

The difference between Sabatier and De Munnynck at this point, however, is that for the former, symbolism is not a way of arriving at knowledge, but a way of expressing something already known. Without the sort of direct awareness of the divine that Sabatier believed to come by way of revelation, there would certainly be no more relevance in symbolism than De Munnynck says that there is. Which of the two is right at this point turns on the answers to two main questions. (1) Is Thomism correct in condemning as "ontologism" any belief such as Sabatier's that man is capable of receiving an immediate revelation of the divine, and in asserting *per contra* that all knowledge, even of God, must come through the senses? With this question we cannot here deal as it would take us too far outside the scope of this essay. (2) Is it possible for Thomists to substantiate the claim that we can deduce the nature of the finite-infinite relationship and thereafter, in some measure the nature of the divine, from reasoning on created things? Arguments are given in the next chapter to show why this is not, in my view, possible. It simply remains to repeat that Sabatier did not assume, nor does his theory necessitate a belief in, a correspondence between finite and infinite which would enable the human mind to argue from the one to the other, but only such as would enable one to explain, in some degree, the one by the other after the infinite had become known by way of revelation.

M. T-L. Pénido

Pénido writes first of what he calls "religious symbols", (which he distinguishes from "theological symbols"), and characterises them in the following manner: "it is obvious that the symbol is not in any sense a purely natural sign, but is required by custom and convention; for example, flags and the symbols of mathematics and chemistry."[18] Allegories he places in the class of religious symbols, but here he admits a "mixutre of conventional and natural".[19] He does not define precisely how he understands the combination to be effected, but gives as an example the appearance of the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove at the baptism of Christ. Following St. Thomas.

he maintains that, while there is no necessary or intrinsic connection between the Holy Spirit and a dove, that God would nevertheless undoubtedly choose as a symbol a bird that was appropriate. Pénido does not, unfortunately, give any detailed analysis of what "appropriateness" or "conventional" could signify in this context, which is a pity, because it is obvious that before the discussion can continue, some dictinction must be made between two types of symbol which are being to some extent confused.

There are some symbols which have a purely conventional and arbitrary connection with the thing that they represent. Pénido cites chemical and mathematical symbols (presumably an example of the latter would be the symbol π to represent the ratio between the circumference and diameter of a circle), and we can accept these as adequate examples of this type. Here there is no intrinsic connection between the symbol and its referent, nor anything that could be thought of as a genuine likeness between the two. To anyone who does not know the convention, the symbol π can signify nothing. To be more precise, when I am henceforth referring specifically to this type of symbol I will call it a "sign".

Besides signs there are symbols of a quite different order, where there is a genuine resemblance of some kind between symbol and referent, and where the connection between them is intrinsic (or what Pénido means, I think, by "natural"). It is doubtful if the representation of the Holy Spirit by a dove comes into this category. But let us consider the use of the pelican to represent Christ. There is something intrinsically apt in taking as an image of Christ a bird which is said to offer to its offspring, when they are dying for lack of nourishment, its own breast and blood for them to drink in order that they might live. There is an intrinsic aptness too, in Gerard Manley Hopkin's use of the falcon in the air as a symbol of Christ's calm and sublime mastery over men and things.[20] This particular type of symbol I will henceforth term an "image" or "poetic image."

Some such distinction has often been made before, and it seems a rather obvious one. It seems necessary to consider it at greater length, however, because, unfortunately the lack of any agreed meaning to be assigned to such words as "symbol", "sign", and "image" makes this area of study a very confused one; and also be-

cause other people who have made a distinction between "signs" and "symbols" have not always done so on precisely the same grounds as I am seeking to do here.

In a number of his works, Paul Tillich emphasises the importance of the distinction between "signs" and "symbols", but for him the key to this distinction is "participation". "Signs do not participate in any way in the reality and power of that to which they point. Symbols, although they are not the same as that which they symbolise, participate in its meaning and power".[21] As examples of signs Tillich gives letters of the alphabet, ordinary words like "desk", and, like Pénido, mathematical signs;[22] and with all of these examples we can agree. The strangeness of his view is to be seen, however, when he classes as symbols a national flag,[22] and certain liturgical and poetical words. These, he says, "have connotations in situations in which they appear so that they cannot be replaced."[23] He also speaks of a symbol having an inherent power which a sign has not got. What all this seems to mean, though Tillich nowhere recognises the fact, is that a symbol exceeds a sign simply because it has, or has collected, emotional associations which a sign has not. This seems to be proved by the fact that he admits that some things began as signs and then "in use became symbols."[24] This has happened with things "like the candles, like the water at the entrance of the Roman church, like the crosses in all churches . . ."[23] How could this change from sign to symbol occur unless it was brought about by something which, in the first instance had no emotional association with the divine, gradually acquiring such association through the course of time and usage? Thus the reason that Tillich can consider π to be a sign, and a flag to be a symbol (or what I have preferred to call an "image"), is simply because we are not emotionally aroused by the relation of the diameter of a circle to its circumference, in the way that we may be by the flag of our own nation. But considered logically, there is no difference at all between these two—as I would want to call them—signs. In both cases, the connection between sign and referent is arbitrary and conventional and not intrinsic, and they could either of them be changed for one of any number of other possibilities by general agreement. And if one were to ask if some such sign might not, in a particular case, be more suitable or appro-

priate, what such appropriateness would almost certainly refer to would be the ease with which the sign could be written or printed or made or housed—to some utilitarian appropriateness, in other words, but not to an intrinsic one. Tillich seems to me to be confusing the psychological with the logical importance and meaning of symbols. Since the advent of depth psychology we have been made more aware of the way in which myths and symbols derive from, and have importance for, the unconscious levels of our minds. But throughout the present discussion I am concerned solely with the logical significance of symbols and not with their emotional or psychological importance.

It seemed necessary to discuss Tillich's ideas at some length, because in taking a flag as an example of a symbol he has chosen something which Pénido takes as an example of a "conventional sign". Here, for the reasons given above, I would undoubtedly agree with Pénido. But while there is a purely accidental connection between, say, the Union Jack and Great Britain, and while it is logically possible that the Union Jack could have been the flag of any other country or that Great Britain could have had some other flag, it is not logically possible for that aspect of the pelican's character which has been used as an image of Christ's work among men to be used as, say, an image of the devil. Of course, some other aspect of the pelican could be,—its gross beak to represent greed, for example. One could also take the pelican's gouging of its own breast as a symbol of suicide, if one left out of account the fact that it does it on behalf of its offspring. With a poetic image one must take great care not to trespass beyond the limits that the author intends; but this being understood, it should now be evident that the image can be distinguished from the sign as a logically different entity.

Before continuing and taking this distinction absolutely for granted, perhaps something should be said about the "intrinsic connection" which has been mentioned several times in the above few paragraphs. What is, in fact, the essential difference between a conventional and an intrinsic connection between symbol and referent? A test for such a difference would be, I think, to ask whether a person could be expected to respond to a particular symbol without previously having been told what was considered to be the correct

response. Obviously signs like π could mean nothing without their meaning being explained, whereas the meaning of such lines as,

> "O the mind, mind has mountains; cliffs of fall
> Frightful, sheer, no-man fathomed . . ."[25]

is either grasped immediately or probably never will be. Indeed, if the meaning of such lines were not, in some sense, transparent to the sensitive reader, it is difficult to see how poetry would ever be comprehensible at all. If we had to learn, laboriously, in connection with each poem that we read, such things as that " 'cliffs of fall' means . . . etc." the amount of poetry that any one of us would be able to understand in one lifetime would be constricted, not to say constricting. It should not be thought, however, that the object or whatever it may be that the poet takes as the basis of his image must also serve as an image of the same thing outside the poet's use of it. Ted Hughes, for example, expresses the power of the quivering form of a hawk by saying,

> "His wings hold all creation in a weightless quiet,"[25]

It does not follow that every person seeing a hawk should have taken it as an image of such power. The number of things which a hawk could symbolise is very large. What it does signify in any given poem is made apparent from the poem if the poet is any good. An interesting example of one thing serving as an image of two differing, indeed opposing qualities, occurs in the New Testament. Jesus takes leaven as a symbol of the kingdom of God, leavening the whole lump of the world.[27] St. Paul speaks of the leaven of "malice and wickedness."[28] Actually one does not have to go to St. Paul for a contrary example, for Christ Himself warns his disciples against the "leaven of the Pharisees."[29] It might be said that in at least some of the examples that I have given above, we are told what it is that the image resembles ("the kingdom of Heaven is like unto . . .") and do not have to perceive this for ourselves from some supposed "intrinsic" connection. But that there is an intrinsic connection nonetheless seems to me to be proved by the fact that (a) the image is given in order to add to one's knowledge of the kingdom of God, and (b) one can introduce the image by saying that "such and such is like . . ." The words deliberately assert a resemblance. Nobody

would think of maintaining that "being equal to something is like =".

A second important test for distinguishing a sign from an image is, in fact, to ask whether the symbol in question adds anything to our understanding of its referent. Manifestly an = will add nothing to one's understanding of equality, while a poetic image can shed much light on one's understanding of almost anything. It should be pointed out, however, that both of these tests for images apply only in situations where the referent is already, to some extent, known. This condition does not obtain where a user of religious language is trying to explain what he means by "God" to either an ignorant man who has no understanding whatsoever of the meaning of the term or to an intelligent man who says that he has not. In these cases some pointer to the way in which the image is to be interpreted is required, as well as some genuine religious experience to provide a break-through into the realm of the images.

Resemblance or similarity is probably the most important relation known to the mind of man. As is often pointed out, all science begins from some supposed similarity between examples of a certain class of things, and scientific progress often, if not always, arises from the fact that some genius notices a likeness between certain things or events where nobody has ever perceived such likeness before. Professor Bronowski shows that Newton was enabled to arrive at his theory of gravity because he perceived that in one particular at least, an apple was like, not merely every other apple, nor even like every other piece of fruit, but like every other piece of matter in the universe.[30] There seems to me to be little doubt that poetic images arise from the human mind's capacity for perceiving likenesses, and that poets of originality, like Newtons in the world of science, perceive likenesses unobserved by other people. The parallel between the two cases is not exact, quite apart from the fact that the poet's likenesses seem to most people to be more fanciful and less important than the scientist's. Less important or not, the poet's images are still based on likenesses that are as much "there" as the scientist's and consequently we are justified in maintaining that there is an intrinsic connection between referent and image, but not between referent and sign.

Now while, in discussing "religious symbolism", Pénido approached the distinction made above without ever arriving at it, when he discusses "theological symbolism" he leaves us in no doubt that he is concerned with signs and not images. A "theological symbol" he defines as "an arbitrary sign";[31] it has no real correspondence with that which it represents "in the same way that the symbol has no objective relationship with mathematical infinity." While he does not make this perfectly clear, it appears that he believes that it is this sort of symbolism which was advocated by Sabatier. There is some excuse for his having made this assumption, though it would seem to me that a more careful study of the whole of the *Outline* would show it to be false. It is true that Sabatier can lapse from the sort of precision that we should like to see maintained throughout such a book as the *Outline*, and say, for example, that a religious symbol is like an algebraic sign;[32] this is, from the point of view of the position that he normally adopts, simply a mistake. There is also a much more uncharacteristic and puzzling paragraph that appears at the beginning of the section on symbolism. There, having defined a symbol as that which expresses "the invisible and spiritual by the sensible and material", and said that it is "a soul in a body", he goes on to add that "the body is a manifestation of the soul although it does not resemble it."[33] He then takes as his examples of symbols both written and spoken words and says that they can signify something only to those "who have the key".[33] It would seem from this that he means by symbol what we have above defined as a sign, and that this is all there is to it. A closer examination of the passage in question yields some interesting finds, however.

First, although he sets out to define symbols, the moment that he has mentioned the examples of written and spoken words he calls them "signs".[33] Secondly, when he goes on to speak of works of art, he says that they are "even more obviously . . . symbols."[33] (Notice that he has here immediately reverted to the original word "symbols".)

The fact that he conceives of works of art as being, in some unspecified way, *more* symbolic than the previously mentioned signs surely implies that there was in his mind at that moment some

sort of distinction between sign and symbol, although obviously it was not a very clear one.

The interpretation of this passage which would be most in line with the rest of the *Outline* would seem to me, therefore, to be the following: When Sabatier says that the symbol does not resemble its referent he does not mean that there is no similarity between them at all, but that the resemblance is not obvious, literal or univocal. There is no obvious resemblance, for example, between God and a shepherd[34] or a woman in labour.[35] The key that one needs to enable one to find the significance of the symbols is not so much a code which, when explained, any intelligent person could understand, but an awareness of the nature of religion which confers insight into its expressions. This interpretation of the passage in question may seem to be putting a construction on the words which they do not really bear. If one were considering the passage in isolation one would, it must be admitted, come to a different understanding of it. But that some such interpretation as this is required when the passage is set in the context of the *Outline* as a whole seems to me to be undeniable. First, Sabatier speaks time and time again of an organic connection between experience and image, and gives comparisons for such organic unity both soul and body, and seed and plant.[36] Also, the notion of an arbitrary relationship between experience and symbol he specifically rejects: "it is no arbitrary connection which gives unity to these two elements of dogma."[37] He also writes, "Art and religion are more than mere conventions; here we have revelations of that which is hidden both in nature and spirit . . . phenomena are simply veils. That is why, according to their inherent purpose, they become for us symbols."[38] Thus I would maintain that a careful reading of the *Outline* will make it apparent that what Sabatier meant by "symbol" or "poetic image" was what has been defined above as an "image"; that is, as something having an intrinsic connection with its referent. This is really so much a characteristic of his thought that it would be too laborious to go on trying to prove it by multiplying quotations and references.

Of course, if Pénido had been right in supposing that Sabatier's symbolism was a matter of playing with "arbitrary signs", we should have to agree with his rejection of such a game as a method of

arriving at a knowledge of God. If we remember what was pointed out in the last section, namely that Sabatier saw symbolism not as a way of arriving at knowledge, but as a means of expressing experience, this would still not alter our rejection of "arbitrary signs." It is obvious that they could not express anything to those not in possession of a knowledge of the conventions, and they would be a very uninformative set of signs even to those who were.

From the above considerations, and taking into account what Sabatier wrote on symbolism as a whole, it is apparent that what he usually means by "symbols" is what a Thomist would normally classify as a metaphor or analogy of improper proportionality. Pénido spends a great deal of time in an analysis and criticism of such proportionalities, and whether he realised it or not, this part of his work is really more relevant as a criticism of Sabatier than what appears formally as such. It is to this that we will now turn.

Pénido's criticism of metaphors

Thomists have generally classed metaphors as a type of the analogy of proportionality, but have put them in their place as "improper" or "indirect" rather than "proper" or "direct". Let us examine this distinction between these two types of proportionality by considering an example that Pénido himself analyses.[39] Jesus said, "I am the vine; ye are the branches." This metaphor can be set out as a proportionality thus:

$$\frac{\text{vine}}{\text{branches}} = \frac{\text{Christ}}{\text{disciples}}$$

This Pénido would regard as an improper proportionality because the perfection of a vine is not one which is capable of being infinite. If we think of perfection with regard to a vine, its perfection is, so to speak, infinite in one direction only; it is not a true infinite for its quality is limited by the very limits imposed by its necessity of being a finite vine and not something else. If we had taken as our predicate such a quality as goodness, however, the situation would have been different. This is a quality which is capable of being a true infinite in its perfection because there are no limits whatsoever to "goodness" which is therefore predicable of God. Pénido goes on to say that

metaphors, therefore, depending on impure perfections, fall short of proper proportionalities depending on pure perfections in at least three ways. First, with metaphors, "the common perfection is not to be found formally in all the analogates".[40] In other words, with regard to the example given above, the perfection of a vine is not to be found formally in God. Secondly, with a metaphor there is a "complete diversity of natures", but a "similarity with regard to their effects."[41] The quality that is predicated of God is in Him virtually but not formally. That is to say, there is that in God which is necessary to produce vines as an effect, but nothing which is in any formal sense similar to a vine. Because of this, Pénido maintains that metaphors always have reference to God's effects but never to His nature, "do not touch His nature, but His action, and action ad extra."[42] Thirdly, Pénido maintains that metaphors, seen from the point of view of the human beings who use them, always have a purely subjective reference.

Now it would seem to me that none of these objections to metaphor are really valid. They are based on an analysis of the difference between proper proportionalities and metaphors which seizes upon the wrong elements in the difference, and, at the same time, minimises the similarity. This is basically due to Pénido's inability to appreciate the value of a poetic image, which, in its turn, is probably due to his confusing it with "an arbitrary sign"; though, taking his words on poetry into account,[43] the cause and effect are probably the other way round. The confusion with the "arbitrary sign" is most likely due to his inability to appreciate the value of poetic images. A more useful analysis of the difference between proper and improper proportionalities would seem to me to be the following.

If we write out the proper proportionality:

$$\frac{\text{human goodness}}{\text{man}} = \frac{\text{divine goodness}}{\text{God}}$$

and compare it with the improper proportionality:

$$\frac{\text{vine}}{\text{branches}} = \frac{\text{Christ}}{\text{disciples}}$$

the former seems more "proper" because there appears to be, outside the proportionality itself, some likeness between human and divine goodness. Outside the second proportionality, however, there appears to be no likeness between Christ and a vine at all. The difference between the two types of proportionality would therefore seem to be that the proper proportionality is based upon another underlying analogy, and that the improper proportionality is not. Let us call this analogy a "simple analogy". What is meant by the term is some unspecified sort of likeness between things that are admitted to be in some, perhaps even in essential, respects different. A Thomist would probably, if he had given provisional assent to this argument so far, say that the sort of analogy to which I was referring was one of proportion or attribution. To this question I return in the next chapter.* For the moment let us simply say that the difference between proper proportionalities and improper ones appears to be that the former are based on simple analogies, and the latter are not. This difference is, in fact, more apparent than real.

Let us go back to the example of the vine and try to interpret it a little more fully than we have done so far. Let us say that what it means is that in Christ there is life abundant, and that He has come to communicate this fulness of life to men. (This seems to me, in fact, an interpretation at once uncontroversial and in accord with the tenor of St. John's Gospel. It should be made plain, however, that the argument with regard to semantic problems does not depend, either here or later, on particular theological interpretations being adopted; I make an interpretation here and elsewhere simply in order to have one to analyse.) The vine and branches are now a poetic image, an image of the life which is in Christ, vigorous, fruitful and life-giving to others. Now while "vine" cannot afford a basis for a simple analogy, "life" certainly can. We can now rewrite our original metaphor in the following way:

$$\frac{\text{the life of the vine}}{\text{the life of the branches}} = \frac{\text{the life of Christ}}{\text{the life of the disciples}}$$

There now appears to be some simple analogy between the two top

* See p. 68 f.

terms of the equation because the word "life" appears on both sides.

It might also be remarked that if we go back to the distinction between pure and impure perfections, the result is affected in no way whatsoever; for while "vine" may not be capable of being viewed as a pure perfection, "life" is. There is no basis here, then, for enlarging the difference between proper proportionalities and metaphors.

As this contention that all types of proportionality are based upon simple analogies is an important part of the present argument, it might be as well to examine one or two more examples of metaphor to make the point of view more clear. Pénido mentions as another example of metaphor the fact of Christ being the "head" of the church.[44] His case would be that since a head is a physical thing, even the most perfect example of it could not be predicated of God or of Christ, because, being physical, it necessarily has limits even when perfect. But here the head is simply a poetic image for authority. And this authority, or rule, or "commandingness" of Christ is certainly capable of being used as the basis of a simple analogy or regarded as a pure perfection. When viewed as an aspect of the Godhead it is nothing other than divine goodness which makes such an insistent demand upon those who have begun to understand a little of what that goodness is. The "fatherhood" of God could be taken as another example. Even if perfect, fatherhood would be a limited perfection. But fatherhood used as an image in Christian preaching refers to creativity or to love, either of which can form the basis of a simple analogy or a pure perfection.

It had better be made clear, somewhat as a parenthesis, that it is not being claimed that all metaphors are convertible into simple analogies, because there are two types which are exceptions to this rule, but which do not affect the validity of the above argument. First, there are metaphors based upon negative characteristics; many interpretations of the Psalmist's cry, "God is my rock," would furnish us with an example of this type. Often the phrase is taken to refer to some negative characteristic such as "unmoveableness" or "unchangeability". Secondly, there are metaphors based upon characteristics whose similarity is univocal. We could take as an example of this type a description of a crashing aeroplane "plough-

ing up the ground". It is impossible for metaphors based upon some sort of univocal similarity to arise when it is a question of predicating some quality of God.

We must now turn to Pénido's second argument against metaphors, namely that they have reference only to God's effects, and never to His essence. Given Pénido's views on pure and impure perfections, some distinction between essence and effect seems bound to follow from it, or it would be impossible to ascribe any meaning to metaphors making a positive religious assertion at all. On the analysis given above, however, it follows that metaphors refer as much to God's nature as do any other types of analogy. To go back to the vine metaphor for a moment; if the vine giving life to its branches is an image of Christ giving life to His disciples, then, while this certainly says something about the effects of the divine upon men, it also has reference to the nature of Christ Himself. There is no difficulty, from a Thomist point of view, in attributing "life" formally to God or Christ, for it is a pure perfection. Indeed one can go further and point out that the vine metaphor does not simply attribute to the Godhead a rather devitalised conception such as "life", but something which it is really a part of the Christian gospel to proclaim to be of God's essence, namely "life-givingness".

That metaphors have reference only to a "similarity of effects" and not to any similarity of nature is an idea to which Pénido recurs many times. On three occasions he uses the same example to prove his point. Since he believes that goodness is formally in God and that anger is not, he contrasts the ways in which these two qualities can be predicated of the divine. Setting out the improper proportionality:[45]

$$\frac{\text{Jehovah}}{\text{his anger}} = \frac{\text{master}}{\text{his anger}}$$

he says that the only point of the comparison can be in the effects, namely punishment. His position can be summarised thus:

(1) The Bible frequently refers to God's anger, or wrath.

(2) there is no anger formally in God.

(3) "anger" must therefore refer to something other than a formal attribute.

(4) it refers to God's effects. If it does not, what else can "anger" refer to when predicated of God?

It would be too easy to become involved in a purely theological argument here, forgetting the semantic problem which is our chief concern at this point. But even allowing for different theological interpretations, there seem to be more satisfactory ways of giving meaning to "the wrath of God" than by resorting to Pénido's "similarity of effects". If one adopts what might shortly be called the Calvinist interpretation of "wrath", then one maintains that there is, in the divine nature, a holiness and hostility to sin which can properly be called "anger" or "wrath", and that this can be predicated of God as directly and formally as can "love". If one adopts the point of view of the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews, however, one maintains that God punishes us because He loves us and not out of anger at all. In this case, loving correction could also be formally predicated of God. Either of these interpretations would seem to me to be a logically more satisfactory way of dealing with the problem than maintaining, as does Pénido, that there is nothing formally in God corresponding to anger, but that there are effects of God which correspond to it nevertheless. If we see one man strike another, and for some reason believe that it was not done in anger, we do not normally say that he has produced the effect of being angry without in fact, being so. We look for another cause for the blow. So, to recur once more to the "vine" metaphor; it certainly implies a great deal about the effects that the life of Christ has, or can have, upon the life of men; but it is not true that it has reference only to these effects. The vine is an image of the life-givingness of Christ which is a part of His essential nature.

Pénido also seems to believe that those who make no distinction between proper and improper proportionalities think that they can deduce God's essence from His effects.[46] This, he says, is not possible, for if we say that God is good because He produces good effects, so we could say that He is wrathful because He punishes, or, a constantly recurring Thomist argument, that He is a body because He has made bodies. It has already been pointed out in a previous

section of this chapter that a major difference between Sabatier and Thomism is that for Sabatier, metaphors were a way of expressing a previously experienced awareness of God not a way of deducing information about Him. Whichever symbolists may be affected by this particular argument of Pénido's therefore, Sabatier was not one of them.

As a corollary to maintaining that essence cannot be deduced from effects Pénido also maintains that qualities predicated of God by proper analogies would remain predicable "even if we were unaware of any effect".[47] I take it that this means that God would be good even if His goodness produced no effects. (If this is not what Pénido means, then the rest of this paragraph is of no consequence.) We must again strive to keep the controversy to semantics and not to theology. Either, because of one's theological position, one believes that Thomism is here so swamped by the Aristotelian notion of autarcheia that the goodness spoken of is not the goodness of the God and father of Jesus Christ at all, for His goodness must be seen in relation to the world; or, one agrees with Pénido that God's nature need not necessarily produce related effects in the world, in which case a symbolist could easily maintain that the loving care symbolised by the "father" image would also still exist in God even if it produced no effects, being active, presumably, within the Trinity.

Concepts and images

A possible Thomist reaction to the contention in the foregoing section of this chapter that metaphors have reference to the nature of the divine as much as do proper proportionalities, might be to say that all that has been done to increase the importance of the metaphor beyond its proper scope is simply to say that it is based on an underlying analogy. And while Thomists are naturally disposed to accept the validity of properly used analogies, the question they will doubtless want to put is: why, if all metaphors are based on underlying analogies, can we not dispense with the metaphor and begin, *tout court*, with the analogy? Or, alternatively: why not admit, at the very least, that metaphors have to rely heavily on a suppressed analogy to give them some meaning, and that they are therefore of quite subsidiary importance to the analogies on which

they lean? While, as far as I know, Sabatier never faced this question directly, the lines along which he might have tried to answer it seem to me to be sufficiently clear from a study of some pages of the *Outline*.

In a passage quoted in the previous chapter, Sabatier writes that the concepts to which the original images are transformed when they are reduced to dogmas possess "a degree of generality and of precision both together".[48] This paradoxical combination would seem to be possible in the following way. A concept is precise in the sense that we can know exactly what its connotation is, but it is general in the sense that its connotation is very wide. The opposite is the case with the image; here we may not be able to tell, simply from the image itself, what its purport is, but when we know, its connotation is then very precise. Perhaps this can be made more clear by means of some examples.

Let us suppose that we are educated Hindus with no knowledge of Christianity, and that we ask a Christian to explain to us what he means by "God". If he tried to do so by means of concepts, he might begin by saying that God was "love". But how wide a concept this is particularly for anyone using the English language! Pressed for further definition the Christian can either, (1) add more concepts such as "mercy" or "righteousness", or (2) make the meaning of the concept more precise by means of images. If he tries (1) first he will simply be deferring the time when he will have to resort to (2), for he will be called upon to define the new concepts, and this he cannot do by falling back on fresh concepts forever. By resorting to images he can make his original concept more precise immediately. He may, for instance, retell the story of the Prodigal Son, and say that the love of God is like the love of the father in that parable. Now, while the image's ultimate referent is transcendent, the stuff of which it is fashioned is not, but can be as concrete and as detailed as the Christian likes to make it. Thus the story of the Prodigal Son is not merely about a loving father, but about one who gave his son an inheritance without question, who suffered without murmur, and who, when his erring son came back home, ran out to embrace him. Any amount of detail can be added, and the skill with which this is done shows the worth of the story-teller; his

details make the image full and clear, or dissipate its strength in trivialities.

If our original question was answered immediately by the Christian by means of an image, then something of an opposite process would have to take place. Let us suppose that he began with the parable of the Prodigal Son, with no indication as to how it was to be interpreted. What are we to make of the image now? Is God supposed to be like the father or like one of the sons? Or, supposing that we have previously heard some talk of a trinity, like an amalgam of all three? Is he jealous like the elder or profligate like the younger son? And so on. It is just possible that the Christian might seek to answer our questions by means of other images, but he would more probably resort to concepts and tell us that the point of the parable was fatherly love. It is only by means of a conceptual indicator that the purport or connotation of an image can be made incontrovertibly plain. It is the lack of any sure knowledge of what the governing concept of some of Christ's own images are that causes so much difference of opinion over the interpretation of some of His parables. Who or what, for instance, is the man without the wedding garment supposed to symbolise? C. H. Dodd says that for all of Christ's parables what we really need to know is the "Context-in-Life". This is because, of course, if we knew with regard to any particular parable on what occasion and to what end it was told, we should be furnished with a conceptual indicator to the way it was to be interpreted.

It would seem that one of the ultimate causes of the controversy between Thomism and symbolism is that Thomists prefer concepts to images, while theologians such as Sabatier reverse the preference. It is not that either would wish to deny that both have some importance, but for Sabatier the concept, a product of "impassive thought",[49] was something of a falling off from the evocative vigour and primitive vitality of the image, while a Thomist such as De Munnynck can write of the type of metaphor used by Christ Himself that it "has scarcely more than a subjective importance".[50] It seems to me that Sabatier was right in his preference for the following reasons.

First, it seems certain that the image is prior to the concept in the

development of religion (and, indeed, in the development of nearly all knowledge), as Sabatier said that it was. This means that it is prior both historically and psychologically. One has only examine formative religious writings (as distinct from theological writings), to see that this is the case. With regard to Christianity one need look no further than the Psalms and the teaching of Jesus for one's examples. The original inspiration of most religions has flowered first of all in brightly coloured images. For most of us, this process has been paralleled in our own experience. We begin with such images as are provided in, say, the parables of Jesus, and only later do we begin to think conceptually about our religion. To this a Thomist might reply that a priority in time does not necessarily imply a precedence in logical importance. I think that Sabatier might have replied that the sort of analysis of concept and image that was attempted in the previous three paragraphs shows that the image is really a much more precise form of speech than the concept, and that on this ground alone it should be given priority.

Secondly, the concept is essentially a product of, and addressed to, the intellect alone. If God, being transcendent, is beyond the grasp of man's intellect, then the concept is obviously inadequate to express what is required. "There are mysteries which cannot be rendered with abstract concepts and which some of the most inspired of men have been able to express only by images."[51] The concept can only come into play, as Sabatier argued, when, by reflection, the original experience and its accompanying image have been reduced to dimensions that the intellect can grasp. It is the poetic image which is capable of expressing something beyond the simple grasp of the intellect.[52]

Thirdly, while the concept is cold, abstract, and related to the life of the intellect alone, the image is living and sensitive and matched to man's experience as a whole person.[52] So it would seem that it is concepts that are really too mathematical in their significance to be adequate for the living realities of religion. It is really the Thomist doctrine of analogy, based as it is on a predilection for concepts and conceptual analysis which can be accused of falling into the language of signs. It would not be very difficult to signify the concepts so beloved by Thomists, such as "existence", "goodness", "simplicity",

"unity", etc., by signs such as θ, μ, λ, and set out proper proportionalities in these terms. This could never be done with images. Such a process would not be remotely conceivable. The power of the poetic image deriving so much from the exact words in which it is composed, the manner in which it is spoken, the gestures that may accompany it, the context in which it finds itself, discourse based upon this manner of speech must necessarily be more fluid more sensitive to the nuances of what is to be expressed and more apposite to the changing facets of moment to moment experience and conversation.

Finally, one is tempted to point out that any analysis of the language of the founder of Christianity will certainly show that He had a huge preference for images, usually homely, earthy and downright anthropomorphic, as against abstract words and concepts. This point, when made, is almost certain to be taken either as evidence of incredible historical naiveté or a species of hitting below the belt. But perhaps it will again be fashionable one day to take the teaching of Jesus as seriously as Sabatier did, who knows?

Conclusion

It would probably be as well to sum up this chapter by saying what conclusions I think have been reached. The basis of Pénido's attack upon metaphorical predication, and through it, upon symbolism, is that he thinks that it has, with respect to the people who use it, a purely subjective reference. If his arguments about the "complete diversity of natures" and "similarity of effects" could be substantiated, then this would probably follow. But reasons have been given to suggest that these arguments are not valid. This is not, of course, the same thing as showing that the reference of metaphors in a religious context is objective. We must content ourselves for the moment with claiming simply:

(1) that the subjectivity of metaphors does not follow from the arguments that he adduces, and

(2) that there is no reason to distinguish metaphors from any other type of analogy in this regard.

Whether any speech about God, image, proportionality or whatever it may be, has more than a subjective reference is discussed in

Chapter VI. The claims of Thomists for the way of analogy are examined in the next chapter.

Footnotes

1. *Symbolism and Belief.* (Allen and Unwin, 1938). p. 315.
2. Pen. p. 69. "La nature divine, nous dit-on, est une inconnue dont rien ne peut lever l'indétermination. En revanche les religions nous fournissent des symboles commodes, avec lesquels nous pouvons amuser notre ennui."
3. Pen. p. 117. "Agnosticisme par excès."
4. Le R. P. Sertillanges O.P. *Les grandes thèses de la philosophie Thomiste.*
5. Ibid. p. 45.
6. c.f. also C. A. Campbell, *On Selfhood and Godhood,* (Allen and Unwin, 1957). ". . . The element of agnosticism in the symbolic theology for which I have argued in the foregoing pages seems to me to be certainly no greater, and quite possibly less, than the element of agnosticism implicit in the Analogical theory."
7. Ibid. p. 75.
8. Pen. p. 69
9. P. M. De Munnynck. Article on *L'Analogie Métaphysique,* in Revue Néo-Scolastique, May 1923. p. 138 (All future references to De Munnynck are to this article).
10. Ibid. p. 137.
11. Ibid. p. 136
12. Ibid. p. 137.
13. The Modernist Movement in the Roman Church. (C.U.P. 1934). p. 109.
14. Pen. p. 102.
15. EP, 393.
16. See De Munnynck, p. 138. Also Pen. Chapter 1, Section 4 which is entitled *La connaissance par analogie.*
17. Quoted in *La Doctrine Symboliste: Documents.* Guy Michaud. (Librarie Nizet 1947). p. 22. ". . . si ce n'est un traducteur, un déchiffreur".
18. Pen. p. 68.
19. Pen. p. 68.
20. See his poem, *The Windhover.*
21. *Theology of Culture.* (New York O.U.P., 1964). p. 54.
22. Ibid. p. 55. Notice also that he thinks that the word "God" is symbolic. p. 58.
23. Ibid. p. 56.
24. Ibid. p. 65.
25. G. M. Hopkins. From a sonnet beginning, "No worst, there is none . . ."
26. From the poem *The Hawk in the Rain,* from the book of that title. (Faber 1957.)
27. Matthew 13, v. 33.
28. 1 Corinthians, 5, v. 7 and 8.
29. Mark 8, v. 15.
30. *The Common Sense of Science.* (Pelican 1960). pp. 27–8.

31. Pen. p. 69. Notice that Pénido is here using "symbole" and "signe" interchangeably.
32. EP, p. 305.
33. EP, p. 391.
34. Psalm 23–1.
35. Isaiah 42–14.
36. See, for example, EP, pp. 294, 309, 312 and 391.
37. Ep. p. 304.
38. EP, p. 393. "L'art et la religion sont plus que des conventions; ce sont des révélations de ce qui se cache à la fois et dans l'esprit et dans la nature . . . les phénomenès ne sont que des voiles. Voilà pourquoi, par destination même, ils nous deviennent des symboles."
39. Pen. p. 42.
40. Pen. p. 43.
41. Pen. p. 53. ". . . diversité totale de natures" . . . "similitude d'effets".
42. Pen. p. 106.
43. E.g. pen. p. 104.
44. Pen. p. 42.
45. Pen. p. 102.
46. Pen. p. 44.
47. Pen. p. 45. ". . . même si nous ne connaissions aucun effet . . ."
48. EP, p. 271.
49. EP, p. 270. ". . . la pensée rassise . . ."
50. De Munnynck, p. 132.
51. EP, p. 270.
52. See Ep, p. 392. ". . . le symbole s'addresse bien moins à l'intelligence pure, qu'à la vie intérieure et à l'émotion de ceux qui le contemplent."

IV

An examination of the way of analogy

WHILE the Thomist philosophers whose views we have been considering in the last chapter are prepared to relegate symbol and metaphor to a position of comparative unimportance, they all claim that analogy, unlike symbolism, gives us some real, objective knowledge of God. De Munnynck writes that when we employ such words as "father", "sower", etc., in a theological context, we are making use of a type of comparison which "has scarcely anything more than a subjective importance. Thus it is necessary to choose them (i.e. the comparisons), according to the mentality of the subject". But "analogy . . . is objective; it establishes a real relation between two known objects."[1] Pénido also, in his criticism of metaphorical predication, contrasts this with the use of analogies based on pure perfections which have reference to qualities formally in God.[2] This does not mean, however, that such analogies give us a direct insight into the divine essence. What the Thomist claim, in fact, amounts to we must now examine.

The type of analogy that is usually given the prime place in the mainstream of Thomist thought is that of proper proportionality, "the only analogy, properly speaking, as Cajétan has clearly demonstrated."[3] This is not a straightforward comparison between a human quality and something said to be equivalent in the divine; it is a comparison between two relations, and comprises a four-term equation. An example of such a proportionality might be:

$$\frac{\text{divine goodness}}{\text{God's mode of existence}} = \frac{\text{human goodness}}{\text{man's mode of existence}}$$

Naturally we wish to enquire what the equals sign can mean. Manifestly it does not mean the same as in a mathematical equation.

No Thomist would maintain that the divine goodness was related to the divine existence in the same way as human goodness is related to human existence. "That," as Austin Farrer says, "is exactly what we have to deny."[4] For in man, goodness and existence are to be differentiated and are separate; but, according to Thomist doctrine, God is simple and His goodness is the same thing as His existence and essence. The way in which several human qualities are united in one human personality is thus not at all the same as the way in which divine qualities form the unity of the Godhead. Thus it is not true that a proportionality is a simple equation of relations, because the relations turn out to be unequal. What is meant is that the divine goodness is appropriate to the divine existence as human goodness is appropriate to human existence. But since the divine goodness is appropriate to the divine existence in a different way from that in which human goodness is appropriate to human existence (for divine and human appropriateness must be different), we have now arrived at the point where the equals sign can simply be erased, for no real comparison is left. It is surprising that, after admitting the limitations of a proper proportionality, Farrer can still say, "Does it not at least sketch out an area or a direction in which the truth lies."[4] It is not surprising that if all analogies can do is to indicate in a general manner the land in which the treasure is buried, that philosophers who are sceptical about the existence of the treasure to begin with do not set to and start digging up a whole continent on the remote chance that they might hit upon the correct square yard.

It is necessary to enquire, however, why analogies still appear to many people, myself included, to be valid ways of speaking of God. It would seem to be because there is, in any proportionality, a prior analogy of which we may or may not be directly aware, which is the real analogy that is attracting the mind. This can most easily be demonstrated by writing down two different proportionalities such as:

2 : 3 as 4 : 6, and
2 : 3 as apple : orange.

The first of these holds some meaning because 2, 3, 4 and 6 are all equally numbers, even though different numbers. The mind can thus perceive a similarity between the terms on each side of the

proportionality as well as between the proportions. In the second case, however, the mind can derive no meaning from the proportionality at all, for it can perceive no prior similarity between numbers and fruit. On the same lines, it was pointed out in the previous chapter that the reason why the vine metaphor appears to be different from a proper proportionality is because there seems to be no immediate likeness between Christ and a vine. For any proportionality to have meaning for us therefore, there must be some sort of similarity between the terms on each side of the proportionality, or the proportions could not be compared. Let us call this similarity a "simple analogy", and take up our discussion of it where we left off in the previous chapter.

Before making any attempt to say with any precision what is meant by the term, it would be as well to stop for a moment to consider an objection that a Thomist might make to our use of it. "There is no point," he might argue, "in inventing another term when there is a perfectly good one ready to hand. The analogy is not a "simple" one but one of attribution, a type which has been recognised in Thomist philosophy from the earliest days. Battista Mondin is one who defends this type of analogy as the most important in St. Thomas's teaching, but he makes an important distinction between intrinsic and extrinsic attribution, and maintains, in contrast to the main tradition of Thomist thought, that it is the former which is of paramount importance. To Mondin, the difference between the two is this: with the analogy of extrinsic attribution, when we say, for example, "Peter is healthy," "medicine is healthy," "the food is healthy," the meaning of health does not change and is univocal throughout. It is the meaning of the copula that varies, signifying sometimes "belongs to," sometimes "causes," etc.[5] With an analogy of intrinsic attribution, for example "substance is being," "God is being," "man is being," the meaning of the copula does not vary, but that of "being" does, for the predicate is being used analogically and not univocally here.[6] Furthermore, in this case of intrinsic denomination, the concept applies properly only to one subject, and is transferred to the others by the mind using it analogically.[6]

Now while agreeing with Mondin that a distinction between the

two types of attribution needs to be made, I am not at all sure that it is being made on the right grounds here. The analogy of extrinsic attribution it would seem to me to be best to exclude from the category of analogy altogether. Surely Mondin is wrong in his analysis of it in thinking that its main difference from analogies of intrinsic attribution lies in the fact that the copula varies. What would seem to be the case in the examples concerning "health" so beloved of all Thomists from Aquinas's time to our own, is that it is not the meaning of the copula that varies, but the meaning of "health", which, far from being used univocally, is not even being used analogically, but equivocally, sometimes to mean "health-giving," sometimes "health-signifying," etc. It is purely an accident of verbal convention that we can use one word to mean all these different things, as can easily be seen if we try similarly to extend the usage of other words. For example, we do not say, "the man that we found expiring in the desert was still alive," and, "the water that we gave him was alive." We say that the water was "life-giving". The fact that in the case of health we could use the same word in both instances is of no logical significance whatsoever. Thus the analogy of extrinsic attribution can be rejected as being based upon a pure equivocation. Whether Mondin would agree with quite such an outright rejection of extrinsic attribution as this, I am not sure, but he does, in fact, accord very little importance to it, his whole book being written to show that it is the analogy of intrinsic attribution with which Aquinas is primarily concerned, and that it is this type of analogy that can fulfil the claims made by Thomists on behalf of analogy in general.[7] He rejects the attempts of Cajétan and other expositors of St. Thomas to turn all analogies of intrinsic attribution into proportionalities, arguing that, with "wisdom" for example, we can certainly set up a proportionality if we wish to, but that if we do, it is doubtful if it has any real usefulness, and that in any case we want to say that there is ". . . a similarity between Wisdom and wisdom."[8] With all his arguments in this direction I find myself in agreement, and suppose that what I mean by "simple analogy" is very close to what Mondin means by the analogy of intrinsic attribution.

I still prefer the former term, however, because all types of attri-

bution seem to me to be too closely linked to the notion of causality. Mondin asserts on several occasions that the similarity to be found in an analogy of intrinsic attribution "is based on a relation of efficient causality."[9] If this is so, then one cannot really use such an analogy without adopting all the presuppositions of Thomist natural theology, which many people today find difficulty in doing. It is often pointed out to us that, whether Thomists or not, we need some sort of a doctrine of analogy if we are to speak of God at all, and it would therefore seem to be a pity to tie a doctrine of analogy too closely to a particular set of metaphysical presuppositions. A more important consideration, however, is that to base any analogy on the notion of efficient causality is simply to base it on another analogy, for surely nobody wishes to maintain that God causes events in the same way as physical events cause events. When one speaks of Peter and food as both being healthy, and designates the relation between these two types of health as "causal", one is using the term univocally, i.e. to mean the same thing as would be signified by the term if we were to use it of any other type of physical causality. But when we speak of the relation between divine and human goodness as being causal, we must be using the term analogically. There can at best be only an analogy between God's causality and any other.

We now, therefore, have to enquire what sort of an analogy this is. The easiest thing would be to answer, straightaway, that it is a "simple analogy". If we do not give this answer now, we shall have to do so in the long run. If we were to say that the analogy between human and divine causality was itself an analogy of intrinsic attribution we should be landed straight into a vicious regress, for one cannot make the analogy between the two types of causality dependent upon an analogical causality which depends upon an analogical causality . . . indefinitely. One might begin by maintaining that the analogy between the two types of causality was one of proper proportionality, but even if we do set up a proportionality, which we certainly could, if the argument about proportionalities at the beginning of this chapter is valid then this proportionality itself will depend upon a simple analogy. One can conclude then, that all the complicated types of analogy distinguished by scholastics and classified and reclassified by Thomists, depend for their validity on a basic

belief that there is between God and man a sort of likeness which we have been referring to as a "simple analogy". If any Thomist wishes to say that the similarity exists because there is between human and divine a relation of efficient causality, I cannot see that there is anything unreasonable in this; provided that he does not go on to suppose that this explicates the analogy in any way, or makes it any clearer than it otherwise would be, and provided that he realises that causality itself is an analogical concept and that therefore one has to come back to a simple analogy somewhere.

An attempt must now be made to give more definition to this term. What is meant by it is this: that there is between some human and divine qualities a relationship which is capable of being classed as a genuine example of similarity; at the same time it is necessary to assert that there is also a difference. Obviously there could be many degrees of such a similarity as this, all lying somewhere on a scale running between, on the one hand, absolute identity, and on the other, absolute difference. But we are not being very precise at the moment in saying that a simple analogy lies "somewhere" along this scale. What we require, in order to be thoroughly explicit, is some sort of relation or comparison which we fully understand, which is similar to the relation between qualities human and divine. We need, in other words, an analogy for this type of analogy. We need to classify things in our ordinary experience which are similar in the same way as God and man are similar, and different in the same way as God and man are different. An example of what is required is some proportionality such as:

$$\frac{\text{God}}{\text{man}} = \frac{\text{intellectual understanding}}{\text{seeing physical objects}}$$

But the plain fact is that the required analogy for analogy will never be found. The reason for this might be made more plain if we enquire at this point why anything so difficult as metaphysical analogy should be necessary in speaking of God at all.

The basic reason is because God is absolutely unique. If He were only partly unique there would be at least one divine characteristic identical with its counterpart in the created world. But because

God is absolutely unique, there is no such characteristic. The way of analogy, the "via eminentiae", is an attempt to maintain to the full this absolute uniqueness of God, while, at the same time claiming that we do not, like Barthianism, have to go to the other extreme and maintain the absolute difference between man and God altogether. Between agnosticism and anthropomorphism, it is claimed, there is a middle way. But if God is totally unique, the relationship between God and the world will be totally unique also. Thus there is a unique type of likeness between God and man. Now, if we need to speak of God by analogy because He is unique, we shall also need an analogy to speak of the analogy between God and man, because that analogy is unique too. And then we shall need an analogy to speak of this analogy of analogy because this will be unique too . . . We can therefore never come to sufficient understanding of the type of similarity that an analogy is, to give us any sort of precise knowledge of God. If analogical predication is taken to be a means of giving us this sort of knowledge, we must regretfully conclude that it is a failure.

It is possible that a part of the substance of this criticism might be admitted by a Thomist; to salvage something of the doctrine he would probably fall back upon the distinction between "what is signified" and the "way it is signified". Thus, he would maintain, while we do not understand how goodness exists in God, we do know what goodness is, and that it really is predicable of Him. This distinction, Pénido says, "has been attacked by all the symbolists, which proves just how necessary it is for us to maintain it."[10] It seems a pity to try to prove a view correct from the simple fact of one's adversaries' opposition to it; as if their error came into the category of the logically self-evident. What the distinction would seem to mean is that we know what goodness is because we can abstract such a concept from various temporal situations; that we know how such a concept applies to such situations because they are a part of our ordinary experience; that we do not know how the concept applies to God because He is not part of our ordinary experience; but that, even in this latter case, we do still retain a knowledge of what the concept signifies.

Now this, it would seem to me, would be true were the concept

being applied univocally. We would be able, for example, to write out a series: bad man, man-in-the-street, good man, St. Francis . . . and conclude it with an 'x', a sort of prophecy that there would one day live a man whose goodness would surpass even that of St. Francis. And while none of us can know exactly how such surpassing saintliness would manifest itself in word or deed, it would seem to be reasonable to say that we should have some idea of what such saintliness would be like for it would be only greater in degree than that which is already known. Thus if God came into the series after 'x', we should be able to say of Him also that we could understand something of His goodness, but not exactly how it subsisted in Him. But no Thomist would put God at the end of such a series; to do so would be to revert to the univocal predication which is one of the two extremes which the use of analogy is devised to avoid. The Thomist scale of perfection would be much more like the series: animal goodness, human goodness, divine goodness; or, more simply: finite goodness, infinite goodness. Now the difference between these two types of goodness is no longer one of degree, but one of modality. That is to say, the significance of the concept "goodness" differs, in each case, according to the mode in which it is manifested. One could not, for instance, deduce from the series: human goodness, animal goodness, what the next term "vegetable goodness" could mean unless one had some prior experience of vegetable life. It is not simply that without such experience one would not know how the term could be applied to a vegetable; one would not know either what it signified when so applied. If we understood the nature of God as we understand the nature of vegetables, we should be able to understand what divine goodness would be. But without understanding the mode in which "goodness" is signified, we do not know what the "perfection signified" would be either. Perhaps someone might wish to argue that we do know the mode in which perfections are signified of God, and that is "infinitely". The term here, however, cannot have any more than a negative connotation, signifying "not in any finite mode".

The simple conclusion to the above arguments would seem to be that it is impossible to validate the way of analogy as a means of giving objective knowledge of God even when due weight is given

to the use made by Thomists of the principle of causality. Such a conclusion is correct if we are considering only a logical method of validation however. It is argued in the next chapter that Sabatier's way of validating the use of symbols in a "pragmatic" manner is the only hopeful way of proceeding in the present circumstances. It is on these empirical lines, and not on the traditional ones, that there would seem to be some possibility of arguing that there really is an analogy between human and divine qualities, even if we do not know precisely what that "simple analogy" is.

Footnotes

1. Revue Néo-Scolastique, 1923, p. 132. "... n'a guère qu'une importance subjective. Aussi faut-il les choisir suivant la mentalité du sujet." "L'analogie ... est objective; elle constate un lien réel entre duex objets connus."
2. E.g. Pen. p. 53, and pp. 101–108.
3. De Munnynck. Op. cit. p. 133.
4. A. M. Farrer, *Finite and Infinite*. 2nd Ed. p. 53.
5. Battista Mondin. *The Principle of Analogy in Protestant and Catholic Thought*. (Martinus Nyhoff, 1963). p. 59.
6. Op. cit. p. 60.
7. Op. cit. Foreword.
8. Op. cit. p. 69.
9. E.g. op. cit. p. 67.
10. Pen. p. 117.

V

Religious Pragmatism

THOMISM we have criticised not because it says that there is an analogy between finite and infinite, but because it fails to establish precisely what that analogy is. It cannot give any demonstrable meaning to such words as "good" and "wise" when predicated of God. It must now be asked whether Sabatier was any more successful than was Thomism. It must be conceded immediately that in some ways he was not; he did not even try to do what we have criticised Thomism for failing to do, namely establish by metaphysical argument a demonstrable analogy between human and divine. Like Thomism, however, he is prepared to assert that there is such an analogy.

It is at this point that the sceptic is likely to step in and claim that his case is virtually proved. "First," he will say, "you admit that analogy cannot give us any descriptive knowledge of God because when I ask what the analogy is, you say you can only give an analogy for it *ad infinitum*. But secondly, you maintain that there is an analogy even though you do not know what it is. But if you do know what it is, how do you know that it even exists?" If the purpose of preaching, teaching and religious discourse in general were to give us metaphysical facts, to tell us how things are "out there", he would be right. But against a complete acquiescence in the destructiveness of the sceptic, the traditionalist seems also to be right in maintaining that speech about God does signify something about a non-finite reality. The only possible way out of such a dilemma is to adopt something like Sabatier's view of the purpose of religious language; that is to say a view that one could regard as a type of pragmatism.

Pragmatism could be loosely defined as the view that a "true" belief is one which "works". Within this wide definition a good many philosophies could be included, and it is necessary at the out-

set to point out that we have designated Sabatier's a "religious" pragmatism, in order to distinguish it from other types of pragmatism with which it has little in common. With some pragmatists, true propositions appear to be those which work in the sense of contributing to human happiness. In the last resort, this would put religion on a level with a banal type of sloppy reassurance and subordinate the intellectual life of man to his affective comfort. The part of man which has a yearning for truth as such would seem to be suppressed and the relation which most people feel ought to exist between true propositions and "things as they are" would seem to be denied; for any proposition, even when it had no correspondence of any kind with a fact, would seem, on the basis of this theory, to be true, if believing it made men happier. Sabatier's pragmatism should also be clearly distinguished from the view that the worth of a religious proposition depends entirely on the moral conduct which it recommends, there being no question of its being true in the sense of having a referent known or unknown. Surely nobody who was genuinely religious as distinct from morally serious could subscribe to such a view as this. Many of us would find it quite impossible to talk ourselves into believing in the substance of fairy tales simply because such belief would make us better men. In view of the fact that Sabatier often contrasted the subjectivity of religion with the objectivity of science, a superficial reading of the *Outline* might seem to give the impression that this was his own viewpoint. Nothing could be further from the truth. By the subjectivity of religion Sabatier did not mean, like Feuerbach and others, that every statement about God could be exhaustively translated into another proposition about man, but that God was known primarily in our experience as subjects and not in our experience of objects. However unknowable Sabatier thought God to be, he certainly did not believe that He might not be "there".[1]

Dr. Edwyn Bevan, in his *Symbolism* and *Belief*,[2] comes nearer to Sabatier's type of pragmatism than any view or author so far mentioned, though he would not have accepted such a label for his beliefs. Indeed, in Chapter 13, he rejects what he calls "pragmatism", because he interprets "working" as meaning the obtaining of some material benefit from God. He later stigmatises pragmatism as the

belief: "Act as if there were God Who is a loving Father, and you will find certain desirable results follow."[3] His own belief he expresses as: "Act as if there were God Who is a loving Father, and you will, in so doing, be making the right response to that which God really is."[4] In stating his position thus, he feels that he is able to maintain that there really is some correspondence between God and a loving father. While this view, which it seems to me to be still reasonable to class as a type of pragmatism, comes nearer to a true religious belief than any of the other types of pragmatism that we have so far mentioned, it still does not provide all that is required. In contrast to the above two statements of Bevan, Sabatier's position is: "Act as if God were a loving Father, particularly pray to God as if He were a loving father, and you will eventually be led into the relationship with, and consciousness of God that was born in our Lord Jesus Christ." This will entail incidentally, of course, that one is making "the right response to that which God really is."

This type of pragmatism seems to me to be open to none of the criticisms that we have levelled against the other types, nor to those that are usually brought against pragmatism as such. First, it is genuinely religious in that its ultimate value is neither human happiness nor social stability but simply God. To the criticism that for a proposition to be true there should be some sort of correspondence between proposition and fact it can reply that there is such a correspondence even if it is impossible for us to know what this correspondence is where, in the case of religion, the facts in question are beyond the grasp of our intellects and the range of our language; but if the map leads us to our destination, it seems reasonable to suppose that there is some sort of correspondence between it and the terrain that has been covered. Secondly, to the criticism that the pure desire to know, a legitimate part of our human inheritance, is being frustrated, it can reply that on the contrary we are being led to see that knowing does not mean simply an ability to conceptualise something, nor even an ability to fit it into some sort of relation with other facts; but a transformation of our understanding and a deepening of our insight by whatever inadequate words may serve to this end, so that we may approach more and more to a simple beholding of the truth as it really is. This truth, of course, a Christian

will simply equate with God. (And the process of being brought to an understanding of the truth, it is well to point out for fear of being misunderstood by orthodox protestants, is always seen by Sabatier as the work of the Holy Spirit in revealing God and not the work of man in discovering Him.)

It might be asked at this point in what sense we can regard religious assertions as being true or false on the basis of such a philosophy as this. Given the pragmatic outlook that we are here trying to defend, the answer must be that propositions about God that lead men to a direct consciousness of Him are true, and those that do not are false. "But," the critic might complain, "this will mean that two contradictory assertions can both be true at the same time. Thinking of God in personal terms and speaking of Him as a father may lead a Christian to what you call a consciousness of God, and thinking of speaking of Him in impersonal terms may do the same thing for a Hindu. How can assertions made by the two of them both be correct at the same time?" But there should be nothing surprising in the fact that they can. The rules which apply to words being used literally and univocally do not necessarily apply to the same words used symbolically. For instance, if the word "person" is predicated in its literal sense of human beings, it is obvious that a man cannot both be a person and not a person at the same time. But when the word is used in a symbolic sense (as most theologians do so use it) of God, the contradiction need not arise. For if the word "person" is not being predicated univocally of God and human beings, in some sense God must be allowed to be not a person, and the words "personal" and "impersonal" may therefore both be truly predicable of God at the same time. Also, predicates which in a literal sense may not be so much contradictory as simply on different levels or in different categories, may also, as symbols, be predicable of the same subject. We do not object that because the Psalmist called God a "rock" that Jesus was mistaken in thinking of Him as a father; we do not object that because Robert Burns's love was "like a red red rose that's newly sprung in June," that she cannot also be like a "melodie that's sweetly played in tune."

But some may wish to argue that despite the fact that several different poetic images may all be predicable to some extent of the

same referent, that nevertheless some may still be in an absolute sense more correct than others. Thomism maintains that the objective validity of some symbols and analogies can be established by metaphysical argument; this view we have criticised in the last two chapters and will not repeat the arguments here. The belief that certain symbols can have an objective validity and superiority to other symbols is also upheld by philosophers of other schools of thought. C. A. Campbell, for example, writes, ". . . the religious consciousness is subject to an inward necessity of the mind to symbolise its object in terms of certain "rational" concepts . . ."[5] Even if this were the case, I cannot myself see that it follows that "there is good justification for the claim that these concepts have objective validity as symbols of their symbolizandum,"[5] for I cannot see why it should be assumed that what is a necessity for the human mind should also be a necessity for "reality". Even if it were true that "their propiety as symbols is determined, not subjectively by anyone's personal choice and private history, but objectively by the very constitution of the human mind,"[5] it would still not prove that they must have some objective validity, for their effectiveness would still be relative to the human condition if not to particular human conditions, and it is logically possible (and I would think practically also) that there should be many other mental conditions than the human one. A different race on a different planet would require a different set of symbols from those required by human beings. Man has always made his symbols for God in his own image, even if he has not so made God; and presumably other species would do the same. (It should be noted that we are here dealing with the creation and use of symbols, not with the laws of thought. If it were true that all minds of whatsoever sort they might be had to accept, say, the laws of inference if they were going to be able to think at all, it would not follow that there was any parallel necessity operating with regard to the choice and use of symbols.)

The way in which one would ordinarily try to show the objective validity of a particular symbol outside a religious context would be by getting people to compare the symbol and the symbolizandum. If a certain person were said to be "as round as a ball", one would be able to see both the roundness of the ball and the roundness of

the person in question and therefore be able to appraise the accuracy of the simile. Having some direct visual experience of human beauty one can understand something of what Shakespeare meant by comparing his love to a summer's day. But unless one is prepared to claim that the essence of divinity is similarly both known and understood by the human mind, then one is precluded from making a similar comparison between symbol and symbolizandum in a religious context. Thus one cannot show in any theoretical manner that any particular symbols have some absolute validity.

The above paragraph might be thought to be in conflict with the contention made throughout this essay and Sabatier's works that the human mind does, in fact, have some direct knowledge of God; and it might be argued that if this is so, the symbolizandum is known and can be compared with religious symbols. This point could be made, however, only if one was overlooking the distinction which it is necessary to draw, between an awareness of God which Sabatier certainly thought that the human mind possessed, and an understanding of God which he just as certainly thought that it did not. Mystics, who may be judged to have had a fuller awareness of God than most are always the first to insist that what they have apprehended is a mystery, for the expression of which all human speech is inadequate. This may be emphasised in many ways; by paradoxical speech about the "beyond that is akin" or by saying that God is "infinitely beyond us but in the same direction." But whatever phrases may be used, we seem always to come to the fact that there is no possibility of a straight comparison of symbol and symbolizandum in a religious context as there may be when, say, a poet is describing the beauty of his love.

Quite apart from the fact that Campbell's argument for the objective validity of certain religious symbols does not seem to me to be a valid one, it also seems that he over-emphasises the extent to which, in fact, different human minds have been led to the use of the same symbols. Obviously the proof of such a contention as this would depend upon a careful analysis and comparison of the actual symbols used by believers in the various higher religious. For this I have neither the knowledge nor, at the moment, the space. I can only record the opinion that the result of such a study would be to

show that there is no universal tendency for religious thought to move towards the same concepts or images, nor even a general tendency in one religion for this to happen; but that within all the great religious traditions of mankind there are parallel movements of thought to two or three great complexes of symbols; towards such impersonal images as "light" or "the ocean of bliss", etc., or to such personal ones as "father", "mother", "king", etc. This, I think, is determined by different types of human temperament which are probably better understood and elucidated and related to their associated theologies in the BhagavadGita than elsewhere. The distinction between the way of knowledge and the way of devotion seems to me to be one which it is possible to find in all religions and not in the Hindu religion only. There are, of course, other classifications of human types which are useful also. It is some time now since William James pointed out that the differing temperaments of the "once-born" and the "twice-born" types account for a continually recurring difference between two types of theology.[7]

Further reasons for the great diversity of religious symbols in actual use are rather obvious and need be no more than noted here. First, the literal meaning of a word differs from one age to another. A 1st century Judaean shepherd exercised a different function from a 20th century English one. It is therefore likely that such symbols as "shepherd" will be changed for others. Secondly, at any given point in time, the literal meaning of a word may differ widely according to the social context in which it is being used. "Father" is bound to signify something different for different people according to their experience of particular fathers. The extent to which people are misled by particular religious symbols because they have overlooked these two facts would seem to me to be great, but it would also seem that for a person accustomed to the use of critical thought and imaginative sympathy, many of the difficulties can be overcome or need never arise. If this were not so, it would be next to impossible for men of one age to have any genuine appreciation of the poetry of another.

I hope that it is clear already, but it perhaps should be made quite definitely so, that I would never want to claim that any of the above considerations show that one religious symbol is as good as any

other and that there is nothing to choose between them. On the contrary; it is clear from Sabatier's views that one symbol may be superior to another either (a) because it springs from a more profound experience, or (b) because it is more expressive of any given experience. Against Campbell it is being claimed, for the reasons given, that there are no symbols which have an absolute validity for all seasons and for all conditions of men, and that the only ultimate criterion for preferring one symbol to another is a pragmatic one, i.e. a consideration of whether the symbol evokes the experience from which it sprang.

That Sabatier's is the correct view of the purpose of religious language can surely be seen if we ask ourselves what the ultimate purpose of theology is. We can give some such vague answer as "to lead us to a knowledge of religious truth." But surely we do not conceive of this as the adding of piece after piece of information to a theological word book that we are compiling about God, nor even as a system of knowledge about God which becomes progressively more simplified as each bit of information is fitted into place. Surely the truth is God Himself. And there is no question of our arriving at a knowledge of Him by piling up information. The truth which is God, beyond the omniscience of our information bureaux, is simply to be beheld. And if we are ever to behold this truth it will be in the immediate awareness of the mystery in a state which has traditionally been known as contemplation.

Some people might suppose that the aim of theology is to arrive at a more consistent or all inclusive map. While it cannot be stated categorically that a single comprehensive map is an impossibility, it seems to me unlikely that such will ever be drawn. It would involve a tremendous break with tradition in any case. "Love", "justice", "mercy" and other words which have traditionally been used in speaking of God do not refer to separate facets of the divine nature but to overlapping ones. To give a full analysis of any one of these predicates would involve the inclusion of notions which the others are intended to convey. The existence of maps which are alternatives and intended to supplement rather than supplant one another seems to me to be good in that it dissuades people from falling into the idolatrous confusion of the map with the reality.

It was partly from his understanding of the teaching of Jesus that Sabatier came to believe that religious language had the pragmatic purpose assigned to it above, and not some supposedly "theoretical" one. It will be seen from the number of references that are scattered throughout his works to the teaching of Jesus, that the point on which he insists time and time again is that the aim of Jesus' words was always severely practical: they are to accomplish a sort of spiritual midwifery[6] or, to change the metaphor, of spiritual healing.[8] They are aimed at bringing the carnal man to a spiritual rebirth.[6] They are not aimed at any sort of intellectual enlightenment, but in all He says, Jesus "addresses himself to the heart."[9] "Teaching, for Him, is simply a means of healing."[10] "Salvation is the goal of all religion."[11] As Jesus never meant to found a system of philosophical thought or give theoretical teaching, "one achieves nothing by a philosophical discussion of His ideas. This can lead only to disappointment, for what He offers and what we demand are things of quite different orders. Plato asks what is the relationship between the ideal and the real; Laplace wants to know what was the origin of the cosmos; the biblical critic wants to know if the works attributed to Moses were really by him; and Jesus, as if He heard them not, replies in His gentle, powerful manner, 'Blessed are the poor for theirs is the Kingdom. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness. Blessed are the pure in heart. Come to me all of you who are burdened and suffering and I will relieve you'. It is obvious that a dialogue cannot even begin."[12]

In order to accomplish His end, Jesus was prepared to use the tools available; He is like "a doctor going into a poor man's house", who "uses the instruments and resources which he finds to hand to save the sick man who has called Him."[13] He accepts as given not merely the particular language or languages with which He was born, but also the thought-forms of His age. "He prefers the language of the people to that of philosophers; he uses only poetic images, word juggling, parables, current and traditional notions and any form of expression which, taken literally is impossibly inadequate, but which is, in other ways, the most living and evocative . . . Jesus wanted to force His hearers to interpret His parables for themselves, for He was calling them to an interior activity as in-

dividual persons, He was putting an end to the religion of letter and ceremony, and founding the religion of spirit."[14]

It would seem to me that an analysis of the words of the great religious teachers and leaders of mankind, as distinct from speculative theologians, would lead to similar conclusions with regard to the aims and methods of all religious language. That many people, including a substantial number of linguistic philosophers, apparently do not think this to be so, but imagine that the purpose of religious writings is to give a description of how things are "out there" is undoubtedly the case. But how it came to be so is a bit of a puzzle. There is an old Buddhist parable about a soldier in a battle who was pierced through the arm by an arrow. He did not sit with the arrow in his arm and ponder upon such questions as what its trajectory must have been, what the force with which the bow was drawn, etc. He simply addressed himself to getting the arrow out and having his arm attended to. The aim of any sane religious teaching has always been to accomplish a similar task for stricken humanity. It is philosophers who have asked the factual questions and demanded explanations. With this approach it is hardly possible nowadays to regard religion as anything more than a primitive and outmoded science. But to give information about God which could be analysed and discussed like information about, say, the planets, was never the aim of such religious teachers as Samkara, the Buddha, the Old Testament prophets or Jesus. They were all concerned with averting catastrophe and saving human beings from the perils that beset them —in the case of some of the Jewish prophets, some very physical perils. Most of them would have agreed with the famous first lines of the Tao te Ching, "The Tao that can be expressed is not the eternal Tao; The name that can be named is not the unchanging name." For this reason they could not have conceived of their task as the purveying of information; but while they believed the nature of God to be indescribable, they thought that the plight of man was rather obvious. Plunged into suffering within and conflict without, alienated by self-regard from the spiritual reality which was his true home, he was in need not of information however interesting, but of salvation however drastic.

The negative side of this salvation is spoken of with almost com-

plete unanimity by various religious traditions as a process of self-naughting. Prayer in its highest forms involves a complete eradication of self-will. "What is prayer in its highest forms but the defeat of egotism and the complete liberation of the individual spirit into the awareness of a full union with God."[15] The positive side of salvation is not spoken of at all by the most consistent of those who maintain that it is unspeakable, but, as Conze says, "it is surprising how much the upholders of the Aryan silence have had to say."[16] When they have spoken of that toward which man's salvation moves, they have spoken in however faltering terms it may be of the Godhead. But, however they speak, and whatever they say, the motive is always the same, to supply a map for the journey. Whether all are equally good maps, have the same destination, and do not recommend routes ending in blind alleys is not something to be decided here. The fact is that whether they spoke well or ill it was of the way of salvation that they were speaking, and not of some metaphysical theory which was supposed to solve the puzzles of the cosmos or of human existence. "The question which the religious man poses to himself is always the question of salvation; if he seems sometimes to be trying to solve the riddle of the universe, this is only because he is trying to resolve the riddle of life."[17]

The association of the intentions and methods of the teaching of Jesus and other religious leaders with the philosophy of pragmatism will doubtless seem to some to have a derogatory nuance. Such is certainly not intended. In order to avoid whatever pejorative associations the name of "pragmatism" may be thought to have, I have styled Sabatier's point of view "religious pragmatism". If religious language were thought to have a simple pragmatic aim, it might be supposed that such words as the Sermon on the Mount or such books as the Bhagavadgita had no intrinsic excellence; that they had no more likeness to "truth" than a purgative administered to an ailing body has to the health at which it is aimed. This is not a good image of what Sabatier intends. It is not that the health of mankind consists of something apart from God, but happens, oddly and ironically, to be best brought about by a dose of religion in early infancy. The image that I have probably overworked in this essay, namely that of a map, is more apposite. Religious teaching serves to guide

towards a destination and becomes, in some senses, irrelevant once the destination is reached; but this is not because it never corresponded, had affinities with, or was proportioned to the ultimate goal, but because the map-image of the reality is so much less than the reality itself.

It might be objected that on this view, religious truth is quite different from scientific or common sense truth, and involves quite different categories of thought; and that this, far from reconciling science and religion, is really forcing them further apart. This is not so, however, for on the basis of what has been said above, it follows that the two are really, as Sabatier envisaged, working along parallel lines. Poetic images now come to have the same function for the theologian as do hypotheses for the scientist. It is the notion of "hypothesis" which is capable of serving as a connecting link between their two methods. As this is an important concept for much present day thinking, some attempt must be made to state what is here understood by the term.

Hypotheses

First of all, an hypothesis is not simply an assumption that is made for no reason at all, much as one might say, "let us suppose that we have arrived at this position in a game of chess and see what we can make of the problems that result from it." Rather is it an assumption that we make in all seriousness as being possibly in some sense "true", and capable of elucidating certain events or behaviour patterns which up to that time had been only imperfectly understood or totally uncomprehended. This may seem a rather obvious point to make, but in the light of some things that have been written recently about "bliks", it seemed necessary to insist on the obvious (if so it is). There seems to be a belief commonly held that some types of hypotheses are not really about "what is the case" but derive from a mental attitude which is antecedent to thinking about facts at all.

Perhaps the easiest way to begin an analysis of "bliks" is to distinguish between two types of hypothesis—those that are made on the basis of other hypotheses, and those which themselves serve as a basis to other beliefs. (It may not always be perfectly clear with the

latter that we have really got through to a genuine rather than an interim basis for belief. This does not alter the fact that some hypotheses are taken to be basic ones whether they really are so or not.) Perhaps some illustrations will help.

An example of the first type might be any hypothesis about the relative motions of the earth and the sun, for any of the various views that have been held upon this subject rest upon more fundamental assumptions about the reliability of our senses and their capacity for veridical perceptions of an external reality. An example of the second type of hypothesis might be the belief that sense experience and that alone is capable of yielding any true knowledge of non-subjective reality. It is this second type of hypothesis that has been discussed a good deal in recent years under the name of "bliks". Hare, who seems to have invented the term, and others who have adopted it have shown that everyone does have a blik, and that without one no explanation of a scientific or other type could be conceived; for we must, in fact, have some hypothesis about what would constitute an explanation before we can begin looking for one.[18] Also, before a scientist can embark upon an examination of his chosen field of study, he must have classified some facts according to a preliminary hypothesis about which facts are important for his purposes; without this preliminary hypothesis he could never have embarked upon what he hopes is going to be a scientific explanation of the area of experience that he is studying. While the concept "blik" has served a useful purpose in reminding us that all our knowledge of any sort must ultimately rest upon some unproven and unproveable hypothesis, it has nevertheless been a source of confusion as well. As the term "blik" is currently employed, there seem to me to be two major objections to it, which imply either that it is a useless concept, or that it has, to some extent, been misconceived. I think that the latter is the case. Let us examine what I consider to be the two misconceptions about bliks.

(1) Hare says that "Flew has shown that a blik does not consist in an assertion or system of them . . .".[19] "A certain lunatic is convinced that all dons want to murder him,"[20] he says, giving his first example of a blik. But surely this belief, blik or not, is about a question of fact. Either all dons do or do not want to murder him, or some do

and some do not. The reason why this is denied to be a question of fact is because of the second misconception about bliks.

(2) "There is no behaviour of dons that can be enacted which he will accept as counting against his theory,"[21] says Hare. It would seem that we are here back to the verification principle in all its primitive ferocity as a test of whether a sentence can be accepted as making a factual assertion. It is because there is no way of making a conclusive verification of the blik that it is thought that it cannot be a proposition about a matter of fact. The truth of the matter would seem to be something a bit different; that the verification principle, if it insists on conclusive verification, is a spurious test not merely of meaningfulness but also of factualness. This is because there is for bliks, as Mitchell was later to insist that there was for religious assertions, some test of their truth, even if this test cannot be conclusive.[22]

It is surely nonsense to say that there is nothing that dons can do that is relevant to the retention or rejection of the lunatic's blik, even if there is nothing that they can do that can constitute a final proof either way, and even if there must always remain a possibility of interpreting pleasant behaviour as diabolical cunning. There are, after all, tests of sincerity which most of us are accustomed to use either casually or deliberately on many occasions. It seems to me to be important to Hare's thesis that the original holder of this blik was a lunatic. Any person open to the normal influences of reason and evidence will realise that there are things that can count against this blik. Similarly with regard to Hare's own real or assumed neurotic blik about the steering system of his car;[23] there is surely evidence which he could collect, if he wished to, which would give him statistical information about steering failures in his make of car. Of course, there is no evidence as to whose car is going to be the next to experience such a failure; but all this means is that we all of us run a certain, not negligible, risk whenever we drive a car. And this is a matter of fact. It may be that Hare would want to take the whole matter to a more basic level by insisting that Hume has shown it to be an unproveable blik, that "makes me put my confidence in . . . the continued ability of the road to support my car, and not gape beneath it revealing nothing below . . ."[24] It is no part of my present argument to wish to neglect this call to examine the very bases of

our belief; indeed I shall try to show that in so far as we do examine our beliefs it will be seen that scientific and religious truth are not nearly so disparate as they are often assumed to be. But however sceptical we may be about the fairly widespread belief that roads will continue to support our cars in the future as they have done in the past, there cannot really be any reasonable doubt that the belief is about a matter of fact, and that it is right, wrong, or partly both.

Van Buren is another modern writer who bases his approach to religion on the concept "blik". He explains the intention of his book *The Secular Meaning of the Gospel* in the following way: "I am looking at metaphysics not as some sort of super-science which might provide us with new information about the 'universe' or 'reality' . . . Rather, I am assuming that any and every metaphysics is a proposal, and invitation, to see what we already know in a particular way. Metaphysics does not give us something new to see in any other way than by giving us a new way to see what we have been looking at all along."[25] Two further contributors to the same symposium pertinently enquire why van Buren thinks that we *ought* to see things in the particular way that he recommends.[26] Why should one way of looking at things, on van Buren's view of metaphysics, be better than another? The only reasonable answer to this question would seem to be that it is because one view corresponds, or is thought to correspond, in some manner more fully with the reality that it is supposed to represent than does any other view. And if a philosopher presents us with a new way of seeing things which is closer to "reality" than any that we have had before, it would seem that this must be because he has shown us something new (or recalled us to something that had been overlooked). And this "something new" will be as much a matter of fact as what we have been looking at all along. To deny this would seem to presuppose that the only facts that there are are physical existents and that relations are not facts. For if we see things in a new way without seeing new things, this must mean that we see the old things in a new relationship to one another. But the statement that such and such things that we all know about are related in such and such a way is to give us new facts about them. It cannot be supposed that a new way of seeing things is something that affects only the beholder. When we look

through binoculars we see things that are half a mile away not merely nearer to ourselves, but also nearer to those that are a quarter of a mile away. And when we adopt a new way of seeing, it must be, if we are at all serious in our philosophising, because we think this new way corresponds, in some sense, more with the reality than the old way did, as we think that the new view presented by binoculars is more useful for present purposes than the that given by ordinary looking. Even if it were maintained that all the relations that we ever "see" are not present in reality but are supplied *in toto* by the human mind's perception of things, then sentences about relations would still be about "how things are", about "what is the case"; that is to say, any statement about relationships between things would still be true or false (in this case always false), and therefore would be propositions with truth value. I conclude, therefore, that a statement of a blik, despite all that has been said to the contrary, is an assertion about a matter of fact, about what is the case, and incidentally, that it is not possible to withdraw religious assertions from attacks that have been made upon their alleged meaninglessness simply by saying that they are bliks.

A hypothesis, then, is to be regarded as a belief which is adopted in order to make sense of the experience that we have so far had, which can never be conclusively demonstrated to be final, which may be superseded by some other way of looking at things at a later time, which makes some assertion about things as they are, and which is retained or rejected according as it is found useful in enabling us to deal with present and future experience. Besides the distinction between two types of hypothesis made above, there is also another distinction between a further two types to be made. Hypotheses are of two sorts according as they are concerned with direct sense experience or with something else. I would like to consider both of these types of hypothesis, and for the sake of simplicity will confine myself to discussing visual experience only.

(1) *Direct sense experience*

We have a number of visual sensations whatever the cause of these sensations may be. If our immediate perceptions are sense-data, then any object that we believe ourselves to be seeing will be

a hypothesis made on the basis of the sense-data that we have connected together to make an intelligible whole. The further idea that "the external world" consists of a number of such objects will also be a hypothesis leading to others from which some sort of common sense philosophy will be built up. If, however, the visual sensations are directly of intelligible objects, we are not now emancipated from the realm of hypothesis, for we shall still have to try to form a concept of what an "object" is. The moment that we begin to try to define it we are embarked on the formulation of a hypothesis. We suppose that it is something extended in space, that it is capable of being coloured, or that the colours are supplied by our minds' perception, etc., and eventually we arrive at some notion of what we mean by "object" or some other such thing as "matter" which is conceived as being the stuff of which objects are made. The fact that to adults visual images come along in such familiar patterns tends to blind us to the fact that the objects into which they are grouped are really hypotheses about a non-subjective reality, and that as children we entertained some other quite different, and to us now quite astonishing, hypotheses about number, shape, size, etc. These childish hypotheses were later discarded and replaced by better only with some difficulty. It must not be thought, of course, that I am suggesting that we are all presented with a recognised mass of raw material which we have to interpret as best we can. The truth is that we do not know where the raw material ends and the interpretation begins. The whole result of visual experience is present in our minds as hypotheses which are quite unverifiable, for we cannot compare things as observed by us with the same things as not observed by us. But though we can never say how our sense-images-plus-hypotheses resemble "things as they are", we normally believe that between the two there is some "systematic concomitant variation"[27] because, on the bases of these hypotheses we seem to move around the world with tolerable efficiency.

(2) *That which is beyond the range of direct sense experience*

We believe in the existence of many things and events which cannot be seen such as the movement of electricity in a wire. In order to be able to think of such phenomena we think first of an ordinary

visual image and then say that the phenomenon in question is "like" that. In the case of electricity, for example, we may say that the movement of electricity down a wire is like the flow of water down a glass pipe, or like the "bump" being transferred from one end of a line of shunted coal trucks to the other. In a similar way the internal constitution of the atom is pictured as a planetary system. Occasionally two different and mutually irreconcilable pictures are used for the same referent, as in the case of electricity above, and as in the case of light rays which are thought of sometimes as wave motions and sometimes as streams of particles of energy. In all these cases it is manifestly impossible to say how the picture resembles that which it is supposed to represent; but that in some way or another it does, the scientist feels permitted to assume, since proceeding on this assumption in the past he has found that it works. That is to say, it enables him to predict future eventualities and so conduces to the preservation and enhancement of his life. Such scientific pictures or hypotheses were often, in the past, framed as statements of laws; they are now more generally agreed to be hypotheses about the way things are, that are discarded when any other hypotheses are seen to work better. When they were regarded as laws there was often controversy between protagonists of different hypotheses who regarded their own attitude as right and the others' as wrong. It is now more easily seen that different pictures are alternative ways of looking at things, and that while one might be justified in arguing that one particular picture was in some respects preferable, there is no question of one of them being "right" and the other "wrong". One picture may possibly "correspond" more with the reality that it represents than does another, but there would seem to be no sense in saying that any particular hypothesis was *the* correct one, nor any possibility of verifying the correspondence of particular pictures with their referents by direct observation. The two main reasons for preferring one hypothesis to others seem, at the moment, to be:

(1) a pragmatic one; that one hypothesis enables us to deal with the most eventualities in practice.

(2) what one might call an aesthetic one; that one of the hypotheses is the simplest, while still covering all the known facts.

While the criteria of truth are thus partly practical and partly

aesthetic, it does not follow that the goal of a scientist must be wholly practical (i.e. directed towards finding out what works) and not at all intellectual (i.e. directed to knowing what is the case). His main criterion of truth may be a practical one, but the aim of disinterested curiosity has always been the latter.

Now it seems to me to be not unreasonable to maintain that all our knowledge of any sort is based upon or consists of hypotheses in one form or another. In this respect, scientific and religious truth are no different from one another. Scientific pictures such as the planetary atom and theological pictures such as the fatherhood of God are hypotheses enabling man to dispose himself in an appropriate way to the reality that they represent. While we may never be able to discover what the connection between symbol and reality in either of these two cases is, we seem justified in assuming that there is one, for if there were none at all, it is difficult to see what use any symbol could ever be to us.

While the concept of "hypothesis" is thus capable of acting as a unifying factor with regard to scientific and religious knowledge, it is not being asserted that there are no differences between the hypotheses used in these two different spheres. A scientific hypothesis is one which is basically intellectual; it operates in the sphere of conceptual thinking. Any emotional reaction that we may have to such a hypothesis is irrelevant. To the hypothesis that the earth goes round the sun and not vice versa, for instance, we may feel despair, glee, or unconcern. All are equally irrelevant, and the only appropriate reaction is an intellectual one, namely a desire to establish the truth of the matter. The religious hypothesis proper, however, is an image. With a great deal of theology there has been a considerable inclination to turn such images into purely intellectual formulations by translating them into concepts; but, as argued above, this is a reduction of the genuine religious attitude (which can have a limited usefulness nonetheless), and should not obscure the fact that a religious image-hypothesis includes not merely a way of looking at things but also an appropriate response which involves the conative and affective aspects of man's mind. Indeed it is best thought of not as having something for each of these aspects separately but as appealing to the whole man without division.

This brings us to a consideration of Ian Ramsey's concept of "model" which is very like that of "hypothesis" that we have been discussing above. A distinction is made by Ramsey between "picturing models" which are simply descriptive, and "disclosure models" which convey an insight.[28] The latter are met with in metaphors, for example, which arise where two diverse contexts "meet tangentially".[29] Such metaphors are ". . . rooted in disclosures and born in insight."[30] It is clear that "disclosure" plays the same rôle in Ramsey's thought as does "la conscience religieuse", the basic religious experience or awareness in Sabatier's. The difference between them would seem to be that, as in so many other theological systems, there is a distinct leaning towards the intellectual aspect of the experience in the word "disclosure". It would seem to me that the word, as Ramsey uses it, always includes, or even basically means, "knowledge about" something. A disclosure is an insight, a seeing that something is like . . . With Sabatier, the use of the word "sentiment" as more or less synonymous with "conscience" (consciousness) and "experience", and the use of the Pascalian term "le coeur" for that aspect of man which is active in such states of experience, seems to me to show more clearly that what is involved is not merely some form of intellectual insight, but a form of awareness which involves the whole personality. The use of the term "disclosure" would seem to me to assimilate religious ways of knowing and thinking too much to scientific procedure, though it may be that this is because scientific procedure, for Ramsey, is not the simply intellectual process that it is sometimes taken to be. The use of religious language, for Ramsey, is to give us models which harmonise the various aspects of our experience.[31] For Sabatier, the aim of expressive images is to evoke in us the moments of direct awareness which they express. The one gives us a way of thinking about the mystery, the other leads us to an experience of the mystery itself. The difference between these two thinkers seems to me basically to spring from the fact that Sabatier tends to assimilate theological assertions to poetry while Ramsey takes them nearer to science. (I am not saying that either of them confound the two either deliberately or inadvertently.)

Before leaving the discussion of "hypothesis" it might be as well

to mention an objection that might arise: it is possible that many religious people will object to the truths of religion being represented as hypotheses; they may feel that such representation is lethal to any genuine religious faith. It might be argued that to regard the divinity of Christ, for example, as a hypothesis does not do justice to the absolute conviction with which a belief in the incarnation not merely is, but also should be, entertained. To object along these lines seems to me to confuse psychological certitude with logical certainty. A particular religious belief may generate in a believer a conviction amounting to certitude and involve a personal commitment which is not merely a provisional or half-hearted allegiance. All this is involved in the word "faith" (and much more beside). But no amount of this sort of argument will ever enable us to proceed from certitude to certainty, to argue that because we or other people *feel* absolutely certain about some belief, that therefore it is a logically certain truth. The fact that anyone entertains any attitude whatsoever towards a particular proposition will never affect the truth or falsehood of that proposition.

The religious objection, which I am not suggesting does not deserve serious attention, seems to me to arise mainly because of the fear that such a view as I have expressed above will lead to a weakening not so much of faith as of commitment. The fear, I think, is illusory. A decision is decisive. It can, of course, be revised and reversed. But for the time for which it stands it is a firm decision. The lack of logical certainty does not weaken it. Surely nobody ever half commits himself or half decides to be a Christian, a non-Christian or an agnostic. I cannot conceive what a "half decision" in such circumstances would be. We are placed in a situation in which, whether we like it or not, we have to decide—where the refusal to decide is itself a decision so to refuse. If it is once seen that any decision, that of the sceptic or atheist as much as that of the Christian, is of the nature of a value judgment (which is, of course, a judgment involving commitment), then it will also be seen that the reminder that certitude is not certainty, far from having the bad effect of weakening the decision, may have the wholly good effect of making us more respectful and tolerant towards the sincere decisions and commitments of other people. (I am not here writing of

the familiar distinction in Christian thought between faith and knowledge. I believe that some people have "known" God as surely as others "know" the external world. But philosophical questioning has shown that even our knowledge of the external world is not of a logically certain nature.)

Mystery

If we are to make any sense of a symbolist view of religious language, another concept which must be added to that of "hypothesis" is that of "mystery", for, as Sabatier says, "the idea of "symbol" and the idea of "mystery" go together."[32] There is, of course, a considerable tendency amongst modern philosophers to make short work of such a concept as this. Some mysteries, they would argue, can be dispelled by knowledge of new facts; some can be dispelled by a clarification of our understanding of how the relevant words are being used; and after this, if there are any mysteries which seem to be incapable of being dispelled in principle, this must be because they are only seeming problems, because the sentences which have the grammatical form of questions are really logically meaningless. Religious mysteries are thus quickly classified along with the absurd. But surely some distinction should be made between what falls short of the demands and processes of logic and what rises above them (or, if that distinction is unacceptable, between what is logically self-contradictory and what is outside the area of ordinary logic altogether, like poetry for example). Such a distinction seems often to be overtly and covertly denied. Bertrand Russell, for example, commenting on the cosmological argument, writes, "If there can be anything without a cause, it may just as well be the world as God . . ."[33] Assuming that by the "world" he means the sum total of the physical and not some semi-mystical entity beyond, this is surely a silly argument. If there is anything that we know about physical objects it is that they do not make themselves out of nothing. To suppose that the world of physical objects existed without a cause would therefore be to suppose an absurdity or contradiction. But to suppose that there is being which is not physical and may therefore possibly be responsible for its own existence in a way which we cannot fully comprehend is not to fall into the realm of the

absurd. I am not claiming that the cosmological "proof" shows that there must be such a "being", nor that we can be certain that the world is not absurd, for one has to reckon with this latter as a distinct possibility. All that needs to be pointed out here is that to suppose that the world had no cause is a different type of supposition from that of supposing that God had no cause; for it appears from our observation that physical objects/events do have causes and to suppose some point at which they did not is to posit the contradictory. To suppose some being which is not subject to physical conditions is to posit the mysterious. Of course, the objection is bound to arise that this latter supposition, if not absurd in the sense of "contradictory" is nevertheless still meaningless. While any attempt to give positive definition to the word "God" might be regarded as meaningless (this is precisely the question at issue in the whole of this essay), it seems to me impossible so to regard the negative statements in the present paragraph, where God is being spoken of simply as the "non-physical", etc.

If mystery is not absurdity, we must now try to say more clearly what it is. Basically, it is something that is known and in some sense understood, but which becomes more elusive the more profoundly we penetrate into it. "Whoever says 'symbol' says at the same time 'veiling' and 'revealing'. In becoming present and even sensible to us, the living truth still remains veiled."[34] An obvious example of such a mystery would be human love, which we may think that we understand very well from a shallow experience of it, but which, as our experience deepens, we find becomes more and more "mysterious". To give a much more precise definition of "mystery" is difficult but perhaps we can help towards some further indication of the meaning of the term by contrasting it with some other things that it is not, but with which it is often confused.

First, as already observed, it is not to be classed with the absurd. Secondly, it is not a secret; a secret is usually some information that is withheld from us, such as what we are to get for our next Christmas present, but which, when and if we are told about it, we have no difficulty in understanding. Thirdly, it is not a problem; a problem always has a solution (if it does not it is only a pseudo-problem), while there is no possibility of finding a solution to a mystery, for

the terms are simply inapplicable one to the other. Lastly, I think that we can say what would be required to bring a mystery to an end; when something can be fitted into a closed system (i.e. one in which everything is totally explicable in terms either of itself or of other things in the system), it is a mystery no longer. Hundreds of such systems exist in daily life so long as we do not trouble to question some of the assumptions on which they are based. With a motor car, for instance; given that things are what they seem to be, that nature is uniform, that men have the desires that they have, etc., it is possible to say exactly what a carburettor or a clutch is. But when we ask some fundamental questions and start putting question marks against causality, induction, uniformity, etc., and begin to wonder what we mean by "matter", "energy" and so on, the system is closed no longer. One conclusion that we would seem to be able to draw from all the philosophy that has so far been written is that nowhere in this world is there a truly closed system and that the universe itself is not one either. The mystery remains; it arises every time that we seriously try to describe what we mean by such terms as "object", "perception", "matter", "life", etc. It is possible that in the last resort everything can be reduced to just one mystery. In science, for example, perhaps everything can be explained in terms of just one concept such as "energy", but to reduce all mysteries to one does not reduce the mystery.

A mystery arises whenever we try to give a complete description of something that we think we know quite well. What often seems to happen is that we think that we have explained something when we have named it. We see the waves coming further and further up the beach, and are able to say, with more knowledge than was apparently possessed by Julius Caesar, "Ah, that is the tide." If asked what a tide is, we are able to reply that it is the movement of the sea caused by, amongst other things, the varying attraction of the moon. In other words, after having named something, we next comment upon its behaviour and its causes; that is, we try to explain it in terms of something that we take to be known. "Gravity," we say, "you know what gravity is." But supposing the persistent questioner replies, "No, what is it?" Then we begin going around the same circus once more. Familiarity in this case certainly breeds,

if not contempt, then something that is at least very like it. It is astonishing how readily the human mind is prepared to write off so much of the mystery that continually surrounds us by saying, "You know, that's so-and-so, we've seen that hundreds of times before." Nobody would thinkingly suppose that naming something explained it; but we all seem to have a built-in assumption that it does. This is because we confuse what is familiar with what is understood. The familiar is more credible than the unfamiliar, certainly, but this does not make it more comprehensible.

The notion of mystery is most clearly arrived at when we make the distinction between "knowing" and "knowing about". We continually contrive to cover up the mystery of the basic fact of our being confronted by something with the indefatigable propensity of the human mind to give information about it. So we resolve mystery into problems and get information instead of understanding. We become more informed but not more aware. Science, common sense and a good deal of modern philosophy seem to assume that the confrontation, the basic knowing, is important because it enables us to go on to the amassing of information about things. They are all concerned with facts, with "what is the case". Religion does, and it seems to me that philosophy should, work the other way round; that is, compile information about things in order eventually to confront and be confronted by them in the right way. Religious thought leads to contemplation of God and His world.

It might seem that regarding our confrontation with something in ordinary perception as coming face to face with mystery, is robbing the term of its real significance. If everything is a mystery, then we have added nothing to our understanding of things by simply finding another term with which to name them. If, however, we begin by saying that, for example, "red" is a mystery, this seems to be a trivial observation only because we are not questioning any of our assumptions on which our knowledge of "red" is based. It comes into the category of mystery because it is a part of a much larger complex. It is when we begin to ask, "then what is colour . . . , what is the matter of which it is said to be a property . . . , what is the energy of which matter is said to be composed . . . ?" that we begin to take things into the realm of mystery proper. All questions

of this sort seem to resolve themselves in the end into the basic question of being or existence itself. Nowhere can the great divide between mystery and absurdity be better seen than in the discussion that has gone on around the question, "Why is there anything at all?" To some this is simply a meaningless question because it cannot be answered in the same terms as one which asks, "What is the case?" But, while as J. J. C. Smart admits, to reject this question as meaningless is not evidence of a lack of intelligence, it is evidence of shallowness.[35] It is, in fact, due to a confusion of mystery with meaninglessness that the question has ever been regarded as absurd.

It might be asked whether we can make a psychological or only a logical distinction between knowing and knowing about. Sabatier seems to have thought that while, with religious experience at any rate, we could make a logical distinction between our basic experience and the eventual system of thought that came to be built upon it, that in fact we never found a moment of primitive awareness isolated from thought about the object of experience. It seems to me, however, that moments of cognition, when discursive thought is absent, may occur on rare occasions. In books of devotion a process of prayer, which develops by way of discursive meditation upon God to a prayer of acquired contemplation or simple beholding, is often described, and it would seem that in any true mystical experience thought about, or knowledge about, the object of experience is not present. Wordsworth's description of such an experience could, I think, in this regard, be taken as typical.

> In such access of mind, in such high hour
> Of visitation from the living God,
> Thought was not: in enjoyment it expired.
> No thanks he breathed, he proffered no request.
> Rapt into still communion that transcends
> The imperfect offices of prayer and praise,
> His mind was a thanksgiving to the power
> That made him; it was blessedness and love.[36]

The man who thought of poetry as "emotion recollected in tranquillity"[37] was able to write *about* this experience as the result of subsequent reflection upon it.

We do not have to go to what many people would bracket off as abnormal experience, to find knowing isolated from knowing about. If we take Martin Buber's distinction between I-Thou and I-it relations, we have here another way of speaking of the difference between the awareness of something that takes it as it is, that is simply a direct relation to something and a confrontation by it, and the attitude that turns it over and around in one's mind in order to extract information about it. Nor need such experience be in any way overtly connected with religion. Sartre, writing presumably in a heavily autobiographical manner, describes how Roquentin came up against the sheer fact of some tree roots one day.[38] The easiest way of explaining the revulsion that he there felt would be to say, that the comfort and support of information, which had for so long distracted his mind, was at that moment withdrawn, and he was left with an alarming view of something as it really was. Undoubtedly the persons that we are and have been, and the information that we possess, will all affect the way in which we see directly into the heart of things in this way. But that the direct awareness must come first seems to be self evident, for without something being "given", it would be impossible for us to extract and compile information about it. In this way then, all our knowledge comes from our direct confrontation with the given, from the propensity to mystical apprehension that is present, but deformed in all of us. The information that we compile may help us to a right appraisal of what we see, and in our progress in learning to see things aright. And we have much progress to make, for, as Traherne says, "You never enjoy the world aright, till you see how a sand exhibiteth the wisdom and power of God . . . You never enjoy the world aright, till the Sea itself floweth in your veins, till you are clothed with the heavens and crowned with the stars . . ."[39]

Despite all the difficulties involved, perhaps it might be as well to try to say something more of what I am here taking this "seeing aright" to be. If we begin by saying that it results from looking at a person or a thing as objectively as possible, it might be objected that this is what a scientist is trying to do all the time, and that there is no need to make all these difficulties about it. It is different from scientific looking, however, for what the scientist is trying to ob-

serve as objectively as possible is not things but facts about things, and his attitude is therefore an analytic one. This is very different from holding an object in the centre of awareness without taking it to bits, reflecting upon it, thinking of facts about it or doing anything other than simply holding it as it is in the centre of consciousness. It is, of course, different again from what happens when we fasten our gaze upon an object, our eyes become glazed, and our mind is abstracted into a state of day-dreaming play around many matters unconnected with the thing on which our gaze is fixed all the time.

Whether we ever enter into this contemplative relation with anything depends in the last resort upon us and not upon the object of our awareness. By this I do not mean that we must fall into some Pelagian view of the matter; only that it depends on the view that we adopt, whether this is adopted by will or by grace. It is a part of our normal experience, however, that some things have more power to compel this attitude in us than others. Things that we call "beautiful" have the power to stop our restless questioning and compel our contemplation. But while some things make the attitude of contemplation more easy than others, there is nothing in the last resort towards which it cannot be adopted.

I believe that the type of awareness that I have been trying to describe is one which is present in all mystical experience as well as in the experience that Buber calls an I-Thou relation. Unlike many people, I am not in the least surprised that Buber speaks of entering into this relation with things as well as with persons. Some people seem to have been somewhat misled by the phrase "I-Thou" into thinking that the relation to which it refers is possible only with beings that we would normally address as "thou", i.e. other persons, and that Buber is trying to give a description of what is peculiar to relations with persons as distinct from relations with things. This, I think, is far from the truth. In this case, whether we engaged in an I-Thou relation in any given situation would be determined by the object of our experience at least as much as by our attitude towards it. But a careful reading of Buber's book will surely show that this is not what he intended us to understand. Far from its being strange that he should have spoken of an I-Thou relation with things,

this makes it quite plain that he is mainly concerned with a distinction between two types of awareness of the "other", rather than one between two different types of object; and that he should have chosen to speak in this manner of a tree is even less strange,[40] for there are few things more likely than these gentle visitations from another and calmer realm than that of our present noisy world of persons, to induce in us the beatitude of contemplation.

The moments of "direct awareness" that I have been trying to describe seem to me to come into human experience in three main ways:

(1) In all acts of perception; but here the element of direct confrontation with something other than ourselves is so overlaid with our thinking about the objects of experience, and with the universal human desire to "use" them, that we are hardly, if at all, aware of it.

(2) In moments when we are surprised into becoming more acutely aware of the element of direct confrontation in our experience more or less involuntarily. Probably such moments are most often induced in the realms of aesthetics and sexual love.

(3) As a result of a discipline of prayer and meditation leading to what is often described as "acquired contemplation". For Sabatier, religious speech takes its origin from moments of direct awareness of the divine. It consists of images whose aim is to induce in us the response which is appropriate to the mystery that they reveal.

To conclude, something had better be said about this notion of "appropriateness" referred to here and elsewhere above. On the face of things, it would appear that such a notion must be defined in relation to some human intention; e.g. if we want to make a journey, a motor car may be appropriate, but if we want to fly it is not. It could be said that the intention in both scientific and religious knowledge is one of self- or life-preservation. On the material level, we need to know as much as possible about our environment in order to avoid being poisoned, drowned, etc. On the spiritual level, we need to adopt such views and attitudes as will preserve us from spiritual destruction. An appropriate attitude towards God would therefore be such as would lead to this end. If we were to stop here, however, we should be back in a banal rather than a religious form of pragmatism, for the test of truth would now be once more

a species of human comfort. A truly religious person would, I think, want to define "appropriateness" in relation to God, not man; for as St. Bernard says, the reason for loving God is God.[41] It could be argued that this still takes human intention into account, for love and worship are not the appropriate response to God if one wishes for spiritual destruction. While persons who have taken the love of God seriously have always been prepared to argue that loving God brings its own rewards, they have also always insisted that God should still be loved even were this to lead to death, not life; and that if there was any sense in which we "should" choose life, it was because this was what was willed by God. What is felt to be "appropriate" has to be derived as part of the whole value judgment from man's awareness of the divine.

Footnotes

1. For a fuller discussion of these points, see Appendix C on "Subjectivity".
2. Allen and Unwin, 1938.
3. Op. cit. p. 335.
4. Op. cit. p. 335.
5. *On Selfhood and Godhood,* Allen and Unwin, 1957, p. 355.
6. RA, p. 448.
7. *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, particularly chapters 4 and 8.
8. RA, pp. 496–7.
9. RA, p. 498.
10. RA, p. 497.
11. RA, p. 498.
12. RA, p. 497.
13. RA, p. 498.
14. EP, p.194. "Il préfère le langage du peuple à celui des savants; il ne se sert que d'images, de jeux de mots, de paradoxes, de paraboles, d'idées courantes et traditionelles, de toutes formes d'expression qui, prise à la lettre, est bien la plus inadéquate du monde, mais qui est, en revanche, la plus vivante et la plus excitatrice . . . Jésus voulait forcer ses auditeurs à interpréter chacune de ses paraboles, parce qu'il les appelait à une activité intérieure, autonome et personelle, parce qu'il mettait fin à la religion de la lettre et du rite, et voulait fonder la religion de l'esprit."
15. EP, p. 129.
16. *Buddhism.* (Bruno Cassirer, 1951). p. 16.
17. EP, p. 13.
18. NPT, p. 101.
19. NPT, p. 100.
20. NPT, p. 99.

21. NPT, p. 100.
22. NPT. pp. 103–5.
23. NPT, pp. 100–1.
24. NPT, p. 101.
25. *Religious Education*, Jan./Feb. 1965. p. 5.
26. Op. cit. pp. 15 and 22.
27. A phrase that I have taken from D. Emmett's *The Nature of Metaphysical Thinking*.
28. *Models and Mystery* (O.U.P., 1964). pp. 2 and 9–10.
29. Op. cit. p. 52.
30. Op. cit. p. 50.
31. ". . . A model in theology . . . stands or falls according to its success (or otherwise) in harmonising whatever events are to hand." Op. cit. p. 17.
32. EP, p. 393.
33. *Why I am not a Christian*. (Watts and Co., 1927). p. 11.
34. EP, p. 393. "Qui dit symbole, dit tout ensemble occultation et révélation. En devenant présente et même sensible, la vérité vivante demeure encore voilée."
35. NPT, pp. 19 and 26.
36. *The Excursion*.
37. Preface to "The Lyrical Ballads".
38. In his novel *La Naussée*.
39. *Centuries of Meditations*. 1st Century no.'s 27 and 29.
40. *I and Thou*. (T. and T. Clarke, 1937). p. 7.
41. *De Diligendo Deo*. (C.U.P. 1926). p. 9, Cap. 1. "Causa diligendi deum deus est." It is interesting to note, however, that St. Bernard extracts two meanings from this sentence, one of them a very pragmatic one: " . . . sive quia nihil iustius sive quia nil diligi fructiosius potest."

VI

Sabatier's views in the light of contemporary philosophical theology

"*What is God for one who is entirely void of religious feeling, that is to say of the feeling of an interior relationship with God?*"[1]

WE now come to what is probably the most important question about Sabatier for any present-day student of religion, namely how far his views on religious language, appearing in books written about seventy years ago, can stand up to the sort of analysis and criticism of religious assertions that have been made by philosophers during the last twenty years or so. It would be best to begin with some words of his own. "It is a truth which has become almost a commonplace for philologists, that languages are organisms and that words have a life and development of their own comparable to vegetable and animal life . . . It is the same with the dogmas of a church which also make up a living organism and which are nothing other, properly understood, than a theological language through which the consciousness of this church and the devotion of its members are revealed and affirmed . . . the life of dogmas is to be found neither in the logic of their ideas nor in the greater or less correctness of these theoretical formulations, but, above all else, in the religious life itself; that is to say in the practical devotion of the church which professes them. Dogma is the language which faith speaks . . . One should not consider dogmas as they are set out and classified in confessions of faith and in works of credal theology. At least, one should not limit oneself to studying them in these catalogues, just as one should not try to catch the sense of a living language simply from a dictionary. Words and dogmas here appear lifeless, and, indeed, so they are, for they lie in a sort of tomb. If one really wishes to feel the life of words, to

see them blossom with infinite nuances of meaning and shoot forth with perpetually new significance, then one must take them from the lips of men in everyday speech."[2] It will be seen from this that it was Sabatier's expressed advice to find the meaning of a word in its use, advice which the advocates of linguistic analysis now seem disposed to take after much discussion of the verification principle. Lest it should be thought that this is a somewhat isolated passage in the *Outline* not really connected with its main lines of thought and procedure, it should be noted how many times Sabatier recurred to this principle, and how, on the occasion where he produced his most careful analysis of religious language, he put the principle into practice by the very "modern" method of working from paradigm cases.[3] Indeed, in reading the whole of the section from which the above quotations are taken, one cannot but be struck by the very "modern" approach that one finds on many of its pages and one wonders why his method of theorising, which, if not absolutely correct was so obviously on the right lines, ever came to be laid aside for anything else.

Not only did Sabatier see clearly how important it was to pursue the ever-changing meaning of a word through the ever-changing uses to which it was put, he also saw what would be the result if, mistakenly, philosophers did set out to consider dogmas caught, killed and exhibited for inspection like museum pieces. "A moment always arrives, however, when the image becomes detached from the feeling that produced it, and when it becomes fixed simply as an image in the memory. Then, during reflection about it, the image is transformed into a more or less abstract idea or concept... By means of a progressive generalisation and abstraction the reasoning faculty attenuates the primitive metaphor, wearing it down as though upon a grindstone. But when the metaphorical element has disappeared, the original notion itself, at least in so far as any positive connotation is concerned, has disappeared also. There are mysterious lamps which burn only under an alabaster globe. One can make this solid envelope thinner to make it more transparent. But take care not to break it; so the flame is extinguished and we are left in darkness. So it is with our general ideas about the object of religion. When every metaphorical element is eliminated they become simply negative,

contradictory and devoid of all real content. Such are our ideas of the infinite and the absolute."[4]

One can see from this that Sabatier quite clearly anticipated the "death by a thousand qualifications"[5] which religious metaphors are said to suffer, and added that if one wanted to save them from such a premature demise, then it was necessary to put back into them (or, better still, never take away), the "element of positive experience"[6] which was their reason for existing at all. A moment's consideration of what must surely be one of the mildest criticisms of religious language that Flew has ever made, reinforces Sabatier's insistence that we should never forget the dependence of religious language on experience. In a discussion with D. MacKinnon, Flew conceded that he could see how the use of analogy could proceed once it had begun, but what he could not see was how to get started.[7] This revealing admission can surely mean only one thing; that while Flew can see some sort of logic in the use that theologians make of analogy, he has not personally experienced that sort of awareness of the divine for the expression of which analogy and metaphor are employed. Logic gives no premisses; so, without the religious experience there is no sense in the analogy and metaphor. This should hardly surprise us or him. To break into the use of analogy, a man must have the experience which analogy is designed to express.

This leads, of course, to the difficult question of whether, in fact, Flew or anyone else is really wholly devoid of religious experience; or, to put the same question in another way, whether religious writers are writing of an uncommon experience, or of a common experience in an uncommon way. It would take us too far outside the scope of this essay to examine this question at length. The following answer is implied, I think, in what Sabatier wrote; that a developed religious or mystical experience is uncommon, but that the beginnings of such experience are to be found in the human consciousness in general, and that it is only by reference to the fully developed experience that much of the confused and fleeting material of our day to day experience can properly be understood.

This brings us to the crux of the question at issue between sceptics and Christians at the present time, a question which can be put

as one of description: whether there is anything in human experience which, in order to be fully described, requires the sort of language used by religious people, or whether their images and analogies are not just unnecessarily pretentious ways of talking of something that can be quite well and *exhaustively* described in more ordinary ways. The word "exhaustively" is obviously important. No one doubts that, say, a banal description of religious experience in terms of human emotion, like a description of coitus in purely physical terms, may be accurate so far as it goes. There is, however, a considerable tendency among philosophers, both of the professional and public-house types, to assume that the lowest common denominator description (the lower and commoner the better) is, because accurate, also adequate. I have, for example, heard someone justify his religious practices by saying, "Religion is an itch, so I scratch it." Now anyone who took the Christian religion seriously would have to admit that man, being created to love and serve God, and therefore with a need for God, could, at a pinch, be said to have an "itch" for God, and also a need to "scratch" it. The question is not whether such phrases, and many more sophisticated descriptions of man's great illusion are, in their limited way, accurate, but whether they are adequate. This issue now seems to pose the question: do religious propositions really have some objective reference, or are they wholly reducible to descriptions of man's feeling states and emotional attitudes? For obviously if they are so reducible, it is highly misleading, to say the least of it, to import into them such unnecessary terms as "God".

Having heard Sabatier's justification of religious language from his analysis of its use, the sceptical linguistic philosopher might feel disposed to argue that on this view religious propositions are so reducible, and that apparently none of them signifies anything directly about an objective reality at all. Even the A. J. Ayer of *Language, Truth and Logic* could accept religious language on these terms, as the expression of emotional attitudes; if it is not claimed that these emotional attitudes have any objective reference, no positivist would quarrel with religious people having them, and he would even agree that any proposition based upon them was incontrovertible, for even if a man was claiming to have emotions

that he was not, in fact, having, his statement that he was having them would be, in the last resort, as irrefutable as it was irrelevant. The case against Sabatier, then, is that his thought has no way out of the prison of pure subjectivity. "There now is the great word unleashed . . ."[8] It is this question that we must now examine at greater length.

Criticism of religious assertions based on religious experience

C. B. Martin, in *A Religious way of Knowing*,[9] examines the views of two theologians who base their theology to some extent on religious experience, and argues that such experience is not a satisfactory basis for anything like traditional religious beliefs. He contrasts throughout his article two types of statements which make "existential" and "psychological" claims respectively.[10] He concludes from his examination that "statements concerning a certain alleged religious way of knowing betray a logic extraordinarily like that of statements concerning introspective and subjective ways of knowing." He adds, however, that, "It is not my wish to go from a correct suggestion that the logic is very like to an incorrect suggestion that the logic is just like."[11] With this "correct suggestion" I do not think that Sabatier would have quarrelled; indeed he was not afraid, in the *Outline*, of describing religious knowledge as "subjective", though there is some evidence that he was later sorry that he did not make his meaning more precise or even choose a different word.[12] But with regard to the main burden of Martin's article, there seems to me to be little doubt as to what Sabatier's attitude towards it would have been. He would have pointed out that while Martin was using the words "existential" and "psychological" to designate the two types of assertions that he wished to contrast he was begging the question at issue; for the use of the word "existential" assumes, without any reason being given, that these assertions have objective reference. When he comes to examine the assertions based on religious experience he assumes that, to say the least, there is here some doubt about whether such assertions have objective reference or not. Sabatier would have pointed out that what Martin was really contrasting, throughout his article, was sense experience and religious experience, and that it was a gratuitous assumption that one

of these types of experience could lead to existential propositions and that the other could not (or that there was some doubt about the one but not about the other). For none of our experience, not even sense experience, comes to us in packages neatly and clearly labelled "Objective".

So, it is not self-evident that sense experience has reference to something objective or that religious experience has not. It is precisely this that is the question at issue. For Sabatier, sense and religious experience were parallel. The first, via the modifications of our consciousness that he calls sensations, leads us to form hypotheses about physical objects; while the second, via the modifications of our consciousness that he calls "sentiments", leads us to form hypotheses about the divine. The two processes being parallel, there was no more justification for regarding the statements emanating from one of these areas as "existential" than there was for so regarding the statements emanating from the other. The whole question of the evidential value of religious experience which bedevils the philosophers' discussion of it is really something of their own making. Mystics do not normally argue, as Martin seems to want them to, "I have a direct experience of God, therefore He exists." They and most other people simply assume without argument that that of which they are conscious does exist; that, when they are not in error, only things which exist are capable of being present to their apprehension. It is only as a result of philosophical analysis that this has to be admitted on all hands to be a hypothesis. Which is a fair enough conclusion to such analysis, provided that it is a conclusion with regard to all types of human experience, sense-experience included, and not arbitrarily applied only to some. The sceptics are not sceptical enough.

With this in mind, it is not very difficult to see what would have been Sabatier's response to Martin's first argument which he states thus: "The alleged theological way of knowing may be described as follows: 'I have had direct experience (knowledge, acquaintance, apprehension) of God, therefore I have valid reason to believe that God exists.'

A. By this it may be meant that the statement 'I have had direct experience of God, but God does not exist' is contradictory. Thus, the

assertion that 'I have had direct experience of God' commits one to the assertion that God exists. From this it follows that 'I have had direct experience of God' is more than a psychological statement, because it claims more than the fact that I have certain sensations—it claims that God exists. Thus, as it stands this is a correct form of deductive argument. The assertion 'I have had direct experience of God' includes the assertion 'God exists' thus, the conclusion 'therefore, God exists' follows tautologically.

B. Unfortunately, this deduction is useless. The addition of the existential claim 'God exists' to the psychological claim of having religious experiences must be shown to be warrantable. It cannot be shown to be warrantable by any deductive argument, because psychological statements of the form:

(1) I feel as if an unseen power were interested in (willed) my welfare.

(2) I feel an elation quite unlike any I have ever felt before.

(3) I have feelings of guilt and shame at my sinfulness.

(4) I feel as if I were committed to bending all of my efforts to live in a certain way, etc., etc.,

can make the claim only that I have these complex feelings and sensations. Nothing else follows deductively."[13]

With this last sentence Sabatier would have undoubtedly agreed if "deductively" is taken in a strict sense, as here. What he would have gone on to point out is that the argument is equally valid as a criticism of sense experience propositions. Consider the following passage:

"The alleged empirical way of knowing may be described as follows: 'I have had direct visual experience (knowledge, acquaintance, apprehension) of a tree, therefore I have valid reason to believe that the tree exists.'

A. By this may be meant that the statement 'I have had direct visual experience of a tree, but the tree does not exist' is contradictory. Thus, the assertion that 'I have had direct experience of a tree' commits one to the assertion that the tree exists. From this it follows that 'I have had direct experience of a tree' is more than a psychological statement, because it claims more than the fact that I have certain sensations—it claims that the tree exists. Thus as it stands it

is a correct form of deductive argument. The assertion 'I have had direct experience of a tree' includes the assertion 'the tree exists' thus, the conclusion 'therefore, the tree exists' follows tautologically. B. Unfortunately, this deduction is useless. The addition of the existential claim 'the tree exists' to the psychological claim of having visual sensations of it must be shown to be warrantable. It cannot be shown to be warrantable by any deductive argument, because psychological statements of the form:

(1) It looks to me as if there is an object out there extended in space.

(2) I've been up to it and had a sensation of touching bark.

(3) I can hear the leaves rustling anyway.

(4) What's more, I've ordered several to plant in my garden, etc. can make the claim only that I have these complex feelings and sensations. Nothing else follows deductively."

This passage is, of course, simply the same one as previously quoted from Martin's article but with every reference to religious experience replaced by one to sense experience.

Now if Martin wished to adopt a consistently solipsist position, as far as I can see there are no arguments which can refute him (even if there are no conclusive arguments which he can bring to establish the solipsist hypothesis). But if he does not wish to be a solipsist, then it would appear that some other argument must be found to show that religious assertions are very much like psychological ones, for the argument so far examined does not establish any reason for believing in the objective reference of sense experience but not of religious experience.

Instead of contrasting "existential" and "psychological" statements, terms which, after all, beg the question at issue, we will henceforth speak of sense experience and religious experience; the question we shall now have to ask is, "on the basis of Sabatier's frequent use of the word 'feeling' in such phrases as 'the feeling of dependence', is it not likely that he had in mind an experience that has a purely subjective reference?" By using the word "feeling" (as well as, of course, in other places words like "consciousness" and "experience") to designate man's basic awareness of the divine, Sabatier did not intend to imply that there was no element of cogni-

tion at all in this experience. Usually he employs the term "cognitive" as Otto uses "rational" to mean the process of conceptualising or imagining something, and agrees with Otto that it is the "non-rational" which is the most important element in religion. Cognition in the sense of conceptualisation he thought was absent from the basic religious experience then, but not cognition in the sense of a direct apprehension of the given. This apprehension was above thinking, willing and feeling as these words are normally used. It was a total response in which these three forms of psychological activity were undifferentiated. When, by reflection they began to be distinguished, it became possible to separate out some "knowledge about". The use of the word "feeling" then, does not imply a reference to the affective faculty alone, but to a way of apprehension or awareness which Sabatier has symbolized by this word.[14]

There must arise now the difficult question of what, in these circumstances, apprehension without conceptualisation can be like. Some would doubtless feel disposed to make the immediate reply, "like nothing at all". Perhaps there is a fairly commonly experienced example of what such apprehension could be in music, which has been described as "the art of thinking with sounds without concepts".[15] This could, of course, mean that a composer thinks either in a pattern of notes on paper or in patterns of sound, and that the place of concepts in ordinary thinking is taken by one of these substitutes. This is not what is being asserted, however. What is being asserted is that music conveys a meaning beyond the pattern of notes or sounds which is capable of being understood but not conceptualised by a sensitive listener. It will, of course, be denied that music possesses anything like the meaning here ascribed to it, not merely by some empiricist philosophers but also by a number of theologians sensing their monopoly of religious matters being made unsafe. Pénido, for example, writing of the cognate subject of poetry, puts it firmly into its place in the category of the sub-rational, allowing only theology into the realm of that which is beyond reason.. "... the realm of the poet is that which is below reason; it is all that which cannot attain to the realm of the clear light of the intellect, ... the poet gives us intuitions and images of the concrete. The theologian, he has as his portion that which is above reason ...,"[16]

Such writers, like the logical positivist with religion, will always ask the question, "If music does have meaning, what does such and such a sonata mean?" But obviously this question does not ask if music has a meaning; what it requires is someone to translate the meaning into words, and not into the equivocal words of poetry either, but into ordinary scientifically verifiable prose. We need hardly insist at length that this cannot be done. If it could, no sane person would go through the emotional and intellectual effort of writing a sonata if his meaning could equally well be expressed by some pages of plain prose. This does not mean that music has nothing to say about man and the universe which he inhabits. Simply that what it has to say is expressible only in artistic language developed for that purpose. It is easy enough for a logical positivist armed with the verification principle to prove that music has nothing scientific to say. As far as I know, no one has ever claimed that it has. The musician could just as easily retort that science has nothing musical to say; no contribution to make to man's quest for the meaning and purpose of human existence.

If one distinguishes "knowing by direct acquaintance" and "knowing about" almost to the extent of separating them, the problem arises as to how, in that case, one can ever pass from one type of knowing to the other. The answer to be found in Sabatier would appear to be something like this; that in the feeling, awareness, or consciousness of something which is direct acquaintance with it, there seems to be a response which is felt to be appropriate. If there were not, the religious experience would just be an undifferentiated feeling and in place of "dependence" the religious man might just as well have a feeling of superiority, hatred or any other intense emotion. From the very fact of dependence one can begin to deduce some "knowledge about". It is from such "appropriate responses" as this that many things can be deduced, e.g. that one is not justified in treating people like pieces of inanimate matter.[17]

If we are, in this way, to admit some cognitive element into religious experience, we might wonder why Sabatier made it difficult for us to do so by speaking so often of "feeling" and less often of "knowing". He did, of course, speak of knowing, by implication, in the phrase "la connaissance religieuse", "religious knowledge";

but I think that the reason why he liked the terms "sentiment" or "feeling", and "emotion" is because it is difficult to speak of "knowing" God or "seeing" Him without implying very strongly that some concept or image is involved. The truth is that any word that Sabatier used was bound to have only metaphorical significance, for it is impossible to speak univocally of our apprehension of physical objects and of God (even with the word "apprehension"). He could perhaps have used "taste", as does the psalmist, but this seems in many ways far too closely linked with one of our least discriminating and crudely "sensual" senses. By using the metaphor of feeling (and I hope that it does not need saying again that he intended no reference whatsoever to the sense of touch by this word), he was able to express his perception of the fact that God is known intimately within us, that, as is sometimes said, "He is nearer to us than we are ourselves." The metaphor of feeling also enabled him consistently to maintain, and in the view of most subsequent theologians, correctly to maintain, that revelation does not consist of given propositions about God, but of His disclosure of Himself.

One now has to face the question of why Sabatier wanted to claim both: that there is an element of cognition in religious experience and that this cannot be reduced to simple propositions about God. Whatever answer is given, it will amount in one way or another to the fact that God is transcendent. A critic might here want to interject that it is precisely this concept of transcendence which he finds lacking in Sabatier's writings, and that he insists exclusively on the immanence of God.[18] If "immanence" and "transcendence" were to be understood geographically, the critic would be right, for Sabatier almost always speaks of God as interior. If they are understood as terms of value, however, then Sabatier stresses the transcendence of God more than the immanence. We should be careful to ask what it is that we think of God as transcending. Sabatier would certainly not have said that He transcended every aspect of humanity; if He did, there would be absolutely no possibility of any contact between the divine and the human at all. MacIntyre maintains that this, in fact, is precisely what the position is. So he argues that it is impossible for man to experience God in any way because "the definition of God as infinite is intended precisely to distinguish between God

and everything finite, but to take the divine out of the finite is to remove it from the entire world of human experience."[19] (MacIntyre is, of course, speaking of the "infinite" and not the "transcendent", but, *mutatis mutandis*, the argument is not affected by this.) Now the phrase "the entire world of human experience" is decidedly ambiguous. It can mean "all those things that humans have experienced" ("by the senses" seeming to be understood): in which case we can agree that "infinite" or "transcendent" are supposed to remove God from the class of sense experienced objects. Or it could mean, "all the possibilities of human experiencing": and here we have to consider that there may be, as Sabatier believed that there was, some type of human experience other than sensual experience in which man is aware of the divine. I can only say for myself that it does not appear to me to be self-evident that there is no such type of experience. MacIntyre's argument is, I think, valid against such a theology as Barth's, which insists on the transcendence of God at the cost of withdrawing Christian theology from rational discussion and from any sort of dialogue with any other revelations. Throughout the *Outline*, however, while it is assumed that God transcends at least two things—ordinary sense experience and the human intelligence with its powers of analysis, abstraction and conceptualisation—it is not assumed that He exceeds all possibilities of human experiencing altogether.

If the "direct acquaintance" or "apprehension" in its religious form is accepted (provisionally or otherwise) as something which occurs to human beings, we have now to enquire if such an experience can really be taken to have objective reference. A number of people may feel that because some modern philosophers have tried to dispense altogether with the notion of a subject-object relationship, and dialectical theologians have poured scorn upon it as a symbol of our relationship with God, there is little to be said in favour of retaining such an imprecise and outworn distinction. There seem to me, however, to be no alternative terms or thought forms in which we can more appositely discuss the particular criticism of Sabatier's thought that we have to consider. We must try to make the terms "objective" and "subjective" as precise as possible, therefore.

If, as appears often to be assumed, "objective" refers to experience which is shared, and "subjective" to experience which is individual and unshared, then it is very difficult if not impossible to defend religious experience from the charge of being "purely subjective". The assumption is hardly one that we can accept, however, for two main reasons:

(1) On the basis of such an assumption the objects seen by a normal man in the country of the blind would have to be regarded as subjective. Surely there is little to be said for regarding the stars that the man saw before he left his home as objective, and the same stars that he saw in the country of the blind as subjective?

(2) If the objectivity of something is guaranteed by a public which shares one's experience of the thing in question, it seems a little difficult in these circumstances to establish the objectivity of the public which does the guaranteeing. This fact seems to me to be a crucial objection to many of the arguments brought in favour of the alleged "pure subjectivity" of religious experience.

It would seem to me to be better to regard as objective anything whose existence does not depend entirely on someone perceiving it; "subjective" will then be applied to anything whose existence derives entirely from a perceiver. Now it is possible or even likely that in the last analysis there is nothing which can be regarded, according to this definition, as "purely subjective". The hallucinations of delirium tremens could be said to have some "objective" cause in the alcohol which has been previously consumed. And some might even wish to argue that a persons brain is external to the person of the perceiver and that any illusion occasioned by its malfunctioning is also, according to this definition, "objective". We could, of course, point out that there seems to be a different sort of correspondence between an object which causes a normal visual image from that between alcohol and pink rats; but without pursuing this line of thought it would seem to be sufficient for our purpose at the moment to regard "purely subjective" as being synonymous with "as subjective as the pink rats of delirium tremens". If it were conceded that the objects of religious experience were as subjective as that, the sceptic would regard his case as proved and the traditional Christian regard

his as lost. We have now to decide whether religious experience as envisaged by Sabatier is subjective in this sense.

On the face of things, Sabatier seems to give away his case, for he entitles a whole section of the third book of the *Outline*, "*Subjectivity of Religious Knowledge*". But Sabatier is not using the word "subjective" as we have defined it above. To him it seems to mean:

(1) that our knowledge of God comes from our experience as subjects and not from the objects that we experience. Probably less ambiguous words for him to have used therefore would have been "inward", "interior" or "immanent" (which he does sometimes use).

(2) that in science one does not have to adopt a preliminary attitude to the facts being studied, while in religion one does, for without an attitude of faith, the theologian has nothing to study. There is, of course, only a relative difference between science and religion in this, for while science may to some extent eliminate the "affections and the will", it nevertheless requires an "active and thinking subject". While the difference is only relative, it is nevertheless there.[20]

Now while a critic of Sabatier, Thomist or linguistic philosopher whichever it might be, could agree that theoretically what is interior does not have to be subjective also, he might nevertheless maintain that in the case of the religious experience of which Sabatier spoke, it is. MacIntyre, for example, argues that "an experience of a distinctly 'mental' kind, a feeling-state or an image cannot of itself yield us information about anything other than the experience."[21] It is difficult to see how anyone can be so sure of this as MacIntyre apparently is. There seem to be four possibilities.

(1) The statement is analytic. I do not think that this is what MacIntyre means. If he does, I disagree with his definition of "mental".

(2) MacIntyre thinks that his assertion is proved by his next sentence where he writes that, "We could never know from such experiences that they had the character of messages from the divine, unless we already possessed a prior knowledge of the divine and of the way in which messages from it were to be identified."[21] But the fact that we are not certain about the cause of an experience does not prove that it had none, or even that such cause as there was must

have been subjective. Nor does any lack of certainty prove that we do not know something about the cause, even if that something is very little. The question remains, however, as to why we think, in some cases, that the cause is a divine one. To this Sabatier would have replied, I think, that "the divine" was the name that he gave to the cause of such experiences. MacIntyre asks how, in that case, the believer knows that the objective of his experience is to be identified with the God of the creeds.[21] To that, Sabatier would have answered very shortly that the two were the same because the latter had been arrived at by reflection on the former. Apart from such purely historical statements as "suffered under Pontius Pilate", which have the same empirical origin as other historical statements, the creed is simply a carefully cogitated reflection of Christian experience. Such phrases as "God of God . . . very God of very God" reflect the fact that the experience of the Apostles and later Christians was that in coming into contact with Jesus they had made contact with God. If there were any statements in the creeds not derived from sense experience or christian experience, then, as far as Sabatier was concerned, they had no business to be there. MacIntyre argues that if the believer defines the meaning of his religious assertions "ostensively by referring to his experiences . . . we are entitled to ask how he knows that it was the maker of heavens and earth who was manifested in his feeling state. Surely nothing that occurs as a constituent of a feeling-state could provide is with satisfactory evidence on the basis of which" this question "could be answered."[21] The scepticism of these last few words is hardly warranted. The common constituent of all religious experiences being, for Sabatier, a feeling of dependence, the basic meaning of the experience for him was that his own existence depended absolutely on the object of his experience. He knew other people who believed the same thing about themselves; and since the object of his experience seemed infinitely great in comparison with himself, it was not a great jump to the belief that all things depended on God, though it was a jump that he would have been the first to declare could not be cleared by logic alone. In the last resort, of course, as Sabatier well knew, there is nothing to rely upon but the self-evidence provided by the experience itself. "How can one prove that light illuminates

except by compelling those who sleep to awake and open their eyes. Any serious apologetic must propose, as its point of departure, the awakening of the soul and its conversion."[22]

We might ask MacIntyre in this connection how anyone knows that he has fallen in love on the first occasion that he does so. The reason is presumably because all the words about love and the friends' behavious that he had previously thought to be inane now suddenly come to have some significance for him. He has left the Flew situation[23] and broken into the circle of language designed to express what he now feels. In the same way, religious language comes to be successful. When a person has had some experience of the divine he is aware of the fact that it is the divine because he has before read of what such experiences are like. How far the language of love and of religion are actually causal factors in the first experience, and not simply means of expressing the experience otherwise arrived at, it would always be difficult to say; but the likelihood is, I think, not a little.

(3) MacIntyre thinks that no experience can yield any information about anything other than the experience. This would then make MacIntyre's argument very like that of Martin's that we have already examined.[24] In this case, MacIntyre's assertion will be just as true if we substitute "sensational" for "mental". I do not think that this is what MacIntyre means, but if it is, we are back in solipsism, and his position, as far as I am concerned, is irrefutable.

(4) MacIntyre is assuming that "mental" experiences, like Martin's "psychological" ones, must be subjective in the sense defined above. If so he is begging the question, for this is precisely the question at issue.

Martin attempts to show that the religious way of knowing is at least extremely like a subjective experience and that sense experience is not, by the following argument. "When A wishes to support the assertion that a certain physical object exists, the tests and checking procedures made by A himself are not the only things relevant to the truth of his assertion. Testimony of what B, C, D, etc., see, hear, etc., is also relevant. That is, if A wanted to know whether it was really a star that he saw, he could not only take photographs, look through a telescope, etc., but also ask others if they saw the

star. If a large proportion of a large number of people denied seeing the star, A's claim about the star's existence would be weakened. Of course, he might still trust his telescope. However, let us now imagine that A does not make use of the tests and checking procedures (photographs and telescopes) but is left with the testimony of what he sees and the testimony of others concerning what they see. In this case, it is so much to the point if a large number of people deny seeing the star, that A will be considered irrational or mad if he goes on asserting its existence. His only irrefutable position is to reduce his physical object claim to an announcement concerning his own sensations. Then the testimony of men and angels cannot disturb his certitude. These sensations of the moment he knows directly and immediately and the indirect and non-immediate testimony of men and angels is irrelevant. Absolute confidence, and absolute indifference to the majority judgment, is bought at the price of reducing the existential to the psychological."[25] So, Martin maintains, "Because 'having direct experience of God' does not admit the relevance of a society of tests and checking procedures it places itself in the company of the other ways of knowing which preserve their self-sufficiency, 'uniqueness' and 'incommunicability' by making a psychological and not an existential claim."[26]

Now this strikes me as an extraordinarily wayward argument. The question that Martin should be discussing is not whether one particular "physical object" really exists, for in that case the parallel religious question would be whether one particular person's experience that he alleges to be of the divine really is so. If this latter were the question at issue, then the testimony of other people as to whether they found that the poem, music, way of prayer, type of conduct, etc., which triggered off the alleged religious experience for one person also did the same for them would be a relevant if not all-sufficient consideration; as would also their testimony as to how the alleged experience of the divine affected the putative mystic's conduct. But what Martin wishes to call in question is not whether one particular person's experience is really of the divine (we being able to compare it with other people's recorded experiences which were allowed so to be), but whether any religious experience at all is of anything other than mental states. Now to get a true parallel in

this case with sense experience we must ask, not how A's alleged sense experience of a star can justifiably give rise to the making of assertions with "existential" claims, but how his sense experience of anything can. If we ask this, it is obvious that A cannot maintain that the star exists because he has seen it through a telescope, for how does he know that the telescope exists? His only answer can be that he has apprehended the telescope by means of his senses. But if the question at issue is whether his senses can justifiably allow him to make any "existential" assertions, what value has a reply like this? He is simply trying to prove something by assuming it to be true. Nor can he prove his point any more effectively by alleging that other people have seen the star. The "other people" he knows only as the result of sense experience too, so again he would be proving an assertion by means of assuming it to be true. The existential nature of sense experience assertions cannot be proved by sense experience; this impossibility is not an empirical but a logical one. If anyone should say that this does not need to be proved because existential assertions are by definition those that are derived from sense experience, then all that his arguments about the non-existential nature of religious assertions will amount to saying is that religious experience is not sense experience; which all were agreed about to start with.

Again, therefore, the arguments produced against religious experience are equally valid when pressed against sense expereience, and we are still lacking an argument that is not. The fact is, I think, that not merely Martin, but many other modern philosophers, simply assume that sense experience allows existential assertions to be made, and that religious experience does not; this they are certainly entitled to do, but when and if this is admitted to be an assumption, it will immediately be seen that they have no logical superiority over those who assume otherwise. In so far as Martin's argument shows anything at all, it would seem that what it shows is that the lack of testing procedures that he notes implies not that religious claims must be bracketed with "psychological" ones, but, as suggested in the previous paragraph, that they cannot be bracketed with sense experience ones. But because they do not go into a class labelled "sense experience claims" it does not follow that they must

go into one labelled "psychological claims", nor into a class labelled "purely subjective", for there may be other classes available. Those who base any of their beliefs on religious experience would claim that statements deriving from it can be classed neither with sense experience statements nor with statements having only a subjective reference. They would claim, in fact, that religious statements are unique.

The alleged uniqueness of religious experience Martin seems to call in question by suggesting that, on the basis of the arguments proffered by theologians, almost anything could be regarded as unique. He instances the statement, "You don't know what a blue sky is until you have been to Naples," as one which makes just as unique a claim as "you don't know what the experience of God is until you have had it."[27] Now while there is some sense in saying that any experience of any kind is in some ways unique (for it can never be repeated exactly), there is a different sort of uniqueness in theological statements. While the claim about the sky at Naples might be accepted as a pardonable exaggeration of an enthusiastic holiday-maker regretting the imperfections of his colour slides before a group of sceptical friends, it cannot pass muster philosophically speaking. As a matter of fact I do know what a blue sky is like, for I am looking at one at the moment. While there is doubtless more haze in an English sky than in a Neapolitan one, the difference between the two blues is one of degree only. When I use the word "blue" of both skies, I am using it univocally. Words used of God must be at least analogical. The uniqueness of religious knowing is not even exactly like the knowledge that one man can derive from a sense that others do not possess (though there is more of a parallel here than in the "blue sky" case, and it is understandable that one often sees this parallel used as a means of illustration and elucidation). If we refer to what Austin Farrer calls "our old friend"[28] the likeness between the colour scarlet and the sound of a trumpet, there is a certain direct similarity even here that does not hold between religious and sense experience. Because both hearing and seeing are types of sense experience, there is meaning in describing a colour and a sound as "clear", "distinct", "not blurred at the edges", etc. . . . There is, in fact, still some univocal type of likeness

in all types of sense experience. There seems to be no valid reason then, for denying that the religious way of knowing is as unique as the way of knowing by means of the senses. It is quite possible that it comes into a class of its own which is neither sensory nor purely subjective knowledge.

Indeed Martin gives one argument for supposing that this is the case. "If," he says, "no existential claim is lost by the addition of this phrase (i.e. the phrase 'I seem') to a statement then the statement is psychological. For instance the statement 'I feel pain' loses nothing by the addition 'I seem to feel pain'." He continues, "In the case of the religious statement 'I have direct experience of God' the addition of the phrase is fatal to all that the believer wants to assert . . . Thus, the original statement 'I have direct experience of God' is not a psychological statement."[29] He concludes, "The truth is that per impossibile it is both at once."[30] (That is both psychological and existential.) It would have been nearer the truth, less odd and not so impossible I think, to have concluded that it is neither, even if it shares some characteristics with both.

Perhaps it would be as well to come back to the question of verification for a moment. If it is agreed that those who have set most store by the verification principle cannot demonstrate either deductively or inductively the truth of their assumption that sense experience is the only type of experience that can yield true knowledge, it might nevertheless be maintained that this belief can be upheld pretty persuasively. Is there anything persuasive that can be said on the other side? There can be little doubt that there are a number of differences between scientific and religious verification, a difference so large that to some people the phrase "religious verification" is a contradiction in terms. It is to be doubted, however, if an examination of such differences as there are should lead to such a wholly sceptical conclusion. The main differences between scientific and religious verification seem to me to be three:

(1) All that a scientist is required to do in verifying a particular hypothesis is to pay attention and be as accurate as possible in making his measurements and observations. For the rest, he can be as sceptical as he likes about the outcome of his experiments. If, on the other hand, we set out to verify some of the assertions in, say,

Matthew Chapter 5, no such detachment is possible, for such propositions as "blessed are the merciful for they shall obtain mercy" all state that something will follow upon a particular attitude being adopted. From the point of view of the potential verifier, this involves two difficulties.

(a) The particular attitude usually requires, covertly if not overtly, a belief in God and some sort of commitment to Him. From a logical point of view this would appear to mean that one must believe what is to be proved in order to prove it. This case is not perhaps so illogical as it seems. It simply means that one has to adopt a certain attitude and note the result. But this brings us up against the far greater difficulty;

(b) the required attitude is not usually one that is available for the simple switching on, as is the case with the sort of attention required for a scientific experiment. Such states of mind as mercifulness, humility, purity of heart, etc., can doubtless all be simulated, but where, as here, sincerity is an absolute prerequisite, they are not wholly at the command of the human will. The conclusion would seem to be that it is not possible for a person to lay on an experimental religious proof or verification. This is I think true, but it is not because of the logical inconsistency of a religious experiment, but because of the practical difficulty of performing it. Nevertheless, it remains true that if, for whatever reason, a person finds a true religious faith, the verification of it will be forthcoming as a sort of by-product. There is therefore, in this sense, a limited verification of religious assertions to be had. If there were not, if no one had in any sense verified any of the beatitudes since the day that they were first spoken, it would seem to be a bit difficult to account for any continuing belief in them.

(2) The major difference between religious and scientific verification singled out by Ian Ramsey is that religious assertions, unlike scientific ones, do not lead to verifiable deductions.[31] Flew's attack upon religious assertions because of the alleged fact of their being unfalsified[32] makes the same point in another way. Surely, the argument runs, if a proposition about God (particularly a proposition which includes the world as well as God) means anything at all, it must mean that some fact about observable phenomena should be

deducible from it, or, at the very least, that we should be able to think of some hypothetical situation which would invalidate the assertion. The truth of the matter would seem to be that there are deductions that can be made; that they are practically unverifiable ones; and that we can see why they are practically unverifiable. Let us take, for example, the assertion that God is the "maker of heaven and earth and of all things visible and invisible." The most conclusive demonstration of "maker" and of "creation" would occur if we could point to some things made by God and to some others not made by Him and examine the difference. But of course this is precluded because the assertion speaks of a universal fact, and there is no possibility of finding the required experiencable difference. If we ask Flew's question, "what would have to happen to make you withdraw the original assertion?" the answer seems to be, "there would have to be nothing at all in existence." This is one possible deduction from the Christian doctrine of creation. But this is not even theoretically verifiable, for if nothing created existed, there would be no human observer to verify the fact that this was the case. Flew's own discussion of theology and falsification takes place mainly with regard to what has traditionally been called "the problem of evil". We can hardly deal with such a problem as this in a couple of sentences. Let it suffice to say that I think that we must agree with Flew thus far: that this is a real problem for Christians, and if there is any Christian for whom it is not, I do not think that his faith can be a very serious one; if we decide to dispense with belief in God, however, there is, for many of us, the "problem of goodness" and then many more problems arising from the proposed alternative philosophies. The problem of evil would constitute something like a conclusive objection to Christianity if there was any other philosophy which did not have a problem of equivalent or greater intensity.

(3) The difference between scientific and religious verification which seems to be remarked upon most frequently is that the former can be public but that the latter is always private. Perhaps some might wish to argue that there is public religious experience in such things as common worship, the reaction to evangelical sermons, manifestations at spiritualist seances, etc., but for many reasons these

would seem to raise more difficulties than they solve. The fact that religious verification must be private is consequent upon the fact that it is concerned with what Sabatier called the subjective life of man, "le coeur". If anyone tells us that he has, in his own life, verified some of Christ's promises, whether we choose to believe him or not depends not on our watching him re-perform some experiment but on our assessment of his sincerity and his interpretation of the evidence.

There seem to be two further points that need to be added to the discussion of subjectivity:

(1) We have to consider exactly what we mean by "objective" when we apply the word to God. Does it mean the same as when applied to tables and chairs, etc? As the word is used above it does, for I have defined it purely negatively. I have tried to argue that God's existence is no more dependent on our perception than is the existence of everyday objects. If, however, we wanted to give some positive connotation to the word "objective" we should have to begin thinking of objectivity as an analogical not a univocal concept. Manifestly one thing that the objectivity of everyday things implies is the occupancy of space-time and presumably no one wishes to say that of the objectivity of God.

(2) If we reject public corroboration as a sole and safe test of objectivity, we may reasonably be requested to suggest another. I do not think that it is possible to do any other than to say that our beliefs about what is objective and what is not are value judgments which are as unproven, unproveable and subject to dispute as all value judgments made in the realms of aesthetics and morals, etc. Before any religious believer turns away in despair with the comment that this is a very shaky foundation on which to base religious belief, it might be as well to enquire what other foundations there are that can be used not only by him but by the atheist, the sceptic, the positivist or anyone else. In the discussion of bliks (as well as in a good many other places) that has proceeded for a number of years now, it has been made plain that all of our beliefs, scientific, religious or whatever they may be, are fundamentally based upon certain unproved, even if not baseless, assumptions.

Consider, for example, some of the concluding words from

Russell's *A History of Western Philosophy*. "Modern analytical empiricism . . . differs from that of Locke, Berkeley, and Hume by its incorporation of mathematics and its development of a powerful logical technique . . . It has the advantage, as compared with the philosophies of the system-builders, of being able to tackle its problems one at a time, instead of having to invent at one stroke a block theory of the whole universe. Its methods in this respect, resemble those of science. I have no doubt that, in so far as philosophical knowledge is possible, it is by such methods that it must be sought; I have no doubt that, by these methods, many ancient problems are completely soluble."[33] He later agrees with those who "confess frankly that the human intellect is unable to find conclusive answers to many questions of profound importance to mankind," and who refuse to believe "that there is some 'higher' way of knowing, by which we can discover truths hidden from science and the intellect."[34] These are the assumptions on which Russell bases all his claims to knowledge, but what possible basis is there for his initial predilection for sense experience and rational thought as the only ways to knowledge, save a value judgment that these means and these alone give access to the real, and that other supposed senses or ways to knowledge are delusory? What argument can he advance against anyone who claims that there are other channels of knowledge. It is now, I think, admitted by almost everyone, that the most that an application of the verification principle would be able to achieve in a case such as this, is to show that some of the knowledge derived from any further "senses" is unlike that derived from the more usual five. But with regard to this extra knowledge, few people have ever claimed that it was, or was likely to be, empirical in Russell's sense of the term. If we consider those like Sabatier who make the claim that religious consciousness is a consciousness of a supra-sensual reality; and positivists and others who restrict themselves to a belief in five senses; there is nothing that divides them, in the last analysis, but a value judgment.

It is important to realise that it is not the religious person alone whose beliefs are based upon such an initial judgment. So much has been written in the English philosophy of the last few decades which makes a fine impression of opting for the hard, if somewhat narrow,

path of what is or can be verified, and of spurning the swamps of mushy conjecture where opinions are adopted rather more for the sake of the warm reassurance that they give than the cold truth that they possess. But such a dichotomy of types of opinion is a false one. There are, of course, fallacious arguments, tendentious pleadings, and prejudiced and gullible men. There is quite sufficient scope for anyone to be less than honest with the evidence and with himself. But if all the confusion of error and dishonesty were to be swept aside, it would still remain that all the views that were left were all based upon a primitive option, a personal preference, a value judgment, call it what you will.

It might be objected that to use the term "value judgment" so all-inclusively, rather than retain it for moral and aesthetic judgments alone, is likely to sow confusion rather than enlightenment. In many philosophical systems it has been the custom to distinguish between existence judgments and value judgments,[35] and most people feel instinctively that they are on firmer ground with the former. But it is not difficult to see how similar these two types of judgment really are. The case proposed and examined by A. Quinton in another connection may prove instructive for us here.[36] If a man were to begin dreaming consecutively and consistently from night to night, so that he was by day a very ordinary English middle-class citizen and by night a Polynesian chief, and were to become so bemused by the experience that he had eventually to ask himself which was, in fact, the waking experience of the "real", it would seem that the only possible basis for any decision that he might make is a value judgment. He will have to decide that any given experience is "real" or "dream" on the basis of the impact that it makes upon him. It is the concept of the "real" which most easily links together the two areas of "existence" and "value".

Of course, as has been observed already, on the basis of the point of view here recommended there is much scope for dishonesty and the pursuit of false comfort. Courage has always been one of the basic requirements of a genuine philosopher, for radical honesty needs much of it. But not only this; if it is apparent that whatever philosophy we adopt is based upon our own reaction to and judgment about our experience of reality, illusion and error, it is also

apparent that in very many ways throughout all our lives, we are judged by the judgment with which we judge.

I will now try to summarise what I believe to be the most important conclusions to the arguments of the present and the previous chapter:

(1) It has not been shown that religious experience must have some objective reference. The most that can be claimed is that

(2) no arguments that have been examined (and I hope that they have constituted a representative selection of a good deal of modern criticism of religious assertions) show that it must have a purely subjective reference. All the arguments brought against religious experience can be used equally well against sense experience.

(3) The question as to whether religious experience has objective reference has to be settled, as does the parallel question about sense-experience by a decision which is of the nature of a value judgment about the real.

(4) There is no philosophy which is not based at some point on such a value judgment. (It is not being asserted that every philosophy is based upon a decision about solipsism or religion. Simply that, whatever it is that it is based upon, is of the nature of a value judgment.)

(5) There is no way of opting out of the necessity of making such a judgment, not even by ceasing to philosophise.

More positively, it might be helpful to set Sabatier's views in the context of the possible views about religious language generally. These can be grouped broadly under four heads:

(1) The view that there are certain qualities or concepts which can be predicated directly (and univocally) of both God and man. This means that some ways of speaking about God are non-symbolical. In this situation one can elucidate symbolic statements by comparing them with equivalent non-symbolic statements in order to see exactly what the symbols mean. I take it that this view is held implicitly by anyone who speaks seriously of "demythologising" the gospel rather than of "remythologising" it. It would appear that some people seem to think that one can interpret an assertion such as, say, "He shall feed His flock like a shepherd" by substituting for it such a statement as, "God provides for the needs of man." I find

that it is impossible for me to accept anything like this view because I have never seen any assertion about God which did not contain some form of at least veiled symbolism. In rejecting univocal speech about God and man one is staying in the company of Thomism, Sabatier and Barth.

(2) The view that some things can be predicated directly of God and then symbolically or analogically of man. This is a different way of maintaining that some assertions about God are non-symbolical which does not fall into the obvious anthropomorphism of (1). According to this view it is maintained, for example by Barth, that such words as "love", "person", "good", etc., really refer primarily to God and only secondarily to man. Two things would seem to follow from this, if anything like the transcendence of God is maintained; first, the simple fact that certain words are said to be applied directly to God does not make the meaning of these words any the clearer, because so applied; secondly, if they are applied properly to God, we shall be at some loss to know what they mean when applied to man. Of course, in thus considering what words refer to, we are not trying to decide what, in some absolute sense, their reference is, but how we want to use them. It is a philosopher's privilege to define the words that he uses in his own way; whether this is a sensible way or not is decided by the number of problems that are clarified and perhaps solved. In the present case, I can see no real advantage to be gained from adopting the usage proposed, nor any reason to depart from normal usage where words such as "good" and "person" are obviously applied directly and properly to human beings.

(3) The view that some qualities can be predicated directly of man and symbolically or analogically of God. There is another view which is very close to this and could be taken as a subdivision of it which is that words such as "goodness" signify concepts which apply neither to man nor to God in any special or primary sense but which can be applied analogically to either in the appropriate mode. Both of these views are ways of understanding the way of analogy. It is argued in Chapter IV that the way of analogy is inadequate because it is impossible to give a precise notion of what the relationship "analogy" is.

(4) We now reach the point where we admit that there is no definable relationship between a religious symbol and its referent. We can therefore conclude either: (a) that there is no relationship because there is no referent, but simply symbols gyrating or being made to gyrate in a vacuum. This is the familiar position of modern atheism maintained by, e.g., A. Flew, and it would seem at times that the Bishop of Woolwich comes fairly close to it; or (b) that such a relationship does exist because proceeding on this assumption men are brought to a direct experience of the reality symbolised. The justification for remaining a Christian is thus a pragmatic one, and we now have religion firmly based upon experience.

Footnotes

1. RA, p. 529.
2. EP, pp. 300–2.
3. EP, pp. 304–5 (including the footnote).
4. EP, pp. 396–7.
5. NPT, p. 97.
6. EP, p. 397.
7. NPT, p. 182.
8. RA, p. 415.
9. NPT, pp. 76–95.
10. E.g. NPT, 78A. p. 79C, p. 85F, *et al.*
11. NPT. p. 95.
12. See S.'s letter to Lobstein, 9–5–97, in the Revue de Théologie et de Philosophie, 1905, p. 496.
13. NPT. p. 78.
14. See Appendix A for a fuller examination of S.'s views on this subject.
15. Combarieu, quoted by Frank Howes in *Man, Mind and Music.* (Secker & Warburg). p. 79.
16. Pen. p. 104. Contrast S. EP, p. 99.
17. See the discussion of the term "appropriate" at the end of Chapter 5.
18. But see EP, p. 390.
19. NPT, p. 256.
20. For a further discussion of S.'s understanding of the notion of subjectivity, see Appendix B.
21. NPT, p. 256.
22. EP, p. 35.
23. i.e. that of being unable to break into the use of analogy. See NPT, p. 182.
24. pp. 111 f. above.
25. NPT, p. 86.
26. NPT, p. 85.
27. NPT, pp. 81–2.

28. A. Farrer. *Finite and Infinite*, 2nd. ed. p. 88.
29. NPT. p. 88.
30. NPT, p. 89.
31. *Religion and Science*, (S.P.C.K. 1964), p. 69 *et al.*
32. NPT, pp. 96–9.
33. *A History of Western Philosophy*, Bertrand Russell. (Allen and Unwin, 1946). p. 862.
34. Ibid. p. 864.
35. Because of the influence of Kant's thought upon him, S. was naturally one who made such a distinction. See EP, p. 372.
36. *Spaces and Times* in Philosophy, Vol. 36, 1962.

VII

Some consequences of Sabatier's views

IT was claimed in the Introduction that a review of our understanding of religious language would affect our understanding of religion as such. It now might be interesting to enquire what precise difference it would make to our religious and ecclesiastical life if something like Sabatier's views on religious language ever became widely adopted. There would, it seems to me, be five main results of regarding religious language as based on poetic images deriving from religious experience.

First, it would help to dissolve some theological problems that have been causes of divisions in christendom for some time. This it would do by asking protagonists of differing traditions to trace their ideas back to the image or images upon which they have been founded. With the controversy over Pelagianism for instance, it seems fairly clear that man's salvation has often, in the past, been pictured as physical movement in a required direction, and the question has been asked which force would bring about this movement. Augustinians have said solely the grace of God, and Pelagians, after according due remembrance to the initial grace of God in giving man a free will, have said: solely man's own effort. Semi-Pelagians, i.e. those who are aware of a fuller Christian experience than either the Augustinians or the Pelagians, have foundered because they have been unable to find a satisfactory image to express their point of view. What they seem to require is an image which will show how, in some way, two forces each contribute 100 % of the effort required and how both forces are, when seen from some points of view the same force. Perhaps an image based upon human attraction and love may help. If no successful image is forthcoming, the considerations in the next paragraph become important.

Secondly, it would ease the ferocity of a good many theological

disputes if the fact were well and truly grasped that apparently contradictory images are not necessarily as contradictory as they seem, but can be complementary without being competitive. There are some areas of religion where this fact is accepted by everyone. When we sing, for example, that Jesus is our "Shepherd Husband, Friend", no one makes the inane criticism that if He were really our shepherd He could not then be our husband, etc. It is accepted in such a case that the images which are logically incompatible in a strict sense can symbolically add together to form a total picture fuller than any of the images could present by itself. But while this fact seems to be accepted as obvious in some instances, it appears never even to be considered in others, each side to a dispute arguing as though the other were not trying to add some new insight to our understanding but trying to contradict their own beliefs. Every theology is, in fact, a more or less consistent explication and amplification of certain basic images which may have been adopted in the first place either consciously or unconsciously. Disputes between theologians, where they are not concerned simply with pointing out inconsistencies in the other side's development of its own images, are always, in the last resort, about which images are preferable as a means of expressing man's awareness of the divine.

This being the case, it is unlikely that any theological system is entirely wrong, and impossible that one should be entirely right, for, in the nature of the case, no image of the relation between the divine and the human will ever be entirely adequate. The most important thing to remember is that as seemingly incompatible images are not necessarily, when understood as images, inconsistent, so rival theologies, when understood as commending their own particular images, are not necessarily exclusive of one another.

All this means, of course, that there is no such thing as *the* Christian philosophy in the sense of the only philosophy which is compatible with Christian belief. It is very likely possible to express Christian belief using the categories of any of the major systems of philosophy; that is to say by taking the categories and thought-forms of any given philosophy and using them to express Christian belief. Indeed, the whole business of commending Christianity to "modern" man consists simply in this, in taking thought forms and

words that he can understand and expressing Christianity through them. It seems to me that those who would deny that this is either desirable or even possible, who would maintain that any such attempt is a surrender to secularism, have not sufficiently distinguished between adopting a particular philosophy's categories and accepting its values. Of course, to adopt the categories of a particular philosophy in order to make them vehicles for Christian belief will doubtless involve expanding such categories in one's use of them. In a sense, this present essay is an attempt to show that Christianity could be formulated in terms of modern empiricism; for in it I have attempted to show not that an epistemology based on "experience" is wrong, but that the concept of "experience" in much modern philosophy is too narrow, and that if a true account is to be taken of human experience as a whole, we shall have to reckon with more than simply sense-experience.

As well as assuming that words and images are basically incompatible when in fact they are only complementary, sometimes the mistaken assumption is the opposite one, and goes in the direction of trying to show that words and images are compatible in a simple logical way in which they are not. Kenneth Kirk, for example, in order to show that Jesus taught what have come to be accepted as the three "theological virtues", maintained that He meant more or less the same thing by "repentance" as Paul meant by "hope".[1] This attempt to bring the theological virtues into line with the teaching of Jesus seems to me to lead to a rather unplausible argument of the sort that brings a good deal of Christian apologetic into disrepute. Surely it would be much truer to the meaning of the Gospels and the Epistles to admit that one cannot find words in each which have a simple one-for-one correspondence, but that the total picture in each enshrines the same inspiration and reveals the same God. It is in this way, if at all, that the unity of the New Testament is to be maintained.

Thirdly, an important corollary of Sabatier's views would appear to be that orthodoxy has, in the past, been wrongly conceived in too predominantly intellectual terms. If Sabatier was right in thinking that the basic aspect of religious language was images that appeal to the whole personality rather than concepts which appeal to the

intellect alone, it would seem to follow that orthodoxy should be as much concerned with the affective import of words and music as with their intellectual content. How often though, does one hear hymns commended because they expound "fundamental Christian truths" without a thought being given to the doggerel in which such "truths" are couched. And how often does one come across such truths set to music of about the same level of emotional maturity as modern "pop" songs. (And usually it is of considerably less ingenuity and popular appeal.) The words may speak of God as love while the music proclaims quite unmistakeably that He is sloppy. One often hears the argument that fine poetry and music are all very well in their place, but that their place is not congregational worship, it being assumed that the normal church congregation is not capable of understanding them. Usually the people who use such an argument would never think of eliminating the Nicene Creed from Christian worship because a normal congregation is incapable of appreciating the intellectual subtleties that it contains.

Fourthly, Sabatier's way of thinking can help us to distinguish between religious and theological writings, and to avoid criticising the former as though they were the latter. Paul Tillich, for example, in using the words "being" and "non-being" in his various works has, like other philosophers of existentialist persuasion, drawn down upon his head the amused wrath of philosophers who have a predilection for the analytical method. If the latter are to be believed, Tillich should be consigned, *omnia opera*, to the dustbin. Perhaps what he writes is, from their point of view, strictly nonsense. If religious writing attempted to convey information in the way that common sense speech does, it is nonsense. But if we adopt Sabatier's view of religious language, it becomes easy to see why Tillich should at once repel some philosophers and attract many deeply religious temperaments. His words do, in fact, serve as powerful evocative forces in eliciting in others the religious experience from which he himself writes.

Fifthly, Sabatier's views seem naturally to incline one to liberalism and away from dogmatism, for he places the point of decision and judgment in the individual. Not only that, but his whole view of dogma leads away from any possibility of "dogmatism". This fact

alone will, by itself, sufficiently condemn Sabatier's views in the opinion of many. It is noticeable that in the argument that has gone on around the so-called "new morality", one fact which seems to condemn it in the eyes of many is this: that quite apart from the intrinsic correctness or otherwise of its main contentions, the new morality implies that it is impossible to lay down beforehand what will be the right action in any given circumstances. And this means that no authority, ecclesiastical or other, can give more than general guidance as to moral conduct or more than a qualified condemnation of any particular deed. To those who wish to support some type of religious authority as deserving unqualified obedience (by "authority" here is meant external authority such as the Pope, the Bible, General Councils, etc.) neither the new morality nor the views of Sabatier are likely to commend themselves. It should not be imagined however, that Sabatier was against "authority" in a naive or unthinking sort of way, nor that he was unaware of the value and necessity of external authorities in some measure. After all, the church, whatever else it may be, is at least a society of individuals, and if individual judgments about religious matters can have some validity, so can, presumably, the judgment of a number of individuals collectively.[2]

To examine Sabatier's views on authority in detail would require another essay longer than the present, for the exposition of a particular attitude towards religious authority was probably the major part of his work. It must suffice here, therefore, to summarise somewhat baldly his main lines of thought on this subject. First of all, it must be reiterated that the type of liberalism to which Sabatier's views lead is the type that tends towards mysticism rather than to humanism. He does not belong to that tradition which strives to make religion more believable by reducing it to the human. His liberalism is one which is more, not less "religious" than traditional Christianity (if I may express the matter rather crudely for the sake of brevity). Secondly, Sabatier was well aware of the essential part that authority plays in our education, religious or other. After all, we should none of us even learn to speak our native tongues if we did not accept implicity the authoritly of our elders as to what words meant and how they were to be used grammatically. So, with

religion, we must certainly begin with a highly respectful attitude to authority even if we develop a more critical attitude to it eventually. Sabatier's attitude to religious authority was roughly that implied by the phrase "mother church"[3] (though these implications are not normally uppermost in the minds of those who most frequently use the phrase). A good mother is one who educates her offspring towards an eventual independence of herself and her authority. In so far as she tries to keep her children in continued subjection to herself she is behaving selfishly and against their best interests. Discipline has no value if it does not lead to self-discipline. And this does not mean that the children must learn to make for themselves the same judgments that the mother would have made for them, but that they must learn to apply the principles that they have acquired in their own way.[4]

So far the word "authority" has been used to mean visible and external authority. True authority Sabatier regarded as residing only in God. His was the only authority which was infallible. In so far as men claimed infallibility for any subsidiary authority, Bible, Pope, or whatever it might be, thay had fallen grossly into error. The general evolution of religion Sabatier saw as proceeding something like this. There would appear a saint, prophet, poet or whatever one might wish to call him, who wrote or spoke out of a profound inspiration by the Holy Spirit. (The most important occasion being, of course, the Incarnation, when the inspiration was complete.) The truth of his words was recognised (if it was recognised at all) mainly because it was self-authenticating; as the sun gives light by which it itself is seen. Wishing to guard this truth and to make it available to men forever, his followers systematised it and gradually turned it into a set of rules or laws by which the truth could certainly be known. But this legalism, traditionally personnified for Christians by the Pharisees of the Gospels, was really misconceiving the nature of the truth which it was seeking to preserve.These efforts, however sincerely meant, were about as sensible as trying to preserve the life of a friend by mummifying him. They did, in fact, provide eventually the mental shackles which the next prophet would have to break; and so it has gone on. To us and to every generation and individual it is left to decide who are our true prophets and who our

false; and with regard to tradition, to draw the inspiration from the prophets of old without being bound to the systems to which their prophesying has given rise. And this we can do only by sharing, to some extent, the inspiration from which they spoke. ". . . The work of the philosopher, however indispensible it may be, is not the really essential thing in the Christian life . . . there is something more urgent and more necessary than explaining devotion and that is to practise it."[4]

Footnotes

1. "Some Principles of Moral Theology", (Longmans, 1939). pp. 44–5.
2. Apart from the third section of the RA *passim*, see also EP. pp. 342–3.
3. EP, p. 343, esp. "La vérité serait dans une voie moyenne et dans l'organisation d'une église traditionelle, assez ferme pour recueillir sans en rien laisser perdre, l'héritage du passé, assez large et souple pour y permettre l'épanouissement légitime des consciences chrétiennes et l'aquisition de nouveaux trésors."
4. RA, pp. 565–6.

APPENDIX A

The meaning of the word "sentiment" in Sabatier's works

THE most natural English word to translate the French "sentiment" is, of course, "feeling". Unfortunately this is ambiguous in being able to refer both to emotional states and to the sensation of touch. It is obvious from his works that Sabatier is using the word in the former manner since he often contrasts "sentiments" in one sphere with "sensations" in another, and regards them as being parts of parallel processes. It must be pointed out immediately, however, that "sentiment" in its religious reference must be being used symbolically (as "vision" is in "the vision of God", and speech is in "thus saith the Lord") for Sabatier nowhere implied that man "feels" God in the same way that he feels, say, fear. Granted that "sentiment" is being used symbolically to refer to man's apprehension of the divine, what we first have to ask is whether Sabatier's use of this word to describe the primary religious experience implies that he thought that this experience concerned only man's affective faculty and not his conative or cognitive ones. What was Schleiermacher's position in this matter we will leave others to decide. One thing is certain: the obvious superficial similarities between these two theologians should not lead us to assume without evidence that Sabatier followed blindly in the wake of his German precursor. While accepting that religion in general began with the "sentiment de dépendance", Sabatier maintained that Christianity began with something more refined, namely the filial consciousness of Jesus, and that Schleiermacher had wrongly based Christian doctrine on the former not the latter.[1] The "sentiment de dépendance" alone he believed would make religion a matter of pure passivity.[2] He himself defined religion as a relation with God "conscient et voulu",[3] adding with the second adjective a

measure of active willing to the passive emotion of the first, "La religion," he concludes, "est donc un acte libre autant qu'un sentiment de dépendence."[4] It is not difficult to find other passages in which Sabatier includes an act of willing in the primary religious consciousness. In distinguishing, in the last section of the *Religions*, as he often does elsewhere, between faith and belief, he uses the former term for "l'acte du coeur et de la volonté", and the latter for "l'acte intellectuel".[5] As it is one of the basic principles of his system of thought that belief is an outcome of and derived from faith, it would appear that he thought of the primary religious consciousness as including a conative, but excluding any cognitive element.

There are one or two passages, however, which imply something different. Considering again the distinction between faith and belief, between religion and theology, he speaks of "l'émotion pieuse" as "le désir et l'élan qui ébranlent le moi entier . . ." It is always accompanied, he continues, by an ". . . intuition, par le moyen d'une image, (représentant devant la conscience l'objet qui produit ce genre d'émotion)".[6] In the *Esquisse* he writes that faith includes "tous le éléments de la conscience, c'est-à-dire le sentiment, la volonté, l'idée." "N'oublions pas," he continues, "que ces distinctions verbales ne sont que des abstractions pures . . . Jamais dans la réalité vivante il n'a existé de sentiment qui ne portât en lui quelque embryon d'idée . . ."[7] These two passages would appear to imply that at times he included some form of intellection in religious experience. The first quotation does not really prove as much, however. He speaks quote definitely of an intuition accompanying the religious emotion. In the previous paragraph he says. "On ne peut saisir l'experience religieuse . . . à l'état pur et isolé." Life itself one never sees manifested outside of matter, thought matter does not possess the principle or power of life in itself. So with religion, ". . . la vie religieuse ne va pas sans la croyance, bien que la croyance ne soit pas le principe ou la source."[8] What he means therefore is that just as matter and life can be thought of as two separate principles, so can the act of faith and the act of belief be distinguished by reflection; but just as, in practice, life is never encountered apart from matter, so faith will never be encountered in isolation from belief. And as matter gives form and existence to life, so it is belief

which gives form and outward expression to faith; but the life and the faith are primary and the matter and belief secondary elements. In the passage from the *Esquisse* he is also thinking of the intellectual element as an accompaniment but not a part of the fundamental experience; for in the next paragraph he writes, "... comme la science sort des sensations, ainsi la doctrine religieuse sort de la piété." In both of these passages therefore in which he appears to be including an intellectual element in religious experience, what he is really saying is that it always accompanies it in practice. On analysis it is seen to be a derivative element.

While this is a satisfactory interpretation of Sabatier's thought as far as it goes, it does not go far enough, for it gives no positive notion of what he understood by "sentiments" and its near synonyms. It is still too early to conclude that Sabatier regarded dogmatic theology as a "symbolism of religious feelings."[9] If his thought must be summed up in a very few words this is certainly one way to do it, but it is misleading for it is doubtful if we would understand "feelings" nowadays in the way that Sabatier does. The common view would be, I think, that feelings are almost accidental accompaniments of religious states of mind. Right feelings might always accompany right thinking and right willing ideally, but man's condition being far from ideal, this is a harmony rarely achieved in practice. So, for instance, many great writers on prayer have left descriptions of states of aridity in which their devotion to God remained as a matter of pure willing unmixed with anything that could normally be called a "feeling of devotion". More ordinary Christians too are aware of numerous occasions when they force themselves to do what they believe to be right with feelings not merely indifferent but perhaps even actively hostile to their line of action. Religious feelings would, on this view, be the most wayward and unreliable part of our spiritual lives on which to found dogmatic definitions.

It is not difficult to discern that for Sabatier, religious feelings were something far more fundamental to religious life than they are thought to be in the picture drawn above. The "émotions" that he has in mind are usually those of dependence, obedience and filial piety. These might be accompanied or not, according to our mood, by such secondary emotions as elation, despair, etc., but the primary

religious feeling is not thereby altered in value. What most people think of as religious feelings Sabatier would agree, I think, are not essential elements in religious experience. If it is objected that nevertheless states of aridity destroy even profound feelings, one could reply that in that case the mystic in a state of aridity was like a man become blind still using the memory of things seen as springs for thought and action. This comparison does, I think, illustrate Sabatier's position clearly. Throughout the chapter of the *Esquisse* entitled *Théorie Critique de la Connaissance Religieuse*, Sabatier parallels sentiments in the sphere of theology with sensations in the sphere of science. Total aridity in the religious sphere would therefore be comparable to a period without sensations in ordinary life. That is, aridity would resemble a state in which the reflective and conative faculties still existed with the senses still so to say intact, but with nothing whatsoever impinging upon them. Complete spiritual aridity, on the basis of this comparison, would mean therefore the total withdrawal of God not merely from the affective faculty but also from any other faculty which might be capable of perceiving Him. Knowledge of God would be retained in the memory and no fresh knowledge of Him would be possible. Whether such a "sensational" state could occur is beside the point. The image of it provides a good parallel to spiritual aridity and explains why a religious life could not begin with this state. "Sentiments", in Sabatier's thought, are as necessary to religious experience as are sensations to ordinary experience.

On this account, Sabatier's thought would have been more acceptable today. I think, if he had studiously avoided the words "sentiments" and "émotions" and used always "conscience" (consciousness, awareness) or "expérience"—words which he did in fact employ a great deal. In this way he might have avoided a confusion of religious experience with ordinary emotions and left his readers free to understand that he was speaking of the fundamental awareness, perception, apprehension, or intuition of God analogous to the raw material of our perception of the external world.

If this is a correct interpretation of Sabatier's thought at this point it would appear that we have to include some element of cognition in any attempted definition of "sentiments" and synony-

mous terms. If we do, we shall have to explain why it was that Sabatier, in the passages cited above, always made the cognitive a secondary element. The reason would appear to be that it is because by "cognition" he understands the processes of conceptualising or imagining something. What Sabatier is really saying therefore is that religious experience does not come directly in the form of concepts or even images. It is the processes of supplying an image to express the experience, and of refining the image to a concept by later reflection, that are secondary to the basic religious experience and to some extent degrade it from its primitive status. Sabatier thus seems to be using "cognitive" in much the same way as Otto uses "rational" and to be agreeing with Otto's assertion that it is the "non-rational" which is the most important element in religion.[10] If religious experience is not cognitive in the sense defined above, there is, nevertheless, an important sense in which it is. The distinction between knowing—in the sense of "direct acquaintance"—and knowing—in the sense of "possessing information about"—was made in Chapter VI. Much has been built on this distinction by a number of modern theologians, but not always happily, for it has often been confused with another distinction, namely that between knowing things and knowing persons. This has led to some theological language being tied far too closely to images of "personal" encounter, etc. The distinction that is here being made is simply between two types of knowing, not between types of things known. I am not here prejudging the issue of whether the mind knows "objects" or sense-data out of which the "object" is constructed. Whatever the answer to this problem, there must be, as a starting point of all understanding, a direct confrontation with something given—sense-datum or object—which is not a matter of knowing facts about the thing, but is simply a matter of knowing it. It would not seem to me to be stretching language too much to say that in this latter sense of "knowing", knowing God is what Sabatier means by "sentiment". For that aspect of man capable of such states of awareness Sabatier adopted the Pascalian term "le coeur"; he seems to equate this with "l'âme toute entière".[11]

It is instructive to note that Eugène Ménégoz, Sabatier's greatest friend and partner in the advocacy of "Symbolo-Fidéisme", in the

article which he contributed on this subject to Hasting's *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, makes it quite clear that for him faith includes some element of cognition. He makes the familiar distinction between faith and belief. "By faith is meant the movement of the self towards God." A man is saved by this "whatever his belief may be". Ménégoz further defines faith as "an activity of the self in its unity" which "must comprise all the elements of the soul's faculties—thought, feeling, and will." It is a reasonable assumption that Sabatier woild have agreed with this.

APPENDIX B

What Sabatier means by the "subjectivity" of religious knowledge

AS far as the argument of the present book is concerned, Sabatier seems to give away the whole case, for in the third book of the *Outline* he entitled a section *Subjectivité de la Connaissance Religieuse*. He writes, "le premier contraste que nous avons déjà vue apparaître . . . entre la connaissance de la nature et la connaissance religieuse, c'est que la première est objective et que la seconde ne pourra jamais sortir de la subjectivité."[12] He goes on to say that "la science de la nature est subjective, car elle dépend de notre constitution mentale et des lois de notre faculté de connaître."[12] But religious knowledge is one degree more subjective than this because, while "l'objet de la connaissance scientifique est toujours hors du moi . . . l'objet de la connaissance religieuse ou morale, Dieu, le Bien, le Beau, ce ne sont là des phenomenes qu'on puisse saissir hors du moi et indépendamment de lui. Dieu ne se révèle que dans et par la piété; le Bien, que dans la conscience de l'homme bon; le Beau, que dans l'activité créatice de l'artiste. Cela revient á dire que l'objet de ces sortes de connaissance est immanent dans le sujet même, et ne se révèle que par l'activité personelle de ce sujet."[12] From this, and the rest of the same section, it seems clear that Sabatier is not using the word "subjective" in the way that we have defined it above. To him it seems to mean:

(1) That our knowledge of God comes from our experience as subjects and not from the objects that we experience. "L'objet de la connaissance religieuse ne se révèle que dans le sujet . . ."[13] A less ambiguous word in this case would therefore be "immanent" (which Sabatier does use), "inward", or "interior". Now something interior need not necessarily be subjective in our defined sense. An orthodox Christians thinks of the work of the Holy Spirit as being

interior to the activities of individuals and the church; he does not thereby in any way equate the Holy Spirit with some aspect or faculty of the individuals concerned. He regards Him as always a person in the Trinity. In so far as he ascribed any sense to the ideas of Sabatier on the subjectivity of religious knowledge, he would probably say that Sabatier had written "God" where he should have written "Holy Spirit". To illustrate further Sabatier's experience of the inwardness of the divine one could contrast his understanding of "dépendance" with what a Thomist means by "contingence". Looking at an impressive piece of natural scenery and being moved by it, a Thomist might say that he was aware of the contingency of all created things of which he was a witness, and perceived their dependence on God. Sabatier would describe the same experience by saying that the power which he there felt made him aware of his own dependence on God. The Thomist believes himself to have apprehended God "objectively" in cosmological relation with the created world. Sabatier believed himself to have apprehended God in the interior workings of his own consciousness. While these are certainly two differing points of view, they are alike in that they each regard the existence of God as not depending entirely upon a perceiver. For Sabatier, the "interior" of man's mind (if I may put things rather crudely and inexactly for a moment) plays the same part for religious experience as does space-time for sense experience; that is, it supplies the framework in which the experience occurs. In the following passage, which has a decidedly "Thomist" atmosphere about it, it is obvious that while Sabatier is still speaking of a felt dependence, he is certainly not thinking of the divine as entirely reducible to human terms. ". . . ne trouvant dans nous-mêmes ni dans aucune série d'êtres individuels la raison suffisante de notre existence, nous sommes nécessairement obligés de chercher hors de nous, dans l'être universel, la cause première et la fin ultime de notre être et de notre vie."[14]

While the phrase "hors de nous" in the last quotation is significant, and while I think that the interpretation given above of what Sabatier meant by "subjectivity" is substantially accurate, it cannot be denied that there are other quotations that one could find in his works which would be difficult to reconcile with the line taken

above. In a preliminary section to the one on the subjectivity of religious knowledge, Sabatier wrote, ". . . nous nommerons subjective toute connaissance impliquant l'identité du sujet et de l'objet . . ."[15] I can only regard this as a preliminary and imprecise statement which is amended in the succeeding section where he begins to study "de plus près"[16] the contrast of scientific and religious knowledge that he has just raised. Against this quotation we might put the following: "la preuve d'ailleurs, que la règle du Bien dépasse l'homme . . ."[17] "Elle me fait découvrir, dans ma conscience, la coexistence mystérieuse et réelle d'une cause particuliere qui est moi, et d'une cause universelle qui est Dieu."[18] It would seem that the best interpretation of Sabatier's thought on this matter is to take it that by the "subjectivité" of religious experience he meant that God was interior to, but not identical with, the mind of man. This would explain how he could write of God as being "hors de nous", and at the same time say that subjectivity implies "l'identité du sujet et de l'objet." both of which statements are strictly inconsistent with his more precise chapter on the matter.

APPENDIX C

Criticism of Sabatier from a Barthian standpoint

THE other major Christian tradition which, besides Thomism, has contributed most by way of criticism of the liberal protestant position is, of course, that connected with the name of Karl Barth. While, as far as I am aware, Barth himself has never given any time to the discussion of Sabatier's views on religious language, it is not difficult to discover what his criticism would be, for he has spent most of his life in confuting liberal protestantism and developing his own theology in opposition to it.[19] Because the whole ethos and direction of his thought is so fundamentally different from that of a theologian like Sabatier, it is difficult to know which difference to examine first; probably and paradoxically, the best place to begin might be with two points where there is agreement between them.

First, both Sabatier and Barth taught as a fundamental principle of their theologies that all genuine religious knowledge must derive from revelation and that there is no other possible source for it. Secondly, they both insisted that this revelation of God Himself was at the same time a sort of veiling, and that the mystery that is revealed is literally beyond human conception and ordinary verbal description.[20] But while Sabatier would have agreed with Barth in rejecting natural religion (in the sense of a body of knowledge discoverable by human reason alone), he would certainly have wanted to point out two things:

(1) that the real stumbling block for Barthianism is not natural religion, but other revelations. As he asked of the defenders of "authority" in his own day, "pourquoi préfèrent-ils l'autorité de la Bible à celle du Coran?"[21] Barth himself has a quick way of dealing with this difficulty; he simply regards the other "revelations" as human inventions. "The God of Mohammed is an idol like all other

idols, and it is an optical illusion to characterise Christianity along with Islam as a "monotheistic" religion."[22] He goes on to speak of the prophets of Baal and their contest with Elijah on Mount Carmel, and regards this contest as being between "man and his principles," and "He whom the Confession contrasts to them on the ground of His self-revelation."[23] Sometimes, Barth does not even seem to be aware that there are religions other than Christianity which claim to be based on revelation. From all this, it follows necessarily that before a Muslim, who claimed that the Koran was a higher revelation of God than the Old and New Testaments, Barth, on his own terms, is limited to a simple registration of continued disagreement; for if he advanced any argument in favour of his own preference, he would de defending divine revelation with human reason, and thereby admitting that the divine and the human were not so disparate after all.

(2) that there was no good reason for limiting the channels of God's self-discolosure in the way that Barth wants to do. While Sabatier thought that all religious knowledge was confined to revealed knowledge, he did not think that it was limited to one revelation. He would have wanted to know what was the criterion for saying that man's knowledge of God was tied to a particular type of "biblical" revelation. With the Barthian answer, the internal persuasion of the Holy Spirit, he would have had some sympathy, having accepted this from Calvin as his own answer to the question.[24] But he would certainly have added that it was precisely because of the internal persuasion of the Holy Spirit that he was led to accept as revelation what Barth would not. While interior persuasion might be the ultimate basis for any religious belief, Sabatier thought that it was necessary for protagonists of different revelations to enter into dialogue and argue their case one against the other, testing their beliefs empirically. From this dialogue, Sabatier would not have expected to find that one religion was true and the others all false, but that all were more or less developed expressions of man's experience of the one and only God. It is obviously not possible to pursue this question here in order to try to substantiate Sabatier's position, though it is probably the most important and far-reaching problem facing Christian theology at the present moment.

One thing that might be added, however, somewhat in parenthesis, is that Sabatier would have found the use that Barth makes of the Bible, for one who believes its authority to be that of God Himself, cavalier in the extreme. It is safe to say that one would never find Sabatier extolling the law of Christ, and then treating the Ten Commandments as though they were a part of that law;[25] nor quoting Isaiah 40–3, and declaring that this is the voice of the Christian conscience.[26] His belief that the Bible, like all other books, was to be criticised according to the best canons of man's historical and psychological knowledge would have saved him from this arbitrary treatment of God's Word. It is a strange fact that those who are most vociferous in their protestations of respect for biblical authority are almost always the ones who are most ready to treat the Bible according to the most arbitrary and cavalier principles of interpretation, while those whom they stigmatise as lacking any proper respect for God's Word are the ones who are always more careful to see that their exgesis of Scripture conforms to some recognised principles of rational behaviour.

Sabatier would have argued, then, that there is no discoverable reason for Barth to take one religious tradition as God's revelation of Himself and all the others as being the products of man's sinful imagination; that if Barth were to give a reason he would be going against his own principles. Of course the Barthian would reply that the human propensity for thinking up religious beliefs is quite other than the grace of God which grasps Christians and so produces a qualitatively different religion from all the rest. But this would simply bring us back once more to the critical question: what reason has anyone for saying that the religious experience of non-christians is some sort of human experience while that of Barthian Christians is of the grace of God? All experience is equally "human" experience in the sense of being the experience of humans, and if someone claims that a part of his experience is to be accounted for by his being grasped by a power that he calls "divine", he should realise that he is simply marking off a particular experience as being the only valid religious one, not disproving the possibility of religious experience altogether. If he were to do this, he would be invalidating his own experience as much as that of anyone else.

Nevertheless, Barth still wants to make a radical distinction between Christianity and other religions, because, and here we come to his point of departure from both Sabatier and Thomism, he insists that there is in man no point of contact with the divine. This not merely means that there is no part, faculty or attitude of man which is naturally attuned to the divine; it also means that because of the radical discontinuity between God and man, there cannot be any human quality which is in any way comparable with the divine nature. There is, therefore, no connection between God's nature and human language, no analogy[27] between God and man, and no natural symbolism of the divine. In this situation it is, of course, literally impossible for anyone to say anything about God at all; impossible, that is, for man, but not for God, Who seizes upon human utterance and, by a miracle, speaks His word through it.[30] Barth's conception of the word of God is thus almost exactly parallel to the Roman Catholic notion of transubstantiation, where the body and blood of Christ are substantially wholly other than bread and wine, but become literally present in them by a miracle. So, for Barth, there is no more connection initially between human language and God's word than there is between bread and Christ's body, but "even the mouth of Balaam's ass is opened (as if incidentally to show that the Divine possibility involved does not have either a limit, let alone a condition, in humanity)."[28]

Although Barth does, in fact, in the *Church Dogmatics* accept and use the word "analogy", he makes it quite clear in an analysis of a long quotation from Quenstedt how much his employment of this term differs from the traditional usage.[29] For him, the analogy between human and divine exists not because there is any natural affinity between them, (which would imply the existence of what Barth calls an "analogia entis"), but because God, by His grace, has taken up certain words and endowed them with the power to speak of Him (which results in what Barth calls an "analogia gratiae"). While he says that God, in using human language of Himself is not doing anything "inappropriate", because He is taking to Himself "something that already belongs originally and properly to Him," nor performing a "violent miracle," but exercising a "lawful claim," he does still say that it is by "a miracle" that we "come to

participate in the veracity of His revelation," and that "our words become true descriptions of Himself."[30] Barth can accept "analogy", therefore, only "if it is not self-grounded upon a secret prejudice in favour of an imminent capacity of this concept under the compulsion of the object; if it is not, then, a systematic but an exegetical decision . . ."[31] How different analogy is for Barth from what it is in Thomist usage can be seen from a close study of the way he uses the words "majesty" and "person" on pp. 30–34 of *The Knowledge of God and the Service of God.* His departure from the Thomist notion of analogy can be seen, for instance, in the following: "If we do not wish to end by really defining ourselves, when we think that we are defining God, we can only take the second way and therefore hold fast to the *incomprehensible* majesty in which God meets us in His revelation . . ." For Barth there is no middle way between anthropomorphism and equivocity.

One reason why Barth rejects what he calls the "analogia entis" is because he believes that if one posits such an analogy one would be able to argue from the nature of finite things to the nature of God. In this, of course, he agrees with the Thomists who have always treated analogy as a way of knowing as well as a mode of predication. Here, it would seem to me that both are wrong, as was argued above.[32] If we were told that there was a partial similarity between the human race and another race on a different planet, but that there was also a dissimilarity, and especially a great dissimilarity between the conditions in which the two races lived in their respective worlds; then from the single fact that there was some similarity we could hardly go on to deduce something new and positive about the other race. They might resemble us as kittens resemble tigers, birds aeroplanes, or, most probably, in some other way that we have not yet thought of. But from the single fact of resemblance we can deduce nothing more. We are rather in the position of Pooh Bear, who could work out which was his left hand when he knew which was his right, but never remembered how to get started. It is because Barth thought of the "analogia entis" as a method of arriving at a knowledge of the divine that he insisted on classifying it as a part of natural religion and therefore to be rejected. Against this, the attitude of Emil Brunner seems to be more reasonable. "The analogia entis,"

he writes, "is not specifically Roman Catholic. Rather is it the basis of every theology, of Christian theology as much as pagan."[33] In other words, a theology based entirely on revelation depends as much on the "analogia entis" as does one based on reason.

With this view of Brunner's Sabatier would certainly have agreed. He saw that in speaking of the God Who was revealed to him, a man employed words normally used to refer to finite objects and situations. The fact that he could use such words showed that there must be an analogy between finite and infinite; if there were no such analogy, he would not be even capable of receiving the revelation, for it would come to him in some way which would be beyond the human possibility of knowledge; but even if, *per impossibile*, he still received a revelation, without analogy he would be quite incapable of speaking of it. While Sabatier, unlike Thomism, did not posit the analogy as a starting principle, he did arrive at it as a conclusion to his examination of religious language. He therefore thought that while it was impossible for human language to give a direct description of God, He being beyond human concepts, some words were nevertheless more naturally used for the evocation of religious experience than were others. If this were not so, it would be difficult to explain why different religious traditions, the Barthian included, should have hit upon the same sort of words with which to speak of God, and not totally different ones. On Barthian presuppositions it seems impossible to say why we should more naturally use such words as "good" and "majestic" when speaking of God rather than "bad" or "ignominious". Indeed, on Barthian presuppositions, there is no *natural* reason why we should use such words, but only the reason that God has miraculously endowed them with the power to speak of Himself. But now we must ask if God Himself did not employ such words because they were more natural than others. If it required a miracle to make any words whatsoever applicable to the divine, then it would seem that any other words besides those actually employed could have been used just as well. We want to ask, with F. P. Ferré, whether God could as easily have employed a list of starters at Epsom Downs as St. John's Gospel to convey His word, and agree with him that, "If it is countered that God happens, as a rule, to choose language with certain logical charac-

teristics and subject matter through which to reveal Himself, we must conclude that the nature of human language is not, after all, without relevance."[34] It seems then, that all developed religious traditions sense that, in some way, some human qualities are nearer to the divine than are others. There must therefore be some sort of analogy or likeness between human and divine.

Apart from maintaining that God could be spoken of by a list of starters at Epsom Downs as well as by any other words, the only other consistent course for a Barthian would appear to be not to speak of God at all. Of course, not only Barthians but others such as strict Vedantists (with whom Barth has much in common)[35] refuse to adopt this uninspiring way out of the dilemma.

Despite the above considerations which have been urged many times previously, theologians who are attracted to a Barthian type of "revelation" theology still not only continue to use words to express their theological ideas, but also often continue to suppose that they alone are not really called upon to give a reason for what they are doing. But whether a man's religion derives from revelation or from any other source, his use of language still has to be accounted for. Despite this, there are still attempts made to justify "kerugmatic" theology on the assumption that this is not troubled, as is the traditional theology, with difficult questions of semantics. One recent attempt to justify this point of view is Paul van Buren's in *The secular Meaning of the Gospel.* He agrees with the criticisms made by Flew and others of statements about God, but claims that his own Christology is proof against such attacks. For myself, I cannot see that he has shown his Christology is any more meaningful for a "secular" man or a linguistic philosopher than is, say, the natural religion of Thomism. For, either we speak of Jesus in a way which can be analysed exhaustively and without remainder into human terms, in which case we are out of line with traditional Christology; or we wish, when speaking of Jesus, to refer to a "something more", in which case we encounter exactly the same linguistic difficulties as does anyone who makes assertions about God.

Some words written by Austin Farrer in *Finite and Infinite* over twenty years ago seem to me to be as true and important as they were at the time that they were written: "There is a superstition among

revelationists," he writes, "that by declaring themselves independent of any proof of God by analogy from the finite world, they have escaped the necessity of considering the analogy or relation of the finite to the infinite altogether. They are completely mistaken; for all their statements about God must be expressed and plainly are expressed in language drawn from the finite world . . ."[36]

Footnotes

1. RA, p. 558.
2. EP, p. 25.
3. EP, p. 24.
4. EP, p. 25.
5. RA, p. 510.
6. RA, pp. 533–4.
7. EP, p. 293.
8. RA, p. 533.
9. *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church.* Article on S.
10. *The Idea of the Holy.* (O.U.P., 1950, 2nd Ed. p. 1).
11. EP, p. 382.
12. EP, pp. 375–6.
13. EP, p. 379.
14. EP, p. 20.
15. EP, p. 369.
16. EP, p. 375.
17. EP, p. 373.
18. EP, Preface, p. VIII.
19. There is some reason to believe that Barth now regrets the fact that his theology was developed and has been so much thought of as a counterblast to liberal protestantism. See the essay on *The Humanity of God* in the publication of that title. (Collins, 1961).
20. See on this count, e.g. KS, Lecture 3, and EP, p. 393.
21. RA, p. 415.
22. KS, p. 21.
23. KS, p. 22.
24. RA, p. 414. See also RA, p. 410; RA, p. 493; and EP, p. 79.
25. KS, p. 127.
26. *The Word of God and the Word of Man.* (Hodder & Stoughton, 1928). p. 9.
27. That is, no analogy in the traditional sense of the word "analogy". For Barth's use of this term, see the next paragraph.
28. CD, p. 221.
29. CD, p. 237.
30. CD, pp. 228–9.
31. CD, p. 227.
32. Chapter 3, pp. 44–5.

33. From *Nature and Grace*, by Emil Brunner. See *Natural Theology*, (Geoffrey Bles, 1946). p. 55.
34. *Language, Logic and God*, (Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1962). p. 90.
35. See e.g. Dr. Haridas Chaudhuri's essay. *The Integral Philosophy of Sri Aurobindo* in the book of that name (Allen and Unwin, 1960). Particularly p. 21. He quotes Sri Aurobindo as saying, e.g. that reality is "indefinable and inconceivable by finite and defining mind . . . it is describable neither by our negations, neti neti—for we cannot limit it by saying that it is not this, it is not that—nor by our affirmations, for we cannot fix it by saying it is this, it is that, iti iti."
36. Dacre Press, 2nd Ed. p. 2.

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