

PARABLE

1. A parable is a *comparison*, developed in the course of an account, between two deeds or events of different spheres, the purpose of which is to explain an unknown fact by a known fact.

What we understand by a *proverb* (Lk. 4:23) or a simple comparison (Mk. 13:28) is also called a parable in the N.T. It is for this reason that the biblical parable cannot be defined as precisely as is possible in rhetoric.

In general, the teaching given by a parable relates to a single point: e.g., the importance of the Kingdom of God, for which every sacrifice should be made (Matt. 13:44), and the joy of finding again what was lost (Lk. 15:8–10). But there are also cases of parables which convey several lessons: e.g., Lk. 15:11–32: the joy of God in forgiving, the repentant sinner, the man who is upright but self-righteous.

For a long time the Church interpreted all the parables as *allegories*, in which it is no longer the unity of the account but each of its elements which becomes figurative; in Lk. 10:30–35 the wounded traveller represents sinful man; the Good Samaritan, the Lord; the oil and the wine, the sacraments; the inn, the Church, and so on. In reaction against the arbitrariness of these interpretations it was claimed that the allegorical elements had been added to the parables by the primitive Church. But some parables are allegories, interpreted as such by Jesus (Matt. 13:4–9, 18–23, 24–30, 36–43, 47–50; 21: 33–41); and others have allegorical characteristics which cannot be overlooked (Matt. 22:2–14; Lk. 13:25–30; 10:11–27).

2. In the O.T. several parables are found: the rich and the poor (2 Sam. 12:1–4), the vine (Isa. 5:1–6), the thistle and the cedar (2 Kings 14:9), the ploughman (Isa. 28:23–29). The prophets also indulge in “parabolic actions” (Isa. 20:1–4; Jer. 13:1–7; 19:1–2, 10; 18:1–4). Figurative passages and visions occupy an important place in the apocalypses (Ezekiel, Daniel 4, Esdras, Enoch).

The rabbis contemporary with Jesus delighted to teach in parables. They made use of them for commenting on the law; Jesus gave them a new content corresponding to the object of His ministry. But, like the rabbis, He brought into use what He saw around Himself, in nature and in human life: habitual experiences, the leaven, the lamp (Mk. 4:21), the sowing of seed (4:26–29). There were also occasional experiences, the unjust judge (Lk. 18:1–5), the importunate friend (Lk. 11:5–8), the children who refuse to play (Matt. 11:16–17). Sometimes the story is improbable; it is governed by the reality which has to be grasped: the labourers in the vineyard (Matt. 20:1–15), the wicked husbandmen (Matt. 21:33–40).

3. Jesus makes use of parable for the purpose of *announcing the Kingdom of God*: how it is heralded, the success and the failure of this message (Matt. 13:4–9, 18–23); the certainty of its coming (Matt. 13:31–33; Mk. 4:26–29); its importance for men (Matt. 13:44–46); the threat which it brings because of the last judgment (Matt. 13:24–30, 36–43, 47–50); the grace of the Kingdom, the same for all (Matt. 20:1–15); the invitation (Matt. 22:1–14; Lk. 14:15–24); the suddenness of its coming, the watchfulness necessary and what it involves (Matt. 24:45–51; 25:1–13, 14–30; Lk. 16:1–12; 19:11–27; 12:35–40).

Jesus also expresses His own situation in parables, with respect to the reaction of men to His ministry: sinners rejoice in the grace of God, the “righteous” fail to understand it (Lk. 15:1–32); the people of God reject the Son of God (Matt. 21:33–44).

Some parables are concerned with love of one’s neighbour (Lk. 10:30–37); with the danger of riches (Lk. 12:16–21; 16:19–31). Perseverance in prayer (Lk. 11:5–13) is also placed in relationship to the coming of the Kingdom of God (Lk. 18:1–8).

4. Jesus speaks with *the purpose of making Himself understood* (Mk. 4:21ff., 33); by means of figures or parables He adapts Himself to the capacity of His hearers.

The meaning of parables can, however, remain hidden, and it is necessary for them to be followed up with an explanation or application (2 Sam. 12:7; Isa. 5:6-7). It is possible for the hearers not to be in agreement and to reject the revelation which the parable contains (Mk. 12:12; Matt. 21:45). The Kingdom of God does not come in the way that the Jews expected (Lk. 17:20-21); it must be grasped by faith, together with the fact that Jesus is the Christ. The parables participate in the mystery of Christ; one understands them if one receives and believes in Him.

According to Mk. 4:11-12 the parables may be a means of hardening with a view to the last judgment, following Isa. 6:9-10. But these words of Jesus, which are also cited in Jn. 12:40 and Acts 28:26, concern the result of the whole of His ministry: for those who do not believe "everything takes place in parables", that is to say that they rely upon earthly signs and fail to see the divine reality to which these testify; they do not discern who Jesus is and what He brings. It is for the evangelist Mark, and not for Jesus, that the parables are a means of hardening.

5. The Gospel of John contains no parables, but declarations by Jesus concerning Himself, frequently in the form of figures: the *shepherd, the *door, the *way, the *light. According to Jn. 16:19,25, Jesus spoke to His disciples not plainly, but in a figurative manner; when the Holy Spirit is in them they will know truly what it is that Jesus had to reveal to them. The revelation of the Spirit is nothing other than that of Christ (Jn. 16:13-15; 14:26; 15:26).

F. BAUDRAZ

PARADISE, *see* DEATH, LIFE

PATH, *see* WAY

PAUL, *see* NAMES (PERSONAL)

PEACE

At times it is difficult, if not impossible, to distinguish between the numerous texts

which speak of peace, those in which it is a question of the peace *of* God or *with* God and those which speak of peace with men or between men. Biblical realism makes no separation between internal (or spiritual) and external peace: the latter is symptomatic of the former and the first proclaims and conditions the second (e.g. Ps. 122:6-7). Theologically, peace is a gift of God (Num. 6:26), and as a sign of His blessing it is most often associated with the *grace by which God establishes or re-establishes His covenant (Isa. 54:10; Ezek. 34:25; 37:26); hence it becomes a synonym of *reconciliation; but it is also sometimes synonymous with tranquillity and *rest as opposed to a state of *war between individuals or peoples, and men have to seek it, to ask for it, and to "make" it (Matt. 5:9; Mk. 9:51; 2 Cor. 13:11; Prov. 17:1; 1 Tim. 2:2; Rom. 12:18, etc.). This double sense of the word peace must be taken into account if the majority of the texts where it occurs are to be understood.

(a) The Messianic promises are frequently accompanied by the announcement of peace: Melchizedek, in whom the Epistle to the Hebrews sees a type of Christ, is "king of Salem" (=king of Peace, Gen. 14:18; cf. Heb. 7:2). Solomon is also a peaceful king and reigns in Jerusalem, "the place of peace", the "quiet habitation" (Isa. 33:20). The Messiah will be called "Prince of Peace" (Isa. 9:5) and his coming will inaugurate an age of peace for the entire creation (Isa. 2:2-4=Mic. 4:1-3; Isa. 11:1-9; 32:15-20), of which the peace of Jerusalem, the reconciliation of the two kingdoms of Israel, and the submission of all nations are the signs (Isa. 49:8-12; 60:17-18; Zech. 9:9-10; Mic. 5:4). The echo of this hope is found in the Gospel of the Nativity (the songs of Zacharias: Lk. 1:79; of the angels: Lk. 2:14; and of Simeon: Lk. 2:29).

(b) But the announcement and proclamation of peace is accompanied by the declaration of its *conditions*, of which the principal one is the observation and fulfilment of the *righteousness of God: no peace without righteousness! (Ps. 72:3-7; 85:9-11; Isa.

32:17). It is for this reason that, at a time when the final defence of Jerusalem is being contested, the prophets denounce the false hope held out by the words of peace spoken by false prophets (Jer. 6:14; 8:11,15; Ezek. 13:10; Mic. 3:5). Jesus likewise is to denounce the false security of men in view of the imminence of judgment (Lk. 17: 26-36; 19:42-44; cf. 1 Thess. 5:3). That is why "there is no peace for the wicked" (Isa. 48:22; 57:21).

(c) Strange to say, the subject of peace occurs very rarely in the Gospels: if the seventh beatitude says that "peacemakers" are the "sons of God" (Matt. 5:9), it is certain that Jesus neither brings nor promises His disciples peace as the **world* sees it; He Himself declares that He has not come "to bring peace on earth, but division" (Matt. 10:34; Lk. 12:51). Thus He removes all equivocation regarding His Messianic rôle: the peace which He gives is *His own*, that is to say, the peace of which He is the author and mediator (Jn. 12:27; 16:33). It is not the result of human enterprises or transactions, but it is *received*, in faith by the Holy Spirit (Jn. 20:19,22). The peace of Jesus Christ exists for him to whom Jesus gives the command to go in peace (Mk. 5:34; Lk. 7:50; 8:48, etc.).

It is this peace which constitutes the message that the apostles will have to proclaim, not as an ideal, but as a reality given and fulfilled in Him and by Him; just as love of men for each other is founded upon the love which God has for them in Jesus Christ, so peace between men is founded upon the peace which God grants them in Jesus Christ.

(d) Apostolic preaching consists in proclaiming "the **Gospel* of peace by Jesus Christ who is Lord of all", declares Peter (Acts 10:36), and the salutation with which most of the Epistles open—"grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ"—is not a stylistic device. It is an affirmation that now, in Jesus Christ, peace is granted by God to all men and that they are called to live in this peace. Here therefore we find the double sense of the word which was pointed out above:

(i) As grace which is offered, the gift of God, peace is Christ Himself: "He is our peace" (Eph. 2:14-17). "Since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom. 5:1). He has made "peace by the blood of his cross" (Col. 1:20). The redeeming work of Christ, which is to **reconcile* "all things" to God, to **justify* sinners freely by the mediation of the new covenant, is entirely contained in this word: Peace. By Christ and in Christ we know that God is a "God of Peace" (Phil. 4:7,9; Col. 3:15; 2 Thess. 3:16).

(ii) But this peace of God which is received by faith in Jesus Christ is a peace which we have to manifest in our lives (just as the **love* which God has for us produces in us love for our brethren); like love, peace is a fruit of the **Spirit* (Gal. 5:22). That is why the preaching of the Gospel of peace carries with it also the exhortation to "live in peace", to "be in peace", to "seek peace with all" (Rom. 12:18; 14:19; 2 Cor. 13:11; 2 Tim. 2:22; Heb. 12:14; 1 Pet. 3:11; 2 Pet. 3:14). The zeal which the Gospel of peace gives (Eph. 6:15) cannot be a "bitter zeal", for the wisdom from above is "peaceable" and "the harvest of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace" (Jas. 3:14-18).

Does the teaching of Scripture permit the definition of a Christian attitude to **war* and peace between nations? Adhering to what is said about peace, it is necessary for us to bear in mind two affirmations:

(i) The coming of universal peace is bound to the coming of the Lord and to the manifestation of the unity of His Church. Wars continuing to the end of the age will remain as one of the signs of the world in its fallen state.

(ii) On the other hand, it is this world in which, already, Jesus Christ has come "to reconcile all things" and to manifest His victory over sin and death. Therefore to live in this hope and in this faith commits the Church and Christians to manifest, in this domain as in all others, the reality of Christ's finished redemption and of His coming reign. It is just as impossible to take

refuge in a purely spiritualized conception of peace when taking part in war as it is to confuse the peace which is promised as a result of the reign of Christ with that which is sought or desired by men, whatever the ideologies or the interests by which they are motivated. It is the responsibility of the Church, inasmuch as she knows herself to be the announcer of "the good news of peace by Jesus Christ, who is *Lord of all*" (Acts 10:36), to show, on the one hand, that no war is able to disturb her faith or break the "bond of peace" which exists between her members, whatever their national or racial connections (for in Christ there is no longer Greek or Jew, etc., Col. 3:11); and, on the other hand, that no peace can be desired or imagined by men which has not as its condition the acknowledgment and acceptance of the righteousness of God. Only "righteousness will bring forth peace" (Isa. 32:17). There is never any place for saying hypocritically: Peace—when there is no peace! (Ezek. 13:10).

H. ROUX

PEOPLE

O.T.

The O.T. possesses a number of words related to the ideas of *gathering*, *community* and *totality* to translate what we express by people and nation. In very many instances, these words are used parallel to each other (Gen. 27:29; Ps. 2:1; Prov. 14:28; Isa. 34:1; Jer. 51:58; Hab. 2:13). They often signify the whole of the peoples or of the nations of the earth (Deut. 32:8; Ps. 9:8; 44:2,14; 57:9; Isa. 41:1; 43:9; 49:1; 60:2; Mic. 1:2), or they represent the peoples and nations over against the peoples of God (Gen. 49:10; Deut. 14:2; Ps. 7:8; 33:10; 47:3; 67:5). But when God speaks and says "my people", it refers of course to the Chosen People (Isa. 51:4; Zeph. 2:9). A close study of the above references brings out the clear distinction made in the O.T. between a people set apart and all the other nations of the earth.

1. *The people to whom the Promise is*

given. They are the people of Yahweh (Judg. 5:11; 1 Sam. 2:24), just as the Moabites are the people of Chemosh (Num. 21:29). They are the people of God (2 Sam. 14:13) who belong to Him by right (Deut. 14:2; 26:18), who are His own possession (Deut. 4:20). The king of Egypt called them "the people of *Israel" (Exod 1:9), recalling their ancestor Jacob-Israel. A passage in the book of Deuteronomy gives the clearest expression of this relationship between God and His people: "For you are a people holy to the Lord your God: the Lord your God has chosen you to be a people for His own possession, out of all the peoples that are on the face of the earth. It was not because you were more in number than any other people that the Lord set his love upon you and chose you, for you were the fewest of all peoples; but it is because the Lord loves you, and is keeping the oath which he swore to your fathers . . ." (Deut. 7:6-8). Indeed, the divine *election is shown by a promise, made in the first instance to Abraham, that he will become a great nation (Gen. 12:2; 18:18); this promise is made effective through a *covenant (Gen. 17:1-15), for the keeping of which the loyalty of both parties is required, the loyalty of God springing from His very nature. The love of God for His people is shown in history, in the events which bring about the unity of the people: the deliverance from Egypt, the desert wanderings, the conquest of Canaan, the formation of a state.

Of all these events, that which was most significant for the welding together of the chosen people and that which undoubtedly has left the most lasting impress upon Israelite literature, was the sojourn in the desert under the leadership of *Moses. The work of Moses was great and permanent: Moses regrouped in the desert tribes which previously had been enslaved, gave them a code of law which covered every phase of their life, united them in the worship of Yahweh and so formed them into a people who lacked only a land in which to settle. The nomadic period lasted scarcely more than a generation; then followed the invasion of Canaan, which proved disas-

trous to the unity of the people since it gave rise to such a revival of tribal particularism that frequently the word "people" was used to denote one of the tribes (Zebulun: Judg. 5:18). The judges, local chieftains who were anxious to prevent the fusion of a tribe or of a group of tribes with the Canaanites and to reawaken in the Israelites the feeling that they belonged to Yahweh, did their best to mitigate the growing anarchy. They achieved but little success if we are to believe the rather resigned statement in Judges: "In those days, when there was no king in Israel" (19:1).

In the period of the kings, and especially under David and Solomon, some degree of national unity was attained within the confines of the land given to them by Yahweh. All the requisites of a permanent unity seemed to be available; the unity achieved at such cost was, however, of brief duration, as though Yahweh were afraid that familiarity with an earthly fatherland would be injurious to the quest for Himself who was the only true principle of unity. After the glorious reign of Solomon, the chosen people split into two kingdoms whose inhabitants were to be known henceforth as the people of Judah and the people of Israel (cf. 2 Sam. 19:41); but the feeling of national unity did not disappear from the consciousness of these two peoples; they knew that they were brothers and freely used Israel as the common name (Isa. 5:7). Even the various deportations did not extinguish this feeling of national unity and, when the exiles returned to Palestine, their national life was formed anew around the reconstructed Temple and the law of Moses.

The different ways in which the occupied territories were dealt with led to a greater ethnic and religious mixture in the north than in the south (2 Kings 17:24–27 describes the settlement in the former northern kingdom of pagan people) and may account for the fact that the people of Judah realized the responsibility which fell upon them of safeguarding the national unity. Now that national independence was no more than a memory—the Persians were undisputed masters of the Near East—the

kingship of Yahweh was emphasized and the unity of the people was of an essentially religious nature.

To understand the difference there was in the conception of the "people" before and after the Exile we must give consideration to the evolution of the expression frequently met with in the Bible: "the people of the land". In pre-exilic times it denoted all the inhabitants without exception, apart from the king (2 Kings 16:15), and the priests (Jer. 34:19), what we would call to-day "the common people". After the Exile, the expression refers to the population of Palestine, to those inhabitants of the country who do not rigorously observe the regulations of the Mosaic Law (Ezra 4:4; 10:2,11; Neh. 10:31). The discrimination is no longer, as formerly, on historical or political grounds; it is now on religious grounds. The "people" has become the community of those who belong to Yahweh through their obedience to the law. The tragic history of the chosen people led to the centring in Yahweh of all their energies and all their hopes.

In the community, before and after the Exile, only men were taken into account, as was the case with most of the Semitic people (see Nahum 3:13). This is the reason why Judaism is primarily a masculine religion.

2. *The *Nations.* The genealogical table found in Genesis 10 is ample proof of the interest taken by the Chosen People in their neighbours and in the peoples inhabiting the then-known world. Yahweh Himself was not unconcerned with the destiny of the nations and several of His prophets received messages intended for them. Elijah's actions are calculated to extend the influence of Yahweh beyond the frontiers of Israel (1 Kings 19:15); in 2 Kings 5 we see the healing power of Yahweh through the instrumentality of Elisha reaching out to Naaman the Syrian; the prophecy of Amos opens with a collection of oracles concerning the nations; Isaiah warns Damascus, Egypt and Assyria (Isa. 17:1–11; 20:1–6; 37:33–35); the title conferred upon Jeremiah is "a

prophet to the nations" (Jer. 1:5). The title bestowed on the youthful prophet makes it clear that, while he follows the tradition established by his illustrious predecessors, there is something which sets him apart from them, a genuine message addressed to the nations (Jer. 12:14–17). This preaching of Jeremiah prepares the way for the latter days when many nations shall join themselves to the Lord and shall become His people (Zech. 2:11), when the least member of the Chosen People shall become a mighty nation (Isa. 60:22).

Until the moment when these predictions shall come true, the Chosen People and the nations possess in the spiritual world their guardian *angels whose struggles on the spiritual plane are mirrored in terrestrial history (Dan. 10:13, 20; 12:1).

H. MICHAUD

N.T.

In the N.T., the terms "people" or "people of God" are applied to the *Church which unites Jews and Gentiles in the unity of those who believe in Christ. Indeed, the condition which must be fulfilled before one can be accepted into the people of God in the new *covenant is neither the call formerly addressed to Abraham, and through him to the race of which he is the ancestor, nor *circumcision, the rite through which a man is assimilated into Israel, but *faith in Jesus, Israel's Messiah and Lord of all the world. By definition the people of God in Christ comprises men of every race and every tongue. It is an essentially spiritual reality and consequently universal.

According to Lk. 1:17, the mission of John the Baptist is "to make ready for the Lord a people prepared", and in the thought of the evangelist this people extends beyond the confines of Israel, since the Baptist declares that "God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham" (Lk. 3:8). That is precisely what the apostolic preaching brings about. The conversion of the centurion Cornelius proves that "God visited the Gentiles, to take out of them a people" (Acts 15:14). At Corinth, the Lord

encourages Paul by declaring to him in a nocturnal vision that He has "many people in this city" (Acts 18:10) and this people embraces the Jews and the Gentiles (Acts 18:4–8).

In his Epistles, Paul constantly stresses the unity of the people of God, formed from Jews and Gentiles, united by faith in the same Lord (cf. Eph. 2:11–22). That the Gentiles should become the people of God on the same terms as believing Jews was what had been foretold by the prophets (Rom. 9:25; 2 Cor. 6:16; Tit. 2:14). On the other hand the Church acknowledges Jesus as the Christ foretold in the old covenant. It is the Church then which lives in theological continuity with the past—and not the unbelieving Jews who, by their very unbelief, have for the time being strayed from the path of salvation. Since the Church is the people of God she inherits all their titles. She is "the *Israel of God" (Gal. 6:16), the true Israel (Rom. 9:6), the true offspring of Abraham (Gal. 3:29; Rom. 9:7f.), the true circumcision (Phil. 3:3), the authentic temple of God (1 Cor. 3:16).

1 Pet. 2:9f. declares that the title of "people of God" and all the privileges attached thereto have passed over to the Church.

Briefly, the title "people of God" borne by the Church underlines three essential characteristics of the Church.

1. The Church is in unbroken continuity with the old covenant which finds its fulfilment in the faith of believers and not in the rejection of Jesus by the Jews.

2. The Church constitutes a purely religious unity in which ethnic and social distinctions are superseded. Doubtless the Church of Jews and Gentiles does not form a third race, any more than a man or woman who are one in Christ (Gal. 3:28) are a third sex. But the natural differences, which continue as long as this present world lasts, are overcome by faith. This victory finds its clearest expression in the celebration of the Supper which unites all believers at

the same table, the table of the Lord from whom their unity is derived.

3. The Church, by its very existence and composition, is a reminder that Christian redemption is a collective and communal work. God desires the salvation and the unity of the human race, and not merely of a few men or of Jews alone or Gentiles alone. Certainly the call comes to individual believers, for divine calls are always personal. But the new life of the faithful can only be developed by their incorporation into the people of God.

PH.-H. MENOUD

PERDITION, *see* GEHENNA, JUDGMENT

PERFECT, *see* GOOD

PERSECUTION

1. The O.T. gives an account of how God's chosen people, despite the promises of blessing made to them, encountered, as a community or as individuals, the violent hatred of men and of other nations. On their way to the Promised Land the Israelites aroused the envy of other tribes at the land which had been allotted to them (Judges); the life of David, the anointed of the Lord, was threatened by a Saul from whom God had withdrawn the royal authority; the prophet Elijah had to flee (1 Kings 17); Amos was driven out of the royal sanctuary at Bethel (Amos 7); Jeremiah was imprisoned and condemned to death as a traitor (Jer. 38). These facts are stated with a passionless objectivity and in complete faith in the justice of God. The grief and despondency of the prophets (1 Kings 19:14; Jer. 15:15-21) are always set over against the sure promises of God (1 Kings 19:15-18; Jer. 1:8,17-19). The same balance is to be observed in the Psalms (35; 79; 130): persecution will not last for ever, God will execute justice (Ps. 126; Isa. 40-55). And, better still, persecution is even a test of expectation which enables the man who undergoes it to share in the fulfilment of the hidden purposes of God. The profound

significance of persecution is apparent in Isaiah 53, where the persecution of the "servant of the Lord" is set forth as the ground of the redemption of many sinners. The poor "servant" of his own free will atones for the sins of the guilty; his future triumph will not only bring him a personal reward, but will show that his life's work was effective in reconciling many to God.

2. At the beginning of the N.T., Jesus proclaims: "Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 5:10). Persecution is no longer the exceptional experience, it has become one of the authentic marks of belonging to the Kingdom. Whence comes this paradox?

It comes from the course which the ministry of Jesus took; contrary to general expectation, He had to be rejected and put to death. Despite this He is still the Christ: raised from the dead, faithful and humble in the midst of His undeserved *sufferings, such as the prophets had foretold that He would be. But the rebellion of men against their Creator is now condemned, their hatred is shown up. Every disciple must bear this in mind (Lk. 14:26-33) and not imagine that he can be above his Lord (Matt. 10:24f.).

Since the *cross, an instrument of agony, has become, in defiance of human expectation, the sign of the mercy of God who dwells in the midst of His own even if this involves being rejected by them, blessed will be that cross, the instrument of "martyrdom" (which means witness), and blessed will be persecution, affliction and tribulation by means of which the love of God is revealed to triumph one day in the resurrection and in the judgment.

Who can understand this? He to whom much has been forgiven, who in consequence will love much and will follow Christ closely. This love will far outweigh the hatred of the "world". Feeling within itself a foreign body, "a growing, acute, deep-seated tumour", the world will do its best to get rid of it either by assimilation (artful temptations) or, if it proves to be irreducible, by

persecution. When that arises, the disciple will follow with confidence the way of his master (Matt. 5:12; Acts 14:22; 1 Pet. 4:13f.).

In the N.T. period persecution emanates almost exclusively from the Jews (Acts depicts Roman justice as the protector of Paul), but, later on, the whole world with the entire structure of the Roman Empire is to be ranged against the Christians. (Is this already happening at the time of the composition of "Revelation"?)

Through the persons and the goods of the Christians persecution is really aimed at the living, the too living person of the Risen Christ. It is Jesus whom Saul persecutes at Jerusalem and Damascus (Acts 9:5); it is His Body, the Church, which is attacked in the person of His apostles. The Church is on trial, not primarily because of what she is, but on account of her preaching of Christ. So Christians should not be ashamed of these tribulations, at least if these are not caused by their own sin (1 Peter 4:15f.). At the same time they are aware that her persecutors are not in conflict with the Church but with the omnipotent Lord, whom they reject to their own hurt. Christians will therefore pray for their persecutors (Matt. 5:44; Rom. 12:14) and will be ready to welcome them into the Christian fellowship without being afraid of them and without gloating over them (Acts 9:10-17). Since persecution has no merit in itself, the disciples will avoid running into it as far as possible (Matt. 10:23; Acts 13:51; 16:37). Persecution is simply an essential element of the history of the age between the cross of Christ and His final appearance (1 Thess. 3:3f.). Through it God is glorified (Rev. 17:14) and the Church is built up (2 Cor. 4:16; Col. 1:24).

3. Persecution appears in the form of "*tribulations*". The Jews expected these tribulations at the end of the ages, but the Christians claim that they began from the moment of the Crucifixion of Jesus: the end of the *ages has already come then! By their persecution of Christ and His Church the Jews and the pagan world are only

hastening the fulfilment of the prophecies. These final tribulations are of various kinds (2 Cor. 11:23-28), but they have in common the relentless power of death (2 Cor. 4:10), which strikes man in his personal existence (2 Cor. 7:5f.), body and soul. They give rise to a sustained temptation (1 Thess. 3:3; Rev. 2:10), but they reveal the perseverance, the hope, the consolation, the joy which issue from faith (Rom. 5:3f.; 1 Thess. 1:6; 2 Cor. 8:2), because the world has reached the end of its power.

4. In the face of tribulations, the Christian—who is still in the world—feels *affliction*. He knows that this is only temporary (Rev. 21:4; 22:12), but also that for the time being it forms an integral part of his existence as a Christian. He feels grief (2 Cor. 7:9-11), but he knows that affliction is a sign of his deliverance from the world, of the life force which makes him grow (Phil. 3:10). The present solitude of the disciples (Jn. 16:20-22), the result of their union with the invisible Christ, is also the beginning of their joy.

CH. BIBER

PETER, *see* NAMES (PERSONAL)

PHARISEES, *see* JEWS

PIETY

Although the word itself is found only once in the A.V. (1 Tim. 5:4), the spirit which it represents is to be found throughout the Bible and especially in the Psalms, having a much wider connotation than "piety" has in English including, as it does, ideas expressed by other names: faithfulness, *love, *fear, etc.

1. In the O.T., piety (*hesed*) implies a relationship: it is loyalty to the one towards whom one has a certain obligation which arises from kinship, friendship or service.

In its most general meaning, piety is the faithful and sincere respect for the duties which are involved in every human relation-

ship, for example the relationship between father and son (Gen. 47:29), with a relative (Ruth 2:20), a guest (Gen. 19:19), a friend (1 Sam. 20:8), or with anyone who has rendered one a service (Judg. 1:24). The word implies equally the condescension of the superior to his subordinates as the devotion of the subordinate to his superior (2 Sam. 9:1; 16:17); this accounts for the different ways in which the word is translated. Scarcely any of the original meaning of the word has survived except in the expression "filial piety" (cf. 1 Tim. 5:4).

In the religious sense *hesed* is the manifestation of the loyalty and goodwill of God towards His people; it is often translated *goodness* (Ps. 33:5 A.V.), *mercy* (Ps. 136:1ff.; Exod. 20:6 A.V.). But, just as in the secular meaning of the word, it indicates the attitude, compounded of respect, love and obedience, of the faithful towards God, or that which we properly call *piety*. Thus Hosea, the prophet of faithful love, blames Israel whose piety is sporadic and superficial: "Your love is like a morning cloud, like the dew that goes early away. . . . For I desire steadfast love and not sacrifice" (6:4,6), or Jeremiah who recalls the days of Israel's first love for her God (2:2). Later, the adjective *hasid*, which in the plural readily turned into a noun *hasidim*, became the special term to denote those pious Jews who, out of loyalty to God, opposed every compromise with pagan and Hellenistic civilization. It is they who are so frequently depicted in the Psalms as the *godly* (4:3), the *saints* (85:8). Their piety springs from an intense spiritual life, from love and prayer, but also from certain "acts of piety": vows (Ps. 76:11), sacrifices (2 Chr. 32:32), offerings and alms (Neh. 13:14), *fastings. When, under the pressure of various influences, the group of the *Hasidim* tended to form a rigorist sect (Essenes) or a politico-religious party (Pharisees), the most humble among them, despised and often persecuted, abandoned this name in favour of the title of "*the poor". In the N.T. a term corresponding to *hasid* is applied to Elizabeth and Zacharias (Lk. 1:6), Simeon (Lk. 2:25), Anna the prophetess (Lk. 2:37),

Ananias (Acts 22:12) or to proselytes such as Cornelius and one of his soldiers (Acts 10:2,7).

2. A considerable body of teaching on piety is found in the N.T., in the Gospels (Matt. 6:1-18; Lk. 18:1-14, etc.) as well as in the Pauline Epistles (Rom. 12; 2 Cor. 8-9; Phil. 4, etc.). The word itself, however, never appears. In the later texts of the N.T., the pastoral Epistles, the Epistle to the Hebrews and 2 Peter, its synonym "godliness" is found. In these later writings can be discerned a reaction against the rising danger of the intellectualization of the faith and a warning against those teachers, "puffed up with conceit", who hold not "the teaching which accords with godliness" (1 Tim. 6:3; cf. Tit. 1:1; Heb. 12:28). This is what inspires the urgent exhortations addressed to Timothy "aim at godliness. . . . Train yourself in godliness" (1 Tim. 6:11; 4:7). On the other hand, piety is frequently associated with moral virtues such as honesty (1 Tim. 2:2), justice (1 Tim. 6:11; Tit. 2:12), holiness (2 Pet. 3:11); it involves, therefore, the whole spiritual life of the Christian (adoration, prayer, meditation) with reference to his moral life. Piety penetrates the very mystery of the faith: the revelation of God in Jesus Christ (1 Tim. 3:16; 2 Pet. 1:3); it is the "great gain" (1 Tim. 6:6), even if its possession leads you into being persecuted (2 Tim. 3:12).

But, just as Jesus attacked the pious hypocrisy of the Pharisees (Matt. 23), so the Epistles warn us against interested piety (1 Tim. 6:5) and superficial godliness (2 Tim. 3:5). At the time of the healing of the impotent man (Acts 3:12ff.), Peter disclaims that this miracle has been effected through his personal *piety* (v. 12) and declares: "and his name, by faith in his name, has made this man strong" (v. 16).

True piety, then, is sincere, steadfast and completely humble. It is of piety that the claim is made: "godliness is of value in every way, as it holds promise for the present life and for the life to come" (1 Tim. 4:8).

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