402 Zeal (*Zelus*)

We read that zeal is double, of God and of man. The zeal of God is intense love for man which is evident.

First, in the redemption of humanity as the man ardently loves his adulterous wife. When he descends to the brothel asking her for her return promising pardon, Isai. 9[:7] and it is read of her virtue concerning the incarnation or passion, he adds, “The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this.”

Again, in the Psal. [68:10]: “The zeal of your house has eaten me up.”

Second, in justification of this one he loved greatly his servant offending in many things, who dismissed all for only his return, Exod. 20[:5]: “I am the Lord your God, mighty, jealous, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children.” Just as the jealous husband beats his wife and daughter out of love and making mercy to these who love me.

¶ Third, in continuous consideration of the state of whomever, so the jealous husband considers the state and bearing and gestures of his wife, Sap. 1[:10]: “The ear of jealousy hears all things.” Unknown to the guards she becomes insane, to do something shameful in the sight of God that she would not do in the sight of man, Joel 2[:18]: “The Lord has been zealous for his land and has spared his people.”

Second, the zealous man is double, good and evil. But the good appears in three ways.

First, in being indignant against evil, so the zealous one is Phinees, Num. 25[:11]: “Phinees has turned away my wrath from the children of Israel: because he was moved with my zeal against them.” And in Psal. [118:139]: “My zeal has made me pine away: because my enemies forgot your words.”

Second, in provoking to good, Eccli. last chapter [51:24]: “For I have determined to follow her,” that is, the wisdom in me, “I have had a zeal for good.”

Third, in bearing up, so Elias is zealous, 3 Kings 19[:14]. And 4 Kings 10[:16]. Psal. [68:10]: “The zeal of your house has eaten me up.”

Evil zeal is found to be multiple, of which the first is of torturing envy which is sorrow for another good, Eccli. 30[:3]: “He that teaches his son, makes his enemy jealous,” namely, an occasion of envy. And Eccli. 40[:4]: “Wrath, envy, trouble, unquietness, and the fear of death, continual anger.”

Second, the concupiscence of the worried, Eccli. 9[:1]: “Be not jealous over the wife of your bosom,” that is, the desire of following her bodily, “lest she show in your regard the malice of a wicked lesson.”

Third, the cupidity of the ambitious, Eccli. 9[:16]: “Envy not the glory and riches of a sinner: for you know not what his ruin shall be.” And 1 Cor. 3[:3]: “Whereas there is among you envying and contention,” which arise from things said, “are you not carnal, and walk according to man?” James 3[:14]: “If you have bitter zeal, and there be contentions in your hearts; glory not.” So, the zeal of the Lord does not spare the zealous in the future, Prov. 6[:34]: “The jealousy and rage of the husband will not spare in the day of revenge.” Therefore, before that day we should prepare ourselves and think on those things.

Fourth, what things good zeal ought to have, according to Bernard,[[1]](#endnote-1) your zeal, he says, inflames charity, informs truth, guides knowledge, makes firm constancy.

Concerning the first, Psal. [78:5]: “Shall your zeal be kindled like a fire?” Phinees was kindled by such zeal when he killed the one copulating with the Madianite, Num 25[:14]. Wherefore Gregory, *Super Ezechielem*, the first part, homily 12,[[2]](#endnote-2) nothing for God is such a sacrifice, as is zeal for souls.

¶ However how much such zeal pleases the Lord is shown when it is offered through the law, similar things are commanded in sacrifice. About which it is written [Lev. 6:21]: “It shall be tempered with oil and shall be fried in a frying pan. And the priest shall offer it hot, for a most sweet odor to the Lord.” For then similar things are roasted on the altar with the clean mind of the just, consumed by fire through the ardor of holy zeal, which things sprinkled with oil are received, that is, mixed with the mercy of charity, which in the sight of God burns, lights, and loves zealously him who is seen to follow.

Concerning the second, Zach. 8[:2-3]: “I have been jealous for Sion with a great jealousy,” and it follows, “and Jerusalem shall be called the city of truth.” Wherefore the Lord himself who is truth said, Exod. 20[:5]: “I am the Lord your God, mighty, jealous.” And Ezech. 39[:25]: “I will be jealous for my holy name.” But it is to be noted here that God elevating Ezechiel between heaven and earth showed in a vision of God next to the outside door “that looked toward the north, where was set the idol of jealousy to provoke to jealousy,” Ezech. 8[:3]. So, a man elevated between heaven and earth saw in the house of God a statue, an idol of zeal and not true zeal, which does not work toward correction in its zeal, but to emulation, because such ones can be recognized, as the Apostle teaches, [1] Cor. 3[:3]: “Whereas there is among you envying and contention, are you not carnal.” True zeal does not have contention but the knowledge of truth, James 3[:14]: “If you have bitter zeal, and there be contentions in your hearts; glory not and be not liars against the truth.” Such a zealous one wants to know the defects of others, not that he may correct them, but that he may detract and defame, Wis. 1[:10]: “The ear of jealousy hears all.”

Concerning the third, Eccli. 9[:16-17]: “Envy not the glory and riches of a sinner,” and it follows, “Be not pleased with the wrong done by the unjust.” These two evils prophetically come forth from a zealous one who is not ruled by knowledge, but by avarice and injuries, of which is it not prophesized, Psal. [36:1]: “Be not emulous of evildoers, nor envy them that work iniquity.” Rom. 10[:2-3] the Apostle speaks to such ones who “Have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge.” And it follows, “They, not knowing the justice of God.” And such ones make their own. The Jews omit the order of law when they are filled with such zeal, Acts 13[:45]: “The Jews were filled with envy, and contradicted those things which were said by Paul.” So, it happens that zealots because they are ignorant of the knowledge of knowledge, they contradict the teachings of truth.

Concerning the fourth, James 3[:16]: “Where envying and contention is, there is inconstancy.” The kind of zeal that is in man is shown in the mouth, particularly because from the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. For when zeal breaks forth in contention there will be inconstance because contention cannot last long since it is a passion and not a habit. Because of which the Lord says, through Isai. 11[:13]: “The envy of Ephraim shall be taken away, Ephraim shall not envy Juda, and Juda shall not fight against Ephraim.”

¶ Concerning the concealment of vices it is said in Dist. 41, [c.] *Saepe*.[[3]](#endnote-3) Often vices paraded themselves to be virtues, such as tenacity, parsimony, expenditure, liberality, cruelty, zeal for justice, remission. They wish to be piety.

Here end the *Distinctiones* of the Monk of Chester, [Ranulph Higden].

1. Bernard, *In Cantica Canticorum*, 20.4 (PL 183:868): Zelum tuum inflammet charitas, informet scientia, firmet constantia. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. Gregory, *In Ezechielem* 1.12.30 (PL 76:932): Nullum quippe omnipotenti Deo tale est sacrificium, quale est zelus animarum. [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. *Decretum*, Dist. 41, c. 6. Saepe se vitia esse virtutes mentiuntur, vt tenacitas, parsimonia, effusio, largitas, crudelitas, zelus iustitiae, remissio, pietas velit videri. [↑](#endnote-ref-3)