

A NOTE ON CHRISTIAN AFFECTIVITY

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There occurs in the Epistle to the Hebrews a biblical hapaxlegomenon which has considerably exercised both scholars and translators. This word is “*metriopathein*”, used by the author of the Epistle to describe one of Christ’s priestly characteristics and hence having for us a significance beyond the merely scholarly. “For every high-priest taken from among men is appointed for men in the things pertaining to God, that he may offer gifts and sacrifices for sin. He is able to *have compassion* on the ignorant and erring, because he also is beset with weakness and by reason thereof is obliged to offer for sins, as on behalf of the people, so also for himself” (Heb. 5, 1 – 4). This is the Confraternity translation of the text in question.

The Latin Version

The Latin of *metriopathein* is given as *condolere*. This does not exactly translate the Greek word, but it does open such lofty perspectives with regard to the psychology of the Incarnate Word, that most translators have fastened upon it as perfectly expressing Paul’s thought, implying thereby that Paul must have been the author of this Letter. The resonances which this word sets up in the Christian soul are amply reinforced in a dozen evangelical texts. While the Greek word offers certain obvious difficulties of interpretation and suggests historical antecedents of dubious theological value, the Latin awakens a chord of experience so fully and authentically Christian, that most translators have simply transferred its meaning to their vernacular and reserved their commentary for the Latin phrase.

Commentators

Milligan, commenting upon the text, states that “the high priest whom God appoints must also be fitted for his office and that fitness consists in this, that he is able to *bear gently with* the ignorant and the erring on whose

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behalf he is to act".⁽¹⁾ Since the literal meaning of *metriopathein* is rather to "feel in just measure" than to feel sympathy or compassion, or to "bear gently with", it is the Latin equivalent which is emphasized by Milligan.

Westcott again stresses the note of sympathy in his commentary:

"It is necessary that the true High Priest should be able to sympathize with the manifold forms of weakness from which sin springs, being Himself conscious of the nature of sin; but it is not necessary that He should actually share the feelings of sinners as having Himself sinned."

As Westcott continues, his words bring more to the fore the sense of the Greek: "Towards sinners He must have that calm, just feeling that neither exaggerates nor extenuates the offence".⁽²⁾

This latter sentence reveals a nuance of meaning quite distinct from the note of sympathy. It suggests rather an "impersonal justice" rather than that shared grief, that compassion which is a typical fruit of charity, and it strikes a note that is de-emphasized by most commentators. Piconio simply states that "the word used by the Latin translator 'to sorrow with' is not precisely the Greek which means 'bear with or tolerate'".⁽³⁾ Such a translation as "tolerate" is obviously specifying the general meaning of "to feel according to a just measure" by the use of contextual suggestion.

The Note of Sympathy

Some interpretation that will allow the note of sympathy and compassion to prevail is evidently being sought for by most commentators. Prat asserts that, while the Greek means "to be moderate in one's sentiments or passions" when used absolutely, it rather implies "to be indulgent towards" when followed by the dative.⁽⁴⁾ Unfortunately the instances of the word in classical Greek do not appear, at first inspection, to make this interpretation entirely certain.

Pirot admits that the philosophical use of the Greek word implies a moderation in the experience and expression of all the passions, but states that *in the ordinary language* the just measure expressed is in opposition to any excess of the *irascible* passions in particular. Hence in popular language it came to mean a kind and indulgent attitude.⁽⁵⁾

1. J. Milligan, *The Theology of the Epistle to the Hebrew* (Edinburgh: Clark, 1889). pp. 104–105.

2. B. F. Westcott, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (New York: Macmillan & Co., 1839), p. 119.

3. A. Piconio, *Epistles of St. Paul* (London: Hodge, 1890), p. 318.

4. F. Prat, *The Theology of St. Paul* (New York: Benzinger, 1926), vol. I, p. 374.

5. "D'après le contexte, le grand prêtre doit se comporter avec bienveillance et amour envers les hommes. Chez lui la bonté doit être fille de cette 'sympathie' qui caractérise le Christ, notre pontife." L. Pirot, *La Sainte Bible* (Paris: Letouzey et Ane, 1938), Tome XII, p. 308.

Other commentators relate the word to different phrases in the context, with consequently divergent shades of meaning. Huyghe refers the word *condolere* (sympathize) directly to the verb *offerat* (offer) in verse 1, and translates it then as follows: "The priest offers as someone who is apt to keep a measure in anger, i.e. against sin, and who, therefore, pities those who sin".⁽⁶⁾ Here again the irascible emotions are taken to mean the feelings which require and receive a just measure and here again the note of pity, sympathy is stressed. Bonsirven understands the expression as indicating the special quality of the priest in virtue of which he receives the sinner with equitable kindness and for the sinner offers the expiatory sacrifice.⁽⁷⁾ Van Steenkiste provides an interesting variant by taking the word with "taken from among men". According to this author the word in question "gives the reason why he is taken from among men, so that he be humane and merciful".⁽⁸⁾ Callen translates "to feel *for* with moderation", "to be gentle with", which combines the Greek and Latin by giving to the Greek its full dative force. Ceulemans contents himself with noting that Paul remarks here how essential to the priest it is that he should have compassion, though that compassion need not have its foundation in the experience of sin.⁽⁹⁾ Vitti notes that the Fathers saw nothing astonishing in Paul's use of this particular word, despite its philosophical connotation, and that the early translations of it are simply "to sympathize with".⁽¹⁰⁾ For Leonard the term here means "compassionate and intelligent sympathy".⁽¹¹⁾

Sympathy in the Gospel Portrait

Quite aside from hermeneutical reasons it is natural that translators should bring forth the notion of sympathy in the text, since that attitude of soul receives such prominence in the Gospel literature. The Gospels are curiously reticent documents, not given to subtle expositions of Christ's psychology; and that they should record for us this identical inner attitude of Christ with the frequency that they do, proves the strong impression this attitude of Jesus made upon the Evangelists. Aside from

6. C. Huyghe, *Commentarius in Epistolam ad Hebraeos* (Ghent: Huyshauwer et Sheerder, 1901), p. 114. Bover follows approximately the same interpretation: "Ha de ser capaz de moderar su ira y compadecerse de los ignorantes y extraviados . . .", *Teología de San Pablo* (Madrid: E. Catolica, 1946), p. 313.

7. J. Bonsirven, *Saint Paul: Épître aux Hébreux* (Paris: Beauchesne, 1943), 264 – 265.

8. A. Van Steenkiste, *Epistolae S. Pauli*, (Brussels: Payert-Storie, 1886), vol. 2, p. 531.

9. J. Ceulemans, *Commentarius in Epistolas S. Pauli*, (Mechlin: Dessain, 1933), vol. 2, p. 261.

10. A. Vitti, S.J., "Didicit. . .oboedientiam", *Verbum Domini*, vol. 12 (1932), 266 – 267.

11. W. Leonard, in *A Catholic Commentary on Holy Scripture* (London: Nelson & Sons, 1953), p. 1163. Similarly P.P. Saydon, in his Maltese translation of the Bible, explains "compassionate" as "being measured i.e. neither severe nor lax" ("ghandu jkun jaghder, jigifieri jkun bil-qies, la ahrax u lanqas merhi"), *Ir-Testment il-Gdid*, Ediz. MUSEUM, Malta 1977, p. 649.

explicit references to compassion on Jesus' part, one might almost say that the entire Gospel story, especially as related by Luke, is a record of Jesus' ability to appreciate the sufferings of other, of His experience of that inner grief from which charity towards others naturally springs. *Condolere* could be said to be in some sense a central theme of the Gospel story. It is this ready human power to enter into the sorrows of others that is aptly summed up in this word *condolere*. Paul remarks it as the central *human* quality of Christ the priest, and since Christ is essentially priest we are not surprised to find this quality occupying the central position that it actually does occupy in the Gospels. Yet in the ultimate analysis the Latin *condolere* does little more than state a fact. It gives us *one* of the sublime inner spiritual directions of the God Incarnate; it provokes a flood of suggestive meditations about Our Lord; it reverses forever certain pagan evaluations and ethical conceptions; it hints at a completely new approach to that mode of being which is personal, an approach closed to the Greek mind but which Christianity opened to all who could see; but it does not offer grounds for a theoretical exposition of more than this one affective response. It gives no suggestion as to the existence of any norm for judging the validity and spiritual worth of affective responses in general, but only of this particular response of sympathy, compassion.

It is, however quite possible that the word *metriopathein*, which is more general in meaning than *condolere*, may offer possibilities for a greater understanding, from within, of Christ's affective life. For it obviously refers His affective responses to some norm or measure or rule, and the discovery of the norm may serve to clarify questions with regard to Our Lord's entire affective life. Certainly *a priori* the theologian will affirm that the Incarnate Word possessed the most perfect human affections of any man. Yet the precise nature of affectivity has been beclouded by so many and such persistent preconceptions and misunderstandings throughout history, that the norm for judging perfection in this sphere is not immediately evident. If, as seems to be the case, St. Paul is here assigning as Christ's prime human qualification for the priesthood this perfection of inner harmony throughout the whole range of human affectivity, then the discovery of the norm implied in *metriopathein* cannot fail to throw light on Christ's priesthood. Since Christ is essentially priest, it cannot fail to throw light on Christ's approach to reality as a whole.

The Measure implied in the Greek

In establishing the precise meaning of this norm which is implied in the Greek text, historical antecedents for the word help us but little. First, one is not certain whence the author derived this unusual word, and secondly, if one were, it is not at all certain that decision as to its full significance would be any easier. For there is always the danger of introducing into our

thinking about the Incarnate Word concepts which, when unfolded, involve prolongations of pagan ethical ideals.

Philosophical Sources

Metriopathein is not entirely an uncommon word in Greek philosophical literature, and there its meaning is closely defined. In Stoic philosophy *metriopathein* refers to the moderation of the man as yet imperfect, the man who has not yet achieved that insensitivity, impassibility, which is the *apatheia* of the perfect. The *metron*, the norm, in Stoic thought is the total absence of responsiveness. It is patent that, if St. Paul derived the word from Stoic sources, he completely abandoned the meaning it had in Stoic philosophy. The Christian ideal has never been that deeply unrealistic ideal of controlled selfishness extolled by the Stoic. For when such Fathers as Clement of Alexandria and John Climacus in the East and Cassian in the West propose *apatheia* to us as an ideal, by it they mean a supreme subjection of the inferior appetites to reason. Nor is their *apatheia* offered to us as a terminal ideal, but merely as an ascetical propaedeutic to charity.

The Aristotelian Ideal

Aristotelian philosophy had, however, used this word to describe the man of perfect virtue. Such a man would not be insensitive, not unresponsive to an appeal to the affections, but rather perfectly regulated, perfectly measured in his responses.⁽¹²⁾ Unfortunately, when the word is projected against the background of Aristotle's Ethics, it conveys certain unhappy connotations to the Christian mind. It suggests a man whose self-control, whose measured attitudes look more to dignity than to virtue. The "*kalón k'agathón*" in Aristotle's Ethics ultimately resolves itself into the choice decided on by noble men, the measure adopted by great-hearted souls — which has all the appearances of an ethical *ignorantia elenchi*. There is an intimation present in the Aristotelian formula of the presence of some Platonic archetype of ideal-response which governs affective responses independently of the object motivating such responses. To the Aristotelian man Christ at the tomb of Lazarus, or in the darkness of Gethsemane, might seem undignified, His responses excessive.

The fact of the matter is that it is not ancient pagan philosophy which will open to us the meaning of the measure implied in the expression *metriopathein*. For here we are again confronted with one of those new words which Christianity has spoken to the philosophic mind, and it is rather the mind fecundated by Christian revelation which will disengage the new ideal here proposed in Christ as the unique exemplary cause of perfection in the affective sphere. If we turn to pre-Christian thought, we

12. *Diogenes Laertes*, 81

shall discover only that affectivity is an *epiphenomenon* of the body, a product of that dark world of matter which is not only opaque to reason but an enemy of the spirit. The redeemability of the world of affectivity did not even occur to any ancient philosopher but Plato, and in him there was lacking the metaphysics for any valid evaluation of this sphere.

There is a perennial need, even for the Christian, to rediscover the spirituality of affectivity, for there are not a few obstacles to his accepting the very possibility of spiritual affections.⁽¹³⁾ Historically Christian philosophy has incompletely explored the structure and the significance of affectivity. It has been embarrassed in its metaphysical analyses by the poverty of empirical findings offered to it by the psychologists.

Among the moral obstacles there is one which merits attention both for its perennial vigour and for the very classicity of the error it involves. So tenacious a hold has this attitude on certain minds, that it merits a position among philosophic errors, since it seems without difficulty to find, in each century, new theoretical justifications which make it a very fecund source of distorted viewpoints on affectivity. We refer to that recurrent ethos of hardness which, from Gnosticism to Nietzscheism, has illegitimately strengthened its philosophic pretensions by an alliance with human pride.⁽¹⁴⁾ At the root of much speculative contempt for affectivity there can sometimes be discerned a basic pride in being above every event, every situation that calls for a surrender, a self-renunciation. Not infrequently masquerading as a virtue, this metaphysically unjustifiable independence considers all surrender, although it be to the noblest of values, as a weakness. A radical weakness, a radical inability to face any situation where something is stronger and higher than oneself, is disguised as virility. This icy form of pride involves two basic rejections: man's metaphysical situation as contingent, as viator, his ontological receptivity before God and being, is rejected on the one hand; on the other hand man's very dignity, his capacity to transcend himself, is repudiated. The resulting spastic state of inner conflict gradually numbs the capacity to respond to any value which calls for submission and self-transcendence.

The Ethos of Hardness

The attitude of cramping hardness which shines out in this classical type of egoism considers all reverence, all compassion, all tears of contrition, even that affective response of adoration, as signs of mere weakness.⁽¹⁵⁾ Such a

13. cf. "Humani generis", *AAS*, XLII (1950), 574.

14. Y. de Montcheuil analyses the "ressentiment" characteristic of this attitude in *Mélanges théologiques* (Paris: Aubier, 1946), deuxième partie, ch. II and III.

15. The humanism of the Church is reflected in her condemnation of the following propositions of Michael de Molinos: (1) "Dum anima interna fastidit discursus de Deo et virtutes et frigida manet, nullum in seipsa sentiens fervorem, bonum signum est" (DS 2229); (2) "totum sensibile, quod experimur in vita spirituali, est abominabile, spurcum et

spirit stands in polar opposition to the specific temper of every Christian virtue. Completely antithetical to the atmosphere of peace in which Christ moves, an atmosphere of meekness, of omnipotence in self-chosen bonds, this ethos emerges philosophically in a resentful denial of all of man's centrifugal powers, and predominantly of charity. When such an attitude has completed its theoretic justification it possesses an exquisitely dehumanizing power, for it refuses to accept man's primal finality, his dynamism to *pati divina*. Pride in the rigidity of immobility effectively cuts off that contact with the whole world of values which could nourish philosophic speculation on the nature of affective response to good. As a consequence the whole nature of affectivity is effectively closed to this type of philosopher. He is blind to the very object he would analyze.

Psychological Roots of this Ethos

This philosophical attitude appears destined to enjoy long life, for it is rooted in a not uncommon experience of being, which the atheist existentialist has analyzed with morbid efficiency. The psychological roots of such an ethos are found in a pervasive cowardice, an eviscerating fear before the demands which being makes upon the soul, being in the plenitude of its range from finite to infinite.⁽¹⁶⁾ Such a philosopher as described may well fear that, unless he holds on to his soul with both hands, he may lose it before reality which invites so consistently to self-surrender. His "solution" has been to put out the eye of his mind with regard to a whole class of objects: value objects. Scaling being down to the cozy dimensions of the comfortable, he has historically achieved a philosophic peace which is a very unstable equilibrium, — for being has a way of resisting dictation.⁽¹⁷⁾ Since experience is a quite basic presupposition for philosophic analysis, and since this philosopher has cut himself off from experience of the object he would analyze, we can accept such a philosopher's analysis of spiritual affectivity for what it is — subjective impressions founded more on the emotions than on reason.

The Christian thinker who attempts to come to grips with the problem

immundum" (DS 2230); (3) "male agit anima, quae procedit per hanc viam internam, si in diebus solemnibus vult aliquo conatu particulari excitare in se devotum aliquem sensum, quoniam animae internae omnes dies sunt aequales, omnes festivi. Et idem dicitur de locis sacris, quia huiusmodi animabus omnia loca aequalia sunt" (DS 2233). Even previous to the condemnation of Molinos the church had sufficiently manifested her mind in a letter from the Holy Office to the Bishops of Italy condemning the Quietist attitude as it is expressed in the following terms: "... Ancora gl'affetti della devotione sensibile, la tenerezza del cuore, le lagrime, e le consolazioni spirituali si devono fuggire e rigettare, anzi disprezzare dai contemplativi, come cose repugnanti alla contemplatione" (J. De Guibert, *Documenta Ecclesiastica Christianae Perfectionis* n. 445).

16. Cfr. Hugo Rahner, "Introduction au concept de philosophie existentielle chez Heidegger", *Recherches de sciences religieuses*, (vol. 30) 1940, p. 152 — 171.

17. D. Hildebrand, *Fundamental Moral Attitudes*, (New York: Longmans Green, 1948) ch. I

of spiritual affectivity has an incalculable advantage over his pagan predecessor.¹⁸ The single glowing fact of the existence of the theandric Christ has established for the Christian a point of reference that illuminates every problem concerning man's nature. For the Christian thinker has been in such luminous and repeated contact with this central reality of Christ, that he quite naturally locates any ethical problem in a new frame of reference. Having witnessed the royal majesty of this Man in his Passion, the Christian feels no compulsion to diminish the grief he has also witnessed in the Garden. He who has listened to His voice command death to surrender up its victim, experiences no discomfort at the tears of Christ.

The Problem of language

At the outset of his examination of affectivity the Christian thinker finds a difficulty in the very language that deals with his subject. He encounters the one word "feeling" used to describe a range of experience whose variety and distinction is ill-suggested by the word feeling. At the end of the day the labourer "feels" exhausted and the child "feels" sleepy; but so also St. Theresa is said to "feel" the presence of His Divine Majesty, the lover is said to "feel" the pangs of despised love, the listener "feels" joy in attending to a Bach Chorale. It is evident that some of these feelings are pure states that require as a condition for their existence no knowledge of the objects which cause them. One may feel tired, sleepy, irritable and not know either the cause of the feeling or how the cause has operated to produce this feeling. Still less need we actually *experience* the process by which the cause achieves its effect. The intentional and spiritual part of man's nature is not indispensably called onto play in order that these feelings may exist.

Other feelings such as joy, love, doubt, fear, sorrow demand that the object motivating them be in some way known — and this furnishes the basic distinction between feelings which are bodily states, and spiritual feelings or spiritual affectivity. Spiritual affectivity is object-dependent in a special way. The responses of doubt, fear, sorrow are concerned with objects; they have an intentional character; the theme of such responses is not indeed knowledge, for the question here is not "what is it?" but "is it good?" Nonetheless knowledge of the object motivating the affection is absolutely presupposed. The value, the good in the object must be perceived, and in experience it is immediately evident that it is precisely this good which is motivating the affection.

18. "Never has Christian philosophy denied that the usefulness and efficacy of good dispositions of good will can be the reason why the intellect, influenced by the passions and evil inclinations, can be so obscured that it cannot see clearly. Indeed, St. Thomas holds that the intellect can in some way perceive higher goods of the moral order, whether natural or supernatural, inasmuch as it experiences a certain "connaturality", whether this "connaturality" be purely natural, or the result of grace, and it is clear in its investigations": "*Humani generis*", *A.A.S.*, 1950, 42, p. 574.

Affectivity and Knowledge

The object gives to the person a content of knowledge; beyond this knowledge it evokes from him a reply, a word he speaks to the object because of its goodness; the person thus adds to his content of knowledge an experience of joy or sorrow. The response is not caused by some unknown cause, operating in an unintelligible manner. Rather the response given bears a fully intelligible, intentional relation to the perceived goodness of the object. The sinner who weeps for his sin is not pushed by a causality impervious to rationality; he is moved by his knowledge of the tragic evil of sin; he is aware of why he is moved and he is aware that he should be so moved. The whole pattern is luminous, and to align such spiritual states with bodily states is to disregard their spiritual nature. Certain higher spiritual affections announce their own spiritual character to us by their very quality. Such responses as veneration, indignation, admiration, love cannot even come into being except in dependence upon lofty goods.⁽¹⁹⁾

Once the distinction is understood between feelings which are caused and those which are motivated by an intentional, meaningful grasp of the values inherent in objects, it will be evident that the norm, the regulating measure of affectivity, is found in the object motivating that affectivity.

The Norm of Charity

In evaluating the perfection of affective responses to good it is at once evident that charity, because of its supreme object, has for its measure to be without measure. The perfection of affective charity is total charity, nor can it know excess. It need be referred to but one norm, that absolute goodness which calls for total self-surrender.

Three Classes of Responses

Charity aside, before any complete evaluation can be made of the perfection of a response, we must first notice a fundamental distinction of three classes of responses, a distinction which is based on the character of the object which can motivate responses. There exist, first of all, within the framework of the intentional, certain responses which are essentially good. Such responses as veneration, love, admiration are of their very nature value-responses, dependent upon an objective good, for they presuppose that the object to which they are directed is good and is given as good in experience. The objects to which such responses are directed render these responses essentially good. Such responses do not create any problem for the theologian of morals, for even if one should attempt to distort the

19. Cf. Dietrich von Hildebrand, *Transformation in Christ* (New York: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1948), pp. 396 – 401.

structure of a response of this type, he will not succeed. One may attempt to love evil, but the response produced will not be love.

There exists another class of affective responses, structurally ordained to a class of objects disconformed to man's nature so that these responses are never morally desirable. Hatred, jealousy, envy are such affections, and such is their inner connection with pride or with concupiscence that their very existence indicates moral disorder in the person accepting them.

A third group of affective responses possesses a character sufficiently flexible to admit their being aroused by objects good, bad or indifferent. To this class of responses belong joy and sorrow, and it is this class which has a special need of a measure to judge the response. The measure will, of course, be found in the object which motivates the response. If the object possesses authentic value, if it objectively calls upon man to surrender his enclosing egoism, to allow his heart to be touched, then in submitting to that appeal to transcend self, man is justified and rational. The objective rank of the good in question, within the hierarchy of good, will determine the *depth* of the response which is due. For each value has, as it were, its own inner connection with a specific *stratum* in the soul. One may indeed, for example, permit sports or science or art or knowledge to play the role in one's life which God should play, but none of these goods will be able to touch the *stratum* that is destined to be touched by adoration of the living and true God.

Again there is a *qualitative* correspondence between value perceived and the response which is due. To offer to a morally important object the response that befits an esthetically appealing object is obviously to disregard the objective *quality* of moral value. Further, the ideal *intensity* of the response due in each case will depend upon not only the rank of the good and its specific quality, but above all upon the clarity with which these are *given* in the experience of the subject. This clarity, in turn, depends largely on the moral preparation of the experiencing subject. All men have the initial capacity to perceive moral values; and yet this capacity can be either blunted or cultivated by the individual. As a consequence, that which appears to the blunt man to be a response of exaggerated intensity may not so appear to the saint. Francis's love of holy poverty is not unreasonable merely because it is not shared by the majority of bankers.

An Objection

This brings us to the classical objection against including such spiritual affections as those discussed above within the sphere of morality, — namely that they are not free. We cannot always command joy, sorrow and such affections. Nevertheless we may have an indirect responsibility for such affections. For, although we cannot always freely initiate them, they remain worthy of praise or blame, for we can prepare for them, dispose ourselves for them, freely accept or freely reject them when given. We can answer the

motivation of the good with a deeply personal yes or no. These responses have indeed at times the character of gifts given – but where there is a giving there may also be the free personal act of receiving, and here responsibility is direct. Thus, susceptibility to value, responsiveness to a situation calling for an affective response depends upon factors within our free control.

The Christ of the Gospels

If the analysis above be just, we may reasonably expect that the unique exemplary cause of all perfection, Christ, would demonstrate certain affective responses. Since the Redeemer of mankind had as His most pressing preoccupation the indigent mankind He had come to redeem, the sheep suffering without a Shepherd, it is perhaps only natural that the Redeemer should present to His biographers the spectacle of a profound and oft-renewed response of compassion. If compassion is a note heard again and again in the words of His mouth, if the spontaneous gesture to alleviate human misery betrays repeatedly a compassionate response of His heart, the explanation is not difficult to give. But it is noteworthy that the situations, the objects, the experiences which called forth from Christ this response of compassion were always the *great* human sorrows: the loss of the beloved son, the loss of the beloved brother, the weariness and exhaustion attendant on all great human effort. It was the greatest of all human defeats, the rejection of the divine gifts offered and reoffered that brought the tears over Jerusalem. It was not the stings of His own outrageous fortune that called out Christ's pity, for of that bloodless sentimentality which is moved at its own emotions Christ had no shadow.

Conclusion

If the human person is shown in the Gospel as the object of Christ's most energetic affective responses, we should not be surprised, for the person is *perfectissima in rerum natura*. The *quality* of Christ's responses to the person, even when they are responses of holy anger and indignation, have a perfect, objective correspondence with the qualities of the good at stake. The person may be condemned, he is never treated as a mere object, a thing.

If the *intensity* of the Saviour's responses at times awed and astonished the beholders, as at the tomb of Lazarus, was it not that He, the sovereign Lord of life and death, understood the meaning of death far better than they?

The Gospel story, on every page, instances the plenitude of Jesus' affective life, its perfect balance, its perfect correspondence to the objective situation. We witness, for example, so many different shades of the one response of love, as we behold Jesus facing, now His eternal Father, whose

mandate caused Jesus to set His face towards Jerusalem, now again His disciples, whose dullness of heart had not been able to weary Jesus. Towards children, towards John, towards Peter, Jesus directs a love which has, in each case, its own proper quality, a quality that takes into full account the personal differences in each situation.

So it is with the entire range of spiritual affections that we discern in the Christ of the gospels. There is always the just measure of heartfelt response, the supremely right note, the perfect humanity of this Man in evidence. Indeed, the benignity and humanity of God, Our Lord, has appeared. There is no hint of hardness or bluntness, no intimation of a less than perfect grasp of the good at stake. There is always the perfectly proportioned response. At every point we behold the High Priest who is able to have compassion, the Man taken from among men, who is able to experience in a just measure every noble, every gracious, every holy human affection, whose appraisal of the world, of its good and its evil, is divinely objective.