

As long as these passions reign in the soul they will not allow it to live in the tranquility and peace necessary for the wisdom it can receive naturally and supernaturally.

CHAPTER 17

The first emotion of the will. The nature of joy and a division of the objects of joy.

1. The first passion of the soul and emotion of the will is joy. Joy—to give a definition suited to our purpose—is nothing else than a delight of the will in an object esteemed and considered fitting. For the will never rejoices unless in something that is valuable and pleasing to it. We are speaking of active joy, which occurs when a person understands distinctly and clearly the object of its joy and has power either to rejoice or not.

There is another joy, which is passive. In this kind of joy the will finds itself rejoicing without any clear and distinct understanding of the object of its joy, except at times. It has no power either to possess this joy or not possess it. We will discuss this passive joy afterward.¹ Our topic now is the joy derived from distinct and clear objects, insofar as it is active and voluntary.

2. Joy can arise from six kinds of objects or goods: temporal, natural, sensory, moral, supernatural, and spiritual. We must treat of these in their proper order, regulating the will according to reason, lest it fail to concentrate the vigor of its joy on God because it is being hindered by these goods. We must in all of this presuppose a fundamental principle that will be like a staff, a continual support for our journey. It must be kept in mind, because it is the light by which we will find guidance and understanding in this doctrine and direct joy to God amid all these goods. The principle is: The will should rejoice only in what is for the honor and glory of God, and the greatest honor we can give him is to serve him according to evangelical perfection; anything unincorporated in such service is without value to human beings.²

1. John does not discuss this passive joy as promised. It would be experienced as the fruit of divine action in the soul.

2. The best way to analyze joy is to observe its activity in relation to the various kinds of goods from which it arises and receives nourishment. The six kinds give a sufficiently complete picture of the affective human situation. The first three refer to more exterior goods, the last three to more interior. The basic principle, that the true motive for rejoicing should be the honor and glory of God and the greatest honor we can pay him is to serve him according to evangelical perfection, is applied throughout the following chapters.

CHAPTER 18

Joy in temporal goods. How a person should direct it to God.

1. We listed the first kind of goods as temporal.¹ By temporal goods we mean: riches, status, positions, and other things claiming prestige; and children, relatives, marriages, and so on. All these are possible objects of joy for the will.

But the vanity of rejoicing over riches, titles, status, positions, and other similar goods after which people usually strive is clear. If people were better servants of God by being richer, they would be obliged to rejoice in riches. But riches are rather the occasion of their offending God, as the Wise Man teaches: *Son, if you be rich you shall not be free from sin* [Ecclus. 11:10]. Though it is true that temporal goods of themselves are not necessarily the cause of sin, yet, because of the weakness of its tendencies, the human heart usually becomes attached to them and fails God, which is sin. Thus the Wise Man says you will not be free from sin.

This is why the Lord in the Gospel calls them thorns; the one who willfully handles them will be wounded with some sin [Mt. 13:22; Lk. 8:14]. In St. Luke's Gospel the exclamation—which ought to be greatly feared—asserts: *How difficult will it be for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of heaven* (those who have joy in them), and demonstrates clearly a person's obligation not to rejoice in riches, since one is thereby exposed to so much danger [Lk. 18:24; Mt. 19:23]. In order to turn us from this danger, David also taught: *If riches abound, do not set your heart on them* [Ps. 62:10].

2. I do not want to add any more references here on so clear a matter, for I would never finish quoting Scripture. When would I ever get through telling of the evils Solomon attributes to them in Ecclesiastes? A man who had abundant riches, and knowledge of what they are, exclaimed that everything under the sun was vanity of vanities, affliction of spirit, and vain solicitude of soul [Eccl. 1:14]; that the lover of riches will not reap fruit from them [Eccl. 5:9]; and that riches are kept to the harm of their owner [Eccl. 5:12]. This last assertion is evident also in the Gospel, where the man who rejoiced because for many years he had stored away a good portion of the harvest heard these words from heaven: *Fool, this night they will seek your soul that you may render an accounting, and whose will be all that you stored away?* [Lk. 12:20]. Finally, David imparts the same teaching, that we should not be envious when our neighbor becomes rich, since being rich is without profit for the next life [Ps. 49:16-17]. He indicates thereby that we ought rather to pity our rich neighbor.

¹ In ch. 17. 2.

3. People should not rejoice over riches, neither when they possess them nor when their neighbor possesses them, unless God is served through them. If it is in some way tolerable to rejoice in riches, it is when they are spent and employed in the service of God. This is the only way profit will be drawn from them.

The same holds true for other temporal goods, titles and positions, and so on. It is vain for people to rejoice in these goods if they do not serve God by them and walk more securely on the road of eternal life. And because they cannot know with certitude that they are serving God more, it would be vain of them to rejoice over these goods, for such joy cannot be reasonable. As our Lord says, even though one gains the whole world, one can lose one's soul [Mt. 16:26]. The only reason for rejoicing then is the greater service of God.

4. As for children, there is no reason to rejoice in them because they are many, or rich, or endowed with natural talents and gifts, or because they are wealthy. One should rejoice in them if they are serving God. Beauty, riches, and lineage were of no help to Absalom, David's son, since he did not serve God [2 Sm. 14:25]. The joy he found, therefore, in these goods was vain.

It is also vain to desire children, as some do in upsetting and troubling the whole world with their longing for them. For they do not know whether the children will be good and serve God, or whether the expected happiness will instead be sorrow, or the rest and comfort, trial and grief, or the honor, dishonor. And because of the children they might, as many do, offend God more. Christ says of these people that they circle the earth and the sea in order to enrich their children, and they make them children of perdition twice as much as they themselves [Mt. 23:15].

5. Even though all things are smiling and succeeding prosperously, people should have misgivings rather than joy, since the occasion and danger of forgetting God thereby increases. This is the motive Solomon gave in Ecclesiastes for taking precaution: *I judged laughter an error, and to joy I said: Why are you deceived in vain?* [Eccl. 2:2]. This was like saying: When things smiled on me, I considered it error and deceit to be glad over them, for doubtless the error and foolishness of people who are joyous over what apparently brings them prosperity and success is gross, because they do not know whether some eternal good will result or not. The heart of the fool, states the Wise Man, is where there is gladness; but the heart of the wise is where there is sadness [Eccl. 7:4]. Gladness is blinding to the heart and does not allow it to consider and ponder things, while sadness makes people open their eyes and see the advantage or harm in things. Accordingly, the Wise Man also affirms that anger is

better than laughter [Eccl. 7:3]. Hence it is better to go to a house of mourning than a house of feasting, for in the former we see the end of all human life, as the Wise Man also says [Eccl. 7:2].

6. Indeed, it would also be vanity for a husband and wife to rejoice in their marriage when they are uncertain whether God is being better served by it. They should rather be perplexed, for as St. Paul declares, matrimony is the cause of not centering the heart entirely on God, since the hearts of the couple are set on one another [1 Cor. 7:32-34]. He advises consequently: *If you are free from a wife do not seek one, but if you already have one, be as free of heart as if you had none* [1 Cor. 7:27, 29]. He teaches us this together with what, as we affirmed, he teaches about temporal goods: *This, therefore, that I say to you, brothers, is certain, the time is short; what remains is that those who have wives be as those who have them not; and those who weep as those who do not weep; and those who rejoice as those who do not rejoice; and those who buy as those who do not possess; and those who use this world as those who use it not* [1 Cor. 7:29-31].

The reason he says all this is to explain that nothing but what belongs to the service of God should be the object of our joy. Any other joy would be vain and worthless, for joy that is out of harmony with God is of no value to the soul.

CHAPTER 19

The harm caused from joy in temporal goods.

1. We would run out of ink, paper, and time were we to describe the harm that beleaguers the soul because it turns its affection to temporal goods. Something very small can lead into great evils and destroy remarkable blessings, just as an unextinguished spark can kindle immense fires capable of burning up the world.

All this harm has its origin and root in one main privative harm embodied in this joy: withdrawal from God. Just as approaching God through the affection of the will gives rise to every good, so withdrawal from him through creature affection breeds every harm and evil in the soul. The measure of the harm reflects the intensity of the joy and affection with which the will is joined to the creature, for in that proportion does it withdraw from God. Hence the harm incurred will be greater or less and, for the most part, in both an extensive and intensive way, according to the degree of one's withdrawal from God.¹

1. Just as there is gradual growth in the spiritual life there may also be gradual

2. This privative harm, from which the other negative and positive kinds arise, has four degrees, one worse than the other. When individuals reach the fourth they have encountered all the harm and evil that can be described in this matter. Moses notes these four degrees very clearly in Deuteronomy with these words: *The beloved was surfeited and hobbled backward; he was surfeited, grew fat, and spread out. He forsook God his Maker, and departed from God his Savior* [Dt. 32:15].

3. The soul, which was previously beloved, becomes surfeited by engulfing itself in the joy of creatures. The first degree of harm to spring from this joy is backsliding: a blunting of the mind in relation to God, by which God's goods become dark to it, just as a cloud darkens the air and prevents the sun from illumining it.

By the very fact that spiritual persons rejoice in something and give reign to the appetite in frivolous things, their relationship with God is darkened and their intellect clouded. This is what the divine Spirit teaches in the Book of Wisdom: *Contact with vanity and deception, and their use, obscures good things, and the inconstancy of the appetite overturns and perverts the sense and judgment that is without malice* [Wis. 4:12]. The Holy Spirit teaches by this that even though the intellect is without the thought of any malice, joy in these vanities and concupiscence for them is alone sufficient to produce the first degree of this harm: dullness of mind and darkness of judgment in understanding truth and judging well of each thing as it is in itself.

4. If human beings give way to concupiscence for temporal goods or take joy in them, their sanctity and keen judgment will be insufficient to prevent this injury. God therefore warned us through Moses: *Do not receive gifts that blind even the prudent* [Ex. 23:8]. This admonition was directed toward those who were to be judges since their judgment must be clear and alert, which would not be the case if they were to covet and rejoice in gifts.

Similarly, God commanded Moses to appoint as judges those who abhorred avarice so their judgment would not be blunted by the gratification of their passions [Ex. 18:21]. He speaks not merely of a lack of desire but of the abhorrence of avarice. To enjoy perfect protection from the emotion of love, individuals must maintain this abhorrence and defend themselves from one contrary by means of another. As the prophet Samuel asserted in the Book of Kings, the reason he was always so upright and enlightened a judge was that he never accepted a gift from anyone [1 Sm. 12:3].

5. The second degree of this privative harm issues from the first. It is disclosed in the passage already quoted: *He was surfeited, grew fat, and*

spread out [Dt. 32:15]. Accordingly, this second degree is a spreading out of the will in temporal things—and in a manner that involves even greater freedom. This consists in making little of joy and pleasure in creatures, in not being afflicted about it nor considering it to be so serious a matter. The root of this injury is the reign that was given to joy in the beginning, for in giving way to it the soul grew fat, as is indicated in Exodus, and that fatness of joy and appetite made the will spread out and extend further to creatures.

The consequences are many kinds of serious harm, for this second degree causes one to withdraw from spiritual exercises and the things of God, to lack satisfaction in these exercises because of the pleasure found in other things, and to give oneself over to many imperfections, frivolities, joys, and vain pleasures.

6. When consummated, this second degree takes away entirely the spiritual practices to which individuals were accustomed, so all their mind and covetousness fix on the secular.

Those in the second degree not only possess darkened intellects and judgment in understanding truths and justice, as do those in the first, but they are now extremely weak, lukewarm, and careless in knowing and practicing true judgment. Isaiah affirms this in these words: *They all love gifts and allow themselves to be carried away by retributions, and they do not judge the orphan, and the widow's cause does not come to them and their attention* [Is. 1:23]. This attitude could not exist without their fault, especially when duty was incumbent on them by their office. Those who have reached this degree are not without malice, as are those in the first degree. Thus they gradually turn from justice and virtue because their will reaches out more and more into affection for creatures.

The trait of those in this second degree is extreme lukewarmness—as well as carelessness—in spiritual matters, observing them through mere formality, force, or habit, rather than through love.

7. The third degree of this privative harm is the complete abandoning of God. These individuals don't care about observing God's law, but attend to worldly goods and allow themselves to fall into mortal sins through covetousness. This third degree is indicated in the next assertion of this passage from Exodus: *He forsook God his Maker* [Dt. 32:15]. This degree includes all who are so engrossed in the things, riches, and affairs of this world that they care nothing about fulfilling the obligations of God's law. Forgetful and sluggish about matters pertaining to their salvation, they become much more alive and astute in the things of the world—so much so that Christ in the Gospel calls them children of this world. He says they are more prudent and keen in their affairs than the children of light are in theirs [Lk. 16:8]. Thus in the affairs of God they

are nothing, and in those of the world they are everything. These, precisely, are the greedy. Their appetite and joy are already so extended and dispersed among creatures—and with such anxiety—that they cannot be satisfied. Rather, their appetite and thirst increase more as they regress further from God, the fount that alone can satisfy them. To these individuals God refers through Jeremiah: *They have abandoned me, the fount of living water, and dug for themselves leaking cisterns that cannot hold water* [Jer. 2:13]. The reason for this dissatisfaction is that creatures do not slake the thirst of the avaricious, but rather intensify it.

These greedy persons fall into thousands of kinds of sins out of love for temporal goods, and the harm they suffer is indeterminable. David says of them: *Transierunt in affectum cordis* [Ps. 73:7].²

8. The fourth degree of this privative harm is noted in the final statement of the text: *and departed from God his Savior* [Dt. 32:15]. This is the degree into which the avaricious ones we just mentioned fall. Because of temporal goods, the avaricious do not concern themselves with setting their heart on God's law, and consequently their will, memory, and intellect wander far from God and they forget him, as though he were not their God at all. The reason is that they have made gods for themselves out of money and temporal goods. St. Paul indicates this in declaring that avarice is a form of idolatry [Col. 3:5]. Those who are in this fourth degree forget God and deliberately turn their heart—which ought to be centered on him—to money, as though they had no other God.

9. We find in this fourth degree those who do not hesitate to order divine and supernatural things to temporal things as to gods. They should do just the contrary. They should direct the temporal to God, as is right if God is really their God. Wicked Balaam belongs in this category, for he sold the grace God had given him [Nm. 22:32]. Also Simon Magus, who thought of putting a monetary value on God's grace by contriving to buy it [Acts 18:18-19]. He placed a higher value on money, and he thought he could find someone who by selling grace would esteem money more.

Today many belong in various ways to the category of this fourth degree. Out there in the world, their reason darkened as to spiritual matters through covetousness, they serve money and not God, they are moved by money rather than by God, and they give first consideration to the temporal price and not to the divine value and reward. In countless ways they make money their principal god and goal and give it precedence over God, their ultimate end.

2. "They have passed into the affection of the heart."

10. Also included in the category of this last degree are all those miserable souls who value earthly goods as their god and are so enamored of them that they do not hesitate to sacrifice their lives when they observe that this god of theirs undergoes some temporal loss. They despair and commit suicide for wretched reasons, and demonstrate with their own hands the miserable reward that comes from such a god. Since there is nothing to hope for from him, he gives despair and death. And those whom he does not pursue right up to death, the ultimate injury, die from living in the affliction of anxieties and many other miseries. He does not permit gladness to enter their hearts or for any earthly good to bring them joy. Insofar as they are afflicted about money, they are always paying the tribute of their hearts to it. They cling to it unto their final calamity of just perdition, as the Wise Man warns: *Riches are hoarded to the harm of their owner* [Eccl. 5:12].

11. Belonging to this fourth degree are those of whom St. Paul says: *Tradidit illos in reprobum sensum* [Rom. 1:28].³ For joy in possessions ultimately drags humans down even to these evils.

But even those to whom less harm comes should be pitied greatly, since, as we affirmed, this joy causes the soul to fall far back in the way of God. As David declares: *Do not fear when a man becomes rich* (do not be envious, thinking that he has an advantage over you), *for when he dies he will take nothing with him, nor will his glory and joy descend with him* [Ps. 49:16-17].

CHAPTER 20

Benefits derived through the withdrawal of joy from temporal goods.

1. Spiritual persons must exercise care that in their heart and joy they do not become attached to temporal goods. They must fear lest, through a gradual increase, their small attachments become great. Great things can come from little things, and what is small in the beginning can be immense in the end, just as a spark is enough to set a mountain on fire, and even the whole world [Jas. 3:5]. And they should never assure themselves that, since their attachment is small, they will break away from it in the future even if they do not do so immediately. If they do not have the courage to uproot it when it is small and in its first stages, how do they think and presume they will have the ability to do so when it becomes greater and more deeply rooted? Especially since our Lord affirms in the Gospel that the one who is unfaithful in little things will also be unfaithful

3. "He has given them up to a reprobate sense."

in great things [Lk. 16:10]. Those who avoid small attachments will not fall into greater ones. But there is serious harm in little matters since through them the harm has already passed beyond the enclosure wall of the heart. And as the saying goes: Once begun, half done. Accordingly, David warns us that even though riches abound we must not set our heart on them [Ps. 62:10].

2. Even if human beings do not free their heart of joy in temporal goods for the sake of God and the demands of Christian perfection, they ought to do so because of the resulting temporal advantages, prescinding from the spiritual ones. By liberating themselves from joy in temporal goods, they not only free themselves from the pestiferous kinds of harm we mentioned in the preceding chapters, but in addition acquire the virtue of liberality. Liberality is one of God's principal attributes and can in no way coexist with covetousness.

Moreover, they acquire liberty of spirit, clarity of reason, rest, tranquility, peaceful confidence in God, and, in their will, the true cult and homage of God.

They obtain more joy and recreation in creatures through the dispossession of them. They cannot rejoice in them if they behold them with possessiveness, for this is a care that, like a trap, holds the spirit to earth and does not allow wideness of heart [2 Cor. 6:11].

In detachment from things they acquire a clearer knowledge of them and a better understanding of both natural and supernatural truths concerning them. Their joy, consequently, in these temporal goods is far different from the joy of one who is attached to them, and they receive great benefits and advantages from their joy. They delight in these goods according to the truth of them, but those who are attached delight according to what is false in them; they delight in the best, the attached delight in the worst; they delight in the substance of them, those sensibly attached delight in the accidents. The senses cannot grasp or attain to more than the accidents, whereas the spirit, purged of the clouds and appearances of the accidents, penetrates the truth and value of things, which is the object of the spirit. Joy, then, clouds the judgment like a mist. For there can be no voluntary joy over creatures without voluntary possessiveness, just as there can be no joy, insofar as it is a passion, unaccompanied by habitual possessiveness of heart. The denial and purgation of such joy leaves the judgment as clear as the air when vapors vanish.

3. Those, then, whose joy is unpossessive of things rejoice in them all as though they possessed them all; those others, beholding them with a possessive mind, lose all the delight of them all in general. The former,

as St. Paul states, though they have nothing in their heart, possess everything with greater liberty [2 Cor. 6:10]; the others, insofar as they possess things with attachment, neither have nor possess anything. Rather, their heart is held by things and they suffer as a captive. As many as are the joys they long to uncover in creatures, so many will necessarily be the straits and afflictions of their attached and possessed heart.

Cares do not molest the detached, neither in prayer nor outside it, and thus, losing no time, such people easily store up an abundance of spiritual good. Yet those who are attached spend all their time going to and fro about the snare to which their heart is tied, and even with effort they can hardly free themselves for a short while from this snare of thinking about and finding joy in the object to which their heart is attached.

At the first movement of joy toward things, the spiritual person ought to curb it, remembering the principle we are here following: There is nothing worthy of a person's joy save the service of God and the procurement of his honor and glory in all things. One should seek this alone in the use of things, turning away from vanity and concern for one's own delight and consolation.

4. There is another exceptional and principal benefit of detachment from joy in creatures: freedom of the heart for God. With this the soul is disposed for all the favors God will grant it. Without it, he does not bestow them. The favors are such that for each joy the soul renounces out of love of God and evangelical perfection, it will receive a hundredfold in this life, as promised in the Gospel [Mt. 19:29; Mk. 10:30].

Even if such gains were not to be had, the spiritual person would have to quell these joys because of the displeasure given to God through them. In the Gospel we see that merely because the rich man rejoiced in having stored up goods for many years God was so angered he told him he must give an account of his soul that very night [Lk. 12:20].

We should believe, therefore, that as often as we rejoice vainly, God is watching and planning some chastisement and bitter drink according to our merits; for at times the sadness redounding from the joy is a hundred times greater than the joy. What St. John says of Babylon in the Apocalypse is true, that she would receive torment in the measure in which she rejoiced and lived in delights [Rv. 18:7]. Yet the text does not mean that the sadness will not be greater than the joy. It shall be greater, since eternal torments are inflicted for brief pleasures. But it indicates that no fault will escape a particular punishment. For he who will punish the idle word will not pardon vain joy [Mt. 12:36].