

if  
he  
h,  
ry  
ill  
ce  
if  
u-  
io  
l-  
  
r  
s,  
a  
e  
s  
f

the Stoics imagined nothing could be found in the mind of a wise man to correspond to this emotion – even ‘grief’ is discovered used in a good sense, especially in our Christian authors. The Apostle, for example, praises the Corinthians for having felt a grief ‘in God’s way’. However, someone may say that the Apostle congratulated his readers on feeling grief in repentance, a grief such as can only belong to those who have sinned. This, in fact, is what the Apostle says:

I see that the letter grieved you, if only for the moment. And so I am glad, not because you were grieved, but because your grief led to repentance. For you felt a grief pleasing to God, and so you suffered no hurt from us. For the grief that is according to God’s will produces a repentance which brings salvation, a repentance not to be repented of: this world’s grief produces death. Your grief was according to God’s will; and see what serious intention it has brought about in you!<sup>62</sup>

This gives the Stoics a chance of replying, in defence of their point of view, that grief does no doubt appear to serve a useful purpose when it engenders penitence for sin; but, they say, it cannot exist in the mind of a wise man, just because sin is not for him a possible contingency, with the chance of grief and penitence; no more is any other evil, to bring him grief in the enduring or the feeling of it. Now there is a story told of Alcibiades – that was the name, if my memory serves me. He was happy, they say, in his own estimation; but when Socrates in an argument proved to him how miserable he was, because he was foolish, he burst into tears.<sup>63</sup> Thus for him foolishness was the cause of this salutary and desirable grief, the grief of one who laments that he is not what he ought to be. And yet it is the wise man, according to the Stoics, not the fool, who is incapable of grief.

9. *The agitations of the mind, which appear as right feelings in the lives of the righteous*

As far as this question of mental disturbances is concerned, I have already given my reply to these philosophers in the ninth book of this work.<sup>64</sup> I have shown that they are dealing in words rather than in realities, and are more eager for controversy than for truth. Among us Christians, on the other hand, the citizens of the Holy City of God, as they live by God’s standards in the pilgrimage of this present life, feel fear and desire, pain and gladness in conformity with the holy Scriptures and sound doctrine; and because their love is right, all these feelings are right in them.

62. 2 Cor. 7, 8–11.

63. Cic., Tusc. Disp., 3, 22.

64. Bk IX, 4; 5.

They fear eternal punishment and desire eternal life. They feel pain in their actual situation, because they are still 'groaning inwardly as they wait for adoption, for the ransoming of their bodies';<sup>65</sup> they rejoice in the hope that 'the saying, "Death has been swallowed up in victory"', will become a reality'.<sup>66</sup> Again, they fear to sin, and they desire to persevere. They feel pain about their sins, and they feel gladness in good works. To make them fear to sin, they are told, 'Because wickedness will abound, the love of many will grow cold.'<sup>67</sup> To make them desire to persevere, the Scripture tells them, 'The man who perseveres up to the end is the man who will be saved.'<sup>68</sup> To make them feel pain about sins they are told, 'If we say that there is no sin in us, we are fooling ourselves, and we are remote from the truth.'<sup>69</sup> To make them feel gladness in good works, they are told, 'God loves a cheerful giver.'<sup>70</sup>

Similarly, they fear or desire to be tempted, they feel pain or gladness in temptations, according to their weakness or strength of character. To prompt them to fear temptations, they are told, 'If anyone is caught doing something wrong, you who are guided by the Spirit must set him right in a spirit of kindness. Look to yourself, each one of you, for fear you too may be tempted.'<sup>71</sup> By way of contrast, to encourage them to desire temptation, they hear a valiant citizen of God's City saying, 'Prove me, Lord, and try me: test my heart and mind in the fire.'<sup>72</sup> So that they may feel pain in temptations, they have the sight of Peter weeping;<sup>73</sup> so that they may feel gladness in temptations, they hear the voice of James, saying, 'Consider it nothing but gladness, my brothers, when you come upon temptations of all kinds.'<sup>74</sup>

Besides this, it is not only on their own account that the citizens are moved by these feelings; they also feel them on account of those whose liberation they desire, while they fear that they may perish; they feel pain if they do perish, and feel gladness if they are set free. Those of us who have come into the Church of Christ from the Gentile world should remind ourselves above all of that 'teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth'.<sup>75</sup> He was a man of outstanding virtue and courage who boasted of his own weaknesses,<sup>76</sup> who toiled more than all his fellow-apostles,<sup>77</sup> and in many epistles instructed the peoples of God, not only those who were seen by him at the time, but

65. Rom. 8, 23.

66. 1 Cor. 15, 54.

67. Matt. 24, 12.

68. Matt. 10, 22.

69. 1 John 1, 8.

70. 2 Cor. 9, 8.

71. Gal. 6, 1.

72. Ps. 26, 2.

73. cf. Matt. 26, 75.

74. Jas. 1, 2.

75. 1 Tim. 2, 7.

76. 2 Cor. 12, 5; 12, 9f.

77. 1 Cor. 15, 10.

also those who were foreseen as yet to be. He was Christ's athlete, taught by Christ, anointed by him, crucified with him;<sup>78</sup> he gloried in Christ, and in the theatre of this world, for which he was made a spectacle in the sight of angels as well as men,<sup>79</sup> he fought a great fight and kept the rules<sup>80</sup> and pressed on ahead for the prize of the calling to the realms above.<sup>81</sup> The citizens of God's City are happy to gaze at this hero with the eyes of faith. They see him rejoicing with those who rejoice, and weeping with those who weep,<sup>82</sup> troubled by fighting outside and fears within,<sup>83</sup> desiring to depart and be with Christ.<sup>84</sup> They see him longing to see the Romans so that he may enjoy a harvest among them also, as among other nations,<sup>85</sup> being jealous for the Corinthians, and in that jealousy fearing that their minds may be seduced from the purity which is in Christ.<sup>86</sup> They watch him feeling deep grief and ceaseless pain in his heart for the Israelites,<sup>87</sup> because, in ignorance of the righteousness that God bestows, and wishing to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness.<sup>88</sup> They watch him as he makes known not only his pain but his mourning for certain persons who had sinned before and had shown no repentance for their impurity and their acts of fornication.<sup>89</sup>

If these emotions and feelings, that spring from love of the good and from holy charity, are to be called faults, then let us allow that real faults should be called virtues. But since these feelings are the consequence of right reason when they are exhibited in the proper situation, who would then venture to call them morbid or disordered passions? Hence, when the Lord himself condescended to live a human life in the form of a servant,<sup>90</sup> though completely free from sin, he displayed these feelings in situations where he decided that they should be shown. For human emotion was not illusory in him who had a truly human body and a truly human mind. And so, when these feelings are ascribed to him in the Gospel, there is certainly no falsehood in the ascription; when we are told, for instance, that he felt an angry grief at the Jews' hardness of heart,<sup>91</sup> that he said 'I am glad for your sake, so that you may believe',<sup>92</sup> that he even shed tears when he was about to awaken Lazarus,<sup>93</sup> that he yearned to eat the passover with his disciples,<sup>94</sup> that at the approach of his passion, his

78. Gal. 1, 12; 2; Cor. 1, 21; Gal. 2, 20.

81. Phil. 3, 14.

82. Rom. 12, 15.

79. 1 Cor. 4, 9.

80. 2 Tim. 2, 5.

84. Phil. 1, 23.

85. Rom. 1, 11ff.

83. 2 Cor. 7, 5.

87. Rom. 9, 2.

88. Rom. 10, 3.

86. 2 Cor. 11 2f.

90. Phil. 2, 7.

91. Mark 3, 5.

89. 2 Cor. 12, 21.

93. *ibid.*, 11, 35.

94. Luke 22, 15.

92. John 11, 15.

soul was *grieved*.<sup>95</sup> In fact, he accepted those emotions in his human mind for the sake of his fixed providential design, when he so decided, just as he was made man when he so willed.

At the same time, we have to admit that the emotions we experience, even when they are right and as God would have them, belong to this life, not to the life we hope for in the future; and often we yield to them even against our will. Thus we sometimes weep, even when we do not want to, though we may be moved not by any blameworthy desire but by praiseworthy charity. That implies that we have these emotions as a result of the weakness of our human condition; but this was not true of the Lord Jesus, whose weakness resulted from his power. Yet if we felt none of those emotions at all, while we are subject to the weakness of this life, there would really be something wrong with our life. For the Apostle censured and denounced certain people who, he said, were even devoid of natural feeling.<sup>96</sup> One of the sacred psalms also blames those about whom it says, 'I waited for someone to share my grief; but there was no one.'<sup>97</sup> In fact, complete exemption from pain, while we are in this place of misery, is certainly as one of the literary men of this world expressed it, 'a piece of luck that one has to pay a high price for; the price of inhumanity of mind and insensitivity of body'.<sup>98</sup>

At this point, we may examine that condition which in Greek is called *apatheia*,<sup>99</sup> which might be translated in Latin by *impassibilitas* (impassibility) if such a word existed. Now, bearing in mind that the reference is to a mental, not a physical condition, if we are to understand it as meaning a life without the emotions which occur in defiance of reason and which disturb the thoughts, it is clearly a good and desirable state; but it does not belong to this present life. For it is not the voice of men of any and every sort, but the voice of the most godly, of those advanced in righteousness and holiness, which says, 'If we say that there is no sin in us, we are fooling ourselves, and we are remote from the truth.'<sup>100</sup> And since this state of *apatheia* will not come until there is no sin in man, it will not come in this present life.

At present, however, we do well if our life is free from external blame. But anyone who thinks that his life is without sin does not succeed in avoiding sin, but rather in forfeiting pardon. Moreover, if

95. Matt. 26, 38.

98. Cic., *Tusc. Disp.*, 3, 6, 12.

99. The Stoic moral principle; cf. ch. 2.

100. 1 John 1, 8.

96. Rom. 1, 31.

97. Ps. 69, 20.

*apatheia* is the name of the state in which the mind cannot be touched by any emotion whatsoever, who would not judge this insensitivity to be the worst of all moral defects? There is therefore nothing absurd in the assertion that the final complete happiness will be exempt from the spasms of fear and from any kind of grief; but only a man utterly cut off from truth would say that love and gladness will have no place there. Then if *apatheia* describes a condition in which there is no fear to terrify, no pain to torment, then it is a condition to be shunned in this life, if we wish to lead the right kind of life, the life that is, according to God's will. But in that life of bliss which, it is promised, will be everlasting, it is clearly right that we should hope for this condition.

Now one kind of fear is that which the apostle John has in mind when he says, 'There is no fear in love; in fact perfect love sends fear packing; because fear brings punishment. Anyone who is afraid has not reached the perfection of love.'<sup>101</sup> This fear is not of the same kind as that felt by the apostle Paul when he was afraid that the Corinthians might be seduced by the craftiness of the serpent.<sup>102</sup> This latter is the fear which love feels, which, in truth, only love can feel. But the fear that is not prompted by love is the other kind of fear, the kind the apostle Paul means when he says, 'You did not receive the spirit of slavery, bringing you back to a state of fear.'<sup>103</sup> That fear which 'is pure, enduring for ever',<sup>104</sup> if it will exist in the world to come (and how else can it be understood to endure for ever?) is not the fear that frightens someone away from an evil which may befall him, but the fear that keeps him in a good which cannot be lost.

For in a situation where the love of a good thing attained is changeless, there certainly the fear of an evil to be avoided is a serene fear – if that is a possible expression! The phrase 'fear that is pure' signifies without doubt the act of will which makes it inevitable that we shall refuse to sin and that we shall be on our guard against sin, not with the anxiety of weakness, in fear of sinning, but with a tranquillity based on love. Or, if no kind of fear whatsoever can exist in that assured serenity, with the certainty of unending and blissful gladness, then the saying, 'The fear of the Lord is pure, enduring for ever', is analogous to, 'The patience of the poor will not perish eternally.'<sup>105</sup> For patience itself will not be eternal, since it is only necessary where evils are to be endured; it is the destination reached through patience that will be eternal. So perhaps 'pure fear' is said to

101. 1 John 4, 18.

104. Ps. 19, 9.

102. 2 Cor. 11, 3.

105. Ps. 9, 18.

103. Rom. 8, 15.

endure for ever in the sense that the destination to which the fear itself leads will be permanent.

It comes to this then: we must lead a right life to reach the goal of a life of felicity; and this right kind of life exhibits all those emotions in the right way, and a misdirected life in a misdirected way. But the life of felicity, which is also the life of eternity, will show a love and a gladness that are not only right but also assured, while it will show no fear or pain at all. Hence it is clear what must be the quality of the citizens of God's City during their earthly pilgrimage. They must live a life according to the spirit and not according to the flesh, that is, they must live by God's standards, not man's. And it is also apparent what will be their quality in that immortality towards which they are making their way.

In contrast, the city, that is the society, of the ungodly consists of those who live by the standards not of God but of man; of those who follow the doctrines of men or demons in their worship of false divinity and their contempt for the true Godhead. This city is shaken by these emotions as by diseases and upheavals. And if it has any citizens who give an appearance of controlling and in some way checking these emotions, they are so arrogant and pretentious in their irreligion that the swelling of their pride increases in exact proportion as their feeling of pain decreases. Some of those people may display an empty complacency, the more monstrous for being so rare, which makes them so charmed with this achievement in themselves that they are not stirred or excited by any emotions at all, not swayed or influenced by any feelings. If so, they rather lose every shred of humanity than achieve a true tranquillity. For hardness does not necessarily imply rectitude, and insensibility is not a guarantee of health.

10. *The emotions of the first human beings before their sin*

What of the first human being? Or rather, what of the first human beings, since there was a married couple? We have every reason to ask whether they experienced these emotions in their animal bodies before they sinned – the kind of emotions which we shall not feel in our spiritual bodies, when all sin has been washed away and ended. For if they did feel them, how could they have been happy in that ever-memorable place of bliss called paradise? Can anyone really be described as happy if he is exposed to fear or pain? Moreover, was there anything for them to fear where there was such abundance of all good things, where there was no threat of death or any bodily

sickness, and there was nothing lacking that a good will would seek to obtain, nor was anything present that could spoil man's life of felicity, either in body or mind?

The pair lived in a partnership of unalloyed felicity; their love for God and for each other was undisturbed. This love was the source of immense gladness, since the beloved object was always at hand for their enjoyment. There was a serene avoidance of sin; and as long as this continued, there was no encroachment of any kind of evil, from any quarter, to bring them sadness. Or could it have been that they desired to lay hands on the forbidden tree, so as to eat its fruit, but that they were afraid of dying? In that case both desire and fear was already disturbing them, even in that place. But never let us imagine that this should have happened where there was no sin of any kind. For it must be a sin to desire what the Law of God forbids, and to abstain merely from fear of punishment and not for love of righteousness. Never let us suppose, I repeat, that before all sin there already existed such a sin, the same sin, committed in respect of that tree, which the Lord spoke of in respect of a woman, when he said, 'If anyone looks at a woman with the eyes of lust, he has already committed adultery with her in his heart.'<sup>106</sup>

How fortunate, then, were the first human beings! They were not distressed by any agitations of the mind, nor pained by any disorders of the body. And equally fortunate would be the whole united fellowship of mankind if our first parents had not committed an evil deed whose effect was to be passed on to their posterity, and if none of their descendants had sown in wickedness a crop that they were to reap in condemnation. Moreover, this felicity would have continued until, thanks to the blessing pronounced in the words, 'Increase and multiply,'<sup>107</sup> the number of the predestined saints was made up; and then another and a greater happiness would have been granted, the happiness which has been given to the blessed angels. In this state of bliss there would have been the serene assurance that no one would sin and no one would die, and the life of the saints, without any previous experience of toil, or pain, or death, would have been already what it is now destined to become after all these experiences, when our bodies are restored to incorruptibility at the resurrection of the dead.

106. Matt. 5, 28.

107. Gen. 1, 28.