

*Adam Drozdek*

Andrei Timofeevich Bolotov (1738-1833) was a compulsive writer who left behind over 300 notebooks with original work and copies of works of other authors. Today, he is known primarily for his articles on agriculture, pomology, and horticulture, in many respects innovative and based on his observations and experiments. The scope of his interests was unusually wide and it encompassed pedagogy and spiritual counseling.

Bolotov had always been a religious person, although the strength of his beliefs ebbed and flowed, particularly in the early years of his very long life. He reflected on the reasons of such fluctuations of faith and wanted to provide advice to those who underwent similar bouts of doubts. Considerable reflection and reading on the problem led him to a passionate and quite meticulous presentation of advice in his *Guide to true human happiness or an essay on moral and partially philosophical arguments concerning well-being in human life and the ways of reaching it*. He worked on the book in 1773 using then the title *On happiness of human life and the ways of reaching it* (Zh 3.101)<sup>1</sup> and apparently finished it the same year (3.165), but it was published by Novikov in 1784 in three volumes, well over 1200 pages in total.

---

<sup>1</sup> Following references will be used: C – Christian August Crusius, *Anweisung vernünftig zu leben*, Leipzig, Gleditsch, 1767<sup>3</sup> [1744]; Ch – [Андрей Т. Болотов], *Чувствования христианина при начале и конце каждого дня в неделе, относящиеся к самому себе и к Богу*, Москва, В Университетской типографии у Н. Новикова 1781; DSV – Андрей Т. Болотов, *Дюжина сотен вздохов, чувствований и мыслей христианских*, in *Российский архив: история отечества в свидетельствах и документах XVIII-XX вв.*, vols. 2-3, Москва, Студия Тритэ, 1992 [1991-1998], pp. 471-539; G – Johann Christoph Gottsched, *Erste Gründe der gesamten Weltweisheit, darinn alle philosophische Wissenschaften in ihrer natürlichen Verknüpfung abgehandelt werden*, Leipzig, Breitkopf 1733-1734; H – Johann Adolf Hoffmann, *Zwey Bücher von der Zufriedenheit nach den Gründen der Vernunft und des Glaubens*, Hamburg, Johann Carl Bonn, 1766<sup>4</sup> [1722]; P – Андрей Т. Болотов, *Путеводитель к истинному человеческому счастью или опыт нравоучительных и отчасти философических рассуждений о благополучии человеческой жизни и средствах к приобретению оного*, [1784], in his *Детская философия*, Санкт-Петербург, Петрополис 2012, pp. 353-846; Zh – *Жизнь и приключения Андрея Болотова, описанные самим им для своих потомков*, Санкт-Петербург, Головин, 1870-1873.

### Thelematology

As to an approach to his advising, Bolotov did not make any claim to originality. Comparing himself to a cook who prepares a moral dish to his consumers / readers, Bolotov said that his cooking was not French, as fashion then dictated, but German (P 355). Somewhat mixing metaphors, he hoped that others would use the prescriptions of a doctor whom he himself followed. The method of this doctor was not well known in Russia (354). Bolotov did not mention his name but only said that the name of this doctor was well known in the world (355).

The statement is rather curious: why not mention the name of someone, whose theoretical and practical precepts Bolotov wanted to follow, all the more that this name was not known in Russia? Later on in the book, Bolotov urged the reader to get to know thelematology, “a new and most useful philosophical science” (P 398), which “analyzes all that relates to the human will” (464) and, in fact, the name is derived from θέλημα – ‘will’. Only in his memoirs Bolotov explicitly stated that he learned by heart the thelematology of Crusius and translated some of its parts (Zh 2.57), and that Crusius’ thelematology helped him to overcome his personal problems (2.431).<sup>2</sup>

Thelematology is the first part of a 1000-page opus of Crusius, *An instruction how to live rationally*, with three parts to follow: ethics, the right / law of nature, and the teaching on wisdom. Bolotov was interested particularly in the practical aspects of Crusius’ teaching disregarding Crusius’ theoretical and frequently overly pedantic analyses. Although philosophy is indicated in the title of Bolotov’s book, there is very little of any philosophizing in it with an explanation that the book was written not for philosophers, but for simple people (P 827). However, except for the fleeting reference to an anonymous doctor, Bolotov never clearly indicated what came from Crusius and as it turns out, he not only adopted his theoretical framework, but quite often simply lifted phrases, sentences, even entire passages from Crusius without an indication that they were only his translations of the German original.

Although Bolotov said that he followed the system of this one philosopher, i.e., Crusius, in his entire *Guide* (P 827), he also mentioned that he followed newer philosophers (360, 386). Among these philosophers he appa-

---

<sup>2</sup> Interestingly, in an unpublished autobiography written in 1817, from the entire Königsberg period Bolotov recounted only the life changing influence on him of Crusius’ philosophy, И. В. Щеблыгина, *А. Т. Болотов: гармония мира и души: ценностные ориентации и творческие интересы*, Москва, Андреевский флаг, 2003, p. 105.

rently meant Johann Adolf Hoffmann about whose book, *Two books on contentment / peace based on reason and faith*, Bolotov said: the book “served me later as foundation of all my later good philosophical life and became a foundation on which began to be founded the entire edifice of my peace and happiness in my life”. He read it several times (Zh 1.896), and, in fact, some influence of this book is detectable in the *Guide*.<sup>3</sup> He also may have meant Johann Christoph Gottsched, who wrote about Wolffian philosophy. Although after its initial acceptance Bolotov eventually rejected this philosophy as detrimental to his faith, he acknowledged the value of Gottsched’s book to which he said he owed a lot (1.959). Some traces of this book, *Main foundations of worldly wisdom in which all philosophical sciences are discussed in their natural connection*, are also detectable in the *Guide*.

### Desires

There is an inborn desire to be happy given us by God (G 2.44). Omnipotent God does not do anything in vain (C 7, 301), so our search for happiness cannot be in vain either (P 362; H 8). However, people are constantly dissatisfied and there is always something missing for them to be entirely happy (P 363). The reason is that people don’t know what happiness is and they try to reach it the wrong way (364). If someone thinks happiness is in riches and he becomes rich, then he is constantly concerned about losing these riches and is plagued by other everyday troubles (H 101, 131, 221-222). Some seek happiness in fame, great works, pleasures, etc., and do not find happiness in these things either (P 368). However, someone seeking riches really wants to live joyously; the same with other pursuits of happiness (374). This joy should be constant, undisturbed, but no one has such happiness in this life (376). But can anyone say that life will not continue after this life? “Will anyone among those who have common sense espouse such stupidity that with the

---

<sup>3</sup> However, as Bolotov’s commitment to Crusius indicates, Hoffmann was not Bolotov’s doctor, as suggested by С. И. Брызгалова, Н. В. Шамедько, *Андрей Тимофеевич Болотов как педагог-просветитель*, Издательство Российского государственного университета им. Иммануила Канта 2009, p. 92. Bryzgalova and Shamed’ko refer to И[рина] В. Щеблыгина, *Болотов в Кёнигсберге: К вопросу о формировании мировоззрения Болотова*, “Вестник Московского университета”, Серия 8: История 1995, no. 3, p. 70, but Shcheblygina only mentioned “deep impression” that Huffman made on Bolotov; admittedly, she did not mention Crusius in the context of the *Guide*; the same in Щеблыгина, *А. Т. Болотов*, pp. 20, 112. Incidentally, the medical metaphor could have been taken from Hoffman’s simile who said about himself that, like a doctor, he had to show the causes of illness before he proposed a cure (H 20).

end of this life will be the ultimate end of our existence?” The existence of this inner desire for happiness is a proof of life after death. This desire given by God cannot be deceptive (377) and full satisfaction of this desire can be expected in the future life (C 302). However, to a considerable extent life on earth can be happy (P 379), but the level of happiness depends on our effort: “nothing is given for free, without an effort” (381). God has provided the means for reaching a certain level of happiness in this life (383). The ways that lead to happiness here are the ones “designated by the wise Creator for our nature and are in agreement with His will” (384).

Joy and pleasure stem from a fulfillment of our desires (P 386; C 29). However, we should control which desires can be satisfied and satisfy the ones that can be satisfied without great difficulties, thereby bringing us joy (P 393).

There are two powers in the human soul: intellect and will (P 398; C 4, 8; G 1.316).<sup>4</sup> Bolotov likened a person to a ship in which there is a room representing the soul, in which there are birds representing thoughts and animals representing wants and desires (403). This comparison is exploited on dozens of pages of the *Guide*.

In presenting properties of desires, Bolotov followed Crusius very closely. 1. Desires can be asleep and be awakened by thoughts or by other desires (C 82 (#1)); 2. they are always hungry (P 408) and once they are satisfied, the joy wears off and they want to be again satisfied (C 379-380); 3. they love what they strive for and hate the opposite (C 136); 4. they can be pacified: although the desire is not satisfied, the opposite does not take place either and thus there is hope for fulfillment (P 409; C 98 (#4)); 5. satisfaction of desires leads to pleasure and thus to happiness; (P 410; C 147); 6. an effort has to be made to satisfy desires; 7. desires do not want that their effort was in vain (C 145); 8. desires can turn from good to bad, although all desires were created good and harmonious (P 411), but this order in the soul was disturbed, whereby desires were fighting with one another, from which all our problems come; 9. desires can grow or become smaller; they can become habitual and turn into passions (P 412; C 100-102 (#5); G 1.264). 10. desires can bring on other desires (P 417; C 105 (#6)); 11. many desires can become affects that Bolotov called inciting passions, which are desires that grow very quickly (P 421; C 110 (#7); G 1.254); they eventually begin to shrink; some of these affects are good (astonishment, joy), some bad (fear, fright,

---

<sup>4</sup> Gottsched also said that the soul had only one power (G 1.279); thus, reason and will are two sides of the same powers; for Crusius, only God has one power whose two sides are reason and will (C 8).

anger, ennui, desperation) (P 423, 726-729; C 114-122); 12. actions of desires are in different people on different levels of vividness, strength, and durability (C 88 (#2)); this leads to different categories of characters/temperaments (C 90-91; P 423); 13. desires aim at the way to reach a goal (C 96 (#3)); 14. desires are characterized by courage, which is an ability to overcoming obstacles (C 124-125 (#8)); 15. some desires cause changes in the body (tears, smile); all desires want to have a better grasp of things they aim at (P 424; C 37, 126 (#9)); 16. Each desire wants to have the clearest notion about its object (P 424); 17. each desire loves its own life, whence our desire to live (C 141); 18. desires aim at the present and the future (C 142); 19. desires want to reach the object of desire and detestation of the possibility of evil (C 145-146); 20. desires can see what is better for them (P 425).

Analysis of desires shows “a work of our great Creator”. 1. To incite a desire of something, we have to think about it (C 135-136, 156); 2. a desire can grow after it is awakened and given free rein (C 102); 3. a desire gets smaller if awakened rarely, sleeps for a long time, and is restrained when awake (P 428); 4. a desire is put to sleep when thoughts about its object are ceased (429).

There are a number of inborn desires, some more important than others. The first inborn desire is the desire for one’s own perfection (C 154), from which comes the desire to perfect one’s reason which leads to the drive for truth (P 431; C 159, 161). From the desire of perfection come the desire to act according to reason (C 162); the desire for perfection of the body (C 163); the desire for freedom (C 164); the desire to possess the whole object of desire (C 167). The second inborn desire is the desire to unite oneself with objects in which we see perfection (P 432; C 168), from which come the desire to see perfection (C 170); the desire to possess perfect objects from which comes pleasure coming from art (C 170); the desire of moral love which is the desire of union with rational minds (P 433; C 171-172). The third inborn desire is the drive of conscience to act according to the law of God (P 434; C 179, 190-191). This leads to the desire to do what is pleasing to God and to respect Him; it is the law written in our hearts (C 190). There are also inborn desires humans share with animals such as hunger (P 435; C 200-201).

We are born with a disorder in our souls which was caused by “the fall of our forefather Adam”. Bolotov confessed he could not say why we, being innocent, suffer because of it. This is a mystery hidden from us (P 447). In the paradise, for reasons not known to us, God put Adam to a test (448). The devil managed to incite Adam so that the desire for perfection overtook in him the voice of conscience (449) and so it is in all people and so they are leaning more to evil than to good. However, when we want, we can decrease

the evil rooted in us in which we can rely on God's help that He promised (450).

Natural evil in us stems from the misuse of our freedom, i.e., our will (452; C 358). In all this we should beware of extremes: some people ascribe to the devil too much influence; on the opposite end some people not only reject the devil's influence but don't see any evil in themselves, even though the Scriptures testify about the existence of evil spirits. The middle way is to ascribe evil deeds to oneself and ascribe to the devil only temptations (P 453). The Scriptures testify that evil spirits were originally created as beings higher than humans, with greater reason and will (454). They can in an unknown way incite thoughts in our soul but cannot force our will (455).

There are a number of negative inclinations and desires aimed against reason: 1. inclination to cling to obscure understanding of things; 2. inclination to preconceptions (459; C 361); 3. paying no attention to important things (C 363); 4. excessive curiosity; 5. superstition (C 363; P 460); 6. skepticism that includes doubts about the Christian law (about religion: C 363). Also, there are negative inclinations and desires aimed against will: 1. laziness; 2. desire of comfort (C 364); 3. seeking sensory pleasures (P 461; C 365; H 28, 32); 4. dislike of obligations including the Christian law; 5. corrupted self-love (C 365; H 27, 65); 6. putting one's own interest first; 7. inconstancy; 8. violent passions (P 462); 9. unfulfilled desires which include envy (C 366) and wishing ill to others; 10. bad taste; 11. stubbornness (463; C 367). Finally, there are negative inclinations and desires aimed both against reason and will, which include 1. ambition; 2. greed; and 3. lust (P 464; C 368); pride, for example, is part of ambition (P 466; C 373).

Evil in human life has three kinds of adverse consequences: 1. some take place in ourselves, 2. some concern our relationship with people, and 3. some concern our relationship with God (P 469; C 378-379). Consequences of the first kind include the fact that 1. the perfection of our soul is diminished (C 379); 2. vices turn into habits (C 380); 3. stubbornness increases (C 380); and 4. the soul becomes enslaved (P 471; C 381). Social consequences of evil lead to the situation that 1. we are disliked by people; 2. people harm one another; and 3. they do not find others worthy to be helped (P 473; C 382).

God infinitely loves goodness, and infinitely hates evil (P 475) for which we will be punished (476-478; C 383). If it were impossible to remove evil desires from us, we would not be guilty of our deeds (P 483) and God could not require any improvement of us and He would unjustly judge us (484). There are thus eternal consequences of our attitude to evil in this life. Fortunately, we have a desire, although weak, that others correct their ways and abandon their vices. Moreover, we love virtue; society requires of people truth and loyalty; we have an inborn desire of truth and virtue; and "our heart

whispers to our ear that the creator of the world needs and wants our correction” (485). So, self-improvement is possible, an eradication or at least a suppression of evil desires can be achieved particularly with God’s help which will come 1. when we admit that without His help we cannot do it and 2. that we believe in His help; 3. when we come to Him and ask Him for help 4. to use this help while following ways designed for us, that is, by following the Christian law; 5. when we ourselves begin to work on correcting our ways (cf. DSV 475). We can be certain of the reality of God’s help because of God’s love for man (P 488) and the fact that God prompts us to follow the Christian law and eventually leads to eternal happiness (489), although it remains a mystery how God accomplishes His help.

### Rules for self-improvement

Bolotov listed fourteen overlapping ways of self-improvement (cf. P 600).

First, “try, first of all, enter into yourself to recognize all bad inclinations, desires, passions and habits which rule in us” (P 511; DSV 520.191; H 86 (Marcus Aurelius)). To learn about one’s bad inclinations: 1. recognize that they come from self-love; 2. force yourself to perform such self-analysis; 3. make a list of your vices (P 514); 4. try to be objective when going over this list; remember past and current deeds and desires to determine your own passions and bad inclinations; 5. determine their strength (515; H 44, 106). Some such inclinations simply disappear when they are determined (P 516).

Second, “know the nature and various properties of our passions, bad inclinations, and habits, in particular, their natural comforts and weaknesses to be able to use them in an opportune moment” (P 517; H 92). Their comfort lies 1. in our frequent thinking about objects of desires and seeing only positive sides in them (P 518); 2. when we think for a long time about these things; 3. when similar inclinations are active; 4. when they are not disturbed by any counteraction (519); 5. when we do not think about God’s help to defeat them (520); 6. from “some outside support and helper,” and it is easy to guess who that helper is [devil?]. On the other hand, their weaknesses include the fact that 1. they cannot be constantly active (521); 2. they cannot act without an object they strive for; 3. all thoughts are under the control of reason; 4. they do not like to act in vain (522); 5. each one has an enemy; 6. bad inclinations don’t like thoughts opposing them (523); 7. desires decrease when they are satisfied several times; 8. many passions become oversatiated; 9. some passions can act against other passions (524); 10. most importantly, they are afraid of “the mentioned outside, strong helper of their enemies” [God?].



Third, “take a firm stand and try to free your reason and will from the yoke of command of passions” (P 525; C 331, 417).

Fourth, “try to strengthen your will with exercises appropriate to it” by having it control desires (P 529). Force yourself to do good deeds and not to do bad deeds; next time it will be easier (533).

Fifth, “try to equip yourself beforehand with thoughts and impressions that are suitable to oppose vices of passions and to destroy their actions” (P 535). Good source of such thoughts are books and conversations in which the bad consequences of passion are discussed (537) and in which the good consequences of opposing them are presented. Such thoughts should stem from reasons why it is beneficial to overcome passions and from the possibility of such overcoming (538). The best for forming such thoughts is thinking about the presence of God with all His perfections (539; C 441); thinking about the greatness of the world and one’s own smallness; thinking about death (P 540). Now, these thoughts have to be kept vivid and thus they should be associated with words that evoke them quickly (541; C 405). To make it easier, Bolotov recommended keeping a list of these thoughts in a small notebook to be carried in one’s pocket (P 543).

Sixth, “try to magnify as much as possible good inclinations and habits, in particular the ones that oppose passions that rule over you the most or are the strongest so that you can use them when needed” (P 545). Good inclinations are magnified the same way as bad ones are, since their nature is the same (546): 1. wake up an inclination as often as possible and 2. keep it active as long as possible and 3. don’t allow it to go to sleep for too long (547). Desires can be indirectly incited by thought by 1. reading books that speak about virtue; 2. seeking opportunities to talk about virtue (548); 3. when reading or conversation awakens a desire to do good, do it as soon as possible (549).

Seventh, “not only do not purposely incite in yourself bad inclinations and tendencies, but also try to escape occasions when they can be easily incited” (P 554; C 400).

Eighth, “try to investigate the foundation and object of each bad desire and passion and also all causes inciting them and as precisely as possible analyze and then reject them or, in the extreme case, rework the strongest of them” (P 557; C 401-402).

Ninth, “try by all means to diminish your stronger passions by lengthening their sleep or inaction and bring them to the point when they by themselves become incapacitated” (P 561). Do it by 1. getting rid of tempting thoughts (565); 2-3. staying away from bad company; 4. not reading bad books that incite your passions; 5. staying away from practices that incite



them (C 400); 6. not seeking positions that give opportunities for their activity; 7. noting which opportunities incite them; 8. fighting one's own laziness (P 566).

Tenth, "notice the first minutes when passions are awakened and using them do not allow them to act in fullness" (568; C 384; H 49).

Eleventh, "make a firm resolution to fight against your passions and be always ready for courageous rebuff and counteraction of their blows, in particular, in the case of inescapable reasons and opportunities that incite them" (P 572); this is possible by the fact that people have an inborn ability for courage that is dormant (574; C 125).

Twelfth, "in each unavoidable case do not surrender to passions without an opposition, but rather courageously fight against them unabatedly using all your strength and abilities to have every time victory over them and use to that end all proper means" (P 577).

Thirteenth, "do not despair in case of first poor successes in opposing passions and do not become weak in your spirit, but rather even more incite yourself to a more courageous opposition to them and learn from it how to defeat them with more sophisticated ways". In case of a defeat 1. "enter into yourself and be ashamed of your weakness and lack of courage" (P 581-582); 2. become angry at your enemy; 3. analyze the fight you lost (583); 4. analyze mistakes you made in this fight (584). When passions overwhelm us, we need to ask God for help. Just one thought about God can chase away many enemies (589).

Fourteenth, "just as at the beginning of your correction process, so in the middle of it and particularly while overcoming passions always call upon the help of God and believe without a doubt that He will help you"; this is the most important principle, although "our times are such that by nothing else can someone disgrace himself as by this," i.e., by recognizing the almighty God who cares for us (P 590).

In all human attempts for self-improvement, God's help is never far away, even if we do not see it and even if we are not even asking for it. He helps us without asking Him 1. when we try to improve ourselves, in which case God creates opportunities to listen and read about ways of accomplishing it; 2. He creates opportunities for good deeds; 3. He prompts our conscience when bad things happen (P 592); in this case, we should say, "go away, unworthy thoughts! I don't want to listen to you. My creator and His will are most important to me and His wrath most terrifying! ... Help me, You, great God! and fill the inadequacy of my strength with your all-powerful help" (P 597). 4. He creates good opportunities for improving ourselves (P 592); and 5. when goodness did not succeed, God sends misfortunes, attacks, and illness-

ses, in which case our nature shows us the magnitude of our passions, forces us to analyze ourselves and for some time makes us able to begin with a good result. Also, 6. God fortifies our will in our fight against passions, although “how He does it, we cannot rationally know” (593). In all this, it is enough to begin a good work, in which case “your Creator, all-seeing and, at the same time, present and seeing you and looking at what is happening, will be exceedingly pleased with it and will without fail help you and bring to conclusion this deed pleasing to Him that you started and as an initial reward for it in the same hour He will fill your soul with the purest joy, and for a future reward [given] in a worthy fashion even better than you can think, your deed will be written in the book of life and will never be forgotten” (596).

## J o y

There are five rules or sets of rules that allow for an increase of joy and thus of happiness in one’s life.

The first and most important way of increasing joy is by magnifying in oneself the love for God and for other people (P 608; C 412) since nothing can be good without love of God and man (P 618, DSV 519.172). Bolotov spoke about an inborn desire to unite the soul with objects perceived as perfect without considering any self-interest, from which desire comes spiritual love, a desire to unite spiritually with other rational beings without any self-interest (P 610): we rejoice when good things happen to someone we love; we rejoice when fulfilling God’s command when we love Him (611). We feel good when we did something good, which shows that in all people there is a striving for the love of God since doing good is doing what pleases God (613). The New Testament is the best source to know what the love for God and men is. This love has to come from the depth of our hearts (620). It manifests itself in obedience to God (622; C 437), thinking and talking about Him (C 440); learning about Him and His attributes (C 439); becoming like Him (C 444); expressing our gratitude for His care (P 623; C 444); using His gifts for good deeds (C 443); praying to Him (P 624; C 444); always counting on His help (C 446; H 506); trying not to anger Him by our bad deeds (625; C 450); giving honor to Him (C 450); and expressing humility before Him (P 626; C 451).

We cannot love God without loving men (P 642). Do to others as you would like them do to you, this is the law and the prophets (Mt. 7:12). If these words are not convincing, read books of ancient philosophers and moralists who spoke according to the natural reason (P 643). Here are the main duties toward one’s neighbor: 1. love all people (C 494; G 2.151-152,

425) and thus serve one another (C 495; P 645); 2. serve others gladly, honestly (C 582; G 2.425-436), politely, and in a friendly fashion (C 584); 3. no one wants to be hated (C 584), so don't hate anyone; 4. everyone would like to be loved, so love everyone, even your enemies (P 648-649; C 584; G 2.160); thus, the command of loving others also agrees with nature (P 649).

There are ways to increase one's love for God: 1. think about God as frequently as possible; 2. think as often as possible about God's blessings; 3. think as often as possible how much God loves you, how merciful and good to you He is (cf. DSV 491); 4. think about His promises (P 652); 5. try to talk to Him (1.-5.: Ch 202-203); 6. remind yourself of your nothingness and the corruption of your nature; 7. think about your lack of gratitude; 8. think about your obligation to love God as His creation, which is needed for eternal happiness; 9. read edifying books (H 192); 10. manifest your love for God.

There are also ways to increase one's love for man: 1. look at people from the positive angle (P 653); 2. count their good deeds, not bad deeds; 3. don't think about their misdeeds, but about their good deeds; 4. think about them as your brothers; 5. think about the problems of your subordinates; 6. think about your equals as being in the same situation as you are (654); 7. don't think yearningly about your superiors' situation; remember that they may have more problems than you (cf. H 175-176); 8. try to befriend all people; 9. remember reasons that make you love people (P 655).

The second set of rules related to an increase of joy is about learning spiritual joys / pleasures of thinking (P 658; C 413). There are three types of joy in life: sensory, mental (thinking), and both sensory and mental such as contemplation of beauty of nature and seeing in it God's work (P 659; C 413). People are not impressed by what they see in nature since they become used to it and do not contemplate on it and on its orderliness (P 662); besides, the eyes of our souls have been darkened by the fall of Adam (666). The joy coming from contemplation of nature can arise through the entire year (667). Spiritual joys are most worthy; God filled the world with beauty so that we could praise Him by admiring this beauty. Through such joys we can sharpen our minds and improve our hearts. To incite in oneself this appreciation, one should read books of scholars who describe the beauty and order of nature. In the only explicit reference in the *Guide* to other authors, Bolotov listed 13 books that served him well in this endeavor (671). These are treatises on physico-theology or works, some of them multi-volume, that have a significant physico-theological component. Since these books can be inaccessible to the public (all of them are in German), then "any physics [book] and [any book] related to natural history" would be fine. To appreciate the beauty and order of nature, and thereby appreciate the work of God, Bolotov advised his

readers: 1. learn how to watch all things in nature (674), for example, “the sapphire vault of the sky, and marvel of many forms, changeably kinds, and marble motley of clouds, particularly at the sunrise and the sunset” (675); 2. analyze all things “so to speak, downwards and across,” that is, very thoroughly; 3. analyze the structure of things and ask for its cause, which will invoke the thought about the Creator; “knowledge of physics and its parts can be in this case of great help”,<sup>5</sup> 4. consider the skills needed to create such structures; 5. consider the nature of natural events: birth, multiplication, death, etc. (676); 6. consider the reason for which things are; 7. consider positive properties of things and draw moral conclusions from them; 8. consider things created by men, such as watches and compare them with nature; 9. consider invisible things such as the way God directs nature and His wisdom manifested in nature (677). Bolotov confessed that he started to have an idea about the greatness of God, started to obey His commandments, and started to learn about himself through an appreciation of the order of nature (668-669). In fact, his religious sentiment has been enhanced very strongly throughout his life by the appreciation of nature. This transpires from his *Letters on beauties of nature* and *The painter of nature*,<sup>6</sup> but also from his scholarly articles on matters related to agronomy, orchards, forests, and the like.

The third rule of increasing joy is about teaching oneself such joys which can be acquired without any loss and many preparations in the current situation (P 678; C 414). We are constantly dissatisfied with what we have and often we even don't know why (P 679). With a tinge of self-reference, Bolotov said that someone can be happier with a small orchard than someone with large one because he knows how to use it and is delighted “not only with the outward side and with looking at it but also with its essence, and thus [he rejoices] with his senses and with his spirit” (684); he rejoices over “this temple that nature itself prepared” and is ready to soil his hand when working on it (685).

---

<sup>5</sup> “Physics makes the creations to be a ladder on which the intellect climbs to the knowledge of the Creator and through which the world becomes a scene on which everywhere shine for our eyes the clearest traces and proofs of perfections of this first and infinite Being, [perfections that are] worthy of praise”, J[ohann] G[eorg] Sulzer, *Versuch einiger moralischen Betrachtungen über die Werke der Natur*, Berlin, Haude und Spener, 1750, p. vii. Bolotov considered Sulzer's work as a foundation of great transformation in all his feelings (Zh 1.862).

<sup>6</sup> А. Т. Болотов, *Избранное*, Псков, ПОИПКРО, 1993, pp. 133-344. The spirit of these two works resembles closely Eukrates' physico-theological description of his estate as presented by Sulzer in his *Unterredungen über die Schönheit der Natur*, Berlin, Haude und Spener, 1770 [1750].

The fourth rule for increasing joy states: “take delight from joys from outward sensations moderately and not too often” (P 688; C 414). Sensory joys not only wear out with time, but also can turn into something unpleasant (P 690).

The fifth rule of increasing joy states: “take delight of joys always in an informed way and with frequent reflection” on it; this is, think about an enjoyment before it happens; reflect on it when it is happening; and after it took place (P 695; C 415). This reflection pertains to the fact that desires were fulfilled for which we can thank God. This also should be a reflection on a problem that could have prevented this fulfillment; on benefits stemming from it; on disappointment that could have happened when it would not be fulfilled; and on how many people did not get their wish (P 699).

### C o n t e n t m e n t

After increase of joy, the second problem related to boosting happiness in earthly life that Bolotov, following Crusius, discussed, is the problem of inner peace or contentment, a state that should be possible even without fulfillment of desires. Generally, such a state can be accomplished by trying to be in circumstances in which disappointment would be minimal and when it does happen, by minimizing the negative results (P 704). There are a number of rules allowing for enhancing contentment.

The first rule is about teaching oneself to desire virtue strongly, i.e., to love it (P 705; C 415). Moral good is what agrees with the law of God or with His designs that He expects His creation to follow, i.e., what agrees with the will of God (P 706; C 33). Philosophers usually distinguish noble goods that constitute our main temporal goods and include the material of virtue, e.g., learning truth, heartfelt friendship; on the other hand, there are also ignoble goods that stem only from delight taken from pleasures and although they do not promote virtue, they are not opposed to it (P 706; definitions and examples in C 411).

The second rule requires never to think about getting and keeping earthly goods as the most valuable things (P 710; C 416). We all experienced a situation that something we possessed was lost (P 717). However, usually we don’t need a half of what we have. Moreover, many people do not have what we do and yet they live comfortably (718). We should remember that we were born naked and brought nothing to the world and will take nothing from it (720).

The third rule: eradicate unneeded whims and desires (P 721; C 416).

The fourth rule: tone down affects and do away with passions (P 725; C 417).

## Dissatisfaction

The third set of rules related to an increase of happiness of the earthly life speak about minimizing regret and dissatisfaction (P 743). In our good days we should prepare ourselves for misfortunes and defend ourselves (748) with thoughts which in the moment of regret could calm us (749).

The first rule of minimizing dissatisfaction is: “think about the cause of your sorrow and regret to arrive at the most precise possible understanding of the state, true price, cause, and actions of evil that afflicted or are about to afflict you”. It may turn out that this evil is illusory or not as big as it appears to be or we can easily counteract its causes and free ourselves of it (P 750-751; C 418). Our misfortunes are caused by 1. our passions (P 753); 2. our bad deeds (755); 3. deeds of others (756); 4. the will of God, e.g., being born stupid, having disproportional limbs; being sickly; cripple; slave experiencing losses; having too many children; having no children; having a bad marriage; illness of the loved ones; chronic illness (758); blindness; deafness; losing one’s tongue; having a bad memory; stuttering; obesity; wounds; often we become too bitter over it; we don’t know God’s design and what would be better for us; instead of bitterness toward God we should patiently endure what He sent us. Our problems can also be caused by 5. the makeup of nature, the makeup created by God, such as a poor yield of wheat; storms; flood; epidemic among cattle; fire; poor roads; insects (759-760).

The second rule of reducing displeasure: do not give yourself to sorrow and don’t dwell on it (P 765; C 418); thus, thoughts about evil experiences should be removed (P 767).

The third rule: as soon as an evil is noticed, think about ways of counter-acting, deflecting, or decreasing it (P 769; C 419). Partially, this can be accomplished using one’s own strength; however, it is much better to trust in God and His help, although many will deride the last advice (P 776). “Firm and perfect trust in God and doubtless hope for His help that He will not abandon us is for us such a treasure of which benefits and usefulness no human pen can describe” (777). The Scripture says that we should rely that way on God; thus, this is possible (779). We need, first of all, to know God, His infinite attributes and perfections (780; C 439), particularly His infinite love; without it we cannot firmly trust in Him; then, we need to make a firm resolution to correct our ways; then we need to entrust to God all our affairs for Him to lead us (781).

The fourth rule: what we cannot change, we should patiently endure (783; C 419; H 52, 146).

The fifth rule: turn an unavoidable evil into a means for good (P 795; C 419; H 145).

## Consolation

Consolations are “contemplative thoughts made to oppose sorrow to calm our spirit (C 428), or ... spiritual medicine for our mental wounds and illnesses” (P 801). There are two types of consolations: opposing consolations (C 428), which are thoughts about an oppressing evil as apparent, imaginary (P 802), and inciting consolations, which incite thoughts or good desires that can overcome our sorrow (803, 812; Crusius spoke about *Wiederlegungsgründe* and *Bewegungsgründe* of consolation, C 428).

Here are the general rules for opposing consolations to bring inner peace: 1. analyze your sorrow (P 804); 2. see if the evil is only imaginary (805; C 418, 428); 3. see if your displeasure comes from unfulfilled desires (P 805); 4. see if the evil you experience is deserved and serves a greater good (806; see if you caused this evil, C 418, and if it a means for a greater good, C 428; H 578); 5. when evil is caused by others, see if your vexation is more about them than about the evil they caused (P 807); 6. see if the evil is really so great as you think it is (P 808; C 418, 428); 7. see if evil is long-lasting (P 809; a kind of #6, C 428); 8. see if evil can be easily deflected (P 810; a kind of #6, C 428); 9. see if misfortune has anything pleasant and good in it (P 810; kind of evil serving a greater good; H 214); 10. see if what you lost really belonged to someone else (P 811) remembering at the same time that the owner of all that exists is God (812).

General rules for inciting consolations to bring contentment are as follows: 11. think how unavoidable a misfortune was (flood, etc.) (P 813; C 428); 12. remember that a misfortune fell also upon others, not only upon yourself (814; C 428); 13. be glad that it did not get any worse than what happened (P 815; C 428); think about how many people would change their fate for yours; when analyzing your deeds, maybe you would see that you deserved a much worse fate (P 816); 14. think about futility of your sorrow which does not help any; 15. think how futile is your downspiredness and that it is much more useful and courageous to endure your misfortune like Socrates and Epictetus; if pagans could do it, all the more we, Christians, can do it (817-818); 16. remember that your debt requires that you patiently endure misfortunes (819); 17. remember what harm did to you what you lost (820); 18. when a misfortune was caused by natural causes, blame yourself for the unreasonableness of your sorrow (821); 19. know that your misfortune was according to the will of God (822; all important events that influence human life happen by God’s providence C 430, H 87 (Aurelius), 559, 577); 20. give your sorrow to the Lord and know that He will not abandon you (P 823).

At the end of the *Guide*, Bolotov referred to the classical virtue of moderation concerning bodily and spiritual pleasures. He spoke about moderation



in respect to the sexual drive (P 832), in which he repeated Crusius' discussion of chastity as "virtuous restriction" of this drive (C 420-421). His discussion of restraining appetite (P 833) repeated Crusius' remarks on "moderation in narrow sense", which is "the virtuous restraint" put on appetite (C 423). He used Crusius' discussion of limiting the desire for fame through humility (P 833-834, 838; C 424-425) and closed the *Guide* with five rules for contentment, which were directly copied from Crusius: 1. be grateful to God that you are a human being and, as such, destined for eternal happiness; 2. think about what pertains to your happiness, not in comparison with others; 3. think about the vanity of earthly goods (H 206-207); 4. consider the fact that not all people are as happy as they appear to be and thus our desire to be in their situation is groundless; 5. dissatisfaction with what we have only makes matters worse (P 840-841; C 430-431).

### Memento mori

1200 pages are a lot of advising and some advice Bolotov gave from his own experience. How effective was the entire approach? In 1781 Bolotov published *Feelings of a Christian at the beginning and the end of a day of one week related to oneself and to God*, which is basically a cry of a frustrated and discouraged heart lamenting over constant failure in one's self-improvement and only a handful of advices have been offered.<sup>7</sup>

My inclination – lamented Bolotov – is only toward evil (Ch 11). I will oppose my passions with all my strength; I will hate them (20). However, the good news is that nothing happens by accident (22). God, "You turn

---

<sup>7</sup> It has been suggested that the *Feelings* "is a work similar to [Johann Friedrich] Tiede's *Unterhaltung[en] mit Gott in den Abendstunden* (1771)": James L. Rice, *The memoirs of A.T. Bolotov and Russian literary history*, in A.G. Cross (ed.), *Russian literature in the age of Catherine the Great*, Oxford, Meeuws, 1976, p. 37. Bolotov read this work the same year when his *Feelings* were published (Zh 3.929, 1006), so the timeline seems to be a bit off, although, theoretically a book can be written and published the same year. Besides he "laid a foundation" for this book already in 1773 (3.344). Moreover, Tiede's work consists of reflections on a wide range of topics followed with short prayers. The *Feelings* are just focused on Bolotov's guilt before God and his inability to cope with his passions when striving for religious perfection, all of it done very prayerfully (almost exactly a half of the book are prayers). Also, it is rather puzzling to read that Bolotov's *Feelings of a Christian* were written after reading Gottsched's book "directly following Gottsched's guidelines," В. Щеблыгина, *Болотов в Кёнигсберге*, p. 72. Hardly. If Bolotov really wrote his book after reading Gottsched, it would be at best a reaction to Gottsched to show *different* guidelines, guidelines more attuned to Bolotov's Christian convictions.

even the most unfortunate events in favor of those who love You” (23). Forgive me my sins on account on your Son (36). I don’t know what is good for me; may happen not what I want, but what You want (45). All that I have is Yours (56, 111). However, what to do with my passions? (67). You know that I try to subdue them (68). But my efforts are worthless before You (70). I make promises to You and yet every night when I reflect on events of the day, my conscience condemns me (71). I’ll ask God for help in my struggle with passions and temptations (77-78). Do I have reason so that I do more stupid things than cattle? Do I have free will to do evil to anger God and condemn myself to eternal punishment? (87).

In case of temptation, Bolotov proposed in form of a prayer to do as follows: 1. exclaim to God, “no, I don’t want to do it” (Ch 97) and about this resistance, 2. “what a wonderful and good deed it’ll be and what pleasant and good consequences and beneficial things will follow from it,” “it” being the resistance of the temptation; 3. this resistance will be pleasing to God, beneficial to me (98) and laudable in the eyes of others; 4. I will not listen to my heart but will do what is pleasing to God; 5. what honor it’ll be to me, when I resist, so that I will become thereby a servant of God (99); 6. God will love and bless me even more; 7. I will be worthy of His patience and deflect His anger (100); 8. He will more willingly listen to my prayers and will accept my repentance and will forgive my sins; 9. I’ll escape the deserved punishment (101); 10. I’ll have spiritual peace; 11. I boldly can call Him my Father; 12. what blessing can be expected from this infinite Father (102) who is love; 13. He will be my best Protector (103); 14. nothing in the world would harm me (104); 15. I’ll exchange momentary pleasures for eternal ones (105).

My passions are guilty of all evil – continued Bolotov with a contrite heart – they turn into nothingness the best of my intentions (Ch 119). My passions and bad habits almost always prevail (125). When these enemies of mine appear, then I say, 1. In what I want to do, I should not forget that I am mortal; 2. my death can be very close (128); 3. how should I know that I will live for several more years? 4. if my death is close, how can I think about some silly things? (129); 5. death is stepping into eternity (130); from which there is no going back (131). What if this eternity will be filled with most tormenting feelings, constant grief, tormenting repentance, futile vexation, and tormenting longing and despair... (133).

This was Bolotov’s best spiritual bet: remember that you will die and all you do should be done *sub specie aeternitatis*, from the eternal perspective, from the perspective of life after death, which can be an eternal blessing or eternal condemnation. However, without losing sight of this eternal perspective, more practical steps are needed not only to go through one day, not

only through each day of the week, as the title of the *Feelings* book announces, but through each day of the entire life, which can be very long as the lifetime of Bolotov himself testifies. Therefore, Bolotov did not turn away from his *Guide* and its multitudinous and at times pedantic advice, with its more practical and more mundane steps, but, having written it in 1773 and the *Feelings* in 1781, he published the *Guide* in 1784, thereby giving the stamp of approval on Crusius' doctoral approach. One theme remained the same: the constant reliance on God. A difference between the *Feelings* and the *Guide* would be in the extent of this reliance: the *Feelings* in desperation rely completely on God to the level of paralyzing all everyday activities. The *Guide* proposes a more proactive approach with constant awareness that the help of God is always close by. However, one's own activity must be part of the solution of a happy life.