

# Miscellaneous Systematic Theology

## Discussion Posts 2

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How can reading material about emotions open doors for conversation and leading people to our Savior?

Based on *Anatomy of the Soul: Surprising Connections between Neuroscience and Spiritual Practices That Can Transform Your Life and Relationships* by Curt Thompson M.D.

It's seems paradoxical that people in the world seem way more into how they feel than objective truth when it comes to the Bible; and yet it's probably also true, as the author says, that many people leave emotions out when they think about their own narratives, because sin has destroyed mankind's wholeness, and his ability to handle the injuries of life and emotions in healthy ways. As believers with full acceptance into the Father's presence, we are not ashamed or afraid to talk about any of the facilities God created within us and, "saw that it was good." Anything can become a topic that can give us a beginning point to talk with men and women who need to meet Yeshua, but especially topics like emotions and neuroscience since they give us a chance to share people's lives while discussing the goodness of love and of relationships with people and God. I occasionally attend a bi-weekly science discussion, and the topic tomorrow night is for those who wish to, to write and read a one page paper on how he thinks consciousness may have arisen. I don't know if I will have

much scientific information to contribute since everyone knows I think consciousness arose when God created our souls and spirits, but if I go tomorrow night, by just being there and listening I may get a chance to use insight from the Bible, for things people may miss when they approach consciousness as nothing more than physical neurons firing.

I think 'telling our story' may be the heart of Dr. Thompson's book. He originally became interested in the topic when he heard Daniel Siegel teach that the brains of both teller and listener actually change when someone empathically listens to another person tell his life story, and he developed his clinical approach accordingly based on a process of becoming known, and felt, and surprised by seeing oneself be empathetically seen. He said if one's parents did not help one develop secure attachment as a child, it cannot be attained later without the help of a sympathetic third person. However, he did say that the Bible's stories are like shared autobiographical memories that can help us integrate the different parts of our brain functions through biblical narratives and poetry, versus hard facts, like the ten commandments.

How can we use discussion of the emotions to help lead people to Jesus Christ?

I was teaching an evangelistic Bible study on the book of Ruth recently, and it seems to me this book is intended to be taught emotionally. I showed some Ruth movie trailers before beginning the study, because I wanted to try to reach the emotions that Naomi and Ruth felt as they lost their husbands (and children for Naomi), that caused Naomi to say, "Call me not Naomi (pleasant), call me Mara (bitter), for the Almighty has dealt very bitterly with me." I also wanted to show the faith and trust Ruth placed in the God of Naomi's people, and Boaz's appreciation that Ruth not only made great sacrifices to take care of her mother-in-law ("Boaz answered and said unto her, It hath fully been shewed me, all that thou hast done unto thy mother in law since the death of thine husband: and how thou hast left thy father and thy mother, and the land of thy nativity, and art come unto a people which thou knewest not heretofore.") and was a hard worker ("the servant that was set over the reapers answered and said, It is the Moabitish damsel that came back with Naomi out of the country of Moab: And she said, I pray you, let me glean and gather after the reapers among the sheaves: so she came, and hath continued even from the morning until now, that she tarried a little in the house), but also he appreciated her saving faith in God ("The Lord recompense thy work, and a full reward be

given thee of the Lord God of Israel, under whose wings thou art come to trust”).

The story is amazing from a personal perspective in that just as things turn around for Ruth, and Boaz is even willing to marry this Moabitess, he says, ‘thou art a virtuous woman, and now it is true that I am thy near kinsman: howbeit there is a kinsman nearer than I.’ Oh no!!! Yet God’s love to Ruth comes through and she becomes the great-grandmother of King David, who was prophesied to be the ancestor of Messiah, and from the very small town that the story takes place in, Bethlehem, “But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting.” This shows how our smallest personal concerns interact with the grand redemption story of all the ages.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hefjo8HLf74>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hUfQrg8PRHg>

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Pm\\_W9-XNxro](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Pm_W9-XNxro)

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nl-Nlu17\\_a0](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nl-Nlu17_a0)

Also, I’ve gotten a lot of interest from non-Christians to my FB posting on the web of the Song of Solomon, which is the only book in the Bible written from a woman’s perspective and thoughts, even though authored by Solomon by divine inspiration. The book shows the hopes and fears of Shulamith through the story of her engagement and married life with Solomon.

<https://www.facebook.com/BibleSongOfSolomon/>

What would life on earth be like if the Shalom of God were functional?

Based on *Not the Way It's Supposed to Be: A Breviary of Sin* by Cornelius Plantinga, Jr.

Plantinga describes sin as a culpable vandalism of shalom, a perversion and pollution of that which is good, a disintegration of things that should be whole, an implosion of things that should be kept orderly divided, and a parasite that has no power of its own apart from its repackaging and reusing of good for its wrong purposes or in wrong amounts. So, I assume life on earth when things are the way things ought to be would allow us to see goodness like we’ve never seen it before, in purity and clarity for the first time, undivided

in motives and actions. Not only that, but Plantinga describes the progress of sin and its corruption as interrelated downward spirals that not only multiply within ourselves but that also interact and amplify waves of corruption in families, societies, and cultures; so when things are entirely as they should be, can't we expect to see good and wholesomeness multiplied an hundredfold into personal and society-wide new manifestations of virtues that could never be achieved independently of everyone's collective increase more and more into that which is good?

Do the proud love humility in others and often try to sell it to them?

Based on *Not the Way It's Supposed to Be: A Breviary of Sin* by Cornelius Plantinga, Jr.

I haven't noticed this in myself, but I did appreciate Plantinga's distinguishing between humility and "its thinner cousin, unpretentiousness." I think I have natural tendencies towards unpretentiousness, along with a natural dislike of any pretentiousness I might detect in others; but I have no concept of how a person could detect humility in themselves, though we all can and should understand it's humbler to submit to and obey God and his word than to follow our own opinions. I have seen where men seem to be more easily able to see in other the sins they themselves are guilty of, kind of like Jesus statement to "pull the log from your own eye so you can see clearly to help remove the splinter you saw in your brother's eye."

I did appreciate the way Plantinga dealt with envy as a form of attack, and entertainment as a form of flight. For envy, he gave the examples of Cain and Abel, Esau and Jacob, Ishmael and Isaac, Saul and David, and Salieri and Mozart. He pointed out the difference between covetousness, which merely wants what the other person has, and envy which wants the other person to lose what he has. Cain began by being envious of Abel's acceptance by God, but when given another chance by God, was no longer interested, but only wanted to destroy Abel's acceptance by God. David eyed Uriah's wife and wanted her; whereas Saul eyed David, and wanted him killed. Plantinga discussed envy's relationship to the negative side of the sixth commandment, pointing out that the Heidelberg Catechism, Answer 106, says "By forbidding murder God teaches us that he hates the root of murder: envy, hatred, anger, vindictiveness." Cain's envy made him angry, and his anger came from pride. "So Cain was very angry," Gen. 4:3-8. As for Esau, "Esau hated Jacob because of the blessing

wherewith his father blessed him: and Esau said in his heart, The days of mourning for my father are at hand; then will I slay my brother Jacob. ... [Rebekah warned Jacob saying], Thy brother Esau, as touching thee, doth comfort himself, purposing to kill thee. ... Flee thou to Laban my brother to Haran; And tarry with him a few days, until thy brother's fury turn away; Until thy brother's anger turn away from thee," Gen. 47:41-45. I remember a video on the internet a few years ago that showed that younger children preferred to receive less in order to prevent others from getting more, like preferring no one gets any candy instead of them getting one and someone else getting two, or preferring that they only get one candy and the other child one instead of them getting two and the other child getting three. Those videos seem to have been removed from the internet or the search engine results, and the only videos that are left say we were all born good, but I did find the earlier video results in verbal form. <http://www.newyorker.com/science/maria-konnikova/how-we-learn-fairness>.

Plantinga also talked about flight from the positive aspect of the sixth commandment, Heidelberg Catechism, 107, "Q. Is it enough ... that we do not kill our neighbor? A. No. God tells us to love our neighbors as ourselves, to be patient, peace-loving, gentle, merciful, and friendly to them, to protect them from harm as much as we can." He also said that immersing ourselves in entertainment is a way of abandoning God, our neighbors, and even ourselves since it deters us from becoming the mature, loving, involved people God wants us to become. Finally, the shock experiment was a shocking revelation of how people abandon their responsibilities to care for others by hiding behind authority and just doing what others lead them into. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yr5cjyokVUs>

What did Augustine mean by "Freewill is sufficient for evil, but it is of no avail for good unless it is aided by Omnipotent Good."

There's no responsibility without ability. When a CEO claims credit for all the good things, and blames his employees for all the bad things, we know all his employees cannot be not bad, and it's the CEO that's responsible for his company's mistakes as well as its accomplishments: the buck stops here. God is the creator of each human being, even though he creates them indirectly through birth from Adam and Eve, an indirect cause is still a cause, so as their creator he's responsible for the welfare of each person. Even evil men like

ourselves know it would be very wrong for a man to breed and raise animals to torture them.

My current belief is that once Adam and Eve sinned, God, being infinitely morally good, had a choice either to 1) destroy them for their sin so their resulting total depravity would not be passed on to their children, or 2) allow them to live and bear sinful children but provide a way of salvation to each of them. I don't mean God was obligated to provide salvation, but that he was obligated to provide salvation if he chose to allow all Adam and Eve's children to be created, even though indirectly, in total depravity. God cannot do everything. He can't do illogical things like create something he can't create, like a rock so big he can't lift it; and he can't do unjust things, because justice is not 'whatever God does,' but, like logic, something that even God is subject to.

And we can't say men are lost, not just because they are born in total depravity, but also because they personally choose to sin, and that all of us would have failed the same test as Adam and Eve. If a million created individuals would all fail a test, then it's because of the way the individuals are created, or the way the test is created. Free choice would involve at least some passing the fruit of the garden test, or choosing an offered salvation after being born in total depravity. God says it's not just to punish one person for another person's sins. "In those days they shall say no more, The fathers have eaten a sour grape, and the children's teeth are set on edge. But every one shall die for his own iniquity: every man that eateth the sour grape, his teeth shall be set on edge. Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah," Jer. 31:29-31.

And it's not free will to use the technicality that by making men want to choose the offered salvation, they choose freely, merely because the definition of choosing freely is doing what one wills. If changing what a person wants to will is one hundred percent effective for all so changed, then the changing is actually the cause even though indirect, and therefore not true choice, regardless of the technicality of any definition.

After God has provided salvation to all at inestimable personal cost and graciousness, Augustine takes away the reality of the offer, and thereby makes God out to unjust and cruel, a creator of sentient and feeling beings in order to make them suffer forever. "Freewill is sufficient for evil, but it is of no avail for good unless it is aided by Omnipotent Good," would be a good statement, if Augustine meant it to mean men's wills need aiding and God aids the wills of all through "the gospel, ... the

power of God unto salvation,” Rom. 1:16. But Augustine means that even when men hear the gospel, only those God causes to believe by putting the elective power of God on the gospel “power of God,” Rom. 1:16, can believe, which wrongfully makes God out to be unjust and cruel, when it’s really Augustine and his incorrect doctrine that’s unjust and cruel.

Demarest's book on Salvation is not very dispensational as evidenced by his treatment of Revelation 21 and 22.

Based on *The Cross and Salvation: The Doctrine of Salvation* by Bruce Demarest.

Demarest’s book is not very dispensational. He says Revelation 21 and 22 are highly symbolic. I don't know what needs to be so symbolic about streets, walls, gemstones, trees, rivers, kings, light, tears, etc. He says Jerusalem symbolizes the saints eternal home in heaven, but Rev. 21 begins by saying the New Jerusalem that Jesus went to prepare for us comes down out of heaven. Anything that comes down out of heaven comes to earth, and Rev. 21 says not that men will go up to dwell with God but that God will come down and dwell with men. He says the river of life denotes immortality and the tree of life signifies immortality. But somehow he says we will end up in a literal restored Edenic garden environment. He says his servants will see his face and his name will be on their foreheads and they will serve him. But I wonder what faces and foreheads symbolize, and if service symbolizes tennis, and what Jesus symbolizes. I guess one person's guess is as good as another's. Based on the references in Demarest’s book, I ordered a used copy of Salvation by Ernest Kevan, because I like his statement that a gospel without the perseverance of the saints does not have enough good news in it.