

# Theory 2

# CHRISTIAN

# ANTHROPOLOGY

## 1. Three powers of the soul: intellect, feelings, and the will.

- a. **The intellect** perceives or becomes aware of reality through the five senses, the imagination or the memory.
  - i. The intellect then presents its perception of reality to the feelings as “this is right and good for me”
  - ii. or “this is wrong and bad for me.”
- b. **The feelings** respond to what the Intellect presented with:
  - i. “I like this,” prompting the will to choose it;
  - ii. or “I dislike that,” prompting the will to avoid it.
- c. **The will** chooses the apparent good and avoids the evil.
- d. Thinking should inform our feelings which prompt our choices.
  - i. Thinking should rule our lives, not feeling.
  - ii. Feelings are meant to be good servants but, if left in charge, they become very bad masters.

## 2. There are 11 fundamental Passions:

The passions as they were intended by God	The passions in light of the Fall and concupiscence
<b>Love:</b> a response to something in general you think is pleasing: I want this good.	Love becomes disordered. <i>Lust</i> : the desire to use another person to get what we want.
<b>Desire:</b> a response to a specific thing you think would be pleasing for you.	When Desire is disordered, we want things that are unhealthy for us or seek our happiness in things that can't satisfy. <i>Gluttony</i> is derivative of this.
<b>Joy:</b> the response to a pleasing thing that you possess.	When Joy is disordered, we derive joy from evil occurring to another ( <i>envy</i> ) or when our sinful <i>pride</i> is puffed up.
<b>Hate:</b> a response to something you think is displeasing in general: "I hate meetings" or "I hate being late".	When Hatred is disordered, I can see other <i>people</i> as my enemy and hate them.
<b>Aversion:</b> a response to a specific thing you think would be displeasing for you right now.	When our Aversion is disordered for something that is actually a good thing – tithing, prayer, charity, etc.
<b>Sorrow:</b> the response to a displeasing thing that you have to suffer right now.	Disordered Sorrow becomes <i>Envy</i> – sorrow in the face of someone else's good fortune.
<b>Hope:</b> the confident impulse of overcoming obstacles.	When Hope is disordered, we set our hearts on the wrong things: pleasure, wealth, power, fame.
<b>Despair:</b> surrender before insurmountable obstacles; despair of being satisfied by created things alone.	When Despair is disordered, we give up on the wrong thing. We give up on our goal of being holy. This is <i>sloth</i> or we give up on <i>someone</i> and write them off (student, a colleague, spouse/family member).
<b>Fear:</b> receding from the threat of danger.	Disordered Fear can become disproportional or irrational fear; fear of the wrong thing – opinion of others and brings anxiety, worry, and stress*.
<b>Courage:</b> daring in the face of danger.	Disordered Courage risks what is greater to get what is lesser. Ex.) When we risk a marriage for the sake of a career; underestimate the danger and take a stupid action.
<b>Anger:</b> battling against a present undesirable or unjust situation.	Our disordered <i>Anger</i> is too strong, lasts too long, is directed at the wrong thing. For example, the anger that comes from gaining power and control over someone or something, which is destructive rather than constructive.

### 3. Fallen Human Nature

- a. With Original Sin, these three powers of our soul have been wounded.
  - i. The intellect has been darkened, we suffer from ignorance and intellectual laziness.
    - 1. It takes a lot of effort to really think things through.
    - 2. It's easier to feel.
    - 3. So, we let the intellect go to sleep and let our feelings decide what we do.
  - ii. We let feelings rule our life.
    - 1. We are ruled by likes and dislikes.
    - 2. That might be ok except for the fact that, because of Original Sin, we tend to like what is bad for us and dislike what is good for us.

### 4. But we can change the way we feel by how we Think

- a. Let's say, for instance, you really dislike someone. Your bad feelings for him are making it really hard.
- b. Begin with your thinking.
  - i. Think and talk about his good points, his virtues, and maybe especially the gifts he has that you don't.
  - ii. If you think and talk about the person in those terms long enough, you'll be constantly reminded of how much there is to appreciate about this person, and you'll actually begin to appreciate him, and it'll be easier to treat him charitably.
  - iii. In this way - Thinking changes feeling.
- c. Use this strategy to avoid evil.
  - i. Say you want to gossip about someone
  - ii. You can picture in your head how awkward it'll be if what you've been saying gets back to that person.
  - iii. Or you can use St. James' image, about how a small flame – gossip – can burn down a whole forest of good.
  - iv. Whatever image works to help you realize how deadly gossip is, use that, focus on that, picture that.
  - v. And eventually your desire to gossip will fade.
- d. If we think about *the pleasing aspects of what's good and the displeasing aspects of what's bad* our desires will change, prompting the right action.

### 5. We can change the way we feel by how we act

- a. Most people don't start out liking exercise, but if they keep at it, they begin to look forward to their morning run.
- b. People usually don't start out enjoying prayer, but if they pray anyway, day after day, they get to the point where they can't do without it.

- c. The same goes for abstaining from bad behavior you're inclined to.
  - i. If you have a bad temper, you'll want to say horrible things when you get angry.
  - ii. But if you resist the urge to lash out and choose to hold your tongue, the anger will fade and the desire to be undisturbed by others will grow.
- d. If you resist the wrong feelings and do the right actions long enough,
  - i. the bad desires will fade
  - ii. the right desires will grow
  - iii. prompting you to the right actions.

## 6. If you do the right thing, over and over,

- a. even if you don't feel like it
- b. eventually you begin to like it
- c. it becomes pleasing to the emotions and then we have a good habit.

## 7. Our Soul can be healed, but we must go to Jesus.

- a. We can't heal ourselves. Jesus can. If we will let him in.
- b. So, the first step is just to be honest and say:
  - i. "Jesus, my life is out of control.
  - ii. I surrender to you.
  - iii. Take care of everything."
- c. Then spend time with him every day in friendship – which is prayer
  - i. talking to him from the heart,
  - ii. listening to him by reading his Word,
  - iii. reflecting in silence,
  - iv. and just being with him in stillness.
  - v. Make the firm resolution to do what He tells you.
    - 1. This is how Jesus begins to act through you to transform you.

## 8. Temptation

- a. "Concupiscence" is the term we use to describe a situation we all find ourselves in
  - i. I.e., sometimes our passions, our feelings, our emotions pull us the wrong way.
  - ii. This is pretty much what we mean by the word "temptation" – a disordered passion, the desire to sin in one way or another.
- b. Temptations can pull us towards an evil we shouldn't do, or away from good thing we should do.
  - i. We can have temptations to drink too much
  - ii. We can also have temptations to tithe too little

- c. Temptation is a constant feature of human life. We all know we shouldn't give in to temptation – but is there anything we can do to actually *get rid* of our temptations?
  - i. Actually, there is.

## 9. You can control your passions

- a. One of the great lies of our contemporary pseudo-therapeutic culture is the notion that “you can't change how you feel.”
  - i. People say this all the time about passions they know are counterproductive. They say, “Well, I can't change how I feel about this thing, or about that person – but I'll just try to ignore it.”
  - ii. This kind of fatalism of disordered feeling – of temptation – is really dangerous.
    - 1. If you think you can't do anything about your temptations, that you'll be stuck with the same temptations, and that they'll have the same intensity your whole life – man, that's going to be demoralizing.
      - a. It'll make you more likely to give in to a temptation if you think the alternative is an exhausting struggle against this relentless force inside you that you'll never be able to escape.
- b. But the good news is, you can control your feelings!
  - i. Not all at once, of course.
    - 1. St. Thomas Aquinas says our control over our passions is “political,” not “despotic.”
      - a. In other words, we can't just tell ourselves to feel a certain way and expect them to obey us immediately.
      - b. It's a long, slow, process. And there's almost always going to be some resistance.
  - ii. But if you're willing to put the work in, you can make major changes to your emotional life. You can not only resist temptation – you can live a life where you no longer experience temptation as the overwhelming force it once was.

## 10. What temptation are you vulnerable to?

- a. Before going any further, stop and ask God to show you what your dominant temptation is
  - i. Is it pride – the desire to find your identity or self-worth in your work, your kids, some achievement?
  - ii. Is the need to be right or affirmed or in control?
  - iii. Is it the consuming desire to win
  - iv. Is it envy and the desire to gossip or the tendency to resentment?
  - v. Is it lust?
  - vi. Is it sloth – a lack of interest in the things of God and the desire to stay busy all the time or veg in entertainment?

- vii. Is it greed and the desire to find happiness, security in homes, wealth, travel, or experiences?
  - viii. Is it gluttony – the desire to escape fear, anxiety, pain or boredom with food, alcohol or drugs?
  - ix. Is it anger?
  - x. Or complaining?
- b. What disordered desire do you think displeases God the most?
- i. What feeling do you wish would go away?
  - ii. What temptation do you want to start fighting right now?

## 11. Checking the passions

- a. The first step to changing your disordered feelings – your temptations – is, guess what? *not giving into them!*
- i. That's right: Resisting temptation is the first step to diminishing temptation
- b. Why is that?
- i. Because there's a reciprocal relationship between feelings and behavior
    - 1. On the one hand, our feelings about things, whether we like them or dislike them, affect our choices. We tend to do what we like and not what we don't like. Feeling motivates our behavior
      - a. Our feelings prompt us to act – and not to act – in certain ways.
    - 2. On the other hand, our actions over time change the way we feel about things
      - a. If you act a certain way, over and over, you get used to it, you come to like acting in that way.
      - b. We are habit-forming creatures – and a habit is where something which may not have felt natural or desirable before *begins* to feel natural and you start to like it after you've put in enough work.
  - ii. Suppose you have a terrible profanity problem
    - 1. Well, if you can keep yourself from cussing long enough, you'll find that when other people around you use coarse language, it starts to feel really wrong.
  - iii. Or suppose you really have an aversion to spending time in daily meditation
    - 1. It's really something that doesn't appeal to you.
    - 2. Well, if you make it part of your daily routine, eventually you'll come to a place where you want to make sure you pray every day – and you won't like how you feels on the days you don't pray.
- c. So if you can repeatedly do the right thing and not do the wrong thing enough times – well, then eventually you form a habit and your passions/feelings/emotions change so that we like the right things and we don't like the wrong things.

- d. When that happens, our emotions and feelings are working as God designed to propel us toward what is good and away from evil.
- e. Imagine how great that would be – and it is totally possible because that is how God designed you.

## 12. God's grace

- a. The point is, living well becomes easier the more you do it. That's virtue.
- b. But *before* you have virtue – before it feels natural, before your repeated behaviors have really been able to reduce the force of temptation...
  - i. How do you do the right thing under **those** circumstances?
- c. The answer is: By Jesus living in you!
  - i. With baptism Jesus begins to live in us and us in Him.
    - 1. That doesn't mean He makes it easy.
    - 2. He is within us
    - 3. But so are our disordered passions
    - 4. And they will be a constant source of resistance to Him until we've had time to get them under control.
  - ii. But we have to trust that by sharing His life with us the Lord gives us the means and the opportunity to live beautiful and powerful lives.
    - 1. It may be a real challenge at first – but the good news is, the more you strive to resist temptation and do what is good, the easier it gets.