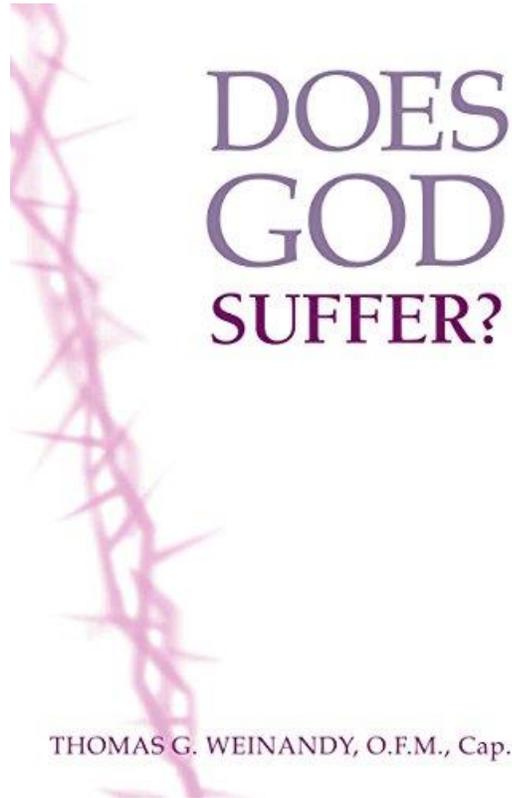


Daily Life with Christ-68. Understanding brain addictions (8)—God does not have a brain-5 (i.e., God has no ventral tegmental area - He does not suffer/change).



We have noted in the study of brain addictions how the ventral tegmental area (VTA) of the human brain sends bursts of dopamine that produces virtually irresistible cravings found in brain addictions (for illustration of the three areas of the brain, see Daily Life in Christ-59).

The VTA is at the top of the human brain stem, near the middle of the head just slightly above the ears, a few inches behind and a little below the nucleus accumbens. Brain cells in the VTA project to both the nucleus accumbens and the prefrontal cortex and therefore influences both pleasure and self-control. It is the VTA that produces the powerful neurotransmitter dopamine, also known as the addiction molecule of the brain.

Obviously, God does not have a physical brain for His mind. He does not need one. Moreover, He does not have a VTA that bursts forth dopamine giving Him ever-changing cravings or wantings. He does not need a VTA to excite or stimulate a nucleus accumbens, a pleasure center. God does not need a VTA to stimulate a prefrontal cortex. While most would agree that God does not have a prefrontal cortex, a nucleus accumbens, or a VTA, many today tend to describe God in terms of attributes of human thinking, pleasure, or wanting.

Related to the idea of cravings or feelings is the doctrine of the impassibility of God. The doctrine of the impassibility of God is the classical Christian doctrine that orthodox Christianity held from the Patristic era through the Reformation. Among other things, the impassibility of God teaches that God does not suffer. In other words, God is never in a passive or vulnerable

state whereby He can be made to suffer by the actions of others. There is nothing any human being can do to make God suffer. In spite of its rich history, the doctrine of the impassibility of God has fallen on hard times. In an effort to make God more relatable, contemporary theologians have all but rejected the impassibility of God. They like a God who suffers like a human.

The most common objection to the passibility of God is that it somehow makes God less loving. The idea is that if God cannot suffer alongside His creatures, then how could He really be caring and loving? However, just the contrary is true. It is because God is impassible that He can be fully loving 100% of the time. In other words, A God who does not suffer is more loving, compassionate, and merciful than a God who does. Recall that Scripture declares the love of God dogmatically and absolutely (1 John 4:8, 16). There are two interconnected metaphysics of love: desire for the good of the beloved, and desire to be closer to the beloved. Suffering itself is not a constitutive element of love. Love is a good in itself. Suffering is not a good in itself, but rather due to some evil. The reason human beings willingly suffer is for the good of the love and so the suffering entailed in love is seen as good., but it is precisely the love that is good and not the suffering itself.

God cannot suffer because He cannot be deprived of any aspect of His fully actualized goodness which would cause Him to suffer. Moreover, since suffering is not constitutive of love, we can also perceive why the absence of suffering in God does not necessarily imply the absence of love and thus divine indifference. If God did suffer, it would mean that God would need not only to alleviate the suffering of others, but also His own suffering, and thus there would be an inbuilt self-interest in God's love and consolation.

The undermining of the impassibility of God also undermines the uniqueness of the suffering of the God-man, Jesus Christ. It was in the incarnation that the eternal Son of God suffered—even if only in His human nature. It is not an accident that those who speak so profusely about suffering in the nature of God also downplay and ignore the uniqueness of the Incarnation of the Son of God—WHEREIN THE IMPASSIBLE DOES SUFFER.

In sum, God does not have nor need a VTA or any human brain part to move Him to desire objects. God does not change. God does not need to suffer before He can love. This means that no matter what I do, I cannot upset God or make Him angry—I cannot affect His unconditional love. God is fully dynamic 100% of the time regardless of my state. To be sure, His everpresent love can take the form of punishment (Hebrews 12:6, "For whom the LORD loves He chastens, And scourges every son whom He receives."), but that form of punishment (as well as any and all retribution on any human being) are all subsumed under the attribute of love. True to Scripture, God is love, which means that everything that He does in my life and your life is under the category of love. He is always seeking our best interest, a best interest that is always in God Himself. In other words, God always seeks our highest and best good, a good that is always in Him (Psa. 73:24-25).

In the unconditional and unchanging love of God,

Pastor Don