

A. Turning up the Volume

In closing there are a couple of things I have noted in my research which I feel need to be emphasized. Each came to my attention after much of the study had been finalized and entered into the computer.

The first has to do with a particular aspect of facilitating a memory trace which may be compared to an electrical rheostat. Before noting that, let's review the several changes which occur in the brain that we learned are common whenever something is learned:

Rose, Stephen. *The Making of Memory: From Molecules to Mind*. New York: Bantam Books, 1992. Reprint. New York: Anchor Books, 1993; pp. 259-60:

Learning causes changes in synaptic connectivity between one neuron and another. Dendrites increase in length, change branching patterns, and the number of spines alter. Connectivity is altered not only by increasing the actual number of synapses but also by altering the size or position of any particular synapse.

Added to this list is the concept that following each facilitation of a memory trace adjustments are made regarding current flow at each synaptic connection:

Johnson, George. *In the Palaces of Memory: How We Build the Worlds inside Our Heads*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1991. Reprint. New York: Vintage Books, 1992, pp. 24-25:

In the 1960s, Eric Kandel of Columbia University found that the synapse seemed to function like a volume control. If a synapse is turned up, the neurons on either side become more strongly connected: If the first one fires, the next is likely to follow.

On the other hand, two neurons whose synapse is turned down are, in effect, disconnected. The synapses, then, seem to allow for the malleability needed for learning.

B. Volition: Firing Pin for that First Neuron

Throughout my research I was amused to see among the writers a consistently blind devotion to the theology of evolution. Neurologists recognize that there is something which controls human thought but they insist in isolating it in the cerebral cortex. The answer is of course found in the soul and in particular human volition. Whereas in the 19th century, science was quick to recognize theology as a part of the creation, it's no longer does so in the 20th.

Today, the scientific community is subservient to a secular government for its financial survival. Both are inflexibly committed to the view that evolution is scientific law rather than unproved theory. The mention of "spooky stuff" in a grant request would make it illegal for the government to issue the funds and politically incorrect of the applicant who broached the subject.

However, there is a neuroscientist who at least has the courage to address the subject of free will in his recent book. I think you will find some of his thoughts at least encouraging if not theological:

Restak, Richard M. *The Modular Brain: How New Discoveries in Neuroscience Are Answering Age-Old Questions about Memory, Free Will, Consciousness, and Personal Identity*. New York: (1st ed.) Simon & Schuster, 1995, pp. 155-58; 120-21 passim:

[NOTE: Dr. Restak refers to the human ability to choose by the word “will.” I am going to take the liberty to substitute the word “volition.”]

Despite the limitations in our knowledge about the brain and its relationship to violence, courts are increasingly willing to accept “brain disease” as a mitigating factor in determining guilt or innocence.

Slowly, the emphasis is shifting away from the principle that a person is responsible for his or her behavior and toward various “explanations” why certain people engage in criminal or other self-destructive actions. On the face of it, this redefinition of volition and individual responsibility seems to make sense. With this question, brain scientists come to grips with the issues of good and evil.

What becomes of our traditional belief in personal responsibility if the killing of another person is viewed not as a matter of choice but, rather, as due to some irresistible impulse emanating from a damaged brain? With some people, acts of consideration and kindness towards others seem natural, indeed even inevitable. It is as if they couldn’t imagine themselves acting any other way. If this is true, what happens to volition? Are such people acting kindly only as a result of some patterning within their brain? Are those who love and those who hate others merely acting out different brain activity patterns? I recognize that in raising such questions, I am proceeding quite a bit beyond my own training and education. I am neither a theologian or a moral philosopher. But that aside, it does seem to me that a belief in goodness and the existence of good people who have loving and caring feelings toward others must imply a belief in the existence of evil or whatever word you might wish to substitute for people who not only commit, but seem to enjoy committing, gratuitous and inexplicable acts of cruelty and destructiveness toward others.

Neurology is not going to solve the mystery of why some people kill others. Neither can it help us discover why killers are often not just unwilling participants in something beyond their control, but rather, judging from their own words and actions, often engaged in something that gives them great pleasure.

Ronald Markham, who has examined more murderers than perhaps any psychiatrist in the United States, says:

“Our society is leaning awfully close to the idea that you have to be mentally ill in some way to commit a crime. This is not so. Most crimes—even grisly murders—are not committed by mentally ill people, but by people just like you and me.”

It’s likely that the tendency towards violence, like most human behaviors, follows a bell curve. At one end are those who, even in the face of extreme or life-threatening provocation, cannot arouse themselves to violent action. Further along the continuum are the rest of us, who are capable of violence if the stakes are high enough. At the other extreme are the habitually and chronically violent, whose actions do not represent insanity and certainly not brain damage, but only the outer limits of our human potential for violence.

But even a casual effort at introspection reveals that even the most balanced of us are often of two or more “minds.” One part of us wants desperately to do something, while another part resists with a ferocity that leaves us feeling disjointed and conflicted. At such times we wonder if more than one person occupies our bodies.

This last paragraph by Dr. Restak is a perfect segue into the next component of our study. We have examined the theology of neurology. Now it’s time to apply the neurology to the theology of Romans 7.

A. Outline of the Book of Romans

I. Introduction

We need to put our central passage into context and that requires that we note three things:

- a. An outline of the book of Romans.
- b. A review of the corrected translation of Romans 6.
- c. An overview of the teaching aid used in Romans 7:1-13.

A. Outline of the Book of Romans

1. Introduction: 1:1-17
2. Why the Devil's World needs Salvation: 1:18-32
3. Divine Judgment of Unbelief: 2:1-16
4. Disadvantages and Advantages of being a Jew: 2:17-3:3:8
5. Divine Integrity Rejects Sinful Man: 3:9-20.
6. The Judicial Aspects of Divine Integrity: 3:21-31
7. Adjustment to the Justice of God: 4:1-25
8. The A Fortiori Advantages of Justification: 5:1-21
9. Defeat of the Sinful Nature through Retroactive and Current Positional Truth: 6:1-13
10. Choice of Husbands: Sin or Righteousness: 6:14-23
11. The Two Marriages: 7:1-6
12. Mosaic Law as Counselor for the First Marriage: 7:7-14
13. Attacks of the First Husband: 7:15-21
14. Divided Loyalties between the First and Second Husbands: 7:22-25
15. The New Marriage and Sanctification: 8:1-17
16. The New Marriage and Security: 8:18-30
17. The New Marriage and Its Five Challenges:
 1. Opposition: 8:31
 2. Blessings: 8:32
 3. Accusations and Judgment: 8:33-34
 4. Undeserved Suffering: 8:35-37
 5. Security: 8:38-39
18. Paul's Concern for the Jew: 9:1-11:31
19. The Royal Family Honor Code: 12:1-15:13
20. Conclusion: 15:14-16:27

Romans 6:1 - Therefore, to what conclusion are we forced? Are we to continue in the sovereignty of the sinful nature in order that the grace of God might increase?

Romans 6:2 - Emphatically not! We who have died to the sinful nature, how shall we still live in it?

Romans 6:3 - Or are you ignorant [*agnoeo*] that all of us who have been immersed [*baptizo*] into Christ Jesus have been immersed [*baptizo*] into His Spiritual Death?

Romans 6:4 - Therefore, we have been buried together with Him through the baptism of the Holy Spirit into His death in order that as Christ has historically been resurrected from deaths, through the glory of God the Father, so also, we might have the option to walk [*peripateo*] in newness of life.

Romans 6:5 - If we have become intimately united with Him in the likeness of His death, and we in fact have, not only this but also, we shall in fact be intimately united to the likeness of His resurrection.

Retroactive Positional Truth

The believer, at the moment of salvation, is supernaturally taken by the Holy Spirit and immersed into the Spiritual Death of our Lord on the cross. Spiritual Death is a technical term which speaks of three-hour period on the cross when God judged our sins in Christ. Retroactive Positional Truth breaks the power of the old sin nature and is the divorce of the new believer from his first husband.

Current Positional Truth

The believer is supernaturally taken by the Holy Spirit and immersed into the Resurrection of our Lord. This unites us with Christ and thus allows us to share His eternal life and guarantees us eternal security and a resurrection body. This constitutes the second marriage to the new husband, Jesus Christ.