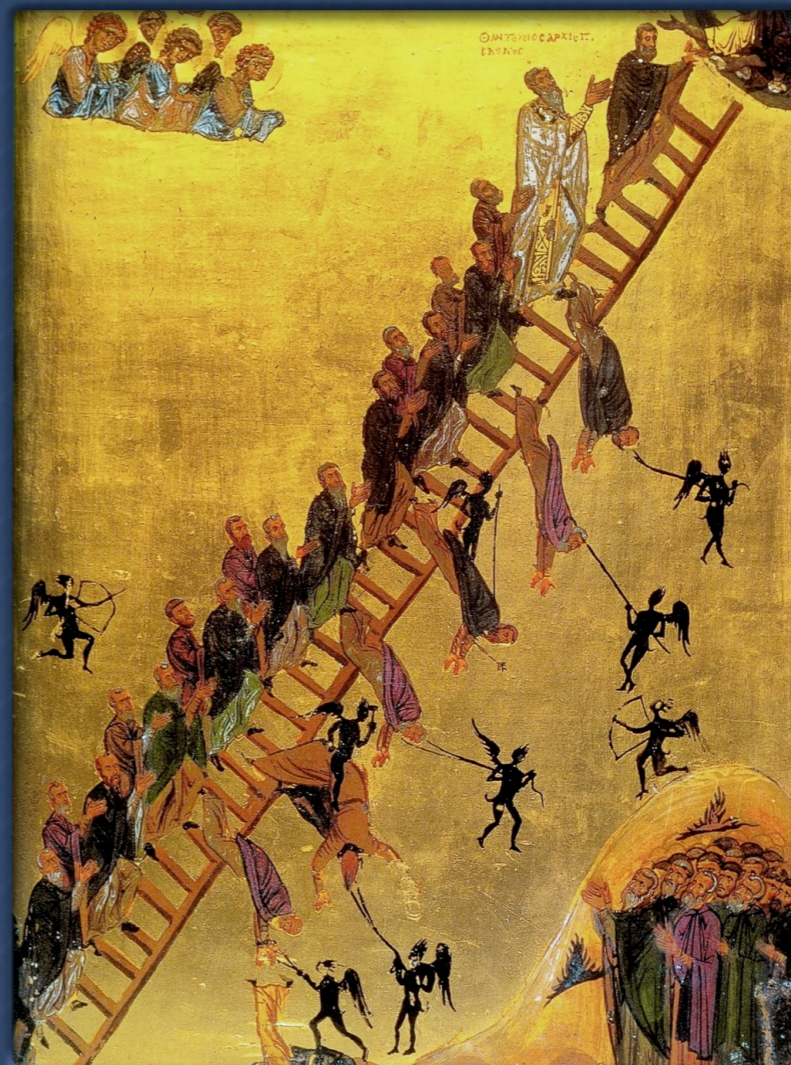


Orthodox Way of Life

Life of Repentance



Purpose

- ✦ Apostles & Fathers became **one with God** with **direct knowledge** of Him.
- ✦ Knew in a **deep inner way** that transcends knowledge of this world.
- ✦ Becoming **like Him** they **led others**
- ✦ What is our purpose?
 - ✦ Same
 - ✦ Become **one with God**, united in love.
direct relationship with Him.
unite our will with His.
“Thy will be done...”

Path to Salvation

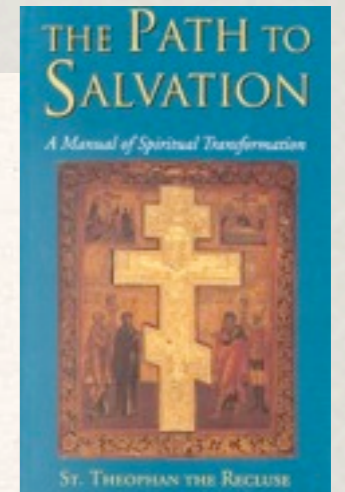
- ✦ How do we attain union with God – theosis?
- ✦ Orthodox Way of Life
- ✦ Why the Church exists.
- ✦ A **life long** process
Begins with **faith** in Jesus Christ and
Baptism or **Confession** if a renewal of faith.
- ✦ No systematic approach. Each person's path is **unique** - need spiritual guide.
- ✦ One comprehensive view is given by Saint Theophan the Recluse.

Saint Theophan

- ✦ *Saint Theophan the Recluse*

(1815–1894)

- ✦ Born in Russia
- ✦ Teacher and Bishop
- ✦ Studied teachings of Desert Fathers
- ✦ Last 20 years as recluse

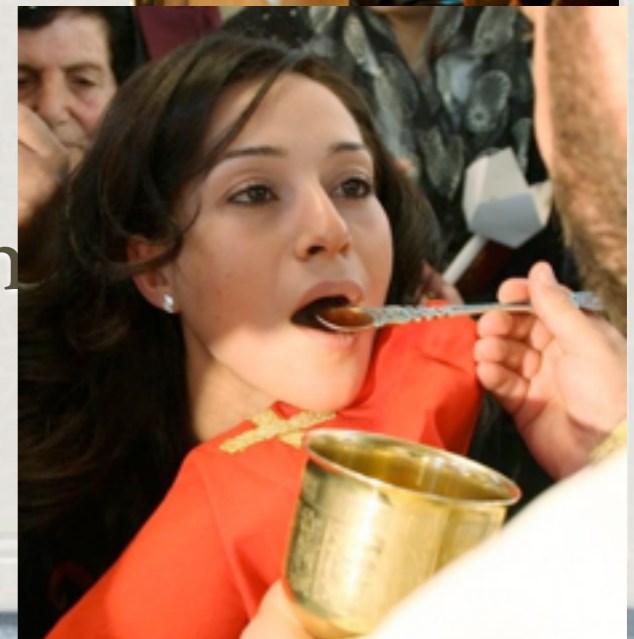


Saint Theophan

- ✦ Awakening
 - ✦ **Zeal** - faith
 - ✦ **Repentance**
 - ✦ **Confession**
- ✦ Maintaining Zeal
- ✦ Purification
 - ✦ Life of **Repentance**
 - ✦ Attracting God's grace through **ascetic** practices
- ✦ Spiritual warfare
- ✦ Full preparation and participation in the Sacraments.
- ✦ Living communion with God
 - ✦ Hesychia - silence
 - ✦ Passionless and Dispassion

Sacraments

- ✦ What is difference in being followers of Christ vs. philosopher or moral teacher?
- ✦ Even with our unworthiness, through Baptism become Members of Christ's Body.
- ✦ Even as "dead" members, with repentance we become a living member again.
- ✦ Sacraments are **essential** to our theosis. We share in His Body and Blood.
- ✦ **Church** is where we realize our **union** with God, and a deified human nature.



Energy & Essence



- ✦ God is both **essence** and **energy**.
Like sun and its rays
- ✦ If He were only essence What would be problem ?
- ✦ Could not unite with Him as His **essence is unapproachable** for Man.
God would remain self-sufficient unable to communicate with His creation
- ✦ To know his **essence** would be like grabbing end of open electric transmission wire compared with his **energies** that are like the light that comes from a light bulb connected to the wire.
- ✦ We become gods **though** His **energy**, not in His essence.

Energy & Essence

- ✦ Church Fathers affirmed God filled with **divine eros**, with infinite **ecstatic love** seeks to unite with us.
- ✦ Expressed as His **energies**.
 - ✦ How He is **present** in nature.
 - ✦ How He **preserves** the world
- ✦ He illumines, sanctifies, and deifies man through His uncreated **energies**.
- ✦ Because of His **energies**, His divine grace, we are **united** with Him.
- ✦ This is greatest **mystery** of Orthodox faith and life.



Energy & Essence

- ✦ St. Gregory of Palamas made it clear that we **can participate in God's very nature** and **become one** with Him via His **grace**, power or Divine Energy, both on earth and in Heaven, though in different degrees.
- ✦ A fundamental **doctrine** of the Church.
Implications?

Theosis

- ✿ How to qualify for Theosis?
 - ✿ First, it is a **gift** from God.
 - ✿ But, we must **prepare** ourselves
 - ✿ St. Gregory became worthy after much struggle, **cleansing of passions**, & prayer.
 - ✿ Must **desire**, **struggle** and prepare ourselves so we are worthy and **capable** to accept this gift when given to us.
- ✿ Here are **qualifications** taught by Church fathers.

Humility

✦ 1. Humility:

- ✦ Without humility you cannot accept that the **purpose** of your life is **outside yourself**.
- ✦ **Not possible** to unite with God if we believe that we can be perfected by our **own efforts**.
- ✦ Way of **current world**: Man is center of all efforts to create a better world. God not needed. Called **secular**.
- ✦ For Orthodox, everything is Christ centered. Must accept that **center of world** is **Christ**, **not yourself**.

Humility

- ✦ To **Begin: Acknowledge** the **purpose** of life is **outside of ourselves**. It is with our Father, Maker and Creator.
- ✦ We must realize that we **need healing**, we are **weak**, filled with **passions**.
- ✦ We have to maintain this humility and **never think** our progress in coming closer to God is due to our **own efforts**.
- ✦ To walk the path to Theosis we must **depend** on **Grace** of God.

Asceticism

✦ 2. Asceticism

- ✦ With humility our next task is to **tame our passions.** - purification
- ✦ We begin by **applying** to our lives the **commandments** with effort, repentance and patience.
- ✦ God's grace is hidden in His commandments and as we **observe** them we **unite** with Him.

Asceticism

- ✦ What is nature of uprooting our passions?
- ✦ Takes great effort.
- ✦ *“You cannot receive the Holy spirit if you do not give the blood of your heart to the struggle to cleanse yourself of the passions, to repent really and in depth, and in order to acquire the virtues.”*
- ✦ Key is **Love**: Love embodies all the virtues. It **overcomes selfishness**, our love for ourselves.
- ✦ To overcome our selfishness and gain love is the reason for **asceticism**. - without it: no spiritual life, no struggle, no progress.

How Paul Struggles

For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find.

For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice.

Now if I do what I will not to do, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me.

I find then a law, that evil is present with me, the one who wills to do good.

For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man.

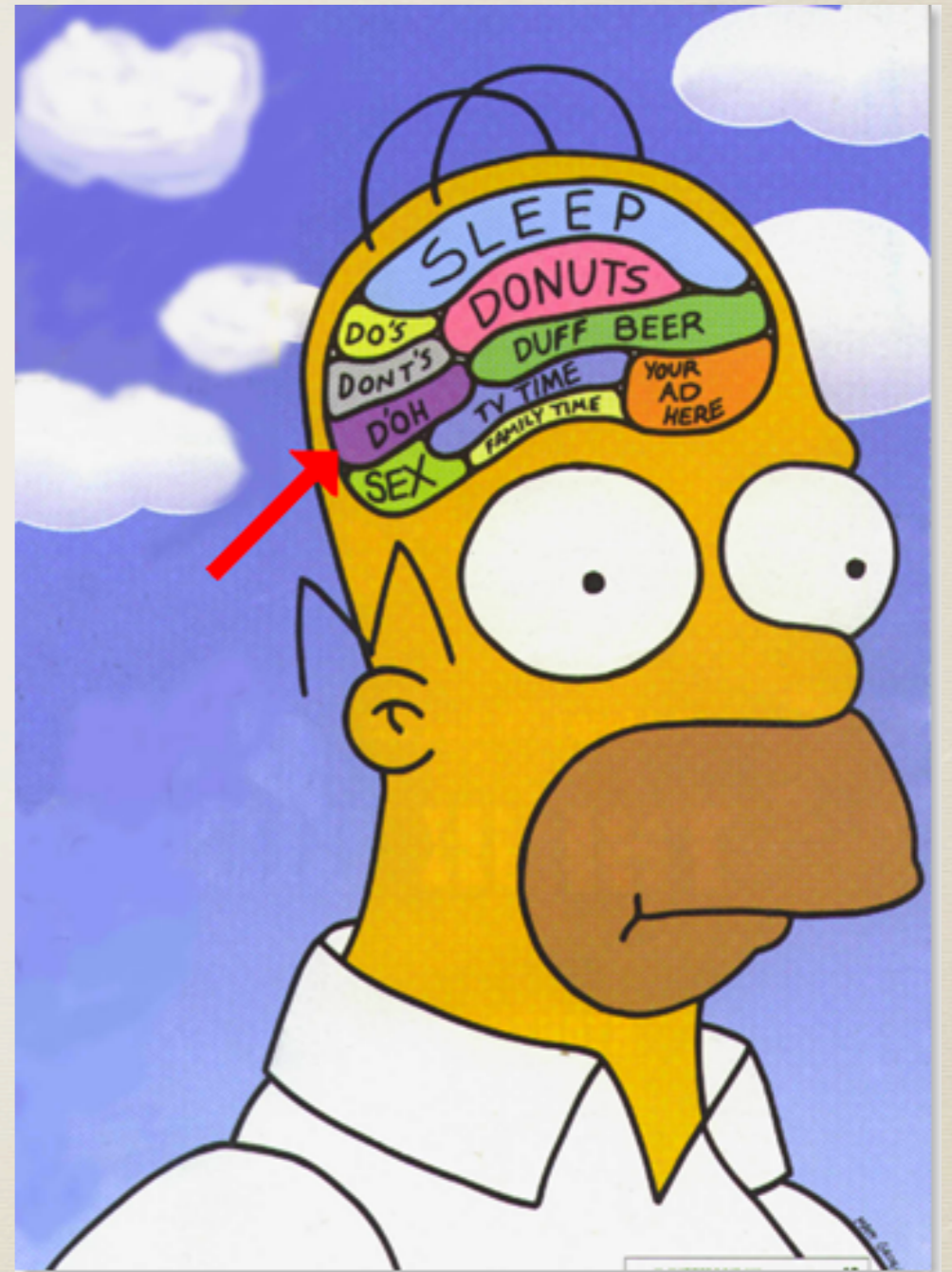
But *I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.* (Rom 7:18 -23)

Asceticism

- * Why is it that we find it so difficult to do what God commands us to do?
- * Why are our intentions so often *not* carried out?

Brain

- * Mental programming
- * Our brain has etched in it patterns of behavior which can become our strength or weakness.
- * Where our sinful tendencies are engraved so they will be repeated often.
- * The devil knows our weakness and continually tempts us.



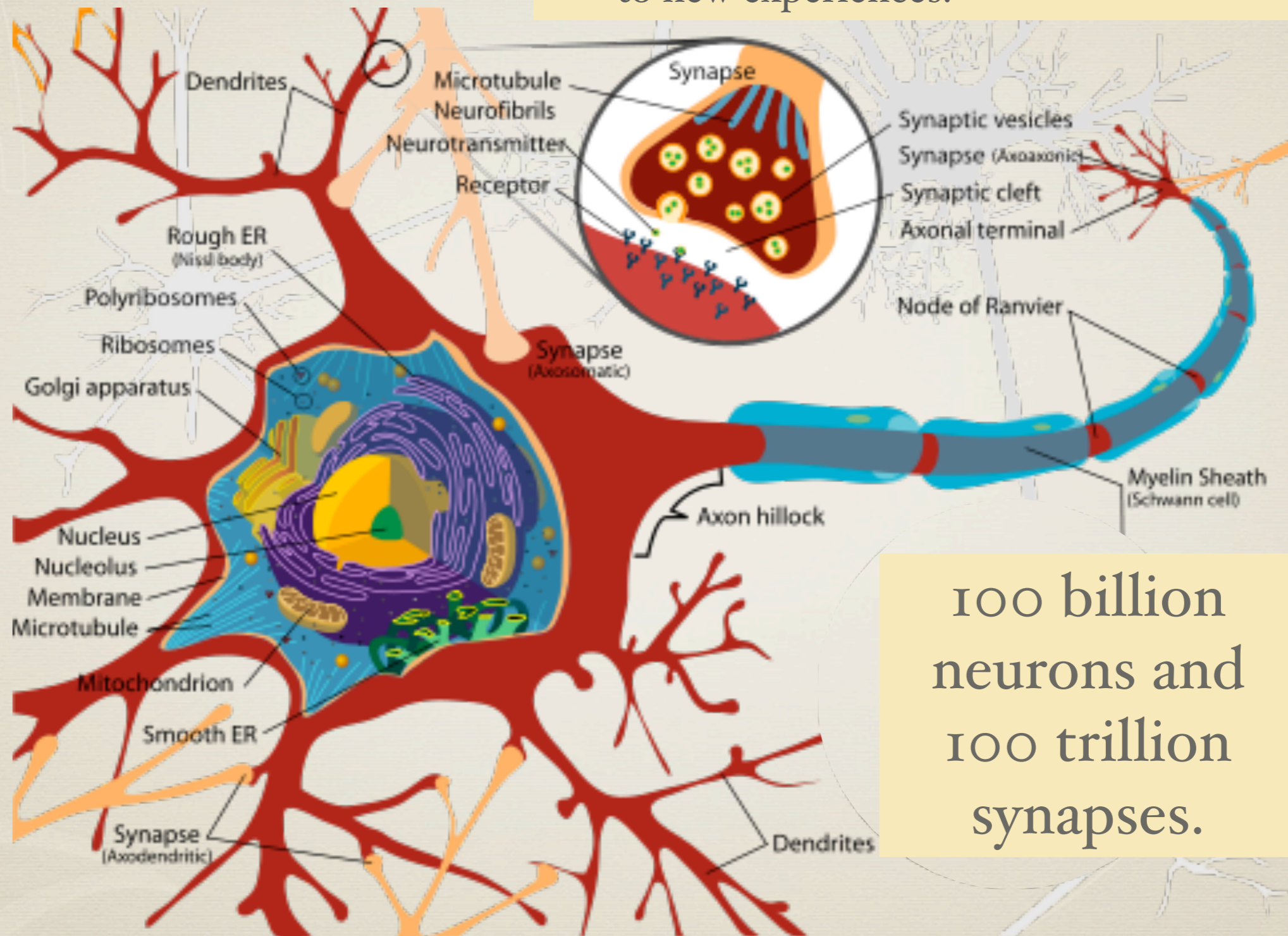


Brain

- * What is the the brain?
 - * A part of our **body** - Chemicals and living cells.
 - * **Integrates soul** and **body** and the **external** world.
 - * Allows the body to **adapt and interact** with its environment.
 - * Takes input from all the senses and **creates an integrated view** of the **world**.
 - * Contains means for **regulation** all bodily functions.
 - * Its focus is on the **body** and its needs and desires (passions)
 - * Incredibly **complex** network of physical connections.

Neurons

Synapses are awash in hormones and neurotransmitters that modulate the transmission of signals, and they constantly form and dissolve, weaken and strengthen in response to new experiences.



100 billion
neurons and
100 trillion
synapses.



- * We can look at sinful tendency in two ways
 1. The devil who tempts us
 2. Our mental programming that produces automatic responses - passions

Passions

Passions - πάθος

Those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. Gal 5:24

What are Passions?

- * **Emotions** that control us.
Sexual desire, anger, envy, desire for material goods, rejection, fear, love...
- * **Desires** that cannot be satisfied.
Material goodies, recognition, food, sex...
- * **Express our egoism** or self-centeredness.
- * **Attempts to satisfy spiritual longing** by this world means.



Passions

- * Jesus Christ says,
*From **within**, out of the heart of man, **come evil thoughts**, fornication, theft, murder, adultery, coveting, wickedness, deceit, licentiousness, envy, slander, pride, foolishness. All these things **come from within** and they defile man.”* Mark 7: 21-23



Passions

- * Passions are forces that enter into our soul, become patterns etched into our brains, programed into our automatic responses, and need to be rooted out.
- * Some of this is probably also **hereditary**.
- * Overcoming sinfulness is a most **difficult** task.



Passions

- * Many: gluttony, unchastity, avarice, anger, dejection, listlessness, self-esteem, pride and vainglory



Passions

- * Two types: **Natural** and **Unnatural** Passions
- * What would a natural passion be?
 - * **Natural passions** depend on nature and not on the will.
Appetite for food,
Fear of being harmed,
Sexual attraction
 - * Necessary to preserve our nature.
The **animal** aspect of our being.
 - * Not a problem unless they go **beyond** the **need** for **self preservation**.



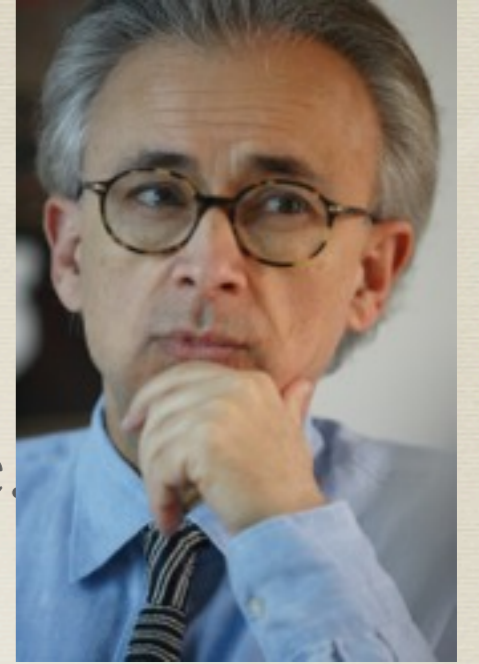
Passions

* **Unnatural Passions**

- * What do we all long for?
- * We mistakenly connect our **longing for spiritual wholeness** with natural passions
- * We **seek pleasure or happiness** only to find pain on the other end. Then seek more pleasure.
- * *When man isn't focused on distinguishing between what is spiritual and things of the senses he **disobeys** the divine command. He **errs** when the irrationality of **feeling is the only form of discernment**. He is captured by pleasure and avoidance of pain.*

(St. Maximos, Questions to Thalassios I, 43, PG90.412-13 - OS 87)

How Emotions Work



Antonio Damasio - *The Feeling of What Happens*

- * Something from our senses **initiates** a response.
- * Brain sends **commands** to other regions of the brain and most everywhere in the body proper.
 1. **Bloodstream** - commands are sent in the form of chemical molecules that act on receptors in the cells of body tissues.
 2. **Neuron pathways** - commands take the form of electromechanical signals which act on other neurons or on muscular fibers or on organs which in turn can release chemicals of their own into the blood stream.
- * Results in **global change** in the state of the **organism**.
- * Then we become **aware** of a feeling.

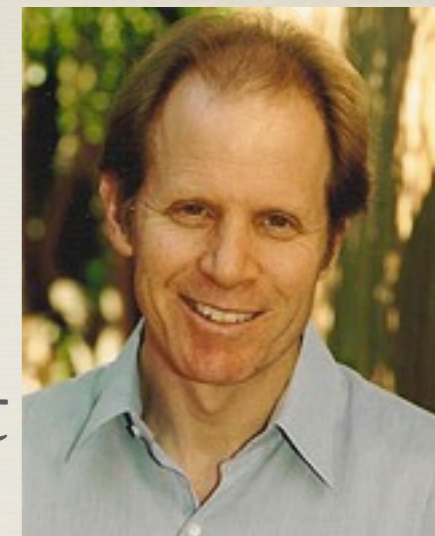
How Emotions Work

- * What is the lesson here?
- * We **can't wait** for our **feelings** to develop to control our behavior. We need to interact at the **time of the stimulus** and work to **change** the **automatic response** of the emotional response.

Attention and Watchfulness

Mindful Brain, Daniel J. Siegel

- * We can actually focus our minds in a way that **changes** the structures and function of the **brain** throughout our lives. (96)
- * Attentional processes, emotion regulation, and capacity to observe internally, to introspect and reflect, are all considered **trainable** skills. (Lutz and colleagues 204) (97)
- * This is how we can prepare for cooperation with God. We must **develop attentiveness** in our mind.



- * Brain imaging studies suggest **frontal lobe** is critical in directing our ability to **act freely** and make decisions and this can be interpreted that free will is conscious choice involving an introspective monitoring of the self. (158)
- * The **more you concentrate** on a moral idea, the **easier** it becomes to act on that belief.
- * Frontal lobes monitor our **ability to stay attentive** and alert, helping us to focus on a task.
- * Nuns in prayer showed greater activity in the frontal lobes.



Andrew Newberg

- * If you want to maintain a sense of well being you have to work at it **continually** reinforcing positive feeling and **beliefs**. This is one of the benefits of religious **ritual**.
- * The key to creating any reality is based on a concentrated **repetition** of ideas. (189)
- * The more we stay **focused** on our object of contemplation, the more real the thought becomes.
- * Be careful about what you pray for or meditate on because it may eventually become your personal truth. If you want to make spirituality central part of your life then by all means **focus** on **spiritual ideals** as often as you can. Andrew



Peter

- * *Gird up the loins of your mind... not conforming yourselves to the former lusts but ... you also be holy in all your conduct.* 1 Peter 1:13-15
- * *Abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul... submit yourself to every ordinance...* 1 Peter 2:11, 13



Paul

* ***Put to death*** therefore what is earthly in you; unchastity, uncleanness,, passion, evil desire and greed, which is idolatry... But now put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, slander and foul talk from your mouth. Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have ***put off the old nature*** with its practices and have put on the ***new nature*** which is ***being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator.*** Col 3: 5-10

Orthodox Way of Life

- * Church shows us the **way** to deal with this difficult but most important challenge we face.
- * We cannot do it by our own effort but only through **grace** of the Holy Spirit.
- * This effort is called a **purification** of the Heart. Involves continual **repentance**.
- * It is a **difficult** path requiring attention, persistence and endurance.



Church

- ✦ Work of the Church is to **guide us** towards Theosis.
- ✦ Holy services, sacraments, patristic theology, Christ centered guidance.
- ✦ When we view each other as **prospective gods**, struggling, our attitude towards each other improves.
- ✦ Want to **help** rather than criticize or punish.
Seek to find ways to aid them to attain Theosis.

Church

- ✿ As long as we are enclosed within ourselves, centered on our egos we are only **individuals**.
- ✿ When we **let go** of this **self-centeredness**, then we become full persons in the eye of God
- ✿ The ego encounters God and **I becomes Thou**.

Church

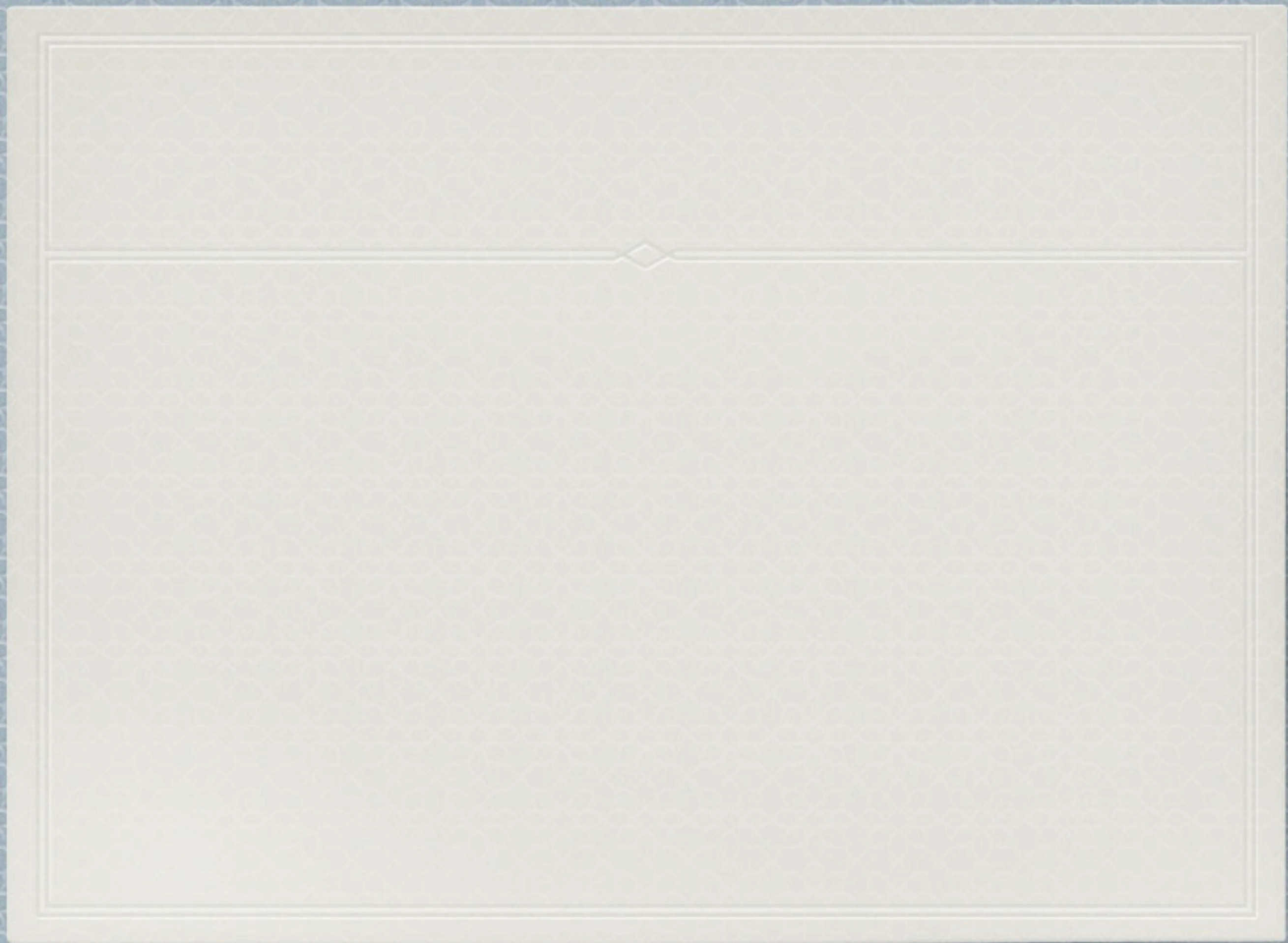
- ✿ Today too many only seek “**feel good**” experiences. Instead of seeking experience of God we seek **false substitutes**.
- ✿ What are some of these approaches?
- ✿ **Morality** has for the most part lost its purpose. **No longer** to leads one to God. Becomes only **rules** imposed. No longer has any boundaries. **Relativism** prevails.

Church

- ✦ Our inclinations and powers for achieving Theosis are instead directed toward seeking **pleasures** and carnal worship.
- ✦ Life becomes **purposeless**, many occupations are harmful, we live busy life of business to cover up our angst of the void we feel within.
- ✦ Important to devote our efforts to **helping ourselves and others** around us to the task of theosis. Only on this path will we find peace and our salvation.

Ten Points

- ✦ *Praying Daily*
- ✦ *Worshiping and participating in the sacraments*
- ✦ *Honoring the liturgical cycle*
- ✦ *Using the Jesus Prayer*
- ✦ *Slowing down and ordering your life*
- ✦ *Being watchful*
- ✦ *Taming the Passions*
- ✦ *Putting others first*
- ✦ *Spiritual fellowship*
- ✦ *Reading Scriptures and Holy Fathers*



Prayer & Fasting

Next

