

PART 1

Why Fear? Why Now?

In part 1, I want you to think about the question “why” or “why now?” The chapters in this section examine the need for exploring the emotion of fear through our current cultural milieu. In chapter 1, I open by exploring the need for conversation between literature on emotions and theology. This exploration takes us into the long held doctrine of the impassability of God. In addition, I explore the differences between anxiety and fear, as well as how they have been conflated in our common cultural language.

In chapter 2, I look at how threats are generated in our current culture. By exploring the ways in which we consume media stories about terrorism, crime, and humanity, I put forth the idea that we are living in a culture of fear. This is an unprecedented time when humanity has access to global events at their fingertips. Thus, this is also a time in history when the threats of the world are commonly known and digested by anyone with access to the news, newspaper, or an RSS news feed.

Throughout this part of the book, I build the case that a new examination of fear is warranted; it is a “why now” set of propositions meant to help us see the necessity of exploring fear in new and complex ways. As you go through these first two chapters, I will refer back to the case examples mentioned in the introduction. It will be helpful if you keep these three diverse examples in mind as we move through the chapters, as they will help ground your reading of this text.

This Emotional Life

*God was angry and . . .
They changed their ways and God had
compassion . . .
Jesus went into the temple and turned over
the tables of the money changers . . .
Jesus wept . . .*

The Bible is full of moments when God and Jesus act with a passion driven by their emotions. Anger, compassion, love, sadness, and even fear all have places in the biblical narrative. God is often described as angry, jealous, compassionate, and/or loving. Yet, over time, Christian doctrine has been shaped by God's omnipotence and omniscience ("all-powerful-ness" and "all-knowing-ness") rather than God's empathic abilities. In fact, we even have a longstanding historical doctrine (called the impassability of God) that describes God's lack of true emotional experience. As we absorb these views of God, we come to the conclusion that to be more like God is to be a well-reasoned and impassioned actor in the world. In turn, our faith and concepts of God suffer from a lack of emotional and impassioned experience. Nowhere is this truer than in the mainline church of which I am a part. We pride ourselves on our thinking faith—on our ability to reason, reflect, and weave together science, rationality, and faith. It's not that we eschew emotions; they just occupy a space in the backgrounds our faith. There is nothing wrong with a well-reasoned faith; yet, there may be something wrong with a faith that does not open itself to the impact and possibilities that emotions provide. Emotions should be vital parts of our faith and life; they are the components of experience that make life more than just a series of facts; emotions make our dreams and imaginings possible and worthy of pursuit. Therefore, we do ourselves a disservice when

we discount or vilify any emotional experience, whether it is anger, fear, joy, or sadness.

OUR EMOTIONAL LIFE

Emotions are embodied aspects of our brain that enable us to cope with complex experiences quickly and actively. Let's break that down a bit. Emotions are embodied. They are a part of our brain's wisdom, and they are inescapable and adaptive. Neuropsychologist Joseph LeDoux (who has spent much of his career studying the emotion of fear) says that the word *emotion* is little more than "a label, a convenient way of talking about aspects of the brain and mind."¹ Like our higher cognitive functions (thinking, reflecting, interpreting, language, and so on), emotions are another system within the brain and mind that help us process the world in which we live, move, and become. LeDoux goes on to say that "[m]any emotions are products of evolutionary wisdom, which probably has more intelligence than all human minds together."² This is an interesting statement in that it not only puts the status of emotions on par with reason, but almost elevates the meaning and purpose of emotions to an uncontainable wisdom beyond that of simple reason.

We are emotional creatures; we are thinking creatures; we are expressive, active, reflective, embodied creatures. We are inescapably all of these things, as they are a part of our physical presence in the world. It is the connection between the embedded emotional systems of the brain and our ideas about our createdness that lead me to believe that all emotions are more vital to our lives, faiths, and experiences than we sometimes give them credit. Love, sadness, anger, and even fear are emotions that we often express uniquely based on our experiences. At the same time, it is widely thought that all human beings experience certain kinds of emotions regardless of culture, race, or gender. This conservation of certain emotions across wide landscapes of humanity should give us ample pause to reflect on the messages that a Christian faith shares about emotions in general. More specifically, it should give us a reason to engage the divine-human relationship around the topic of emotions.

Thus emotions must carry weight within the boundaries of our faith and life because they are meaningful parts of the *Imago Dei*.³ The *Imago Dei* refers to the Christian way of talking about our intimate ties to the Creator. I use the term here to describe how we act as co-creators in the world, experiencing and interpreting it with God's help. When I consider humanity as made "in the image of God," it calls to mind both the certainty of a relationship to the divine, but also the possibilities created through our dynamic experiences of the world.

For me, the *Imago Dei* takes on figurative qualities as we are called to embody in our experiences who we understand God to be and how we believe God acts in compassionate and meaningful ways in the world. For this reason, our images of God should reflect our understanding of humanity, but also incorporate the idea that God is much more than we are, or can comprehend about ourselves.

FROM IMPASSABILITY TO EMPATH-ABILITY

The Impassability of God is a doctrine that originated with the early church as it sought to find its way and place in the pantheon of religions of that day. Impassability has its roots in Greek philosophy. It basically means “that God does not feel and/or experience emotions; God is, as Aristotle said three centuries before the church began, the unmoved mover.”⁴ As you can see, the doctrine we have inherited and debated throughout the years doesn’t actually have its roots in Christian thought, but more so in the thoughts of Christians influenced by Greek philosophy.

Creating a vision of God as the unmoved mover, while attempting to preserve a laundry list of God’s perfect qualities, ignores the passion and emotionality of the God we come to know in scripture. The simple truth is that they didn’t have functional Magnetic Resonance Images of the brain as it lights up when we experience an emotion. Therefore, the way those early philosophers experienced emotions was as outside forces that derail us from the rational thoughts we are intended to have. As we have come to challenge conventional and historical thought about human beings, our theology and some of the doctrines we use to describe the divine-human relationship will continue to be challenged by the introduction of new knowledge. As we do this with emotions in particular, I am reminded of this statement: “Theological anthropology is enriched by affirming the essential and embodied nature of human emotions; they are one of God’s greatest gifts to humankind.”⁵ Theological anthropology has to do with the impressions of humanity we hold to be true through the lens of faith. It is the merger of our sense of history, experience, reason, psychology, sociology, and theology into a picture that completes the sentence, “Human beings are . . .” Thus if we say “human beings are broken,” we make a theological statement about sin, redemption, God’s presence or absence, God’s role as healer, guide, and sustainer. Our theological anthropology guides the kind of spiritual care we offer others; it impacts the ways we preach, teach, and lead communities of faith.

Think about the prophets, the early stories about God in scripture—even the life of Jesus reveals an emotional core. Take time to explore God’s anger and

frustration with humanity, which often permeates the texts we read. Go back and discover God's gentleness and compassion as they are woven throughout the stories of God's relationship with humanity. Turn to the Gospels and see the emotional life of Jesus play out in his ministry. The sorrow, love, anger, exhaustion, fear, and hope expressed throughout his meandering ministry saturate Jesus' interactions with people everywhere. There is simply little defense for the impassability of God, save for a human theologian's need for God to be perfect on all fronts. Even then, some form of perfect emotionality should be derived from the texts we call authoritative.

The difficulty we face with deconstructing a doctrine or a theology is twofold. First, how do we break with centuries of routine thinking? Second, how do we create what takes its place? To the first question, I can only propose that you allow yourself to be creative for a moment. Instead of thinking that God wants us merely to think clearly, what if we embrace the idea that God wants us to experience fully? What if we not only attempted to experience fully, but also believed that God experienced our lives fully as well? How would that challenge the conventional notions of God's relationship with us? To challenge long-held routine knowledge about God is to take a leap of faith. It means using the creative and imaginative gifts we have been given to see God in the ordinary and beyond. If a doctrine is going to hold up, we must be willing to challenge it, to challenge the routines of faith that we have been handed, and see in the end if the God we come to know is still worthy of worship.

To understand how we might replace the doctrine of impassability, I propose that we begin to think about God's empath-ability. You have already seen some of the support for this idea in paragraphs above that discuss God's emotional life in relationship with humanity. Through these words, we see that the impassability of God is a problematic doctrine to say the least. Furthermore, when we add these paraphrased words from scripture, "and God heard their cries,"⁶ we can begin to envision anew the relationship between God and the emotions that shape the divine-human relationship.

To see God as "empathically-able" we must understand the meaning of empathy. Simply put, empathy is the ability to put yourself in another's shoes and "get" what they are feeling or experiencing. A colleague and mentor, Carrie Doehring, states that empathy is "making a connection with another person by experiencing what it is like to be that person, and . . . maintaining separation from the other person by being aware of one's own feelings and thoughts."⁷ I think we can certainly make the case that God "gets" humanity; the leap we have to make is whether or not part of this connection to human beings is emotional as well. Insight is the ability to understand what someone else is

thinking; this is different from empathy, which has a distinctly emotional flavor. To say that God is empathic is to believe in God's ability to experience the suffering, joy, pain, anger, hurt, fear, happiness that humans experience on a daily basis. It is to call God intimately immanent, yet at the same time that immanence is shared throughout all of humanity and the world.

While scripture and experience tell us a good deal about the empath-ability of God, process theology takes it one step further. Pastoral theologian Robert Thompson remarks that

[w]ritings in process theology include some scant but clear statements about the suffering of God, which I think are significant for our exploration of emotions. If God suffers, and particularly if God suffers on account of the world, then we humans are reassured of God's care, which provokes feelings of assurance. Furthermore, as creatures made in God's image (a classical theological concept that I find meaningful), humans can also be reassured that, as God suffers, suffering will sometimes be our experience, and we can manage it with God's ever-present offerings of help. On the last page of his long and complex introductory book on process thought, Whitehead writes, "God is the great companion—the fellow-sufferer who understands" (Whitehead, 1978, p. 351).⁸

I think this view of God is refreshing. Not only does God experience the suffering we experience, but God, through this experience, also continues to offer us help by being present in a co-determinative relationship. To see God through the lens of empath-ability is to truly experience God as with us. To know that God takes in and empathizes with our experiences is to see God as a meaningful presence in our journeys of life and faith. It is to experience God as truly caring for us before, during, and after each moment that shapes our lives.

Empathy requires us to access and reflect upon the emotional content of our lives. It requires us to look beyond the facts, reason, or logic, and see the complexity of experiences as through a variety of lenses. Seeing God as empathic is vital to a meaningful faith. To believe that God truly cares, and doesn't just fake emotionality for our benefit, is less about making God in our image and more realizing that God's comprehension of the human condition is far beyond what we can explain. Furthermore, when we are empathic, having access to a myriad of emotions, we may be more fully bearing the image of God into the world.

Given what we know about the embodied nature of emotions, the doctrine concerning the impassability of God holds little truth for contemporary theology. Instead, I propose that we begin to shape our thoughts about God around the idea of empath-ability. By doing this, we can begin exploring emotions through a theological lens that values their impact. As a result, we can live into a faith that is more authentic to our experience of the world, as well as our experience of what it means to be made in the image of God. Simply put, we are empathic and emotional creatures; we are created in the image of God; therefore, God must have some experience of emotions, as well as the ability to empathize. While the logic may be as simple as $1 + 1 = 2$, we must also be able to think broadly about the implications of this kind of concept of God.⁹ This includes beginning to understand what we say when we claim to be afraid.

FEAR AND ANXIETY

To say that God is empathic means that a wide variety of emotions are a part of the divine-human relational matrix. It means that in ways beyond our full comprehension, God suffers with us, loves with us, grows angry and indignant, and even understands and knows what it is like to experience fear. These are bold claims that are thrown in the direction of a mysterious God.¹⁰ Humanity has often looked upon our emotions as weaknesses; my question to you is simply, what if they were all meant to be strengths? What if our embodied emotional experiences were meant to help draw us closer in our relationship with the divine? In the midst of that conversation, we must come to realize that *all* emotions must be a part of this relationship. We cannot simply separate good and bad, or positive and negative, and then attribute one set to God and another to humanity. Assuming we accept the argument that emotions are vital to the divine human relationship and, furthermore, that God shares in our experiences of emotional moments, then it is helpful to begin to construct ideas about these embodied emotions that speak to their adaptability, and their role in surviving, coping, and thriving in this world.

We can begin with understanding that there are some similarities shared by human beings. There are core emotional experiences that most, if not all, of humanity (and some of the animal kingdom) share. These core embodied emotions often include such things as anger, fear, happiness, sadness, and disgust. If we were to describe an emotional *Imago Dei*, these might be the places where we start to understand our embodied selves. Moreover, understanding emotions means realizing their uniqueness, and the ways they impact us on individual and relational levels. As we will see in coming chapters,

fear is an adaptable emotion that orients us toward survival, coping, and thriving in the world. It is also one of the emotions, left to its own devices, that can drive us to separate ourselves from meaningful communities and relationships. Before we get to that, it is helpful to explore what we mean when we talk about the emotion of fear, because one of the more misunderstood relationships between emotional states is the one between fear and anxiety.

To understand fear we need to define it over and above other emotions we might experience. In a 2012 *New York Times* editorial, Joseph LeDoux admitted that “the line between fear and anxiety can get pretty thin and fuzzy.”¹¹ This fuzzy line is seen in the language we use to talk about fearful and anxious experiences, mixing the two emotions as if they were completely interchangeable. To be sure, there are differences between fear and anxiety that are worth exploring.

A lot of our confusion probably stems from our adoption of psychological language into the everyday ways we talk to one another. The truth is, even in therapeutic circles, it is more common to discuss anxiety than fear. We put these two together, and often find ourselves mentioning anxiety when we mean fear and vice versa. While I will endeavor to define fear as different from anxiety, later chapters will be devoted to really teasing out what it means to be afraid and how that impacts our lives.

Since the turn of the twentieth century, when psychology became part of the social structure of various cultures, we have been trying to define humanity through a better understanding of the human brain and mind. We created a whole mess of words and concepts like *repression* (the stuffing of emotions or other painful experiences out of our consciousness) and *suppression* (the blocking of unacceptable desires from our consciousness) to describe our behaviors related to our thinking and experiencing of the world. Sometimes when we are trying to define a concept it is helpful to build our understanding through previous concepts. The difference between anxiety and fear is no exception. While anxiety has been preferred in certain therapy circles, some people have tried to describe the difference between the two emotional states.

The first description I want to point to is one from Seward Hiltner, a pastoral theologian:

[A] truer statement of the distinction in human beings between fear and anxiety would be to call the first the alarm signal that is read accurately without perceptible pause between signal and interpretation, while the latter involves perceptible pause.¹²

The way I read it, a perceptible pause is something akin to a reflection rather than a reaction. Thus anxiety involves at least a modicum of reflection before a response occurs. On the other hand, the emotion of fear is more reactive to a threat. Hiltner also uses the term *alarm signal*, which is certainly appropriate to both fear and anxiety. This may be another place where the two emotions become confused. Both signal a sense of unease about an experience, object, or relationship; however, fear provides a more immediate response to that experience while anxiety tends to encompass a reflective response. This of course does only a little bit to clear up the differences between anxiety and fear. So let's dive a little deeper.

Let's try and grasp the difference between these two emotions from the perspective of what is thought to provide healing. According to psychoanalyst Isaac Ramzy, "The simplest and the most accurate way of defining anxiety, however, is perhaps to contrast it with its opposite, which is peace—peace of the mind."¹³ Therapists and other meditative specialists have often used a variety of peace-inducing techniques to help people cope with their anxieties. Peace, or engaging in peace-inducing activities, requires reflection; it requires training and practice and patience as we develop the skills to handle the anxieties that intrude on our lives. These are helpful skills to have when our lives are not directly threatened but instead overwhelmed by a general sense of unease. They are less helpful when we encounter a bear while walking through the woods.

I think a better antidote for fear is hope. Both fear and hope emotions have future-oriented components, and they are derived from connections to our memories, beliefs, and imaginations. To be hopeful in the face of an immediate threat is to give a sense of urgency to actions. Human beings have great survival instincts, but our emotional lives also give us the passion to know why living is important. Hope provides a more meaningful antidote to fear, as it directs us with the passion to thrive, giving us the reason to act upon the body's manifestation of fear.

Hiltner and Ramzy point us in two helpful directions concerning the emotion of fear. Their words about a perceptible pause and the role of peace help begin the process of separating fear and anxiety. Through them we begin to understand that anxiety most likely involves a reflective component that distinguishes it from fear. However, I think there is a more compelling argument to be made that can help us decide which emotion we are experiencing at different points in our lives. For that, I turn to psychologist Sonia Bishop, who defines the two terms this way:

Fear is . . . a biologically adaptive physiological and behavioral response to the actual or anticipated occurrence of an explicit threatening stimulus. *Anxiety crucially involves uncertainty as to the expectancy of a threat, is triggered by less explicit or more generalized cues, and is characterized by a more diffuse state of distress, with symptoms of hyperarousal and worry.*¹⁴

The emotion of fear is generated by specific things. We fear something, someone, some imagined object. To be afraid means attaching an object to the emotion. I am afraid of spiders; I am anxious about watching my daughters grow up, date, and navigate the world. I hope you can see the difference here. Spiders are a definite object; they hold a place in my memory that signals danger whenever I see one. My anxiety about my daughters and their growth and development is a bit more mysterious and open-ended. Will they meet someone nice who treats them well? Will they be safe and secure? Will I be a good father? These kinds of questions lead to more generalized ruminations about possibilities of threatening experiences occurring in their lives.

As we can see, there are some differences that point to the uniqueness of each emotion. The place where this fuzzy line gets drawn is often with the personal experiences of each emotion. There is some crossover in the symptoms we experience in both emotions, such as hyperarousal or hypervigilance. However, when we think of anxiety and fear, we can also begin to talk about the intensity of experience. I surmise that things such as panic attacks often occur when we enter a generalized anxiety state and then become fixated on a particular object or thought that arouses the fear centers of our brains. This causes us to physically react in ways more akin to a fear response than an anxiety response. Generally speaking, the emotion of fear gives rise to specific behavioral responses such as fight, flight, freeze, and appease, whereas our anxieties most often produce a less-severe reaction to the generalized cues that make us worry.

One theory I have about this is that many of our anxieties stem from experiences of fear, held in our memories, which bleed out and get associated with new cues in our environments. This moves us to think about how the brain works. While the primary discussion on fear and the brain occurs in a later chapter, as I discuss the differences between fear and anxiety it is hard to do so without peering inside our skulls. Basically, I think of much of our anxiety as being generated by echoes of fear-associated memories, which in turn create an anticipation of possible dire consequences. In essence, fear-coded memories bleed out in a way that formerly specific threats are now associated with new

and often undefined cues in the world. Some interesting research discusses the relationship between the amygdala and anxiety and fear.

The amygdalae are small almond-shaped clusters of neurons located in both “sides” of the brain just behind our eyes. Most neurological research points to these bundles of neurons as bearing responsibility for the emotion of fear. Additionally, some research shows that interaction between the amygdala and prefrontal circuits of the brain play a large role in anxiety production.¹⁵ What this means is that the structure of the brain plays a big role in the production of fear and anxiety. Moreover, there are different sets of connections that are thought to produce each emotion. The amygdalae have some far-reaching connections with other parts of the brain, including those that store and produce memories. Part of the distinction between these two emotional states is how a stimulus is interpreted and the neural pathways that are engaged as a response.

Examining fear and anxiety, we can see that there is ample reason to think about them as distinct emotional states. They share some similarities, but ultimately are different emotions. Not including the different pathways engaged in the brain, four particular ideas help us understand this difference. Anxiety requires reflection; fear is more responsive. Peace is described as the antidote to anxiety; I believe the emotion of fear requires us to access a more hopeful imagination. The source of anxiety is often mysterious and open-ended; whereas with fear there is a specific object (real or imagined) attached to it. Finally, the resulting behaviors of each emotion differ, although there is some overlap here that often causes confusion.

Let’s think back to Sandra’s situation. She was mugged, and every ounce of her being felt the panic that comes from a surge of fear. In that moment she reacted to protect herself from the threat and to cope with what was happening to her. As she began to construct a future out of this experience, that fear-filled moment began to show up in a variety of settings. She interpreted sudden interruptions at her office as threats, staying hypervigilant in what had always been a safe place previously. She fled from situations that might cause her to react with fear. The difference between her reaction and one of pure anxiety was the hostile ways she began to interpret the world around her. A person only experiencing anxiety might be more cognizant of their surroundings; they might carry a whistle or pepper spray, but they still go out. A person experiencing a recurring sense of fear locks themselves away at night, or refuses to go out with friends; they may take the need to feel safe to an extreme rather than risk being hurt again.

We can see some of this in Jim's reaction to his fear as well. He took on the role of a protective aggressor. Even though his chances of being caught up in a terrorist plot were slim to none, he maintained the need to protect himself. This new worldview carried his actions to an extreme far beyond what might be considered a normal reaction to tragic events. Jim's choice was to fight in face of the things he feels threaten him. For someone who is afraid, this kind of behavior is not uncommon. The trouble for individuals and communities comes when it shapes the way we see the world; when we look into the future and threats dominate the landscape.

I think Jim and Sandra typify why theologians have been so afraid of the emotion of fear. It can wreak havoc on our lives and relationships. At the same time, the emotion of fear is incredibly adaptive. Fear is the emotional tool we use to survive, cope, and thrive in a sometimes hostile and unpredictable world. It is meant to be the trigger for a quick response to a threat, helping us act in particular ways when we face danger. Without fear, there is no humanity; there is no recognition of the will to live. Without fear, we walk up and pet lions and tigers and bears; without fear, we tiptoe to the edge of cliffs without a care about falling off; without fear, we miss the chance to reflect upon the possibilities to come, and we miss the opportunity to experience the things we hope for in life.

When the emotion of fear is utilized properly, it arises quickly as a reaction to a threat, and when that threat has abated it recedes into the background. In this way, the emotion of fear is one of the greatest gifts we have from God. It is the emotion that keeps us living; it is the state of being that helps us survive and cope in this world. We can make all of the theological arguments we want about God, embodiment, and the importance of emotions. However, the simple fact of the matter is that the emotion of fear has been conserved throughout our history to help us know when we need to protect our lives against the things that threaten us. For this gift, we should be grateful to God. Furthermore, trying to rid ourselves or suppress the emotion of fear seems counterproductive.

In Sandra's and Jim's cases, the emotion of fear shaped their world in drastic ways, which created hostility and isolation. This is why we need a better understanding of the emotion of fear from a theological point of view. How do you talk to Jim about the extreme measures he is taking? How do you help Sandra reclaim the goodness of life? The more we understand the emotion of fear and its complexities, the better we are able to see the concurrent stream of hope that flows with it. However, in this postmodern world, it is becoming increasingly hard to let our fears subside. As you will see in the next chapter, the threats we experience have been multiplying at an alarming rate, creating a Culture of Fear.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. How do you understand God? Does it help you to be able to think about God as a fellow sufferer who cares, or does this stretch your imagination too far?
2. What are the objects or specific things you fear? How do these things or experiences shape your behavior and relationships?
3. What do you imagine the connection between fear and hope to be as we think about faith and God?

Notes

1. Joseph E. LeDoux, *The Emotional Brain: The Mysterious Underpinnings of Emotional Life* (New York: Simon & Schuster Paperbacks, 1996), 16.

2. *Ibid.*, 36.

3. I understand this term loosely as it relates to evolution and process theology, but can also respect its value in a variety of theological circles. However we might choose to interpret this phrase, to think of the *Imago Dei* as solely corporeal does it little justice. Moreover, thinking of it as a purely rational image may go too far as well. To truly understand the *Imago Dei*, we must look beyond human constructions and capabilities—our physical attributes, mental capacities, and even emotional abilities—and peer into the mystery of love, grace, justice, and hope. These thematic images form a more consistent understanding of God that reveals an active relational power and presence to the world. Thus to be in the image of God is to act, feel, and think in ways that embody the attributes we ascribe to the Holy Other. In this way, emotions become central to the *Imago Dei* rather than an afterthought.

4. Robert Thompson, “Process Theology and Emotion: An Introductory Exploration,” *Journal of Pastoral Theology* 15, no. 1 (2005): 19.

5. *Ibid.*, 28.

6. You can look to the second chapter in Exodus to see this kind of empathic response play out; additionally, the Psalms (such as Psalm 40) and prophets (such as Isaiah 58) are sources where you see reference to God’s hearing and responding to the cries of oppressed, lonely, and lost people. To be fair, there are also passages that allude to God’s hiddenness. Yet, even these passages have hints of anger or other emotions that drive the passion of God elsewhere.

7. Carrie Doehring, *The Practice of Pastoral Care: A Postmodern Approach* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2006), 18.

8. *Ibid.*, 25.

9. This includes thinking about what we would consider to be the core emotions conserved in the structures of the brain. Jaak Panksepp, a psychologist and neuroscientist, says that “[p]rimary emotional systems, as far as we know, are intrinsic within brain tools for allowing animals to generate complex, dynamically flexible instinctual action patterns to cope with specific environmental enticements and threats” (2007, p. 1821). Early lists of primary emotions generally posited four: mad, sad, glad, and afraid. As modern neuroscience helps us better understand the capacities of the brain, ideas about the shape of our emotions have changed. Categories like

primary, secondary, universal, etc. have been proposed with some fanfare, but often without the kind of support needed to establish a true taxonomy of emotions. That said, neuropsychologists today often describe seven arguable, but identifiable, emotional states: care, play, panic, rage, seeking, fear, lust (Panksepp, 2007, p. 1825). Jaak Panksepp, "Criteria for Basic Emotions: Is DISGUST a Primary 'Emotion'?", *Cognition & Emotion* 21, no. 8 (2007): 1819–28.

10. Here, I am reminded of my first class in my doctoral program. We were discussing what we can and cannot claim about God. One student's position was that we cannot have any ultimate claims about the true nature of God. This is true to a certain extent. The understanding that I came to, after conversation with Larry Kent Graham, was that God gave us brains that reason, experience, emote, and imagine. If we do not use these capabilities to their fullest, we don't do God any favors. Therefore, we should question and assert in conversation and collaboration to develop ideas about God that stretch our understanding and challenge any stagnant beliefs. Once this has been done, we can leave the rest to mystery.

11. Joseph E. LeDoux, "Searching the Brain for the Roots of Fear," *New York Times*, January 22, 2012, <http://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2012/01/22/anatomy-of-fear/?hp>.

12. Seward Hiltner, "Some Theories of Anxiety: Psychiatric," in *Constructive Aspects of Anxiety*, ed. Seward Hiltner and Karl Menninger (New York: Abingdon, 1960), 47.

13. Isaac Ramzy, "Freud's Understanding of Anxiety," in *Constructive Aspects of Anxiety*, ed. Seward Hiltner and Karl Menninger (New York: Abingdon, 1960), 18.

14. Sonia J. Bishop, "Neurocognitive Mechanisms of Anxiety: An Integrative Account," *Trends in Cognitive Sciences* 11, no. 7 (2007): 307.

15. See Bishop, "Neurocognitive Mechanisms of Anxiety: An Integrative Account," 307–16, and R. J. Davidson, "Anxiety and Affective Style: Role of Prefrontal Cortex and Amygdala," *Biological Psychiatry* 51, no. 1 (2002): 68–80, for a broader understanding of the interaction between the amygdala and the rest of the brain in the production of anxiety and fear.