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Navigation

[UFOs](#)
[Paranormal](#)
[People](#)
[Places](#)
[Area 51](#)
[Random](#)
[Top 100](#)
[Catalog](#)
[What's New](#)

Search...

...for this word in:

Page Titles
Page Contents
Book Title/Author

[Help](#)

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Book Catalog

Neuropsychological Bases of God Beliefs

By [Micheal Persinger](#)

Our Price: **\$59.95**

Our Item Code: **PersingerGod**

Postage Code: **[book1](#)**

175 Pages, Hardcover

Cover Size: 6 x 9 inches

[Praeger Publishers](#)

Date: 1987 ISBN: 0-275-92648-6

Added to Catalog: 6/5/98
WIRT: 55524153

Availability: This item is usually in stock and available for immediate Priority Mail shipment. Order it today (by 8pm Eastern/5pm Pacific), and you will probably have it in 2-3 days (in USA).

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Our Review

Credibility	Research Value	Cultural Interest	Visual Information	Style	Silliness	Wow Factor	Bargain
5	5	5	2	4	1	5	3
Very High	Very High	Very High	Low	Stylish	Very Low	Wow!	Moderate

Explanation of Ratings

Credibility = Very High: In general, this category is a rating of the author's intellectual discipline and the strength of his argument (which are very high), not the veracity of his claims (which could be false in spite of the strong argument).

Visual Information = Low: The only illustrations are cross-sections of the brain.

Style = Stylish: Not a stodgy academic work; highly engaging and readable.

This is our favorite work of skepticism, offering what amounts to Grand Unified Theory to explain all manner of religious and paranormal belief systems. Unlike other skeptics, who simply attack the beliefs themselves, neuroscientist Persinger cuts to the heart of the matter, showing us how the brain, human evolution and human psychology predispose us to believe in the unbelievable. Persinger argues that the personal experience of contact with God, as reported by converts of nearly all religions, can be explained as a disturbance of the brain's temporal lobe. This assertion is not merely speculative: Temporal lobe seizures can be measured in the brains of both schizophrenics and healthy meditators at the same time they report godly encounters. God, Allah or some "higher consciousness" spoke to them, they insist, even though they can't recall exactly what was said. Such seizures can become learned behavior, and simply "praying" to God may be enough to bring them about.

Giving these subjective experiences their power is an innate human characteristic: egocentrism. This is the tendency of a person to see himself as the center of the universe -- as the "chosen one" who God is likely to devote his attention to. Truly mature people learn to leave egocentrism behind, but there aren't many of them in human society. Most people are locked in childishness, and gods provide a substitute for parents.

In the book, we found no references to alien abduction claims and only a few to near-death experiences, but it is easy to see how they would fit into Persinger's theories. There is, in fact, little in the paranormal domain that Persinger's theories do not explain. Only consciousness itself is still a mystery. -- *Glenn Campbell*

Reservations

This is an academic book, priced accordingly, and we are embarrassed by the high price. Obviously, you should not buy it until you are sure you want it. Try researching Persinger on the net first. If you live near a university, try looking for this book in their library.

Comparison to Other Books

This is our top recommended skeptics book -- worth more than any of those published by Prometheus Books.

Julian Jaynes' [Origin of Consciousness in the Breakdown of the Bicameral Mind](#) explores some of the same ideas, namely that consciousness evolved with human civilization. Persinger's book is much clearer and more useful, though.

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Information from the Publisher

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Publisher's Synopsis

In this study, the scientific principles of learning and brain functions are applied to the God Experience. The author skillfully blends modern neurophysiology with critical behavioral psychology to offer an objective explanation for why people believe in God. This provocative and scholarly work will interest psychologists, neuroscientists, clergy, and anyone studying mystical experience.

Table of Contents

- Preface
- Introduction: The Importance of Predicting the God Experience
- The Temporal Lobe: The Biological Basis of the God Experience
- Predicting Brain Factors in the God Experience
- Ego-centrism: The Power Behind the Proof
- Memory Changes and the Maintenance of Contradictions
- The Expectation of God: Conditioning and Sources of the Details
- Word Games: The Semantics of Anxiety and Anxiety Reduction
- Techniques for Integrating Religious Behaviors: From Rituals to Revelation
- The Religious Personality
- The Good, The Bad, and The Uncertain
- Index

About the Author

MICHAEL A. PERSINGER is Professor of Psychology at Laurentian University, Sudbury, Ontario.

-- From the Publisher

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Reader Comments

Regarding "Neuropsychological Bases of God Beliefs" - Latest First

Michael Persinger

Those interested in current research along the lines of Jaynes' work should look up Michael Persinger. His book "A Neuropsychological Basis for God Beliefs" sheds a lot of technical light on Jaynes' theory. It does not indicate that he is at all aware of Jaynes' work, however.

-- root mugwort 6/2/98 (#1)

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