

Review: Did Man Create God? Is Your Spiritual Brain at Peace with Your Thinking Brain?

by David E. Comings, M.D.

Mother Teresa was famous for her spirituality and religious ideals and yet we now know that for most of her adult life she had intense doubts about her faith. The majority of humans on this earth believes in a personal God and belongs to some form of organized religion. However, like Mother Teresa, at some time in their life many have had doubts and questions about their faith and the tenets of their religion but have lacked the scientific background to answer their doubting questions. Dr. Comings, a physician-scientist who has authored hundreds of articles in the field of human behavior, molecular genetics and neuroscience, has written this book to provide the scientific background to answer such questions in a context that is friendly and compassionate to religion and to man's innate spirituality.

The primary goal of the book is to allow the reader to develop a rational spirituality in which their thinking brain and spiritual brain can live in peace. A basic assumption of most humans is that God created man and divinely influenced the writing of all his sacred books. This book dispassionately explores the possibility that in premodern times our rational brain created the theory of a personal God to answer questions about the physical world like "Where did we come from?" and "Where do we go when we die?" and to satisfy the transcendent yearnings of our spiritual brain. To add believability and authority to our sacred books the rational brain he also proposed that God ultimately wrote these works.

In recent years, some of the major questions many people have relate to Intelligent Design (ID). Its proponents want ID to be taught in schools on a par with evolution. ID proposes that certain aspects of living organisms are so "irreducibly complex" that they had to have been designed by a supernatural force, that evolutionary processes were incapable of doing the job without outside help. In the first two parts of the book, Dr. Comings presents a series of Intelligent Answers to Intelligent Design showing that evolutionary processes easily explain all of items that the ID movement called "irreducibly complex." He also addresses the question of whether the so-called "Cambrian Explosion" and the normal rates of DNA mutation were incompatible with normal evolutionary processes. They are not. Part three covers aspects of cosmology, including the Big Bang and the Anthropic Principle, showing that both of these are explainable based on the current laws of physics and do not indicate Intelligent Design. Relying on a supernatural force to answer many of man's most difficult questions simply postpones real answers since it does not address the issue of who made the supernatural force?

The book then shifts to an examination of the complexities of the human brain. *Part IV. The Neurology of Reason and Spirituality* first addresses the site and mechanism of consciousness. Since this is clearly a product of the brain itself, when the brain dies so does consciousness. In one swoop this fundamental truth of modern neuroscience eliminates the idea of any part of us living on after life such as the "soul" or the "spirit." This carries with it the loss of a heaven and a hell and of any eternal damnation for sins, real or imagined, that we may have committed. In subsequent chapters other aspects of the brain are explored including the miracle of the human frontal lobes, and the sections of the brain involved in pleasure, socialization, rational thought, hope, and happiness. The largest chapter of the book explores *The Spiritual Brain*, located in the temporal lobes. *Internal* stimulation of the spiritual brain by electrical probes during open brain surgery, temporal lobe epilepsy, the anoxia of near death, or

psychedelic drugs, can lead to intense feelings of spirituality and of a transcendence beyond one's self. Many of the most influential religious figures in history appear to have had temporal lobe epilepsy, endowing them with intense convictions that they passed on to the less spiritually endowed.

Studies of the psychedelic drug DMT have shown that when highly intelligent subjects are given this short acting drug, these sophisticated individuals are totally convinced they were abducted into "contact" with a non-human being. This suggests that at times the spiritual brain is incapable of distinguishing between internally generated "unreal" experiences and externally generated "real" experiences – providing us with important insights about the power and realness of spiritual experiences.

The chapter on *The Meditating Brain*, shows that when humans engage in conscious attempts to have a spiritual experience, as in various types of meditation, many parts of the brain other than the temporal lobes are involved, including the frontal and parietal lobes. Other chapters illustrate the enormous curative power of the placebo effect, the permanence of early childhood religious beliefs, and the pleasurable and rewarding nature of spirituality.

The next two parts show the important role of genes in our spirituality, in our religious attitudes, in our ability to reason (intelligence) and in both our bad and good behavior. Spirituality comes from within as an innate trait while religiosity comes from without as a learned behavior. Combined these chapters indicate that humans are inherently happy and good, independent of religion, and that spirituality played a critical role in the evolution and survival of man. A feeling of being associated with something that transcends one's self became an important, rewarding, comforting, and innate part of the human condition.

Additional important chapters relating to the thesis of this book examine the origins of the world's major and minor religions, the probability that man created both man's religions and the Gods of his religions. A chapter on psychedelics and religion reviews the important role of psychedelic mushrooms and other plants is imbuing users with a sense of connectedness with a spirituality greater than themselves. Different psychedelics have played a role in the origins of religion on several continents.

In separate chapters the benefits and the evils of religion and the problem of evil are discussed. The problem of evil refers to one of the thorniest issues of religion – how can God allow so much evil to occur, both in the form of humans killing humans and natural disasters. While many explanations have been offered, only one explanation is completely satisfactory – that the theory of a personal God is man made. A God created by man would be powerless to prevent evil.

A summary of the book asks whether our thinking brain is incompatible with religion and faith. It is concluded that for some belief systems the rational and spiritual brains are totally compatible, for some they are compatible with only minor qualifications and for some they are compatible but with major qualifications. However, a belief that the Bible or Qur'an are literally true, that one sacred book is better than another, that one God is better than another, and that one religion is better than another – provides a situation in which the rational thinking brain and the spiritual brain are totally incompatible.

Dr. Comings concludes that religious intolerance, wars and terrorism are based on *irrational spirituality* where there is an incompatibility between the rational and spiritual brain, where individuals believe that one person's God is better than another's. By contrast a *rational spirituality* allows individuals of all religions to live in peace. This book is a potentially life

changing read for anyone who has ever had doubts about their faith or religion but wanted responses that were sympathetic to their spirituality.