

# THE SPIRITUAL SCIENTIST

## A Cyber Magazine for Those Who Think

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### Made For Each Other

*"You're saying your research proves this higher reality exist?" asks writer Vince Rause.*

*Prof Andrew Newberg of the University of Pennsylvania replies, "I'm saying the possibility of such a reality is not inconsistent with science."*

*"But you can't observe such a thing in a scientific way, can you?"*

*Newberg grins. He hasn't simply observed such a state; he has managed to take its picture.*

### DIVINE FINDINGS

What you are reading is an extract from a fascinating article in the Jan 2002 issue of the Readers Digest, *Searching for the Divine* (pg 125) Prof Andrew Newberg is a leader in neurotheology, an emerging science which explores the links between spirituality and the brain.

Newberg and his team took pictures of the brain of the subjects in a normal waking state and in deep meditation. When they studied the scans, their attention was drawn to a chunk of the brain's left parietal lobe which they called the orientation association area. This region is responsible for drawing the line between the physical self and rest of existence, a task that requires a constant stream of neural information flowing in from the senses. What the scans revealed, however, was that at peak moments of prayer and meditation, the flow was dramatically reduced, indicating a decrease in neuronal activity. In such a brain state, the subject loses awareness of his physical self, goes to a state of complete relaxation and deep satisfaction and experiences a higher reality.

Newberg concludes such an experience of God by the human brain is as much a reality as any perception by the brain of "ordinary" physical reality.

This article is representative of what modern medical science is discovering (or rather rediscovering). More and more rigorous and unbiased studies are providing impeccable scientific evidence establishing the benefits, and indeed the necessity, of spirituality as an integral part of human existence.

### LET THE DATA SPEAK

Consider the following data compiled by Patrick Glynn, Associate Director at the George Washington University, in his book *God: The Evidence*.

**Suicide:** A large-scale 1972 study found that persons who did not attend spiritual prayer meetings were four times as likely to commit suicide than were those who attended spiritual prayer meetings frequently. A review of twelve studies of the relationship between religious commitment and suicide found a negative correlation in all twelve cases. Lack of

spiritual prayer meetings attendance has been found to be the single best predictor of suicide rates, better even than unemployment.

**Drug Abuse:** Numerous studies have found an inverse correlation between religious commitment and abuse of drugs. One survey of nearly 14,000 youths found that substance abuse varied in inverse proportion to strength of religious commitment, with the most conservative religious youths abusing the least. The authors concluded that "importance of religion" was the single best indicator / predictor of substance abuse patterns.

**Alcohol Abuse:** Several studies have found that alcohol abuse is highest among those with little or no religious commitment. One study found that nearly 90% of alcoholics had lost interest in religion in youth, while among the non-alcoholic control group 48% reported an increase in religious commitment in adulthood and 32% reported no change.

**Depression and Stress:** Several studies have found that high levels of religious commitment correlate with lower levels of depression, lower level of stress, and greater ability to cope with stress. Religious people recover from surgery more quickly than do their atheistic counterparts.

**Divorce:** A number of studies have found a strong inverse correlation between spiritual prayer meetings attendance and divorce. Spiritual prayer meetings attendance also correlates strongly with the expressed willingness of a partner to marry the same spouse again - a measure of marital satisfaction.

**Marital and Sexual Satisfaction:** A study found that spiritual prayer meetings attendance predicted marital satisfaction better than any other single variable. Couples in long-lasting marriages who were surveyed in another study listed religion as one of most important "prescriptions" of a happy marriage. Most strikingly, an analysis of data from a massive survey of Redbook magazine readers found that "very religious women report greater happiness and satisfaction with marital sex than either moderately religious or nonreligious women" So religious people even seem to enjoy better marital sex!

**Overall Happiness and Psychological Well-being:** Strong religious believers consistently report greater overall happiness and satisfaction with life. In one Gallup survey, respondents with a strong religious commitment - who agreed that "My religious faith is the most important influence in my life" - were twice as likely as those with minimal spiritual commitment to describe themselves as "very happy"

Thus statistics show that it is difficult to find a more consistent correlative of mental health, or a better insurance against self-destructive behaviors, than a strong religious faith.

## A REMARKABLE REVOLUTION

That psychology and its affiliated fields have come up with these findings is remarkable, to say the very least.

Since the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, a group of psychologists has been caustic in their condemnation of religion. They have branded faith as a form of mental disorder, a disorder that they predicted humanity would outgrow. Such thoughts have led to the predominance of the atheistic mentality in the psychology and other related fields and in medical science at large.

But even in those times there were renowned thinkers who differed markedly. Consider for example what the famous Carl Jung remarked in 1932:

Among all the patients in the second half of my life, there has not been one whose problem in the last resort was not that of finding a religious outlook on life. It is safe to say that every one of them fell ill because he

had lost that which the living religions of every age have given their followers and none of them has really healed who did not regain his religious outlook.

In other words, Carl Jung firmly believed that faith was a medicine rather than a disease.

And the findings of the late 20<sup>th</sup> century show that the atheistic challenge to religion, made under the guise of science, has collapsed - that too under the weight of scientific evidence. That this has happened in such an emphatic way in psychology itself, the field where it once gathered great momentum, is eloquent testimony to the sheer magnitude of the revolution in science *vis-à-vis* spirituality that we are witnessing.

The physicians are coming up with similar findings. Harvard Medical School associate professor of medicine Herbert Benson states that contemporary medical research is showing that the human mind and body are "wired for God". A *Time* cover story puts it even more explicit terms. When it comes to health, "the faithful actually have God on their side." Several other fields as wide-ranging as sociology and ecology are coming up with increasing evidence showing that only a spiritual way of life is sustainable and satisfying; atheism courts disaster at every level.

## THE REDISCOVERY

*Thus modern science is slowly and painfully rediscovering what all the religious scriptures have been teaching since time immemorial: the living being and God are made for each other. When a living being rejects God, he is, by deliberate misuse of his God-given intelligence, stripping his own life of all meaning, direction, substance, peace and happiness.*

The big question however remains. Has modern man experienced enough to learn this lesson? Or does he want to continue in the school of hard knocks? At a global level, time alone will tell. But at an individual level, the *Spiritual Scientist* will be there to help its readers make the intelligent choice.

*Join us next month for another session of spirituo-scientific exploration.*

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# The Spiritual Scientist

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**Dedicated to**

**His Divine Grace A C Bhaktivedanta Swami Srila Prabhupada,  
The Greatest Spiritual Scientist of the Modern Times**

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