

Is the God Machine Real?

By Jeffrey Small

Although *The Jericho Deception* is completely fictional, the genesis of my novel came from the fascinating research of three scientists I have never met. First, over a decade ago, Dr. Michael Persinger, a neuropsychologist at Laurentian University in Ontario, experimented with a device that came to be known as the “God helmet.” Persinger claimed that, like the Logos, his device, which stimulated the temporal lobes of the brain with electromagnetic waves, produced mystical sensations in his subjects. Subsequent research by other scientists with this technology, however, yielded inconsistent results. I am also indebted to the research of University of Pennsylvania’s Professor Andrew Newberg, one of the pioneers in the field of neurotheology, the study of the interrelation of the mind and religious experience. The experiments exploring the neurological similarities of Buddhist meditation and Christian contemplative prayer that Ethan and Elijah discuss in my novel are real studies performed on monks and nuns by Dr. Newberg, which he describes in his excellent books. Finally, my interest in the psychology of mystical experiences was first piqued by the grandfather of this field, Harvard Professor William James. His 1902 masterpiece, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, which describes the commonalities of mystical experiences across religious traditions, is still one of the most important treatises in this field.

I am also deeply grateful for the interview Yale Professor and Director of CapLab Laurie Santos allowed me to conduct with her in New Haven over a cup of coffee at Koffee (Ethan and Rachel’s hangout), as well as the medical advice and background provided by neurologist and good friend Dr. Art Schiff. All inaccuracies in the novel relating to their fields are either my own mistakes or the purposeful result of my creative license as a fiction writer!

My greatest inspiration, however, comes from the two most important women in my life. My brilliant and beautiful wife, Alison, has an uncanny knack of handing me an article or pointing me to a documentary and saying, “This could make an interesting book.” A *Wired Magazine* piece on Dr. Persinger that she gave me sparked my idea for this novel, while a Discovery Channel show on the mystery of the missing years in the life of Jesus led me to the plot of *The Breath of God*. My insightful and talented daughter, Ella, has a voracious appetite for thrillers that makes me wish I could write faster. For their love and infinite patience, I am forever grateful.

I’m also thankful for the unlimited understanding and support of my parents, Jeff and Eileen, and my forum friends—Malon, John, Reed, Jim, Greg, Rob, and Jay—all of whom have encouraged me to pursue my passion of writing.

Once again, I would like to thank Mark Bernstein, my publisher, and the folks at West Hills/Hundreds of Heads and PGW for making my dream a reality. My novel would also be vastly inferior without the guidance and prodding of my editors—Brooke Warner and Caitlin Alexander—both of whom challenge me to become a better writer.

Finally, to the wonderful fans of my first novel, *The Breath of God*, who have been eagerly awaiting this book: I cannot express how touched I have been by your enthusiasm. Thank you!