Book Looks at Religious Hallucinations from Spiritual and Psychological Perspective

New book explores the paranormal experiences in religious practice. The author is not a psychologist but respects modern psychology and psychiatry as well as religious views.


"The Experience of Hallucinations in Religious Practice" claims to be perhaps the only book of its kind published today that deals specifically with the so-called paranormal experiences that one can experience in religious practice. The author said that when he was younger he always looked for more information on this topic but it was impossible to find.

The 42-year old author of this book became very mystically inclined as a teenager, after having a normal and athletic childhood. A reason for this mystical inclination happening so early was perhaps the death of a childhood best friend due to leukemia. After reading books on levitating yogis and the miracles of the saints, he believed it really was possible for some people to develop special abilities that very few others shared. He had a number of spiritual teachers from many different belief systems. When the esoteric roller coaster got too intense, he would join more traditional Judeo-Christian churches.

Pearson began having the same experiences that he read about in books, from bizarre experiences like he was traveling through time to experiences of what seemed like angelic visitations. He enjoyed what he considered at the time was a link with this unseen world, but since it did not seem to have a beneficial effect on him, he began to question it. Pearson came from a family that contained some scientifically-trained members, and he knew how to be objective about certain things, so he decided to dismiss much of the experiences, which still maintaining his basic faith in spirituality.

"It has become more and more clear that what most of the traditional religious leaders say about paranormal experiences should be followed. Whether it be Zen Buddhist monks, or Yogis, or Christians or Jews, most people say not to make much of these so-called paranormal experiences. Seeing or hearing things that may only exist in the mind is always said to be a dangerous phenomena. It has only been in the last thirty years or so that we have been able to see clearly by brain science that most of these things actually are taking place in the brain. One can see the danger of believing in an idea that makes one believe more and more in one's own hallucinations, which are very similar in the brain to what our dreams at night are. I personally believe there are certain real divine experiences that do not only take place in our mind, ones which we may have a special reason to experience. I think these real divine experiences are less sensationalistic then the kind so many people seem to be after."

Pearson has done some charitable work among the homeless of Seattle and he recognizes that many of the homeless are mentally ill and are experiencing hallucinations. "Most likely the homeless who are hallucinating are believing that they are having religious experience. Often they already feel condemned by God because they hallucinate God condemning them." He realizes that since there was no book written when he was younger on this subject, that a book like his that takes both a religious and psychological perspective fills an important need. He says, that, on the contrary, only books were written encouraging people to hallucinate.

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Pearson states, "I tried to write this book for the biggest audience possible. I state clearly up front that I am not a trained psychologist or psychiatrist. Some proofreaders were expecting me to write an academic book that referenced every statement, but many readers are intimidated by such books. I wrote a book that will inform most people's understanding of psychology but one which has only a little technical medical information from brain science, so as to not intimidate people in the reading process."

Today, a large percentage of religious thought encourages people to have extra-sensory experiences. Medical science has also proven both the value of religious faith in some people via statistical studies, and also the fact that some religious experiences fall into the same category as hallucinations or dreams. Because of the many popular celebrity psychics, some of whom even talk to the dead on TV, many come to believe that whatever you experience is what you imagine it to be. But for one who was taught by many different religious teachers, and did a detailed study of religious literature, Pearson felt it necessary to write about the other side of the picture. "Like the great religions teach, many are going to have to learn by personal experience that it's often best to not believe in these experiences," Pearson says. "The problem is, that there are psychological studies that show the longer that you hallucinate, the more your IQ can decrease. I hope that they can wake up from their dreams before it's too late."

The author was born and raised in New York and resettled to Seattle in 1982. In 1992, he founded ParaMind Brainstorming Software, which is a software product that uses the idea of "exhausting the interactions of words" to develop new ideas related to the user's typed-in sentence. He has written other books on the topics of art, spirituality, psychology, brainstorming and creativity, as well as experimental fiction.

"The Experience of Hallucinations in Religious Practice," published by Telical Books, can be purchased online at Amazon.com, by special order at any bookstore, or by sending $19.95 to Telical Books, P.O. Box 27401, Seattle, WA 98165-2401.

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