

God Circuits in our Brains

Adapted from ANDREW NEWBERG, M.D. and MARK ROBERT WALDMAN:

- **Occipital Parietal:** In young children God is a face, and while our images become more abstract with maturity, we all maintain images of God that effect our experience of God.
- **Frontal-Parietal:** Allows us to have the experience of I-Thou with People and God, and with maturity we are able to perceive God as a Real Person in our physical & mental life, and God as being in all things. During some types of meditation can we feel one with God.
- **Frontal Lobe:** Integrates all ideas & experiences about God and attempts to answer all the “why, what and where” questions raised by spiritual experience. This area can also activates the Anterior Cingulate. Intentional meditation on being in love with God can be experienced as attachment involving higher levels of oxytocin, vasopressin in the nucleus accumbens and ventral pallidum, and with appropriate sustained levels of dopamine and serotonin, these brain chemicals (neurotransmitters) and brain area functions are associated with long lasting loving attachment to God, and suppression of the amygdala—which triggers survival reactions of fear and anger, and reactionary sin and dysfunction.
- **Anterior Cingulate:** Allows us to experience God as loving and compassionate. It inhibits anxiety, fear, and anger (sometimes guilt) by suppressing activity in the amygdala.
- **Frontal Left-Temporal-Parietal:** Allows for guiding narratives and conceptual tools that help us communicate (via language) our experience, and then structure our intentional activity in coordinated pursuit of social goals using linear strategies & plans. This area is the SPIN center—rationalization center of the brain, or Christ-Like Transformative Narrative Coach.
- **Striatum-Thalamus:** Inhibits activity in the Amygdala, and thus helps us feel safe and relaxed in the presence of God. Contributes to our intentional ability to have a holistic emotional and physical experience of God as objectively real, “Embodied” Christ in us.
- **Amygdala:** When over stimulated with anger or fear, secondary to trauma, perceptions of threat, or extreme ideology, God can become frightening, authoritarian, and punitive, this experience suppresses the Frontal circuits and thus our ability to think logically and compassionately about God and our enemies. Yet we are called to love our enemies.