**Jacob Abraham, *The Quest for the Spiritual Neuron*,** Religion and Science Series, No.1, Bangalore: Dharmaram Publications, 2004, pages 136, ISBN: 81-86861-63-7.

Science and religion have always been at odds with each other. It was more a war of attrition in which, until two or three centuries ago, religion had an upper hand. But, recently, science has established its arrogant dominance over religion, demeaning many of the sacred beliefs of religion as nothing but the fruit of ignorance, fear, and superstition.

Dr. Jacob Abraham, the author of *The Quest for the Spiritual Neuron*, however, does not see any ground for mutual suspicion and animosity between religion and science. He, instead, sees science and religion as complementary. The present work is the result of his earnest attempt to reconcile these two great forces that have always played pivotal roles in shaping human destiny.

*The Quest for the Spiritual Neuron* is a bold and brilliantly creative attempt by an eminent Indian neuroscientist to reconcile reason and faith, science and religion. This work stands out as a distinguished contribution in more ways than one. It ranks as one of the most successful attempts by any Indian scientist to come to grips with the thorny problem of man’s heritage and destiny. The author, although a neurosurgeon by profession, is practically a theologian and a philosopher as well. He believes that, in order to get a fuller and more accurate understanding of reality, we must incorporate science, especially biology, into our theology. In his view, “All theories of language, knowledge, spiritual revelations and persuasions require for their fullest understanding a biological epistemology” (117).

As a scientist the author’s credentials are impeccable. He retired from the Christian Medical College, Vellore, as professor of neurosurgery and Chairman of the Department of Neurological Sciences. A former president of the Neurological Society of India, Jacob Abraham has delivered the Sachs Memorial Lectures at the prestigious Dartmouth Medical School in USA. As a believer he is moved by a genuine search for God. As a firm believer and an eminent neuroscientist, a pivotal position adopted by the author is that “faith requires the highest cognitive functions in man and utilizes a myriad of brain functions… We must incorporate biology into our theology” (116-117). With this vision as his guiding star, the author dives deep into the bottomless depths of the ‘how’ and ‘why’ of the universe and human existence. He breaks new ground on what is man and what is God: some of them he proves with hard evidence, others are just conjectures, though. The author puts together beautifully in a mega-synthesis things as complex and as varied as the Big Bang, the original Chaos, the immensely vast universe, the solar system, planet earth, neurons and the grey matter, past, present, future, infinity, biology, neurology, consciousness, thought, speech, languages, creativity, culture, gene, holistic maths, quantum physics, *my*, faith, love, redemption, resurrection, and eternity in his quest to find an answer to the question of the ‘how’ and ‘why’ of human beings and the universe.

The author clearly and brilliantly argues that the concept of a mere purposeless chance can never account for the existence of intelligent human beings on planet earth. Evolutionary modification of the human brain, culminating in its present form and status, is clearly the work of the Supreme Being, the Creator God. Evolution took place with a purpose, viz., to produce beings that are capable of speech, creative thinking, and the ability to conceptualise a Spiritual Force or Supreme Being as the creator of the universe. The author visualizes this Supreme Spiritual Being or Spiritual Force as an extra-dimensional and formless energy. “Extra-dimensional” refers to the fact that this Spiritual Force exists outside the space-time cocoon. That is to say, this Spiritual Force does not require space for its existence, nor does it exist in time. Besides, this Supreme Energy, being extra-dimensional and formless, is not governed by the laws of nature.

This Supreme Spiritual Force, however, can enter and permeate throughout the universe. Entry is made possible because the borders of the universe are “fuzzy” or mathematically unstable. The author, applying models from quantum mechanics and holistic mathematics to the configuration of prefrontal neuronal maps, argues that it is possible for individuals to recognize inputs from this extra-dimensional energy or power, bypassing the five senses. He, then, proceeds to apply the Anthropic principle to the above conjecture and argues that, since finite human beings are unable to comprehend, love or worship an extra-dimensional and formless energy, it must be anthropomorphized if humans are to recognize it and experience it. “How does one worship a void, a vapour or a gaseous vertebrate?” asks the author. This is what has necessitated a Jesus or a Krishna. Humans can relate to the extra-dimensional formlessness only through such anthropomorphized forms of it.

While they anthropomorphize an extra-dimensional and formless Supreme Being, humans, of course, make a lot of distortions. With their limited intellectual powers and all the limitations of their language, how can they define the indefinable and describe the indescribable? Hence, imperfections will surely be there in human beings’ understanding and description of the Supreme Spiritual Power in its anthropomorphized form. As a believer and a scientist the author has more than succeeded in explaining to modern humans in scientific terms what their heritage and destiny are. And for that reason the present work is, undoubtedly, a significant contribution to the new branch of knowledge, *neurotheology*.

Jose Thadavanal