

Christianity and the Brain

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COVER PAGE

One of saddest times in my career is the moment of departure of my patients. It is a moment which every soul under the sun passes, no matter who, how and where and regardless of how prepared is the soul. It comes with fear and trembling.

As a neurosurgeon, I have been touched with the last hour journeys of many departed souls. Since I was a child, the moment of departure of a person immediately takes my breath away and my thoughts go beyond and I reflect on the departed soul and the brain. As I became a physician, and later a neurological surgeon working on the science of the brain, my reflections got deeper and deeper.

I wished to make the last hour journey for every departed patient and person as comfortable as possible and this desire represents the main purpose of the “The Christian Brain and the Journey to the Last hour”. It follows my first book; “Christianity and the Brain”.

The last hour journey of mankind is special in every aspect. What goes on within the physical brain is unknown to us but known to the person. What goes on within the spiritual brain of the person is even mysterious. We have been searching and searching for some answers. The book represents to the reader some reflections into the last hour journey of man and the world. The entire human life can be considered as the beginning of the end and hence becomes the last hour. The last hour journey is also the beginning of the End of Days and the start of the new life.

The author wishes that the fear and apprehension of the last hour becomes joyful for the reader at the conclusion of his or her reading. The book is meant for the reflections to go beyond the physical boundaries of the physical world to reflect the entire scenario of the last hour journey and the transition to the new life. It takes the human brain to the spiritual world and its dreams. It gives spiritual insights and provides preparation to every soul living on earth. The book used the Bible as the main reference, both the Old and New Testaments. The author used some of his medical observation as a neurosurgeon and anesthesiologist in patients who were in transient coma or dying.

It is my hope and prayer that my reflections here are a comfort as the reader ponders his or her own last hour journey.

A PREFACE



I SEARCHED AND SEARCHED AND DID NOT FIND THE ANSWER

“But now, O Lord, You are our Father. We are the clay, and You our potter; And all we are is the work of Your hand,” (Isaiah 64: 8)

While in my upbringing, whenever a close family friend passed away, I felt sad and uneasy and only forgetfulness was keeping me going. At any time when I sit with myself and reflect again on the moment of departure and the separation with no return, I get stuck and my thoughts will not move any further. I feel an unimaginable state of mind, full of wondering thoughts. What really happens! Where was the person’s mind while separation took place! What goes through the brain and mind during the last hour! What is the first thing the person sees, feels, and hears and tastes upon the separation!

SEARCH FOR THE ANSWER IN FAITH



I looked at my faith and started to search for the answers. I knocked on the doors of holy places and the houses of the servants of Christ, searching and searching. I read books. What in the mind and the brain stimulated me more! I came closer to my Lord Jesus and the Coptic Orthodox Church. Almost every church mass had a sermon about the Christian dream of mind, the life after death with our beloved Lord in His kingdom and we all should be ready for the moment because it will come like a thief.

I continued to search for the subject and to the known spiritual leaders, especially those who died from the world and live like monks in the deserts and monasteries of the Christian Coptic churches. I spent some time in the monastery of Saint Bishoy and Suirial in Wadi Natoron, in the desert of Egypt, and I met the peaceful monks. I was fortunate because I came across people and places where the overwhelming closeness to the Spirit and God was so obvious. I started to attend Pope Shenouda's lectures weekly and made sure I recorded them as well. In his lectures, his holiness is so deep and spiritual that I fell in love with God the Spirit and prayed to get to know him.

SEARCH FOR THE ANSWERS IN LOST FRIENDS

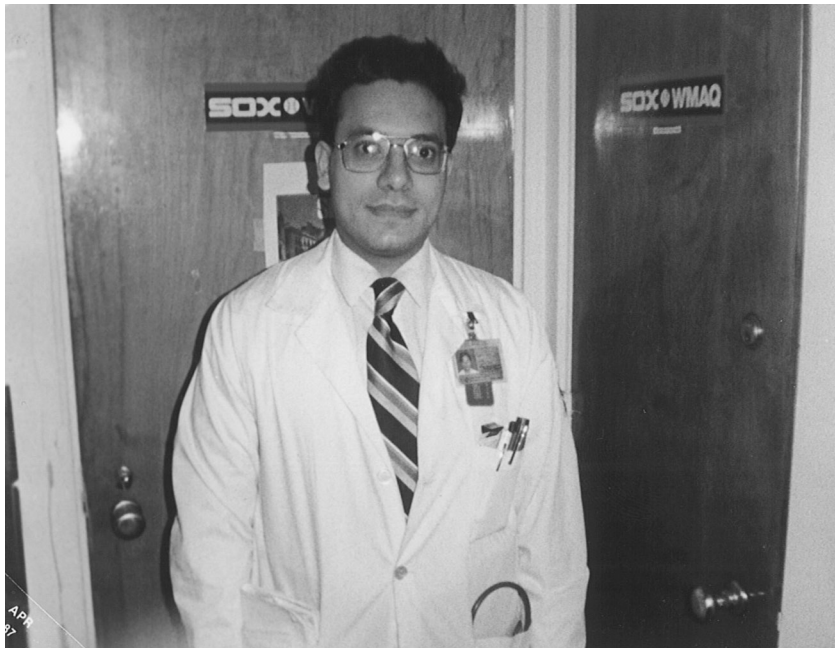


I was still looking for the answers. There were too many questions to handle. I saw the peace on the faces of the faithful and I saw the anger on the faces of others. I saw the unsettled questions, why was he taken and where did his soul go? What was going on in his mind, brain, soul, spirit and body?

I lost my uncles, one after the other. My close friend lost his father while he was in elementary school. No matter where my head turned, my ear heard about the death of a person in a small suburban community in Cairo, Egypt. While

searching for the answer, I fell in love with medicine, as if I was guided by the Spirit where He was taking my hand and leading me gently to the answers in gradual steps. As I was growing up, my mind and brain opened to death at different and wider angle.

SEARCH FOR THE ANSWER IN MEDICINE



I studied very hard in high school, and even harder once I knew that medical school is my first choice and I had to be one of the highest 99th percentile in order to get accepted. With the grace of God, I got that 99th percentile. In my first anatomy class I was shocked when I saw a dead body for the first time. I was assigned to that body to dissect it for the next two years. Just looking at him for the first moment, it opened all my previous thoughts and unresolved questions about death.

I tried to ask around, who was he and where is he now! What was in his mind during his last hour! I searched and searched and I did not find the answer. I looked in the body organs as I was dissecting one by one and I did not find the answer.

Since I could not find the answer in the majority of the human body, I became interested in the brain. In the second year, I began the dissection of the nervous system, the brain and spinal cord. No much living data that I could find. The brain looked like an organ of white tissue. What is within the brain, I asked. "You need to look at the neuroanatomy book and histological slides of sections of the brain" the Professor answered.

I closed the doors and in the quiet of the night, I started to read more and more. What did I learn! The brain is full of tracts, wires and cells that I can not see, but I should imagine in my mind. I asked with frustration; can my brain and mind study another brain! Can my brain know what is going in another's brain! Can my mind comprehend the magnificent brain of another person!

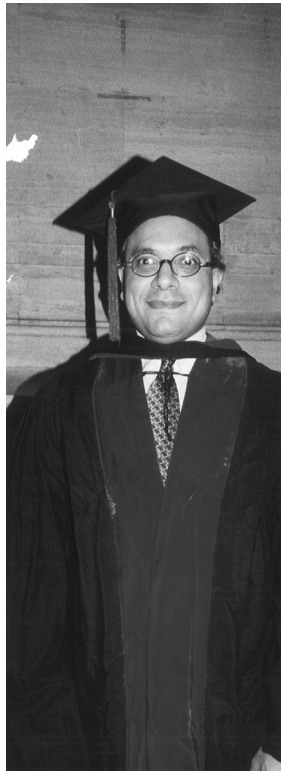
I wondered and wondered and found no answer. By that time, many of the medical students became frustrated by the nervous system and it became an impossible subject for many. Many of us studied enough about the brain to get us to pass the examination. Again, I found myself lonely, searching for the answers, and could not share with my many friends. I was stymied the more I learned about the brain. I spent seven years of hardship in the medical school, Ain Shams University, Cairo, Egypt, until I passed and I was graduated with honors. I looked at the honors and said I am not worthy of such an honor if I still look for the answer and I could not reach it yet!

During my internship, I liked every specialty rotation; pediatric, surgery, internal medicine, gynecology and obstetrics, and anesthesiology. I learned to be a good doctor, but still within me I was asking; what goes inside the brain during the last hour and what is life like thereafter!

There was a rotation that every medical student did not like or select and it was called Neurosurgery. I requested a month's rotation. My friends looked at me with surprise. For the first time, I found myself close to the brains and minds of mankind. Patients were in a coma and dying left and right, and medicine had not advanced to a method to get a better image of the brain: Magnetic Resonance Imaging. I found many stroke patients unattended while waiting for their departure because "there is nothing we can do about it, they already had a stroke and the brain is damaged and will never be the same again" said a senior physician. It became a golden opportunity for me to talk directly to the comatose brains of dying patients. I asked for 9 months to work in this area and I got a room within the ward with these patients. The more I asked and thought, the more I got more questions. I could not get any answer back for my questions. It was avoidable behavior from the living brains and there was no answer back from the comatose

patients. One thing I knew for sure by now, Neurosurgery became my first and only choice

TRIP ABROAD TO SEARCH FOR THE ANSWER



I continued to get know God and live between the churches in Egypt with spiritual people and in the hospitals with patients. Whenever any person passed away, I asked the same questions. The search continued. I followed closely the appearances of the saints and miracles that happen on a daily basis in Egypt to the needy. I looked and heard Saint Mary appear in the church, in Zieton, Cairo Egypt, for the entire year (1967) and continued. I followed closely the stories of various miracles and appearances. It became obvious that we all live in one world whether dead or alive.

I got to learn more about Spirituality and the life to come. At that time, I was determined to go abroad to learn about medicine, neurosurgery and the coma state. It was a one way street to my vision of being a neurosurgeon, but I learned

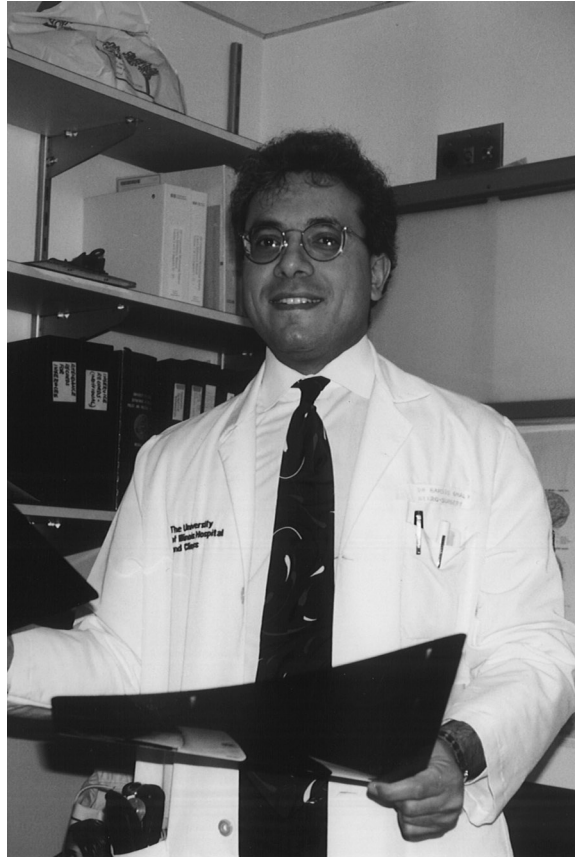
a lesson, it all comes in the right time. Two years passed by a I tried find a residency position and could not.

The first position that was open was to observe patients who got hit in the head, a head trauma center in one of the busiest hospitals in America. It was a great match and great start. I thanked the Lord and took advantage of every minute. Many sleepless nights were spent as I conducted research. I searched and searched and the more I searched, the more questions I raised. I went to the health science libraries to try to find the answers.

I could not get into neurosurgery residency. While researching the comatose brain caused by stroke or trauma, I asked myself what about the brain that is made comatose by anesthetic drugs-and the brain wakes-up again with no recollection of what he has been through! The ideas expanded more and the horizon became wider.

I did not know that the reason I could not find a position in Neurosurgery is because God wanted me to know about the anesthetized brain and the induced coma state. I was accepted to anesthesiology, critical care and pain management residency program at Cook County Hospital, Chicago, Illinois four years after my arrival in the USA. Two years later, I started my dream, a neurosurgery residency at the University of Illinois and Cook County Hospital and completed the program in 1995. The impossible dream of this foreigner had come true and I had become the only physician and surgeon in United States that is board certified in three specialties: Neurological Surgery, Anesthesiology and Pain Management.

SEARCH FOR THE ANSWER IN MY PATIENTS



I cared for patients with various brain problems during my training and afterwards. I loved caring for the sick and felt it is a privilege and honor. I got to know each of my patients. I always feel like I live with them and feel what they are going through. It was hard for me to deal with the last hour of each patient, especially with brain tumors. It was not uncommon for a patient to ask me; what is it like when you die! What it goes through your mind and brain! I found the load getting heavier and continued to search and search. One of the touching stories I remember well: a patient was told to go and die comfortably instead of allowing me to do brain surgery and extend her life. She prayed and the next day she told me about a spiritual vision that informed her to go for the surgery. She did and lived for two more years. When she came and see me she asked "I am wondering

why God wanted me to live more!” What goes on in the mind and the brain during the last hour! Some of us may know it is their last hour, as in their last hour as a dying person from cancer, others may not know that this hour is their last hour. I tried to comfort my patients and started to write in papers some of my reflections of the subject.

WE MAY NEVER KNOW UNTIL WE GET THROUGH

I continued to search and search and the more I searched, the more I questioned. By now, I looked to faith and medicine, to Christianity and the brain, to the living and the dead and to the dying and newly-born. “What a great mystery my Lord” I asked and prayed. Is it true that we may never know until we get through it! Every second someone dies and life goes on. The earth does not notice or slow down. The cry after death gets forgotten by the tribulations and demands of the daily living. Can a human mind read what is going through the dying mind! No single test can tell us. No single imaging of the brain can answer. After my lengthy journey, I got to realize the mystery of the last hour’s journey with the brain.

HOPE THAT I REACHED SOME OF THE ANSWERS



I searched and found that the dead did not take anything with them. I immediately remembered what Jesus said about the preparation for the earthly journey;

“Take nothing for the journey, neither staffs nor bag nor bread nor money; and do not have two tunics apiece.” (Luke 9:3). After dedicating two years to write my first book “Christianity and the Brain” which put me in reflection on the depth of the brain and Spirit, I thought it is natural now to come closer to the lifetime question; the brain and last hour and more specifically “The Christian Brain and The journey To The Last Hour”. I felt obligated to share my thoughts with my patients, friends and interested readers. I always pray to love forever, my Heavenly Father, to make the last hour for each person a joyful trip. If we as material souls were able to make overseas trips joyfully, regardless of the length of the trip, God is certainly able to make our last hour journey peaceful and joyful! He will come and hand us the cup of water to drink and He will give us the bread of life to eat and let us see the spiritual vision on the screen while the soul and the brain is rising up to heaven. To my dearest reader, can you see your last hour journey comparable with an oversea journey! Is it that close and handy! Is the traveling bag and garment ready and have they been cleansed! Are you ready to say to your family and friends, God Bye for now and I will see you again?

THE END OF DAYS

Are we approaching the end of days! Perhaps, we are already in the middle of the week for the determined world collapse as mentioned in Daniel spiritual vision for the end of the world; “Then he shall confirm a covenant with many for one week; But in the middle of the week, He shall bring an end to sacrifice and offering. And on the wing of abomination shall be one who makes desolate, Even until the consummation, which is determined, Is poured out on the desolate.” (Daniel 9: 27). The antichrist is among us and was a one of us and now is against many of us. He is indeed already moving to dominate the world

I used Saint James version of the Bible as the sole reference for this book. It also contains the author’s personal experiences and opinions.

“The righteous perishes, And no man takes it to heart; Merciful men are taken away, While no one considers. That the righteous is taken away from evil. He shall enter into peace; They shall rest in their beds, Each one walking in his uprightness.” (Isaiah 57: 1-2) and “There is no peace for,” Says my God, “for the wicked” (Isaiah 57: 21)