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Danaher's "Jesus and the bicameral brain: Knowing and being" (book review)

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Book Review



Danaher, J. P. (2021). *Jesus and the bicameral brain: Knowing and being*. St. Paul, MN: Paragon House. 212 pp. \$19.95. ISBN 9781557789471

In *Jesus and the Bicameral Brain*, James Danaher urges Christians to embrace bicameral brain neuroscience theory and apply it to their relationship with Jesus. Danaher, a professor emeritus and past department head of the philosophy department at Nyack College in New York, argues in his thesis for this book primarily intended for educated popular audiences that few Christians understand “Jesus’ words are things to be rather than doctrines to believe.” (p.35). Danaher argues that neuroscience and psychology use a bicameral model to understand the brain, where the left side of the brain emphasizes knowing while the right side emphasizes intuition and experiential elements. As do other holistic thinkers, Danaher argues that the two sides of the brain are necessary and need to be integrated for happiness and to truly understand our world. Danaher further argues that in the past, particularly among the mystics of the Middle Ages, Christians did a better job of integrating the two sides of their brain regarding Jesus. Today the western world has become so science focused that the right-sided brain experience is neglected in all areas, especially in the religious sphere.

In ten chapters, Danaher attempts to lead the reader through a basic understanding of the bicameral brain model, basic philosophical ideas about knowledge, then applies these ideas to Jesus and the Gospel. Using the example of the parable of the sower, prayer, death, eternal life, and a modern understanding of what it means to be Christian, Danaher attempts to show how a right-sided brain approach would yield different results than the modern left-sided brain approach.

Danaher is a well-published author who frequently writes on Christian and philosophical topics, including prayer, Christian history, Jesus, and the Christian life. *Jesus and the Bicameral Brain* succeeds in pointing out that left-sided brain approaches which emphasize knowing over experiential/relational approaches to Jesus and Scripture dominate western religious thought. Despite the title suggesting that both approaches are essential, Danaher’s book does little regarding left-sided brain work. It fails to provide any integrating ideas necessary in a work on the bicameral brain. Little documentation is provided, and limited footnotes only address basic Scriptural verse references. Much of the book is highly repetitious and further repeats much of Danaher’s previously published works. In defense, many of Danaher’s previous works are intended for an academic or theologically/philosophically trained audience,

while this work is geared more toward popular readers. Overall, *Jesus and the Bicameral Brain* is a worthwhile work for almost any library and adds awareness to the ongoing discussion about a Christian understanding of Jesus regarding knowledge versus experience/relationship.

Reviewer

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