

# Seizures and the Sight of God

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## Seizures and the Sight of God

Researchers interested in the connection of the brain and religion have examined the experiences of people suffering from Temporal Lobe Epilepsy. Apparently the increased electrical activity in the brain resulting from seizure activity (abnormal electrical activity within localized portions of the brain), makes [sufferers](#) more susceptible to having religious experiences including visions of supernatural beings and near death experiences (NDEs) (9). Temporal [Lobe](#) Epilepsy (TLE) sufferers also may become increasingly obsessed with religion, the study and practice of it (1). Why is it that this form of epilepsy results in religious experiences among the other supernatural experiences possible? Can people who have never studied or practiced religion be susceptible to these same religious experiences? Why do some interested researchers claim that such notable figures as Paul on the road to Damascus, Joan of Arc, Ellen White of the Seventh-Day Adventist Church and other persons suffered from TLE because of their range of reported experiences with God, angels, and demons (1,3)? In my first paper, I highlighted the connection scientists have made between religious experience and the brain. In this paper, I intend to focus on Temporal Lobe Epilepsy, as one of those connections, specifically the symptom of hyperreligiosity.

In 1997 Vilayanur Ramachandran and his colleagues from the University of California at San Diego headed a research study. The team studied patients of temporal lobe epilepsy measuring galvanic skin response on the left hands of the patients (11). This measurement allowed the research team to monitor arousal (specific autonomic nervous system response) and indirectly surmise the communication between the inferior temporal lobe and the amygdala, both important in response related to fear and arousal (9). In addition to two control groups a religious control group and a non-religious control group, each group was shown forty words, including violent words, sexual words, and simple words (like "wheel"), and finally, religious-related words. The results of the study showed a greater arousal in the temporal lobe epilepsy sufferers to religious words in comparison to the non-religious, whom were aroused by sexual words, and religious control groups, whom were aroused by religious and sexual words (10).

Ramachandran and his team concluded that although the patients were not experiencing [seizures](#) or experiencing supernatural occurrences at the time of testing, they were highly sensitive to religious words. Thus, the experiences of temporal lobe seizures strengthened the patients interest in religion (11).

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