



Can a Smart Person Believe in God?

Michael Guillen

[Download now](#)

[Read Online](#) 

Can a Smart Person Believe in God?

Michael Guillen

Can a Smart Person Believe in God? Michael Guillen

As Christians, we are often urged to turn away from scientific discovery and rely solely on the Bible as the source of our faith. On the other hand, many people in areas such as science, law, and education insist that Christian faith is lowbrow or unintelligent. But is it possible to reconcile science with what you believe about God? As someone who has grappled with the issues of science and faith in the public eye for more than a decade as a television journalist, Dr. Michael Guillen believes it is possible. In fact, by embracing the discoveries of science we can see God, the universe, and humanity in full, multidimensional glory.

Fortunately, you don't have to be a genius to enjoy this book. The bite-sized chapters are full of fascinating scientific tidbits in an easy-to-understand format. Captivating stories of the author's childhood in the Mexican barrio of East L.A. and his work in television and research are woven throughout. There is even an entertaining SQ (Spiritual Quotient) test for readers to take.

Can a Smart Person Believe in God? Details

Date : Published September 1st 2004 by Thomas Nelson (first published 2004)

ISBN :

Author : Michael Guillen

Format : Kindle Edition 176 pages

Genre : Christian, Religion, Nonfiction, Christianity, Faith

 [Download Can a Smart Person Believe in God? ...pdf](#)

 [Read Online Can a Smart Person Believe in God? ...pdf](#)

Download and Read Free Online Can a Smart Person Believe in God? Michael Guillen

From Reader Review Can a Smart Person Believe in God? for online ebook

Bobbie says

Read this book this past winter and was excited to see that I am not the only person who as wondered about this very thing. I don't mean if a smart person can believe in God, but if smart people in particular find it difficult because of the nature of being "educated" and "learned". It seems to me that many people walk away from their faith when they go to college, so to some degree, I have to wonder if the influence of people with "higher" education is somehow causing people to doubt the faith they have grown up with and lived their entire lives.

What I like about this book is that not only does the author uncover his truth, he lived it. He grew up with a parent and grandparent that were in the ministry, yet was determined to be a scientist, rather than follow his family into the ministry.

Some might think this would lead a man to abandon his faith completely and perhaps at times, Dr. Guillen may have questioned what he knew to be true. He expresses that faith and science do not have separate origins and well...he is better at telling his story than I, so if this interests you at all, you should pick up a copy of this book for yourself and see what he has to say! I know that those with higher education and those without, will enjoy this book and it's truths and maybe can come to an agreement to either agree or disagree, but to do so amicably.

Tucker says

One of this book's stated purposes is to show that theists are just as smart as atheists (p. 3). Far from proving this point (by comparing average intelligence among different groups or inquiring whether certain thought processes are inherently smarter than others), Guillen merely shows the reasoning process behind his own theism. The other stated purpose, to help theists "feel more secure in the face of such confrontations" with atheists (p. 4), is a better characterization of the book's contents.

Guillen uses the words "religious" and "spiritual" interchangeably because, he says, what matters for his purposes is that an individual is not an atheist, and that she or he believes in "aspects of reality that transcend what the mind alone can understand fully." (p. 6-7) His indifference towards the subtleties of religious belief do not bode well for his characterization of theism as "smart" and compatible with scientific inquiry. As it happens, plenty of self-identified "spiritual" and "religious" people are atheists (whether they know it or not), and plenty of theists are neither spiritual nor religious. Guillen's book actually seems deist, although he never uses the term; such a belief may be, under certain interpretations, non-spiritual, particularly if the Creator is thought to have no personality and not to interact with the world, thus making itself irrelevant to our lives.

Guillen claims the existence of a Spiritual Quotient (SQ) that complements Intelligence Quotient (IQ). (p. 4) He makes the puzzling statement that science and faith can operate independently, but they can collaborate to improve one's "vision" (pp. 128-9). People who use both "see in stereo," an experience he refers to as his own "stereoscopic faith" (pp. 15-16), whereas people with low SQ don't know what they're missing (p. 7). He declines to define exactly what SQ is, even leaving open the question of whether it is defined by propositional belief in God, attitudes such as awe or humility, activities such as prayer, or the sense of a supernatural presence. Nor does he address whether SQ, like IQ, is at least partially fixed at birth, or whether

and how it can be enhanced.

[Aside: One might assume that Guillen's concept of Spiritual Quotient somehow rolls in the concept of Emotional Quotient proposed by others but unmentioned in his book. After all, isn't the right brain (creativity, emotion, and intuition) the complement to the left brain (logic)? Isn't spirituality typically understand as a right brain activity? If this is so, Guillen's characterization of atheists as having "low SQ" might be seen as being disparaging and inaccurate, due to the implication that atheists are emotionally or relationally challenged, or fail to use one-half of their brains. Guillen's diagram of a human face, with one eye representing SQ and one eye representing IQ, either of which can be shut or open, suggests the left brain/right brain paradigm in a literal way. So, too, does his comment that "art, culture, and religion" set people apart from animals, more so than intelligence, language, and virtue (p. 125) and the patronizing comment that "even atheists are capable of loving an adopted child as their own." (p. 142) If it is countered that spirituality is not intended to refer to the right brain at all, then we must question Guillen's scientific basis for identifying the SQ.]

Guillen claims atheists believe in "Randomness, a god whose supernatural-like powers can allegedly transform complete chaos into exquisite order." (p. 2) He further muddles the definition of "religion" by attributing a brand of religion to atheists, as in this sentence: "atheists have relatively low SQs because they worship merely the obvious: the human mind, nature, or the laws of science." (p. 28) (People with high SQs, he says, worship the unseen creator of these things.) His allegation that even atheists have some SQ leads to his conclusion that "atheists are religious," which explains why they seek after "sacred" things. (p. 28) Unfortunately, if everyone has some SQ and everyone is therefore religious, this vitiates the book's opening definition of religion as unique to theists. He motions that "atheists who feel enormously smart about having science for their god" should be chastened by science's periodic shifting of its own core beliefs. (p. 98) He misses the point that atheists recognize nothing as a god, not even science, and that many admit atheism precisely because they are humble about their own capacity for knowledge and because they accept that their spiritual beliefs may need to be revised when new evidence arises. Guillen proclaims, "I revere the scientific method, but I don't worship it," (p. 64) without adequately explaining the difference or showing how atheists cross the line.

When he describes science as "doomed to permanent indecision and debate," he implies he does not like this part of science. (p. 102) But others revel in the opportunity to change their minds frequently in pursuit of accuracy. Guillen's sense of "doom" and his stated personal preference for a method of inquiry that maintains a stable worldview (p. 97) is not evidence for God's existence.

Guillen suggests several types of atheist: "arrogant," "rebellious," or "uncertain." The only good atheist, it seems, is the "Christian atheist" who upholds traditional virtues. (p. 22) With this sleight of hand, he begs the question of whether virtues belong to religion, and he credits any good that comes from an atheist to his own religion, Christianity.

Guillen reveals that 85% of Americans with post-graduate degrees believe in God (p. 24), but fails to acknowledge that it is less than the 94% of believers among the overall American population (p. 2) or to provide a theory for why education seems to reduce theism. Surely something has been written on this topic. For a small example, shortly after finishing his book, I read Donald Miller's *Blue Like Jazz*, and was tickled by his claim that Reed College is known in Portland, Oregon as a "godless place" that "receives more awards and fellowships, per capita, than any other American college and has entertained more than thirty Rhodes scholars." (p. 37)

Guillen says that atheists often accuse theists of searching for patterns in essentially random occurrences. He counters that these patterns are, in fact, not illusory, and that science codifies some of these patterns as "laws". It requires equal leaps of faith, he says, to claim that these patterns are authored by God or by Randomness. (p. 33) I am not sold for a minute on this bizarre anthropomorphization of randomness as a

design artist who develops patterns. Certainly there are patterns in nature, due to the chemical properties of materials or the behavioral tendencies of living things, and there are also some events that scientists believe to be essentially unpredictable. These scientists are simply reporting what *is*; they are not making a "leap of faith" by positing anyone who invents what is.

Principles aside, says Guillen, atheism is violent *in practice*, citing twentieth-century atrocities committed by atheist communist governments (p. 51); how religion in the twenty-first century escapes the same criticism is mystifying. (Abhorrence of religiously motivated violence was the cornerstone of Christopher Hitchens' recent mega-hit *God is Not Great*.)

God is no "viral fiction" or "meme," Guillen says, because most people never come to reject God as they eventually reject most lies and childhood stories (pp. 37-38) and because atheist totalitarian governments haven't been able to provide memes to replace belief in God. (p. 39) Guillen does not acknowledge the writers who have said that God is a *special* viral fiction or meme, meeting certain psychological needs that have evolved for hypothesized evolutionary reasons. He also fails to understand why the inheritance or imitation of our parents' religious beliefs is evidence against God's actual existence. "So what?" is his exact rebuttal. (p. 38) He points out that many people diverge from, or revise, their parents' belief systems. But of course this need not imply a revision in the direction of an external truth about God; they could just be tailoring or elaborating on this special viral fiction.

Guillen says that Occam's razor is "a completely arbitrary rule" that just "seems to work"; despite his admission that it works, he does not want it used to disavow God's existence. (pp. 76-77) Yet he himself employs the rule to argue *for* God's existence, when he says that God's existence is "the most clear-cut explanation" for humanity's propensity for theism. (p. 40)

We would never have invented a religion that is challenging as well as comforting, Guillen insists. (p. 43) He does not provide the necessary support for this statement, given that humans voluntarily engage in many challenging endeavors from weight loss to martyrdom. Yet, in one place, he admits something close to the invention of religion: He says his love is made divine by the belief that is divine. (p. 142) Here he conceives divinity as an intentional construct, not an external attribute. As a parallel claim, couldn't we say that religion is made meaningful by the belief that it is meaningful, and not by God's actual existence?

He mistakenly claims that evolutionary biology understands *love to be essentially selfish*, because of his misinterpretation of the "selfish gene" theory (which, in actuality, simply holds that all genes look for ways to reproduce themselves). (p. 141) Just as Guillen observes that the quality of his love is altered by his beliefs about it, evolutionary biology should be able to accept a parallel premise: *love is made unselfish by the belief that it is unselfish*.

Jason says

I see the point of the book. But nothing really jumped out at me about it.

Jim B says

An amazing discussion of faith by a scientist who has been a Harvard professor and science commentator on ABC television. In plain language, Guillen makes the case that many of the greatest geniuses combined intelligence and spirituality. He relates and compares IQ to what he terms SQ, spirituality quotient. SQ is the

awareness of God that many people have (though a Pentecostal pastor's son and a christian, Guillen is content to deal with the natural knowledge of God, not a defense of Christianity). Having many atheist friends, he deals with their arguments in a companionable, reasonable manner.

For example, since Freud, religion has been viewed by atheists as unhealthy, superstitious and dying out as man progresses. Guillen points out that recent studies have shown that those who believe in God, far from being unhealthy, poorly-adjusted or unhappy tend to be less so than atheists. He points out the resiliency of religion in places like former communist countries where atheism should have succeeded.

He is equally hard on religious people who disparage intelligence and science (he calls them "Spritual Cyclops") as he is on those scientists and intellectuals who disparage faith (he calls them "Intellectual Cyclops") Guillen is no C.S. Lewis, but ANYONE will find this book readable and its treatment of the issues fascinating. There is a "spirituality quiz" at the end of the book 00 not scientific but again thought-provoking. (I scored 88 out of 100!)

Chrystall Jenkins says

Lots of great quotes and scripture references. It's nice to see educated people be open with matters of faith. It did however lose my interest at times.

Rob Springer says

The author takes great pains to let you know he is a smart person. And that's okay because the book is a counterpoint to the argument that only weak-minded people believe in God. But if you're looking for an apologia, there are better books out there.

Steven says

It's very thoughtful with good insights. Good work.

Tiffany Connors says

I read this book because I was asked to be a godmother to my preteen nephew. I don't know if it would convince a non-believer to suddenly find God, but for someone who already believes but doesn't feel like a theology expert, this is a great book to answer questions.
