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First prepared in October 2006 by the Survival Research Institute of Canada (Debra Barr and Walter Meyer zu Erpen). Capitalization of any name or subject in the text below indicates that you will find an entry on that topic in the forthcoming third edition of Rosemary Ellen Guiley's *Encyclopedia of Ghosts and Spirits* (October 2007).

Persinger, Michael A. (1945-)

Professor, author and clinical psychologist. Michael A. Persinger was born on 26 June 1945 in Jacksonville Florida. He obtained a Bachelor of Arts degree from the University of Wisconsin (1967), a Master of Arts from the University of Tennessee (1969), and a PhD from the University of Manitoba (1971). He has been a professor at Laurentian University in Sudbury, Ontario, Canada, since 1971, and is a registered psychologist with a focus on clinical neuropsychology. He has published over two hundred academic articles and written, co-authored or edited seven books: *ELF and VLF Electromagnetic Field Effects* (1974); *The Paranormal: Part I, Patterns* (1974); *The Paranormal: Part II, Mechanisms and Models* (1974); *Space-time Transients and Unusual Events* (1977); *TM and Cult-Mania* (1980); *The Weather Matrix and Human Behaviour* (1980), and *Neuropsychological Bases of God Beliefs* (1987). His research interests include the neuropsychological correlates of religious and paranormal beliefs, delusional thinking, UFO encounters and alien abductions, HAUNTINGS, POLTERGEIST episodes, and telepathic and NEAR-DEATH EXPERIENCES.

Some of Persinger's work addresses the interaction between the geophysical environment, particularly magnetic fields, and human brain structure and activity. It investigates the possibility that emotions and experiences can be induced by the application of magnetic fields to the brain, in comparison to external explanations for alleged experiences of gods and other non-physical beings. For instance, research participants wearing specially fitted helmets that subject them to low-intensity electromagnetic waves have reported seeing ANGELS and other phenomena. Persinger states that the research is not meant "to demean anyone's religious/mystical experience but instead to determine which portions of the brain or its electromagnetic patterns generate the experience."¹

His research demonstrates that brain waves can be manipulated to stimulate altered states of consciousness conducive to mystical and paranormal experiences. For example, research subjects could be artificially induced to see a GHOST or have an OUT-OF-BODY EXPERIENCE. Skeptics use his research to dismiss the paranormal realm, but Persinger's findings could also demonstrate that humans have the brain structures and activity patterns needed to perceive paranormal events, whether artificially induced or genuine. His work adds an important scientific dimension to discussions in this field.

¹From biographical sketch about Michael Persinger on Laurentian University website.

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Further Reading:

Kotler, Steven. "Extreme States," in *Discover* (July 2005), pp. 60-67.

Laurentian University, Behavioural Neuroscience. Available on-line:
<https://laurentian.ca/faculty/mpersinger>

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