

A close-up portrait of Dr. Jerry L. Martin, an older man with white hair and a full white beard, smiling slightly. He is wearing a blue button-down shirt. The background is a soft, out-of-focus mix of yellow and green.

DR.
JERRY
MARTIN

Interview by Daniel Watson, Editor in Chief

*Up close with Philosopher and author of "God: An Autobiography",
Dr. Jerry L. Martin.*

GOD

NO RELIGION.

Why is now the time to use faith as a unifying force around the world?

Religions unite us in one way and divide us in another. They unite us insofar as most religions teach compassion, mutual respect, honesty, and rising above selfishness and greed. To the extent we all live up to the ideals of whatever religion we follow, we will get along better with others with whom we share the earth.

But religions also divide us. Religion is about ultimate things the ultimate reality, the ultimate object of worship, the most ideal ways to worship and live our lives. When people have hold of an ultimate truth, they assume it is the whole truth and the only truth. And they feel they should persuade others of this truth or force it on them or even kill them if they refuse to accept it. This is a huge mistake. Something can be true without being the whole of the truth or the only thing that is true or important. Faith can unify us once we understand that the different religions, in so far as they have truth at all, are different pieces of a much larger puzzle, different aspects of the ultimate divine mystery.

Is God present in all people and cultures, communicating through different religions at different times?

I prayed about this question and was told in prayer, yes, God has been actively communicating with human beings since the beginning. There has never been a time or place from which God was absent. In the book, *God: An Autobiography*, I report how I was guided in prayer to read the ancient scriptures of the great religions – the original revelations, not the subsequent doctrines – and to ask what God was doing in and through each tradition. We can learn from each other since each is a strand of God's conversation with humanity.

How can people become closer to God and thereby to each God?

God communicates to us in more ways than we realize. I was told, "I am a god, who whispers." We have to pay close attention or the distractions of our lives drown out the divine prompts. I complained that if God wants to relate to us, why remain so hidden, and I was told, "You see me all the time." I learned that God is present in nature, for example, not just as an example of divine handiwork, but in the way a person is present in his voice or silhouette. God is also present in the voice of conscience, in epiphanies and insights that may seem like our own thoughts, in gut feelings that tell us, "I should marry this girl" or "I've got to give up a drink." God also puts tasks in our path and produces meaningful "coincidences" – Carl Jung calls them "synchronicities" – that we have to take seriously

and connect the dots. If we pay attention, we can live in sync, in harmony, and in partnership with a loving God. Then it won't be so hard for us to be live in harmony and cooperation with our fellow human beings.

Can each religion be seen as a piece in God's overall puzzle for humanity?

Yes, they can be. But we have to be careful here. Wanting to be nice, some people say, "All the religions are true" or even "They all say the same thing." Well, they don't all say the same thing, and there are some pretty crazy "religions" or cults out there. No, I was told something quite surprising to me and yet it made sense when I thought about it. Religions don't all say the same thing because God didn't tell them the same thing. Why not? Why tell them different things? The whole story would have been too big and complex for people to take in. So God told each culture and each age, what it was prepared to hear and understand and act on. Various cultures have their own concepts, symbols, cultural strengths and temperament. God worked with those. The diversity of cultures gave God ways to show different aspects of the divine. One reason I was given the "revelations" I report in *God: An Autobiography* is that it is time for us all to move forward together to take in a divine reality greater than any single religion has ever comprehended. We will live in a more peaceful world when we do that.

Why does it seem as a society we use God in forms of political gain or manipulation?

Religion has always been misused. We are always tempted to use God for our purposes instead of fitting our purposes to the divine will. Scriptures and religious authority should be used to ask us to live by what Abraham Lincoln called "the better angels of our nature" but they can also be invoked to justify oppression and wrongdoing.

Will there ever be a point within society that will be that "ah ha" moment of man's division that defies unity within the world?

Human conflict is bound to continue, because we are, after all, only human. But I was told that we are "on the threshold of a new spiritual era, a new axial age" – an age during which the walls between religions will come down. Deeper, richer, more comprehensive spiritual understandings will emerge. We will be united by religion, not divided by it. Hopefully, *God: An Autobiography* will contribute to bringing that about.

For more information about Dr. Maritin and his book "God: An Autobiography" visit his site www.godanautobiography.com ■