

Is 'Trance Evangelism' Coming Back In Vogue?

I've never fallen into a trance but I know people who have—and it's totally biblical. We only see people falling into trances a few times in the Bible, but there is enough evidence from the Word of God and from modern expressions to back up this scriptural supernatural experience.

A trance is a state of one who is "out of himself," according to *Easton's Bible Dictionary*. The word trance comes from the Greek word "ekstasis," from which the word ecstasy is derived. Peter fell into a trance in Acts 10:10 that opened his eyes to preach the gospel to the Gentiles. Paul fell into a trance in Acts 22:17 in which the Lord gave Him a warning and a commission to preach the gospel to the Gentiles. I suppose it's hard to describe it if you've not experienced it, but *Smith's Bible Dictionary* goes a little deeper, saying a trance is:

"The state in which a man has passed out of the usual order of his life, beyond the usual limits of consciousness and volition, being rapt in causes of this state are to be traced commonly to strong religious impressions. Whatever explanation may be given of it, it is true of many, if not of most, of those who have left the stamp of their own character on the religious history of mankind, that they have been liable to pass at times into this abnormal state."

Trance Evangelism?

Since we're looking back at historical figures in the body of Christ during Charisma's 40th anniversary month, I thought it fitting to offer a look at Maria Woodworth-Etter, a powerful voice from the late 1800s and early 1900s that was moving in the supernatural before Asuza Street or the charismatic

movement made its mark on church history.

JOIN JENNIFER ON FACEBOOK FOR SPIRITUAL COMMENTARY AND ENCOURAGEMENT. [CLICK HERE.](#)

Indeed, Woodworth-Etter was a Pentecostal forerunner. She saw great outpourings of God's Spirit in the Midwest before entering the West Coast to win souls for God. In Oakland, California, she bought an 8,000-seat tent in 1889 and packed it out with people hungry to watch God move. He didn't disappoint. Healings, signs, wonders, miracles were commonplace in Woodworth-Etter's meetings.

Of course, miracles always draw crowds and critics and it was no different for this female pioneer. However, she didn't see the attacks from fellow healing evangelist John Alexander Dowie coming. Dowie, himself moving in miracles, at first praised Woodworth-Etter but soon accused her of propagating a great delusion because people were falling into trances left and right under her tent. He called it "trance evangelism."

Woodworth-Etter also drew attention from the media. *The Salem* report documents her falling into a trance on March 24, 1904, and she "had to be laid on the platform for over an hour." *The Indianapolis Star* also reported "Woodworth-Etter Goes into a Trance" in a 1904 edition. In 1913, *The Boston Globe* reported, "Took No Money for Healing; Mrs. Etter Gave God Credit for Cures." Those are just a few of the articles written about this pre-Pentecostal minister.

Standing Like Statues

There are accounts of Woodworth-Etter falling into a trance at a St. Louis meeting and standing like a statue for three whole days as attendees of the World Fair looked on in amazement. It's not clear if the trance actually lasted that long, but she was known to fall into trances that left her frozen for hours at a time—and so did many others who attended her meetings.

“People fell into trances, experienced visions of heaven and hell, collapsed on the floor as if they’d been shot or had died,” reports Revival Library. “Thousands were healed of a wide variety of sicknesses and diseases and many believers, even ministers, received mighty baptisms of the Holy Spirit.”

Often times, unbelievers who came in to disrupt the service were encountered by the power of God and themselves fell into a trance. Reporters ridiculed her, her husband lashed out at her in a public letter, she lost the support of well-known ministers in her day, but she continued preaching the gospel and people continued getting saved—and falling into trances. Woodworth-Etter pointed people to scriptural references of trances and believed it was the power of God.

Criticized in her day, she goes down in Pentecostal history as a pioneer, a forerunner who withstood strong persecution to steward the glory of God in her meetings. We need more like Woodworth-Etter in this hour.

In the *Weekly Evangel*, Robert J. Craig, an early Pentecostal leader and pastor of Glad Tidings Temple in San Francisco, honored her and encouraged ministers to study her life and ministry: “If the Pentecostal ministry would study her life and count on God, expecting the supernatural to be revealed in each meeting, what a mighty agency ours would be in the hands of God.”

Amen. And think about it for a minute. What would happen if skeptics of the gospel entered a Holy Ghost meeting and fell into a trance and saw visions of hell? Maybe trance evangelism isn’t such a bad idea.

Jennifer LeClaire is senior editor of Charisma. She is also director of Awakening House of Prayer in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, co-founder of , on the leadership team of the New Breed Revival Network and author of several books, including *The Next Great Move of God: An Appeal to Heaven for*

Spiritual Awakening; Mornings With the Holy Spirit, Listening Daily to the Still, Small Voice of God; The Making of a Prophet and Satan's Deadly Trio: Defeating the Deceptions of Jezebel, Religion and Witchcraft. *You can visit her website here. You can also join Jennifer on Facebook or follow her on Twitter. Jennifer's Periscope handle is @propheticbooks.*