

Supplemental images and narrative to
Is Your God Big Enough? Close Enough? You Enough?
Jesus and the Three Faces of God
by Paul Smith



Chapter 10
THE RECORD OF AWAKENED CONSCIOUSNESS
(in the Bible)
(pages 225-244)



**WHAT'S GOING
ON HERE IN THE
OLD TESTAMENT
ACCOUNT OF
SPIRIT "COMING
ON" SAMUEL
AND SAUL?**

*Saul Prophesies before
Samuel*
James Tissot
French painter
(1836-1902) Jewish
Museum New York

WHAT'S GOING ON HERE IN THE NEW TESTAMENT ACCOUNT OF THE FIRST FOLLOWERS OF JESUS BEING "FILLED WITH" HOLY SPIRIT?



Descent of the Holy Ghost at Pentecost
Alessandro di Mariano di Vanni Filipepi (Sandro Botticelli)
Italian painter of the Early Renaissance (1445 –1510)

Sometimes artists capture the picture better than the words in the Bible as in these two paintings. Notice the body language and intensity of what is being experienced.

In the Old Testament there was, at times, a connection between spirit-breath, prophecy, falling down, and “frenzy.” In the New Testament the connection continued between spirit-breath, falling down, and prophecy but less “frenzy,” (except in Corinthian house church gatherings which Paul had to order to tone it down.) Instead of “frenzy” there is an association with joyful praise of God. Looking at this phenomenon, we must ask, “What was going on with all these ecstatic feelings?”

Spiritual ecstasy ranges from momentary joy and bliss to a trance-like intensive experience that totally engages a person. During this time an individual is intensely focused on inward activity and less open to being aware of their surroundings. Sometimes a person's normal reserve is overwhelmed and there is shaking, trembling, laughter, visions, voices, and other psychic phenomena.



When the messengers from Saul saw Samuel's company of prophets in a "frenzy," 1 Samuel 19 says, "The spirit of the Lord came upon the messengers of Saul and they also fell into a prophetic frenzy." This happened three times.

Then King Saul "fell into a frenzy" in front of Samuel and "stripped off his clothes." The word *nib·bā'îm* is often translated "prophesied" but the NRSV translates it as "fell into a frenzy." This points away from prophecy as only the idea of predicting about the future to the ecstasy that often seems to accompany elevated states of consciousness. We see it at Pentecost and other times in the book of Acts as well as mystics through the centuries. Taking off one's clothing would be an extreme version. But losing one's uptight inhibitions and reserve is common.



Saul Among the Prophets _ Unknown artist



Samson smites the Philistines with the jawbone of an ass _ [Clive Upton](#)

When spirit-breath-consciousness of God” rushed upon” Samson,” he killed a thousand men with the jawbone of a donkey. (Judges15:14-15). Remember that our spiritual experiences are always shaped, interpreted, and acted upon from our worldview. Samson’s stage of development was that of the warrior. Therefore, he expressed his devotion to God in a warrior-like way.

Notice that the descriptions of “rushed upon,” “came upon,” and others are all interpretations of what was being observed. The belief that spirit came from the outside of a person led them to interpret the spirit as coming in, rather than awakening from within. Jesus described it as “out of the believer’s heart shall flow rivers of living water” John 7:38.

Today’s greater awareness of what we now call consciousness means that we see it as already present in every living being. This then expands and intensifies in elevated states.



**"Create in me a clean heart, O God;
and renew a right spirit within me."**

King James Bible Online.org

King David represented a more evolved stage of development. His prayer in Psalm 51 reveals a deep inner work of awakened spirit-breath-consciousness.

For David, according to his prayer, this included the specific experiences of an open heart, God's presence, inner joy, and inner freedom.

This painting is one of the seven Old Testament prophets painted by the Italian High Renaissance master Michelangelo (c. 1508–1512) on the Sistine Chapel ceiling.

Joel predicts the arrival of awakened spirit for all, not just a few.

**"I will pour out my spirit-breath-consciousness on all flesh;
your sons and your daughters
shall prophesy, your elders shall
dream dreams, and your young
people shall see visions."**

Joel 2:28



The Prophet Joel by Michelangelo



Pentecost by Geoffrey Grider

On the day of Pentecost (Pentecost is the 50th day after the Sabbath of Passover week and in Judaism is called the Feast of Weeks) the first friends of Jesus gathered together because Jesus told them to wait to be “clothed with power from on high (Luke 24:49).

When this happened, they all began speaking in strange languages which were heard by travelers as their native tongue. These onlookers accused the followers of Jesus of being drunk because of their ecstatic behavior.

This was undoubtedly the first such experience like this for most of the friends of Jesus. It was momentous and marked the beginning of their newly awakened consciousness.

It was normal for new friends of Jesus to have similar experiences at the beginning of their decision to follow Jesus.

As second generation Christians, the children raised as friends of Jesus, came about it was necessary to initiate them into this awakened form of consciousness. Gradually this “awakening” became the realm of mystics and some others, while the average friends of Jesus was left with trying to embrace right beliefs, live the right life, and love everyone without an inner transformation that would allow them to do those very things.

From Jesus to Paul, the New Testament is filled with joyful, mystical, paranormal experiences that initiated transformation and subsequent action and beliefs. If we **read the Bible only through the lens of beliefs**, we can be confused, puzzled, and limited to mental propositions.



Reading the Bible through puzzling beliefs and limiting mental propositions

However, if we first read the Bible through the **lens of the mystical experiences** in its

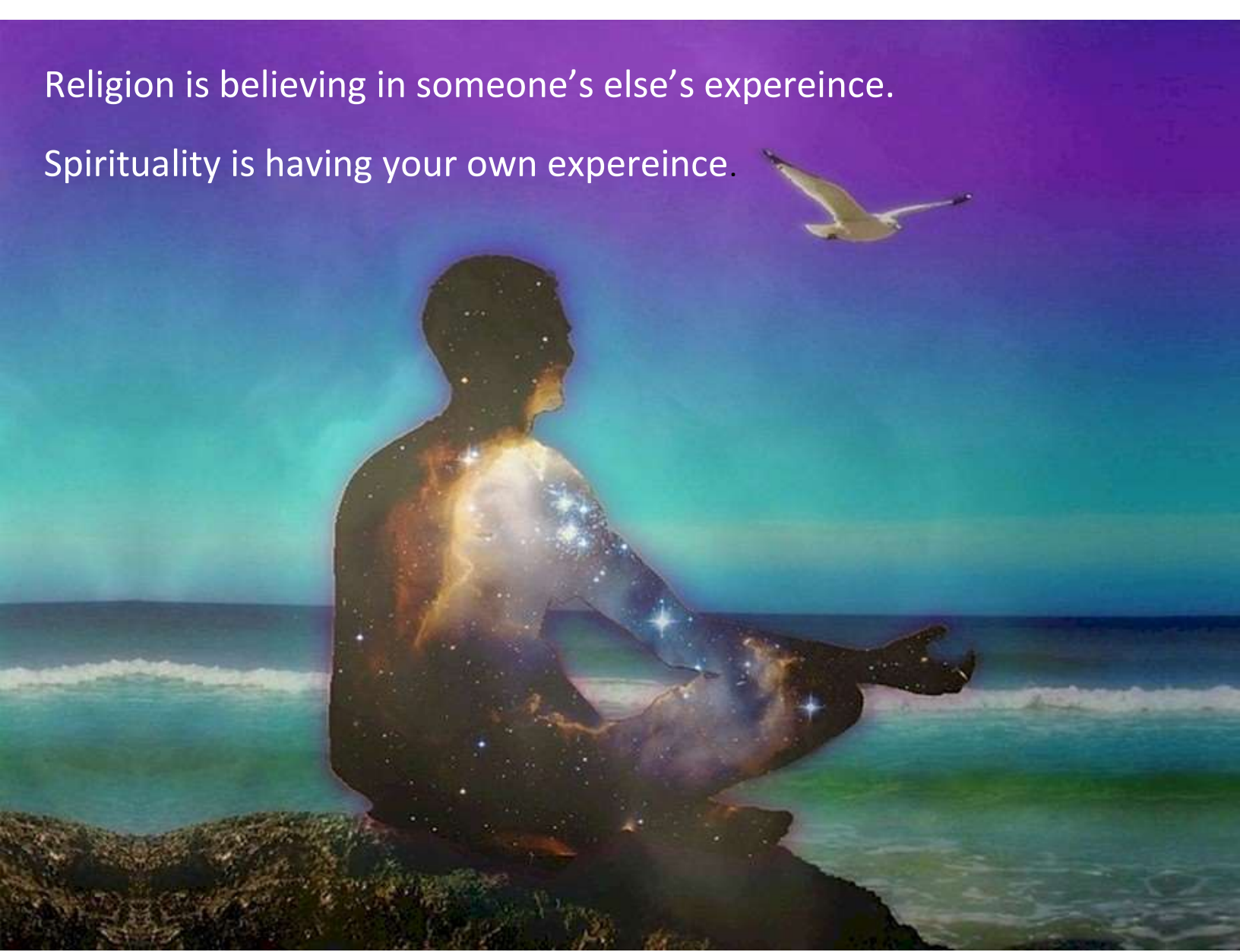


pages, we can begin to see a pattern of elevated consciousness experiences that we are invited to participate in today as followers of Jesus.

Reading the Bible through lens of mystical experience— theirs and yours!

Religion is believing in someone's else's expereince.

Spirituality is having your own expereince.



I am *both* religious and spiritual because:

1. **Religion**, at its most evolved levels, gives us the encouragement to have our own expreinces, a community to have them in, a framework to understand them, and a history that we can learn from so we don't have to keep making the same mistakes others in the past have made.



2. **Spirituality** helps me embrace the inner path and my True Self which then leads to the outer path of love, wisdom, and healing



It was mystical experiences that allowed the friends of Jesus to embrace his teaching at a higher level of understanding and motivated them to act upon it.

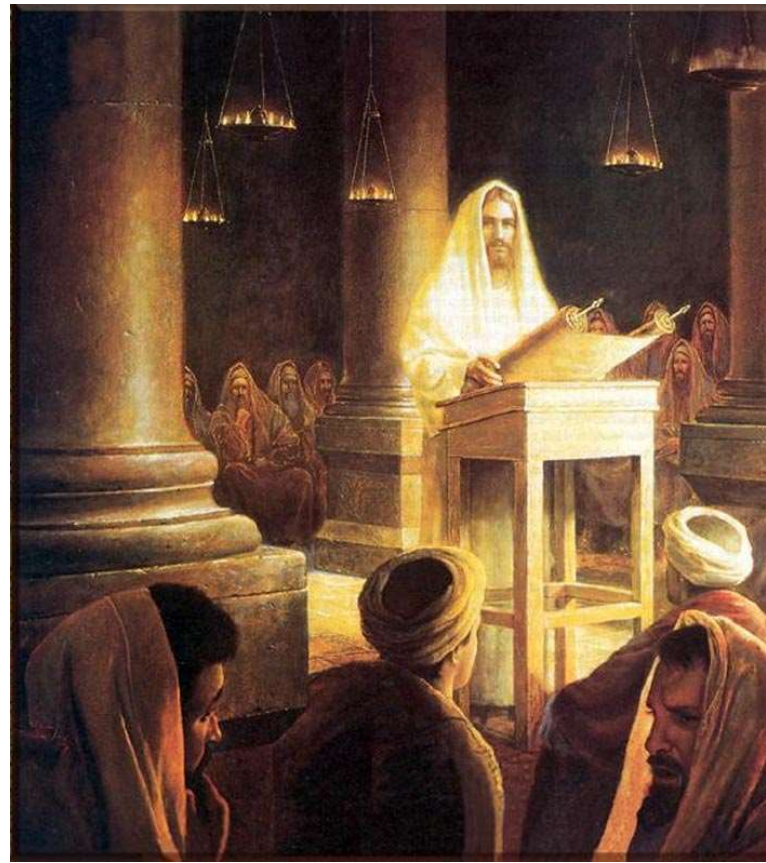
Jesus was first of all a mystic who had frequent experiences of expanded consciousness as recorded in the Gospels. At his baptism in the river Jordan he experienced awakened spirit-breath and the voice of God reassuring him that he was God's child and on the right path.



He immediately went into the wilderness to experience a series of visions in a month-long quest where his motivations were tested.

Jesus then announced his mission statement in his home town synagogue by quoting Isaiah's writing about spirit:

"The spirit of the Lord is upon me. He has anointed me . . . "



Jesus' ministry was characterized by mystical healing power, wisdom, and deep insight.

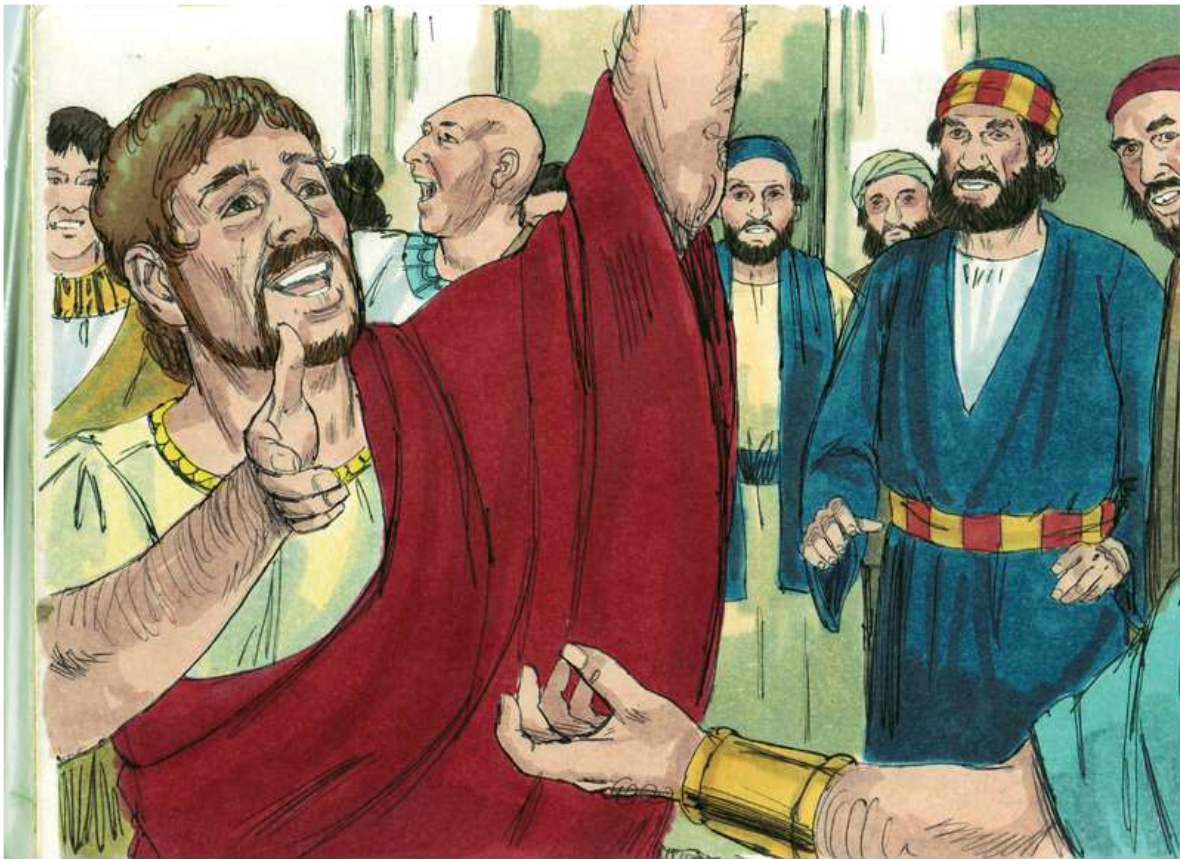
Jesus Healing by James Tissot

Penetecost

He told his followers to wait until they had been awakened to intensified spirit-breath. The church as a gathering of the friends of Jesus was born in a blaze of mystical experiences.



New friends of Jesus were initiated into their new spiritual life with paranormal spiritual experiences of ecstasy, hearing words from God, and praying in transcendent forms.

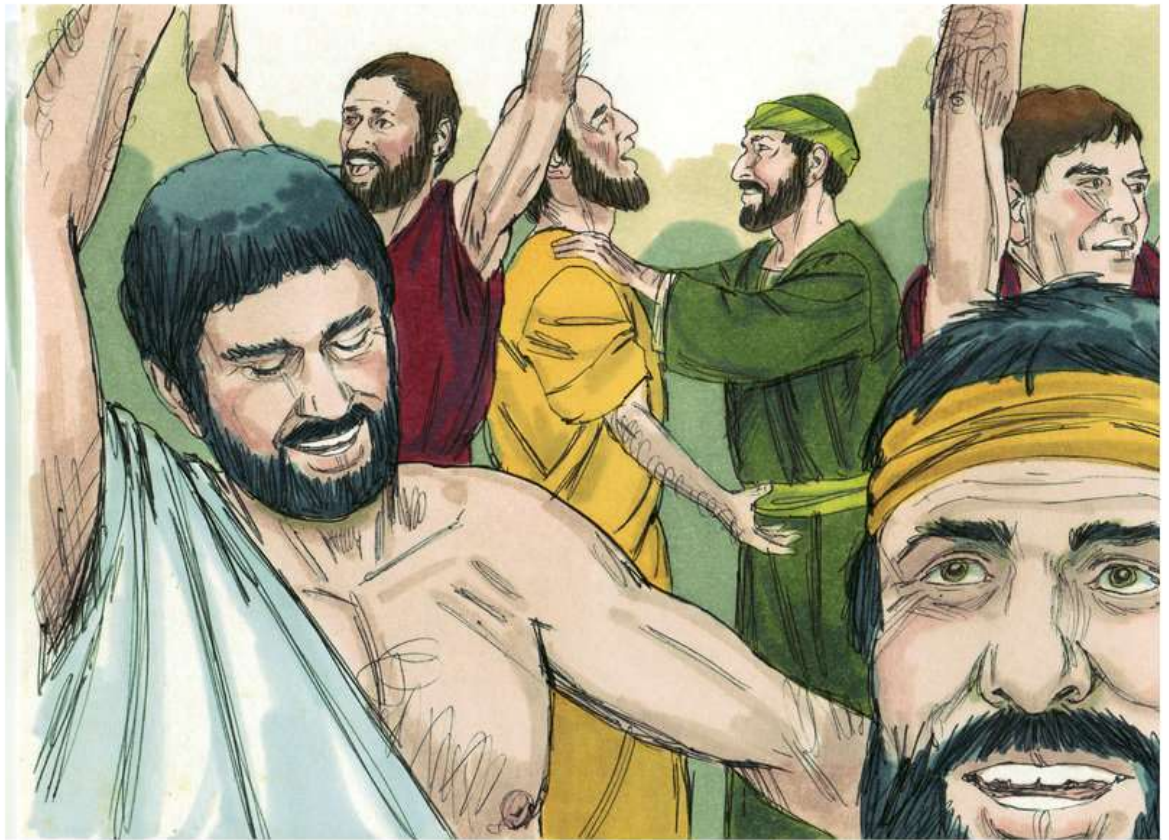


Peter at house of Cornelius

The spirit fell upon all who heard the word. They heard them speaking in tongues and praising God.
Acts 10:44

Paul with new Christians in Ephesus

Spirit came upon them and they spoke in tongues and prophesied.
Acts 19:6



Catacomb Wall Paintings of Early Christian Worship

All these examples show some kind of joyous feelings that might be called ecstasy. The outward behavior varied from mystical praying, to speaking words heard from the inner voice of God, and joyous, spontaneous verbal praise. If we are to believe the ancient pictures in the catacombs, raising hands was also a common expression of joyful praise.





Are you open to deeper feelings of peace, love, joy, bliss?
Are you open to expressing them in and with your body?