

Falling in the Spirit

Is it Lying For God?

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A very common phenomenon in the Charismatic and Pentecostal movements today is “falling” or being “slain” in the spirit. In many churches, it is unquestioned as a normal experience for those who are open and seeking a touch from God. Numerous people will claim that they had a special experience with the Lord during such instances. If one is asked where this practice originated, they may point to a verse in the Bible where someone experienced the presence of the Lord and consequently “fell down”. Is there really biblical support for this practice? Can we honestly say that this phenomenon is truly the Holy Spirit rendering someone unconscious? To answer this, we need to a closer look at what the Bible says, as well as the history of the practice.

It must be noted first of all that this question has nothing to do with the larger issue of whether God is actively demonstrating his power today in signs and wonders. I begin simply with the presupposition that God indeed still heals, performs miracles, and manifests Himself in order to further his Kingdom. Therefore, any criticism of this phenomenon is not due to a cessationist bias or disbelief in the power of God. It is merely the application of the biblical injunction to “test all things” (1 Thess 5:21). The measure, of course, by which we test everything, is the Bible.

Biblical Support for Falling or Being Slain in the Spirit

To answer a question regarding whether a certain practice was present in the early church, the first place in the Bible where one would want to look is in the first history of the church, which is the Book of Acts. A quick perusal will reveal that there is not a single recorded instance where any of the apostles held a meeting and laid hands on people who were then “slain in the spirit”. So at the outset, we already have no direct witness supporting the practice. Likewise in the epistles, Paul makes no mention of the practice, despite the fact that he enumerates the gifts of the Spirit in 1 Corinthians chapter 12, and encourages the use of the charismatic gifts in other places. Consequently, an individual looking for evidence of this phenomenon needs to draw inferences from other passages in scripture that touch upon similar instances. In some cases, the sections of Bible used to support the practice may have nothing at all to do with the experience/phenomenon of being “slain in the Spirit”.

For example, the most oft used biblical defense comes from 2 Chronicles 5:14. In context, we read:

It came even to pass, as the trumpeters and singers [were] as one, to make one sound to be heard in praising and thanking the Lord; and when they lifted up [their] voice with the trumpets and cymbals and instruments of musick, and praised the Lord, [saying], For [he is] good; for his mercy [endureth] for ever: that [then] the house was filled with a cloud, [even] the house of the Lord; So that the priests could not stand to minister by reason of the cloud: for the glory of the Lord had filled the house of God. (2 Chron 5:13, 14, KJV)

Since when one is “Slain in the Spirit” they are said to have been essentially overcome by the Glory of God, this frequently touted as a proof-text. However there are numerous reasons why this is not applicable. Primarily, the text itself doesn’t actually say anything about anyone falling under the power. The King James says that they “could not stand to minister by reason of the cloud”. The Hebrew word “amad” here translated as “stand” (Strong’s 05975) is alternately translated by the word “remain”, “attend”, and “continue” among other possibilities. The idiom “stand before the Lord” is used scores of times throughout the Old Testament to mean that one was appointed as a minister and performed priestly functions. Some translations (Such as the New International Version) don’t even use the word “stand” at all, in keeping with the use of the idiom. So the text simply says that they could not perform their priestly duties “by reason of the cloud”. It is not the power of God prohibited them from “standing” (ie. ministering). It is by “reason of the cloud”.

Another thing that could be said about the text is that, even if one were adamant that the priests couldn’t physically stand, and one was to ignore the fact that the cloud was the inhibitor, even though the text says it was, this still is a far cry from the contemporary practice of people lining up to get hands laid on them and falling over. If the priests were indeed not physically “standing” you could bank on the fact that they would be prostrate on their faces, which would be consistent with temple worship.

Another popular text used to support the practice is a section from Daniel which reads as following:

Therefore I was left alone, and saw this great vision, and there remained no strength in me: for my comeliness was turned in me into corruption, and I retained no strength. Yet heard I the voice of his words: and when I heard the voice of his words, then was I in a deep sleep on my face, and my face toward the ground. And, behold, an hand touched me, which set me upon my knees and [upon] the palms of my hands. And he said unto me, O Daniel, a man greatly beloved, understand the words that I speak unto thee, and stand upright: for unto thee am I now sent. And when he had spoken this word unto me, I stood trembling. (Daniel 10:8-11, KJV)

In Daniel’s situation, he encounters a fearsome and terrifying vision. The people that were with him fled in terror (v. 7). The following verse says that the Angel

says “Fear not, Daniel” (v. 12). Apparently, Daniel had fainted and fell on his face in utter horror. I have heard this verse cited as a proof-text for being slain in the spirit, however, in all my years in the Charismatic movement, I don’t think I have ever heard anyone describe their experience of being “slain” as so terrifying that they fainted dead away. Universally, people say that they feel “peaceful”, “calm” or some other synonym. And, in an interesting reversal, it seems that the “hand of God” that touches Daniel is there to lift him up, rather than make him fall down. In the contemporary instance, a person gets “touched” and they fall over backwards and say that they have some type of peaceful feelings. However in this text, the presence of God causes reverential terror, an individual falls forward in obeisance or fear, and the “special touch” sets a person upright again. It is the exact opposite in every respect. Consequently, there is no conceivable way one can equate this experience of Daniel’s as being “slain in the Spirit”.

Many of the other instances that some cite to support being “slain in the Spirit” are in the same motif as the experience of Daniel, and it therefore unnecessary to parse out. They are:

- Abraham falling “asleep” in terror before the Lord (Gen 15:12-18, 17:1-3)
- Ezekiel’s overwhelming vision in Ezekiel 1:28 and 2:1.
- John’s vision on the Island of Patmos (Rev. 1:17).

Even in Saul’s conversion found in Acts 9:1-6, Saul rose up “trembling and astonished” (v. 6). In every case, either the recipient had to be told to “fear not” or it is specifically mentioned that they were terrorized by the experience. Since all of these are accounts of people either fainting in terror at the majesty of the Lord, or at least losing their strength for the same reason, none of these can be honestly cited to support the idea that being “slain in the Spirit”. They are fundamentally different from the modern day experience.

The only other frequently cited verse is the occasion when officers sent from the chief priests and Pharisees confronted Jesus. They asked him if he was Jesus of Nazareth, and, “as soon then as he had said unto them, I am [he], they went backward, and fell to the ground.” (John 18:6; KJV). This is most likely to be interpreted as a demonstration of Jesus’ authority (employing the divine name “I Am”) and the officers falling in fear. Seeing that they immediately got up and arrested him, and began to abuse him, it is highly unlikely that one would say they were “slain in the spirit” and had received some type of spiritual blessing or positive esoteric experience.

But This Is Revival!

Another popular approach to defend the practice of being “slain in the spirit” is to appeal to great revivals that have happened in the last three centuries. We have been told by a number of church historians that various episodes of being “Slain in the Spirit” happened at the advent of some of the greatest revivals in history.

Among those specifically, Revivals led by Jonathan Edwards, the Cane Ridge Revival in Kentucky, the Welsh Revival, and the Azusa street outpouring.

Chronologically, Jonathan Edwards was the first among these to experience large amounts of people “falling” or fainting during his meetings. In addition, there were many other instances of people crying out, weeping, jerking, and other manifestations.

Many of the “affections” as they came to be called, caused alarm among many of the clergy wherever Edwards went. Edwards painstakingly documented many of the events in several books about revival, and published a number of works defending and describing the revival in New England.

One fact, however, that many people are unaware of is that with the benefit of some years to look back and evaluate the fruit of his ministry, Edwards ultimately came to the conclusion that many of the “affections” that he originally defended were actually either fleshly demonstrations of human carnality, or even satanic influences seeking to stop the revival. In one of his last books on the subject “*Treatise on Religious Affections*”, Edwards actually attributes the ultimate failure of the revival to the excessive manifestations of these “affections”.

After religion has revived in the church of God, and enemies appear, people that are engaged to defend its cause, are commonly most exposed, where they are sensible of danger. While they are wholly intent upon the opposition that appears openly before them, to make head against that, and do neglect carefully to look all around them, the devil comes behind them, and gives a fatal stab unseen; and has opportunity to give a more home stroke, and wound the deeper, because he strikes at his leisure, and according to his pleasure, being obstructed by no guard or resistance.

*And so it is ever likely to be in the church, whenever religion revives remarkably, till we have learned well to distinguish between true and false religion, between saving affections and experiences, and those manifold fair shows, and glistening appearances, by which they are counterfeited; the consequences of which, when they are not distinguished, are often inexpressibly dreadful. By this means, the devil gratifies himself, by bringing it to pass, that that should be offered to God, by multitudes, under a notion of a pleasing acceptable service to him, that is indeed above all things abominable to him. By this means he deceives great multitudes. (*Treatise on Religious Affections, Foreword iii, iv*)*

The revival, according to Edwards, was not stopped by opposition from any group or persons. It was stopped because he and other leaders failed to constrain some of the more exuberant “affections” which were in his opinion, really satanic counterfeits. The devil deceived people into thinking that they were going into a “higher level” of godly experiential knowledge of when they were simply getting sucked into his trap. Edward’s conclusion is that incessant chasing of and bragging about experiences and their priority before the basic

pursuit of holiness, humility and devotion to Christ brought the work of God to a screeching halt.

It is important to note here that Edwards did not categorically deny that the power of God was behind many of the incidents that were experienced. His indictment was against that which was done for show, and experiences sought just for the experiences' sake. There could be no doubt that a sinner who was convicted of his or her sin, who trembled in fear at the thought of their own damnation, who wept in repentance, and was sovereignly "stricken" by God, so as to arise later converted and pious, was indeed a pure example of the work of the Spirit. However, in his own words, there were many tares sown among this wheat,

The Kentucky Cane Ridge Revival, about half a century later, tells a similar story. In this case, some of the most extraordinary events occurred, in which thousands of people were said to have spontaneously fallen down. A number of writers, educators and skeptics attending the meetings there just make note of unusual happenings. Following is a letter from a one Mr. G. Baxter describing what he observed:

Immediately before they become totally powerless they are seized with a general tremor and sometimes, though not often, they utter one or two piercing shrieks in the moment of falling; persons in this situation are affected in different degrees; sometimes when unable to stand or sit they have the use of their hands and can converse with perfect composure. In other cases they are unable to speak, the pulse becomes weak, and they draw a difficult breath about once in a minute: in some instances their extremities become cold, and pulsation, breathing, and all the signs of life forsake them for nearly an hour; ...From this it appears that their falling is neither common fainting, nor a nervous affection. Indeed this strange phenomenon appears to have taken every possible turn to baffle the conjectures of those who are not willing to consider it a supernatural work. Persons have sometimes fallen on their way from public worship; and sometimes after they had arrived at home, and in some cases when they were pursuing their common business on their farms, or when retired for secret devotion. It was above observed that persons generally are seriously affected for some time previous to their falling; in many cases however it is otherwise. Numbers of thoughtless sinners have fallen as suddenly as if struck with lightning. Many professed infidels, and other vicious characters, have been arrested in this way, and sometimes at the very moment when they were uttering blasphemies against the work. (Letter of G. Baxter to Re. Dr. Archibald Alexander, Jan 1st, 1802)

There are a number of other testimonies that aren't as favorable, in many cases documenting the careful detail those leading the revival put into achieving a highly emotionally charged atmosphere, with individuals running around from campsite to campsite with various apocryphal claims of what the Holy Ghost was doing. The one thing that you will find common to all the accounts however is the fact that all of the extraordinary events were associated with repentance and

conversion of those involved. Nobody attending went up to a platform to get prayed over and to be “slain in the spirit”. Typically, a person would be gripped by their own sinfulness before God, wrestle with their predicament for hours or sometimes days, and in earnest pursuit of God’s forgiveness, would experience the “falling”. As pointed out above, however, there were a number of exceptions where God would apparently make a pre-emptive strike against a sinner’s darkened soul, and the stricken individual would be converted when the episode was over.

There is some debate how the various manifestations were viewed in retrospect by the churches involved. Denominationally, the churches involved were primarily Methodist, Presbyterian and Baptist. There were a number of individuals who left their respective churches and formed “New Light” bodies, and still more who became to Shakers. In the ensuing years, churches in the area fought and split over the uncritical acceptance of whatever manifestation some deemed as the work of the Holy Spirit. One of the new churches, in an apparent effort to recapture the frenzy of the earlier camp meetings for their services, would have everyone dance around the altar chanting, “This is the Holy Ghost! Glory!”. In other places, falling down became somewhat obligatory to demonstrate one was truly open to God’s Spirit. It is clear that much of what was gained in the way of new converts and Christian unity during the revival was lost in the following years due to people’s desire to maintain and normalize the extraordinary events that happened during the revival. Just as Gideon’s ephod (Judges 8:27) became a point of stumbling to Israel, individuals’ devotion to the tokens of the past undid the substance of the one thing they wanted to preserve.

The Welsh Revival in 1905 followed a startlingly similar pattern to that of Jonathan Edward’s ministry. Perhaps the most recognizable figure in this case was Evan Roberts, a young Scottish coal miner. After praying for some ten years for revival, he felt emboldened to ask his pastor for permission to address the youth of the church at an evening service. He was granted permission and on the first night, some 17 people attended. He explained to them how there was about to be a tremendous outpouring in the area, and how God was going to reap a huge harvest of souls. Within several days, those words began to see their fulfillment. Roberts preached everywhere he could, pleading for repentance and for individuals to dedicate their lives to Christ with all fervor. Over the next few months, over 100,000 people were converted in Wales. Along with the conversions, there were numerous incidents of people “falling in the Spirit”, and others convulsing, screaming, and laughing. Roberts maintained his message for repentance for several months until he was at the point of exhaustion in the spring of 1905. He then took a sabbatical at the home of Jesse Penn-Lewis and her husband and paused to evaluate his work. To the dismay of many, Roberts did not return to the pulpit. Rather, a few years later, he co-authored a book with Jesse Penn-Lewis entitled “War on the Saints” which by and large dismissed much of the manifestations seen during his revival as evidence of demonic activity. From Chapter 3, Penn-Lewis and Roberts write:

The aftermath of the Revival in Wales, which was a true work of God, revealed numbers of "honest souls" swept off their feet by evil supernatural powers, which they were not able to discern from the true working of God. And later still than the Welsh Revival, there have been other "movements," with large numbers of earnest servants of God swept into deception, through the wiles of deceiving spirits counterfeiting the workings of God; all "honest souls," deceived by the subtle foe, and certain to be led on into still deeper deception, notwithstanding their honesty and earnestness, if they are not awakened to "return to soberness" and recovery out of the snare of the devil into which they have fallen (2 Tim. 2: 26).

It is likely that he could not return to preaching with the knowledge that incidents such as the convulsing and screaming which he attributed to the Holy Spirit were more likely demonic or fleshly in origin. Just like Edwards, his previous uncritical acceptance of the extraordinary became the fly in the ointment that ruined the revival.

At about the same time as the Welsh Revival, there were events happening in America in Los Angeles, California. In 1906, The Azusa Street Revival was under way. It is likely that the reference from Roberts above regarding "other movements...swept into deception" may be referring to Azusa Street in particular. At Azusa Street, William Seymour sought to allow the Holy Spirit to move in a completely unstructured, spontaneous way, and the newspapers were reporting a myriad of extraordinary things were happening. Although Seymour's intent was sincere, the lack of structure immediately led to problems. After just three months, he wrote to his former teacher Charles Fox Parham, (known as the "Father of Pentecostalism") that spiritualists, hypnotists and occultists had co-opted much of what was going on, and requested that Parham come out to Azusa Street and help with leadership. Parham was there only one day, saw what was going on and publicly proclaimed that the whole thing "made God sick to his stomach" and departed. Although many today point back to Azusa Street as evidence that God's spirit moves in various ways, including trances, being "slain in the spirit", laughing and screaming, even while it was happening the people in charge were aware that at least some of it was being instigated by occultists and hypnotists.

The common denominator in all of these revivals is that all of those involved ultimately realized that the extraordinary experiences such as being "slain in the spirit" were more of a liability to the work of God than an asset. It was then tendency for people to be enamored with the experience, rather than with Christ, that ended each Revival, or at least brought it into disrepute. In the cases where God apparently was genuinely causing individuals to "fall", the occurrence was much more in the pattern of the biblical examples, where a person might be overcome by an intense feeling of their own frailty or sin before the holiness and majesty of God. There was no coaching, no catchers, and no preacher pushing on their heads. This is almost antithetical to the contemporary version of being "slain", where the "anointing" is dispensed out in a quasi-magical manner, treated as a spiritual "pick-me-up" for those who need a little something special from God

that day. I myself have been treated to whole services where visiting international evangelists have actually trained the church in how to be “slain”. Jonathan Edwards, Evan Roberts and the other revivalists would probably have thought twice about going into the ministry at all if they had known that their legacy would be invoked to prop up such folly.

Deference To The Outsider

There is another aspect to the phenomenon that also should be addressed from a biblical perspective. Simply put, it is the principle of what I call “Deference to the Outsider”, which is expressed a number of times in the New Testament in the context of the worship service. It is most clearly stated in 1 Corinthians 14:23:

If therefore the whole church be come together into one place, and all speak with tongues, and there come in [those that are] unlearned, or unbelievers, will they not say that ye are mad?

In this case, Paul is talking about the regulation of the gift of tongues. There was certainly no doubt to anyone in his audience as to whether tongues was a God-given charism. In the context of his writing, he also stresses the desirability of the gift, and it's benefit to the individual who speaks in tongues. Yet, he takes the time here to reprimand the Corinthian church for speaking in tongues without an interpreter in a congregational setting. The reason is that someone coming in from without, who might not understand the intricacies of the charismatic gifts would simply think that they were all crazy. They would thus be putting an unnecessary obstacle on the path of faith for someone who observed their service. So despite the fact that the gift of tongues was from God, and had spiritual benefit to the individual, it was not to be displayed unless it could be utilized in a way that would be edifying to all.

If we take that principle, and apply it to the practice of being “slain in the spirit”, we find a similar indictment against it's use in the church service. Whereas tongues at least had a biblical basis, and was undoubtedly from God, being “slain in the spirit” doesn't have that pedigree. It is largely a charismatic tradition that was developed by Kathryn Kuhlman. So how much more should we be cautious about the practice in our church service? To the typical 21st century mind, nothing looks more contrived than to have people walk up to a pastor and, with two husky catchers conveniently at both shoulders, have him push the congregant backwards so he or she falls and is caught, and then remains there for a little “carpet time”. Everyone knows they are not unconscious, asleep, or otherwise unable to move. As soon as the pastor announces that it is time to go, all of the “slain” will simply get up. Recently I watched as a young mother was “slain” in a church service. While she was lying on the ground, her four year-old daughter poked her repeatedly and said “mommy, wake up. I want a drink”. After a few such prods, the mother popped her head up and said angrily “Go find your father!” After which, she promptly put her head back down to again bask in the “spirit-induced” rest. It is wholly inexplicable to not only the unbeliever, but to

even non-charismatic Christians. It is impossible to know of how many millions of souls will be lost over the years because they were completely driven away from the Gospel by seeing such a charade associated with the Good News. Were the Apostle Paul alive today, I have no doubt that he would say something to the effect of “Hey, there are 167 other hours in the week that you can spend lying down, in private, communing with God...get up before you give us all a bad name.”

The Psychological Dimension to Being “Slain”

In many of the historical accounts of revivals, the revivalists felt compelled to decide between the two possibilities that the extraordinary manifestations were either from God, or from the devil. In a sense, that is a false dichotomy. Although we can make the allowance that some of the “falling” may very well have been a genuine move of God, and that there is a personal devil who may very well have counterfeited some of the experiences, it is more likely that much of the phenomenon is rooted in the mundane.

If we look at some of the more clinical descriptions of many of the revivals, one cannot escape observation that they were all engineered to evoke the most extreme depths of emotion from its participants. One only need read a few lines from Edward’s *Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God* to feel the height and breadth of passion that Edward’s exuded.

In the case of the Kentucky Cane Ridge Revival, following is a description from Dr. Richard McNemar in 1807 “The Kentucky Revival”.

the solemn chanting of hymns swelling and falling on the night wind; the impassioned exhortations; the earnest prayers; the sobs, shrieks, or shouts, bursting from persons under intense agitation of mind; the sudden spasms which seized upon scores, and unexpectedly dashed them to the ground -- all conspired to invest the scene with terrific interest, and to work up the feelings to the highest pitch of excitement

McNemar also mentions factors such as exhaustion may have played into these events. The preaching and prayer meetings were going into all hours of the night. The tens thousands of people who attended these impromptu meetings were by and large living right out in the open in the fields or woods where the meetings were held. There were no accommodations for the multitude that showed up in the wilderness. When you couple that with the spirit of expectation that was generated by the revivalists, you can anticipate that there would be some fairly dramatic things going on. When individuals perceive (or at least are led to believe) that there is something extraordinary or supernatural happening in their midst, they are likely to interpret all sensations they experience in that paradigm. This is not to say that God couldn’t or didn’t move in the hearts of the people who fell; just simply that when you prime the audience for a certain emotional or

psychological response, you open the door to the possibility that the response was purely psychological or emotional.

In similar fashion we have testimony from those actually at Azusa Street that some of the people who were “slain” or in trances were actually under the psychological persuasion of occultists. At the time, Theosophists under Helena Blavatsky were employing hypnotic techniques of Franz Mesmer, as well as channeling spirits in a manner not dissimilar to “prophetic utterances” of the Pentecostal movement. They were present at Azusa, and William Seymour was powerless to clearly delineate to those attending between the legitimate and the counterfeit.

In the contemporary examples of being “Slain in the Spirit”, the mode in which it is presented differs in a few ways. There is still a dependency on music to act as a catalyst, and there still may be some emotional pleading involved, and an expectation set that God is “going to touch you”. However, just as some churches after Cane Ridge were reduced to meaningless repetition trying to revisit the events of the revival, most Charismatic churches today practice being “slain in the spirit” out of mere tradition. Many will have an obligatory altar call for the unsaved, and when there is no response, go with “old faithful” and ask anyone who needs a special touch, or is in need of some type of healing, either physically or spiritually. A number of individuals will come up for prayer, and after the pastor is done praying, they fall down, simply out of habit. It has become such a farce that many churches refer to these instances as “CDs” or “Courtesy Drops” where the congregants fall down as a courtesy to the person praying over them, to give everyone the impression that something extraordinary happened when the person or pastor prayed. I have a close friend who has been leading such a prayer team for many years, and is an avid supporter of being slain in the spirit. I asked him one day to estimate the percentage of people he prayed for every week that he felt just did “Courtesy Drops”. He estimated at least 90% of those who fell down were just going through the meaningless ritual, simply because they thought it was expected of them, or wanted to give the impression that God was doing something. The remaining 10% he thought were sincerely being rendered unable to stand by God. He couldn’t really know, of course, but the chance that God was specially touching those people, in his own mind, made the charade with the other 90% justifiable.

Is there a type of person that is prone to fall down? I don’t know of any statistical study on the subject, but after some 20 years in the Charismatic movement, I could provide a pretty good profile. I have noticed that those who are prone to be “slain in the spirit” in a particular church are typically the same people who experience it again and again, every single week. Sometimes they are even going back for the same problem or issue, week after week, year after year, and tend to have chronic emotional issues. They are almost invariably persons who have an inordinate need for acceptance and put great importance on trusting authority figures, particularly their pastor. They are also people who seem to be highly suggestible and easily manipulated. In one service I was attending, the

pastor said that God told him that if every got out of their seats and envisioned an imaginary door, and they walked through the door, they would be free of whatever problem plagued them. Several hundred people got up, reached for the imaginary door handle and went through their imaginary door. The whole church proceeded to march back and forth, walking through their doors and getting “set free”. One woman, who was late for the explanation, asked her friend beside me what in the world was going on. “We are getting set free!” she triumphantly exclaimed. Numerous people reported getting “set free” by that exercise. Interestingly enough, many of those same people by the end of the service apparently need to get set free again, since they were also the ones doing “carpet time” then, also.

Lying For God

Perhaps the final reason why the contemporary version of being “slain in the spirit” needs to be curtailed is simply because it is downright dishonest and ultimately dishonors the Holy Spirit. As pointed out above, the dirty little secret of the Charismatic movement is that much of the “slaying in the spirit” is admittedly people falling down out of a sense of obligation or tradition. There is nothing supernatural happening; people are just responding in a fashion that they have been taught, in hope that if they yield to the exercise, God may do something. However, when they are prayed over and fall down, that is essentially their testimony that God did do something...he has touched them in a fashion so that they could no longer stand up. It is a visible claim to an activity of God. Does God approve of people testifying that He did something, when he really didn't? In Jeremiah 14:14 we read:

And the LORD said to me, The prophets prophesy lies in My name; I did not send them, nor have I commanded them, nor did I speak to them. They prophesy to you a false vision and a worthless divination, and a thing of no value, and the deceit of their heart. (KJV)

Just as it is a grievous thing to say that God spoke something that he didn't, or speak a vision in His name that He didn't give, it is an abominable thing to make the public declaration as to His works that he did not do.

I am reminded how in the 1980s an Eastern New Age guru, the Maharishi claimed that he could teach people to levitate and fly. For several thousand dollars, you could take his classes and learn some aerial acrobatics. A number of people who took the class swore that they actually flew. When the claim was examined, it was discovered that, in reality, people were learning how to bounce on their buttocks. Gravity wasn't suspended, and no one really flew or levitated. The discerning sued to get their money back on the grounds that the yogi was making a fraudulent claim about what was going on at these meetings. Others, however, were satisfied that they “flew” since they implicitly trusted their spiritual leader.

With respect to being slain in the Spirit, Christians who fall down are frequently making fraudulent claims about God. They are in many cases just falling down to maintain the charade that God is doing something special in that service. The pastors too, are complicit by creating the expectation, as well as providing catchers, which is a clear signal that they are anticipating the individual to fall down. If God was really bringing someone into a trance-state, or rendering them unconscious, would “catchers” really be necessary?

The bottom line in this whole question is that being “Slain in the Spirit”, as is practiced as a normative event in Charismatic churches, has no biblical basis, historical basis, or intrinsic value as a method of ministry. It has done more to impede the advancement of the Kingdom of God, than it has to help advance God’s work. Moreover, it puts Christians in the compromising position of having to “fake” the working of the Holy Spirit in order to meet the expectations of the their church or pastor. Christians who fall down are literally “lying”. So when it comes to being “Slain in the Spirit”, don’t fall for it.

Ten Reasons Why NOT to fall for the “Slain in the Spirit” teaching

1. It has no direct Biblical support
2. It runs contrary to the biblical principle of priesthood of all believers by setting up a human being as the conduit of the “anointing”.
3. It has proved to actually be a hindrance to revival over the last three centuries.
4. It has been considered by many great revivalists to actually be a satanic counterfeit.
5. It encourages an esoteric, emotionally driven faith, rather than one based firmly on God’s Word.
6. It violates the principle of “deference to the ungifted” by creating an unnecessary cause for reproach among seekers or the unsaved
7. It is serves more purpose as a psychological manipulation tool for the preacher than medium for God blessing His people.
8. It’s ties to Mesmerism and spiritualism practices cannot be ignored.
9. It is completely ineffectual at creating any real change in it’s practitioners.
10. By reason of peer pressure it has caused millions to “fake it” in order to appear spiritual, thus dishonoring God.