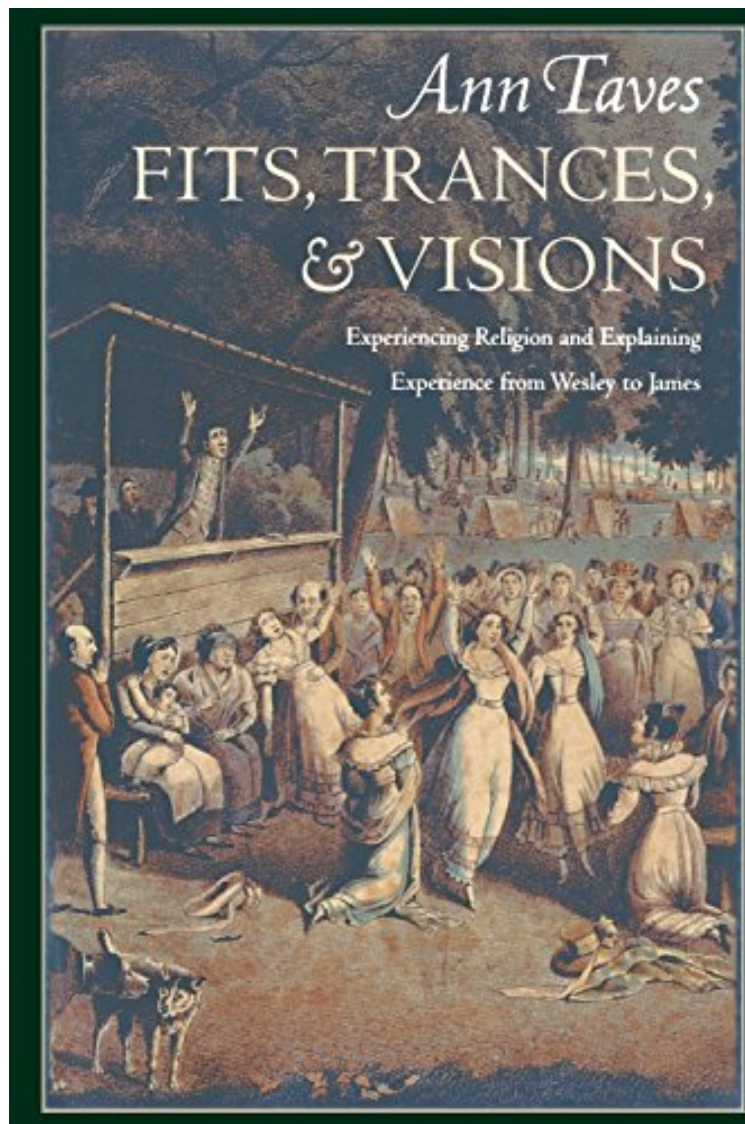


[Online library] Fits, Trances, and Visions: experiencing religion and explaining experience from Wesley to James

## **Fits, Trances, and Visions: experiencing religion and explaining experience from Wesley to James**

*Ann Taves*

*\*Download PDF | ePub | DOC | audiobook | ebooks*



DOWNLOAD



+

READ ONLINE

#655155 in Books Princeton University Press 1999-10-25 Original language: English PDF # 1 9.25 x 1.05 x 6.251, 1.70 #File Name: 0691010242448 pages | File size: 63.Mb

**Ann Taves : Fits, Trances, and Visions: experiencing religion and explaining experience from Wesley to James** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Fits, Trances, and Visions: experiencing religion and explaining experience from Wesley to James:

13 of 13 people found the following review helpful. A must read for every student and seeker of religious

experienceBy Gregory R. MuirheadI have just finished reading this astonishing book, and it is a truly amazing history of American religious experiences---and of various historical thinkers' perspectives on those experiences. It is profoundly moving and liberating. Dr. Taves took great care to describe the different experiential movements, preserving the language of the original participants and observers to present a clear picture of how they understood events in their own time and place. By doing so, she successfully reconstructed bridges of cross-disciplinary thought that have since been torn apart by the increasing fragmentation of academic specialties.The book is full of provocative and probably under-appreciated historical characters and thinkers whose perspectives on religious experiences are as vital today as they were in their own time. For instance, Taves' account of the life and intellectual development of La Roy Sunderland, from preacher to psychological theorist, via an exploration of trance, is fascinating and touching.I found the book's review of William James' thoughts on religious experiences particularly eye-opening, including the way he related workings of the subconscious mind with Darwin's theory of evolution. Among other things, James forces a re-examination of what we usually consider mental disorders. Consider his thought that "dissociation, although generally linked with degeneration, may simply prefigure a re-aggregation of the personality and growth in new and untried directions." This struck me as quite wonderful in the face of modern psychology's focus on pathologies, which has resulted in blindness to the healthy possibilities of unusual mental activities.Every student and seeker of religious experience should read this book.

Fits, trances, visions, speaking in tongues, clairvoyance, out-of-body experiences, possession. Believers have long viewed these and similar involuntary experiences as religious--as manifestations of God, the spirits, or the Christ within. Skeptics, on the other hand, have understood them as symptoms of physical disease, mental disorder, group dynamics, or other natural causes. In this sweeping work of religious and psychological history, Ann Taves explores the myriad ways in which believers and detractors interpreted these complex experiences in Anglo-American culture between the mid-eighteenth and early-twentieth centuries. Taves divides the book into three sections. In the first, ranging from 1740 to 1820, she examines the debate over trances, visions, and other involuntary experiences against the politically charged backdrop of Anglo-American evangelicalism, established churches, Enlightenment thought, and a legacy of religious warfare. In the second part, covering 1820 to 1890, she highlights the interplay between popular psychology--particularly the ideas of "animal magnetism" and mesmerism--and movements in popular religion: the disestablishment of churches, the decline of Calvinist orthodoxy, the expansion of Methodism, and the birth of new religious movements. In the third section, Taves traces the emergence of professional psychology between 1890 and 1910 and explores the implications of new ideas about the subconscious mind, hypnosis, hysteria, and dissociation for the understanding of religious experience. Throughout, Taves follows evolving debates about whether fits, trances, and visions are natural (and therefore not religious) or supernatural (and therefore religious). She pays particular attention to a third interpretation, proposed by such "mediators" as William James, according to which these experiences are natural and religious. Taves shows that ordinary people as well as educated elites debated the meaning of these experiences and reveals the importance of interactions between popular and elite culture in accounting for how people experienced religion and explained experience. Combining rich detail with clear and rigorous argument, this is a major contribution to our understanding of Protestant revivalism and the historical interplay between religion and psychology.

.com Fits, Trances, Visions is a wide-ranging cultural study of some of the most controversial and dramatic expressions of Christian spirituality. Faith healing, possession, clairvoyance, out-of-body experiences, speaking in tongues, animal magnetism, and even hypnotized crabs are among the many subjects described by the fearless Ann Taves, a professor of history and religion at Claremont College. The book's primary focus is the debate between religion and psychology about the sources of such dramatic spiritual experiences. From the mid-18th to the early 20th century, believers and skeptics clashed over the question of whether God was supernaturally present in these experiences, or whether they were merely natural expressions of physical disease or psychological disorder. Taves is especially attentive and sympathetic to the conclusion reached in the early 20th century by William James, who argued that charismatic spirituality was both natural and religious. Taves does sometimes get bogged down in theoretical language, but *Fits, Trances Visions* is noteworthy for offering sympathetic and sophisticated attention to a realm of religious experience that too often receives little more than scholarly scorn. --Michael Joseph GrossFrom Library JournalTaves (history and religion, Claremont Sch. of Theology; religion, Claremont Graduate Univ.) brings a new perspective to familiar territory in American religious historyAcamp meetings, spiritual mediums, Pentecostalism, faith healing, and the work of William James. Looking at the interactions between first-hand accounts and counter-narratives, Taves reveals how bodily experiences of religious faith were given form even as they were challenged. For example, those who were moved to fits or to falling prostrate in a camp meeting learned to understand their experiences through biblical imagery and through the skepticism raised by more "formalist" religious traditions and those who sought purely natural explanations. In examining the nature of the debates over authenticity in religions and the nature (or existence) of the supernatural, Taves moves beyond standard dichotomies to a more complex understanding of mediating traditions that blend and redefine the territory between secular science and religion. Taves

handles the complexity and breadth of her study well, balancing evidence and theory with clear prose, and ultimately provides a new view of the inner workings of American religious traditions. Recommended for academic libraries. A Jan Blodgett, Davidson Coll. Lib., NC Copyright 1999 Reed Business Information, Inc. Winner of the 2000 Award for Best Professional/Scholarly Book in Philosophy and Religion, Association of American Publishers One of Choice's Outstanding Academic Titles for 2000 "Taves brings a new perspective to familiar territory in American religious history: camp meetings, spiritual mediums, Pentecostalism, faith healing, and the work of William James. . . [She] handles the complexity and breadth of her study well, balancing evidence and theory with clear prose, and ultimately provides a new view of the inner workings of American religious traditions."--Library Journal "[Taves] attends sensitively to how language shapes experience, accenting the complex interplay between theory and practice."--Publishers Weekly "As much a treat as a treatise, and not just for historians. . . . An intellectual adventure . . . thick with anecdote, example and quotation."--New York Times Book "An ambitious history both of religious experience within this broadly defined evangelical tradition and of efforts to explain and judge it. . . . A remarkable compendium of firsthand descriptions of religious experience and practice."--Marc Arkin, The Wall Street Journal "Taves provides a fascinating account of the interplay between experiencing religion and explaining these experiences. . . . Provocative, well-written, and an exemplar of interdisciplinary scholarship."--Choice "Taves offers a brilliant introduction to the intricate art of explaining religious experience."--Robert Fuller, Christian Century "This impressive book will stand on its merits for many years to come. It will change the way we look at the received narrative of American religious history and, as much, the way we look at ourselves as interpreters of the narrative . . . Taves has provided grounding and insight that puts us in her debt."--Catherine L. Albanese, Journal of American History "This is an important study and a major contribution to the study of the Anglo-American discourse on religion."--Gary L. Ebersole, Journal of Religion "This is an excellent book. Its method is historical and its self-set purpose concerns the interplay between experiencing religion and explaining the experience. The book deserves careful reading."--Douglas J. Davies, Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute "One of the most important contributions not only to the study of American religious history, but more broadly to the study of religion, which has appeared in recent years. . . . [It] should be of great interest to students of religious phenomena no matter what their particular field of study."--Peter W. Williams, Catholic Historical