

Reflections on Lakeland Florida events
(2)-Revised version

Dear Friends, Fellow Ministers, saints and any others who will listen,

I have been inundated with both concerns, requests for information and for help concerning the happenings in Lakeland, Florida. I thought it might be helpful to send out some guidelines and information I have received from different sources. (on request-see later)

First, some things to think through.

(1) It isn't necessary to have to go there to find out what is happening as there are a multitude of excerpts on You Tube, which give just about every slant you would wish to have. For those who dispute that, I would say "why do you just watch the news on TV and not go to all the places where it comes from to make your own assessment?" We can discern things both good and bad by media visuals without actually being there. I have just watched yet another excerpt called "What possesses Todd Bentley?" (Defending contending.com 2008/5/27). If I needed any further convincing this stuff is not of God this would be it. Full of the usual peripatetic and bizarre behaviour accompanied with the horrible mocking laughter (characteristic of Torontoism), not HOLY laughter, it is the total antithesis to the ministry of the Lord Jesus described in Isaiah 42 and which describes TRUE ANOINTING. To watch the helper of a so called minister of God staggering across a platform with a laptop in his hands and falling down with it, is more akin to clowns at the circus. Anybody who really thinks this is God deserves to be deceived! Even if ALL the You Tube segments were selective, I would still have the same concerns. A huge amount of footage now available shows behaviour so bizarre, that even children in our Church have said "Daddy, how can that possibly be of God?"

(2) Todd Bentley claims to converse with an angel called Emma, who was active with the Kansas City Prophets, and I note one of the people very close to him is Bob Jones whom I understand is a discredited Kansas City Prophet and who claimed to hear from this same angel. At least one site gives information on a pagan goddess called Emma! Does any of this sound Kosher or Biblical? (See Col 2 vs 18-19). Surely, this alone should make any sensible person ask serious questions about what is going on here?

(3) More than one person I have seen on the web and with whom I have spoken believe Todd Bentley has gone into deception and some of these claim to be either his friends or have met him personally.

(4) When revivals took place in Church history (e.g. at the beginning of the 20th Century), they spontaneously occurred in SEVERAL places in the world and were not dependent on ONE place or ONE person or the impartation of "IT" (whatever that is?) People went there to receive a SCRIPTURAL baptism in the Holy Spirit and all the events could be substantiated by Scripture. It seems that everything is dependent on this IMPARTATION. If this is not the Holy Spirit, then we need to be aware that we can receive another spirit, another Jesus and another gospel (2 Cor 11 v 4). Most people don't like to hear that what they are receiving might be this and not the real thing. Why did Paul give this warning if it couldn't happen? "Seducing" and "religious" spirits have been and still are active within the Church and the latter are very different to the dismissive way in which that phrase is often thrown at those who dare to challenge things against Scripture.

(5) Could somebody tell me what "in the name of BAM" means? Or what does "blah, blah, blah" being said over somebody signify? If you take the trouble to actually examine the media, you cannot but be really alarmed by what you see.

(6) Would a spirit filled man promote tattoos or be filled with bits of metal when the Scripture expressly forbids marking or piercing the body. True prophets and ministers promote obedience to the Word of God. (See Deut 13 vs 1-5). It is reported that Todd Bentley said that God told him to get his many tattoos (EG Direction magazine July 08)

(7) There seems to be a preponderance of dreams and visions (sometimes several per night?) My recent studies on the Apostle Paul show that he had 7 major visions in his whole life and these often at crucial and dangerous periods in his life.

(8) There is a clear link with Toronto - You can see Todd Bentley on screen with the Arnotts and many YouTube excerpts show the same bizarre, and ridiculous behaviour which accompanied the Toronto events. In one clip I am told people throw food around! We read or hear of Bentley and Jones "spirit surfing" (whatever that is), and some people who have been in the occult believe that astral projection is taking place.

(9) Healing and miracles, so called, are absolutely no guarantee that something is of the Holy Spirit. (How many of these have been medically authenticated?) Read Revelation 16 vs 13-14 if you don't believe me. Raphael Gasson a converted medium describes in his book "The Challenging Counterfeit", how people are healed in spiritism. It is worth noting that in Matthew 24 one end time sign which occurs 3 times is that of deception and false prophets, which makes it all the more important that these events are matched against Scripture and ALL the Biblical tests by which we should test ministries, manifestations and "signs and wonders". Scripture makes it abundantly clear that we are to judge doctrines, spirits and ministries. Unfortunately many have long since left their Bibles, heads and minds behind, but that seems to be what they are encouraged to do! Don't analyse, just open up to IT. If you replace "false Christs" with "false anointed ones" (Mt 24) (which is linguistically permissible), it makes challenging reading.

(10) Having been personally involved in the charismatic renewal of the sixties with its Spirit anointed meetings, where people hardly dared to move because of the glory and presence of the Holy Spirit, these meetings are more akin to a circus, than anything described in real revivals. There is much hype and I cannot believe that Jesus and the disciples or the early Church ministered in these bizarre ways. Some of the physical activities of kicking people etc beggar belief! I have also experienced with others at close hand the ministry of those who have gone into falsehood and with the experience of hindsight I hear the same alarm bells ringing. Unfortunately many people have never had the misfortune of that experience and think that they are beyond being deceived or that this only happens in somebody else's back garden!

(11) As I both expected and predicted, all those who ran after Toronto seem to be running after these events. I find it sad that when our own country is under judgment, with warnings from people like David Pawson and the Bishop of Rochester, thousands of pounds are being wasted jetting off to USA. We should be on our knees crying out to God to visit our nation in true revival and using this money to evangelise and reach the lost or giving it to those who do.

(12) Somebody once said "the one thing we learn from history is that we never learn". All these things have happened before (Toronto probably caused one of the biggest divisions amongst charismatics/pentecostals in my lifetime, and perhaps ever). In my view, it divided those who really love Scripture and its plain teachings and warnings from those who only pay lip service to such. When Toronto first came, I spent hours examining, researching and most of all tried to search out the heart of God over all these matters (as I also did with the Kansas City prophets). Not only was I horrified by the way Scripture was twisted to suit the events by the leading players, but the Holy Spirit revealed many places in Scripture which clearly showed errors, abuses and deception taking place. I am glad to note that whilst the usual "big name" charismatic leaders are running after this stuff, there are many balanced and noted men of God who aren't.

(13) On a positive note, as an individual and as a Church, we never suffered by weighing and testing and rejecting Torontoism and many other things which have taken place. We have emphasised the balance of preaching the Word of God in the power of the Holy Spirit and we are increasingly finding many hungry people coming in some cases long distances. We regularly experience true gifts of the Holy Spirit, healing, deliverance and the manifest presence of God in our midst, and so we should not be bullied by those who may suggest we are missing something if we do not get involved in all this hype. ANYTHING God does, if it is genuine may take place anywhere direct from heaven and as already said is not dependent on one person or place or some special "impartation". Neither should we be bullied by those who use the phrase "Pharisees" to describe those who are not enthusiastic about these so called "revivals" or wish to weigh them against Scripture and discernings of spirits. The

Holy Spirit is "sent down from heaven" (1 Peter 1 v 12). Just like Torontoism all of this in Florida is dependent on somebody who has this so called anointing imparting it and then passing it on to others. It's all tracked back to one place! This is totally unbiblical.

(14) The use and practices of IMPARTATION in my view is used far beyond the remit of Scripture and there is a huge need to re-visit the doctrine of laying on of hands and the word anointing in both OLD and New Testament concepts. All of this is done far too liberally and freely in the modern Church without realising both the implications and dangers. We should exercise extreme caution about whom we allow to lay hands on us indiscriminately unless we know who they are, and are sure WHAT spirit is being communicated. We are personally acquainted with situations where people received false spirits from "Torontoism" and needed to be delivered from such. Beware of "in" buzz words such as impartation, soaking, resting in the spirit etc. Paul exhorts us "to compare spiritual with spiritual - NOT IN THE WORDS WHICH MAN'S WISDOM TEACHES, (ie the jargon of psychology, religion or modern charismatic 'pop' religion) but which the HOLY SPIRIT TEACHES". (1 Cor 2 v 13) The language of Scripture is quite adequate to describe what God is doing. "Soulish" (psychic) sensations are very different to reality which comes from heaven and God's glory. James tells us "the wisdom which descends NOT from above is earthly, sensual (soulish or psychic) devilish (demonic)". These verses are written not to unbelievers but to Christians. The big problem today is that so many in the Church cannot tell the difference between the soulish and the spiritual. As confirmed by a lady in my Church who was deeply into the occult, much of the activity we are observing is more akin to the kundalini spirit found in yoga and hinduism. This understanding between soul and spirit can only come through allowing God's Word to DIVIDE soul and spirit (Heb 4 v 12) and the true and genuine work of the cross in our lives. (eg John 12 v 25). However, this is contrary to "quick fix" Christianity which is the hall mark of much that happens today. I recommend "War on the saints" by Jessie Penn Lewis (unabridged version). She was closely associated with Evan Roberts of Welsh revival fame and shows in this book the dangers of PASSIVITY and how believers can open up to seducing or deceiving spirits. It is dangerous just to open up ourselves to "power" and to stop using our minds and faculties. This is how eastern mysticism and new age thinking works. We should always remember that the fruit of the Spirit is SELF CONTROL (Gal 5 v 23) and no matter how "powerful" an experience is, if we cannot control it, it is doubtful it is of God. Also the Holy Spirit never interrupts Himself. God is not the author of confusion. Raucous laughter in the middle of a God given message will never be of God. Indeed, much of the laughter I am observing, I believe to be spirits of mockery masquerading under the guise of the Holy Spirit. I sat on Derek Prince's UK board for some years, and as one of the most travelled Bible teachers of recent years, and well used to manifestations of the Holy Spirit, Derek, who was a man of few words, said how concerned he was about "Torontoism" of which this is a replica. He also felt the charismatic stream had been 'hijacked' by flaky ministry and teaching.

(15) There is not only a host of information on the web we can examine, but a growing number of good men have now offered assessments of "Florida". I can send these to you on request and one of the best is by Doug Harris of the well known Reach out Trust in Surrey. These people are specifically called to deal with sects and cults and have much experience and insight from which we can learn. Tony Pearce and Dave Hunt have also written well measured articles amongst others.

(16) Many things have come from America over the past 40 years and the problem is nobody bothers to check them out. Big name "leaders" are the biggest culprits! Check the doctrine, background, pedigree, track record of "ministers" and you might be surprised. "You are gods" and "Jesus died spiritually" are 2 doctrines peddled by American ministries who are very popular here. The fact that somebody is on the God channel is no guarantee that they are Biblically accurate or sound. "If the ROOT be holy, so are the branches" (Romans 11 v 16.) If there is something wrong at the source, then there will always be something wrong with the so called fruit. That's why WE HAVE TO CHECK OUT THE SOURCE!

(17) In SWORD magazine (formerly PROPHECY TODAY) last year November/December 2007, a Word from the Lord was printed. This was to the Church and the Nation of Britain and was given by the leader of one of the longest standing intercessory movements in this nation (a Spirit-filled man) Part of this stated "My people give heed to those who prophesy a lie and they delight in teachers of falsehood. They run to those who steal from them by their destructive heresies, for they cannot discern a path of righteousness. A wave of deception is about to break forth that will sweep away many. Therefore, take heed to yourselves and cling to the Word of my truth." It also contained clear revelation about the negative economic and financial situation which would come, and I can't help

noticing that since then we have seen a huge "downturn" in our nation in these areas. Others I know have been waiting for a wave of deception to come. I see nothing else around that fits this.

We understand that Todd Bentley may have already been invited to Reading (?) and that certainly there are those from the town who have already visited Lakeland. Consequently with the backing of my Church which represents a growing segment of the body of Christ in the south area of Reading and surrounding villages, we will unfortunately not be able to support, promote or back anything connected with these happenings. We will of course continue to fellowship with, relate to and support Churches, Fellowships and individuals in the Reading area as we are enabled and are led, as we have done in the past, and particularly within Biblical parameters. We understand that our concerns and warnings are widely and equally shared and supported by other Churches and organisations in this nation.

We also find ourselves at variance with the statement issued by the Evangelical Alliance (Joel Edwards) in a number of areas. For example, to compare these strange occurrences with such revivals as Jonathan Edwards, Wesley, Whitfield and the Jeffreys is an odious comparison. As any student of revivals or Church history will well know, the reactions here were physical reactions, mainly by sinners to clear anointed Biblical preaching and presentation of the gospel and not to questionable things producing bizarre behaviour in Christians following some "impartation" by one man. However, in my view, such is the power of deception.

No doubt there will, as always, be those who will re-act to what I have said. I am willing to take that risk for the sake of many wounded 'charismatic' saints we have met over the years, and whom we have had to help and get back on their feet. I'd rather sound a trumpet call now and risk bigots firing shots at me than to pick up pieces later on and be guilty of standing before the Lord knowing that I should have said something and didn't. For those who feel I am speaking out of turn, having been involved in "charismatic renewal" for 42 years, and pastoring here for 32, I do feel I have some right and experience to comment on these events.

We do not intend to get involved in endless discussion or argument over these matters, particularly where people have not bothered to answer the questions that are raised or viewed the many excerpts available. These things have been weighed carefully and prayerfully before this communication, but for the sake of the body of Christ in Reading, felt it would be helpful to flag up this message BEFORE things get too far. It would be good to think that those in Reading who truly weigh things by the Scriptures and seek to exercise discernings of spirits may actually do that before these bizarre events hit Reading with force.

I rest my case. May the Lord speak clearly to and have mercy upon us all.

John Angliss.

PS. I am receiving a growing number of responses all of which support what I have said. For those in Reading, I have had these from Tom Hamblin and Eric Bird, both of whom taught and mentored many in the town before moving.

We recommend all readers purchasing and reading "Protection from Deception" by Derek Prince. Derek addresses many of the issues we have raised here.