

THE SICKNESS UNTO DEATH: SPIRITUAL DRUNKENNESS AND FALSE REVIVAL

By: Pastor Bill Randles

“These people are drunk but not with wine, they stagger but not by strong drink ...” Isaiah 29:9

What we are seeing in the so-called Lakeland revival, did not come “like a mighty rushing wind out of heaven”, rather it is the direct result of several “streams” that have converged over the last twenty years. The roots of Todd Bentley’s experienced based revival, are manifold. They include the Kansas City Prophets of the late 1980’s and early nineties, John Wimber’s Vineyard movement, South African Evangelist Rodney Howard Browne, the Toronto Blessing, to the subsequent Pensacola Revival which led directly to Lakeland Florida and Todd Bentley. A major common denominator, which runs through all of these streams, is an emphasis on an experience called spiritual drunkenness!

There can be no denying that Bentley is a direct result of the so called Kansas City Prophets, Bentley himself regards two of these prophets openly, in spite of the moral collapses of both of them. He counts as a mentor Bob Jones, a seer who had to leave the ministry after having to confess to using his prophetic office to disrobe women. But to Bentley, Jones is a spiritual father. It was Jones’ teaching that encouraged false prophecies in the church by encouraging “young prophets” that they need not be 100 % accurate, and that it was a good thing that the accuracy was so low, otherwise there would be a whole lot of Ananias’s and Saphirra’s!

Another highly esteemed “prophet” by Bentley is Paul Cain- the onetime protégé of false prophet William Branham. Branham believed that the doctrine of the Trinity was “of the devil” and that the Zodiac was as reliable a guide as the Bible. But Bentley’s mentor Cain regards Branham as the “greatest prophet of the twentieth century”. Cain’s teaching on Joel’s army, being a mighty end time army of Christians taking dominion, put into words the hope of the Dominionistic “Great Endtimes Revival” heresy that many have been awaited for some time. But Cain also was temporarily defrocked because of a sex and alcohol scandal.

Rodney Howard Browne, a South African Evangelist was the primary one who extracted out of the Joel’s army teaching, the experience of spiritual drunkenness. Doesn’t Joel tell us that there will be “New Wine”? Didn’t Peter use the Joel Text on the day of Pentecost? And when they all began to speak in tongues, didn’t the mockers accuse them of being drunk on “New Wine”? Out of these inferences and faulty interpretations emerged the so-called “Laughing Revival” which spread around the world. Rodney Howard Browne ministered so much spiritual drunkenness, he dubbed himself “God’s Bartender” and he called places where he would “minister”, “Joel’s place”.

These meetings popularized the irreverence, hilarity, madness, and irrationality as being “a genuine revival”, or “a great move of God”. Sermons on Hell were interrupted by hysterical laughter, ministers were put into trance states and never taken out of them, preachers began boasting that they never had to preach anymore, and Rodney and his imitators would open services with “have another drink”!

What were Toronto and Pensacola all about? They were both a direct result of the ministry of Rodney Howard Browne - they too were permeated with drunkenness. Ministers staggering around, slurred speech, ridicule of scripture - (I saw a film of a service by a bleary eyed, disheveled Englishman named John Scotland, who motioned to an open Bible on a pulpit and slurred “I’ll get to that yet for those of you who are still into it”.) Yet there were thousands of people who flocked to the meetings, and for what? To participate in spiritual drunkenness!

Now we have come to the current crisis within Evangelical and Pentecostal churches. At a time when the apostles called for utter sobriety, clear thinking, and sound doctrine, instead thousands flock to Lakeland to “get it” and

“bring it back to their own church”. (By the way, it couldn’t possibly be the Holy Spirit, who is the divine person, and cannot be transported or imparted at will!) Where is “it” taking us - this defection, this apostasy? Certainly out of usefulness to our Lord, who warned us of **“that evil servant who shall say in his heart ‘My Lord delays his coming’ and shall then beat the maidservant and menservants (Have you seen Bentley’s violent approach?) and eat and drink with the drunken”** (*Matthew 24*).

Could this madness go any further? Well, yes as a matter of fact it could. There is a group called the **New Mystics** headed by an evangelist named John Crowder. He takes the “drunkenness” experience to the next level. His **“drunken glory tours”**, yes that is what he calls them, received into churches all over America and the world, induct backslidden or fraudulent Christians into mystical experiences such as stigmata, bilocation (a sorcerer’s term for being in two locations at once), third heaven visitation, etc. etc. etc! All the while administering the next level of spiritual drunkenness, “toking on the glory”, in other words getting high on the presence of God. He stands up in front of his congregations and pretends to suck on a marijuana cigarette, (an imaginary one) which he blasphemously calls “baby Jesus”. He is releasing an album of music, which is entitled (blasphemously, again) “Toke the Ghost”!

My point is not to titillate or intrigue with the latest crazy spiritual fad; I see something more ominous in all of this. I believe that spiritual drunkenness is more than zany antics; I don’t believe it is mere histrionics. Spiritual drunkenness is mentioned in the Bible as being a judgment of God.

Isaiah 29:9-13: “Pause and wonder! Blind yourselves and be blind! They are drunk, but not with wine; they stagger, but not with intoxicating drink. For the LORD has poured out on you the spirit of deep sleep, and has closed your eyes, namely, the prophets; and He has covered your heads, namely, the seers. The whole vision has become to you like the words of a book that is sealed, which men deliver to one who is literate, saying, “Read this, please.” And he says, “I cannot, for it is sealed.” Then the book is delivered to one who is illiterate, saying, “Read this, please.” And he says, “I am not literate.” Therefore the LORD said: “Inasmuch as these people draw near with their mouths and honor Me with their lips, but have removed their hearts far from Me, and their fear toward Me is taught by the commandment of men.”

I see in the antics of Howard Browne, Bentley, the new so called “prophets”, and all who either participate or support such a move a portent of a terrible judgment. The Book closed and sealed? Illiterates in the pulpits? Can you see that this warning is happening before our very eyes! **“Judgment begins in the house of God...If the Righteous scarcely be saved, what shall become of the ungodly and the sinner?”** says *First Peter*. The judgment involves loss of discernment, loss of usefulness, in some cases loss of family, ministry, loss of relevance to this perishing generation, and in many cases, loss of saving faith itself! It is not too late to turn, but it will take humility! How do you admit it was all wrong after so much investment, (you went on trips to the revival, you staggered in front of crowds of people, etc) If you just humble yourself, admit you were wrong and go back to an orthodox, Bible based, God centered fellowship, perhaps this sickness will not be unto death, but to the glory of the forgiving God! Who says, “If you seek me you will find me, if you seek me with all of your heart”. *Jeremiah 29:13*

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