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A STUDY OF THE PREACHMENT AND PRACTICE OF

THE REVEREND MR. ORAL ROBERTS

1947 - 1960

A Thesis

Presented to

the Faculty of

Asbury Theological Seminary

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Divinity

Approved:



Advisor

by

Gerald Owen Breithaupt

August 1970

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The current rise of healing among the sects and denominations on the American religious scene is evidence prima facia of a search for an adequate working philosophy regarding healing. The gamut is spanned from the ministry of Alfred Price as he leans across the communion kneeler to minister in the full ecclesiastical vestments of the Episcopal Church, to the shirt-sleeved ministry of Oral Roberts as he embraces the microphone crying out, "In the name of Jesus of Nazareth, be healed!"

The question that was faced everywhere in research concerning Roberts' ministry was "What do you think of Oral Roberts?" What really was indicated behind the veil of the question was this more pertinent question, "Do you think Oral Roberts can really heal?," or, "Do you really think that anyone can be healed by faith or the laying on of hands?" The reader must look into the life and ministry of the man to find an answer for this question.

Oral Roberts stands within his lonely calling as one who has been castigated for no more reason than the fact that he was approaching this dynamic problem of the relationship of the body and soul from a different direction. He has often been praised for no better reason than the fact that he was unique. Described as a

"religious comet" by Time magazine,¹ Roberts has attempted to plant firmer stakes in the great religious movement in America. Standing as an enigma, Roberts has been described by Cornell as a "Man on Fire . . ."²

The New York Times indicates their understanding of the attitude of many clergymen toward the ministry of Oral Roberts in these words: "Most top leaders of the major Protestant denominations regard Mr. Roberts coolly. They consider him primarily a showman who pulls out all the stops emotionally."³ In spite of the obvious root that his ministry was taking among the masses he served, there was still opposition to his type of ministry, even within the ranks of his own denominational leaders.

Roberts said of those who advised him to disassociate himself from such an active interest in a healing ministry, "Perhaps they didn't feel a fire shut up in their bones, nor did they hear God's voice ringing in their ears, nor the haunting cry of the lost and suffering humanity in their hearts as I did." He indicated his own understanding of the place his ministry has when he said, "We are bringing early Christianity back and giving it to the world."⁴

¹"Deadline From God," Time, July 11, 1955, p. 41.

²George W. Cornell, "Man on Fire," reprint from Success Unlimited, September, 1958.

³"Evangelist Opens 6-Day L.I. Crusade," New York Times, March 26, 1959, p. 39.

⁴Oral Roberts, Oral Roberts' Best Sermons and Stories As Presented In His Great Evangelistic Campaigns Around the World (Tulsa, Oklahoma: Oral Roberts, c.1956), p. 102.

The healing ministry through the ages has had a trichotomous basis in its psychological, theological, and historical emphasis. The literature of healing indicates that we can point to the healing ministry of Christ as revealing the will of God regarding health and sickness. It indicates as well that the apostolic healing ministry continued well into the third century when there began to be degeneration within the Church and the healing functions gradually began to be taken over entirely by the physician. In our own day the two fields of religion and medicine, which for so long had been at odds, are returning to a compatible working relationship.

The healing ministry has been held in disrepute often because of the abuse that has been made of such a ministry by the charlatan, the uninformed, and the quack. In light of the increasing attention being given to the healing power of God and the challenging impact such a development has had upon the religious scene of America, there is a need upon the part of every Christian to give serious consideration to the subject of divine healing.

The establishment of committees to investigate the matter of healing within the various denominational boundaries is indicative of a desire on the part of the churches themselves to come to some understanding of this phenomenon of healing in a generation that is fraught with technology.⁵

⁵Walter W. Dwyer, The Churches' Handbook for Spiritual Healing (New York: Ascension Press, c. 1962), p. 47.

Healing through faith has the mystery and appeal of an unexplored continent in which fact and fancy mingle. The reporting of the ministry of Oral Roberts is as full of fact and imagination as is the whole field of healing faith. Herein the attempt is made to disassociate some of the imaginative elements from the reporting of his ministry and to relate the facts as seen by this writer.

A prime reason for this study has been the personal interest of the writer in the whole subject of healing, with Oral Roberts as the frequent epitome in the popular mind. During several years of serving pastorates the name of Oral Roberts has leaped to the forefront of religious controversy, which has had no small influence upon the congregations served by this writer. This personal desire to better understand the subject of healing by faith, as exemplified through the ministry of Roberts, led to a study of the man and his ministry.

The Problem. In light of the biblical statements regarding healing the ministry of Oral Roberts cannot be dismissed out-of-hand. His work is extraordinarily influential among a large segment of our population; his ministry appears to straddle both main-line and extreme religious groups; and there has been no satisfactory explanation by his detractors of the healings that purportedly occur during his ministry.

In order to establish an appropriate response to the question,

"What do you think of Oral Roberts?," in the context of the problem as stated above, it was necessary to do the following:

1. Examine the matter of healing, as exemplified by the ministry of Oral Roberts;
2. Identify the theological base for his ministry of healing;
3. Analyze his theological conceptions and their presentation in his public ministry; and
4. Reach conclusions regarding the total ministry of Oral Roberts based on the preceeding evidence.

The Scope. This study covers the period 1947-1960 and is related primarily to the theological ramifications of the ministry of Oral Roberts, though in the outworkings it required investigation into other related areas.

This study does not encompass the sociological investigation of healings related to his ministry, nor does it concern itself with the medical and religious proof or denial of healing. These interests are both popular and exotic, but they are not basic to his theological position.

The first section of this study, "An Analysis of Oral Roberts' Preachment," is presented in the words and spirit of Roberts, as closely as it could be obtained, because it is felt that to more adequately understand the man and his ministry one must first understand the spirit of his thought. Frequently Roberts and his

associates have been quoted out of context and misconstrued by an unfriendly critic, whereas a basic understanding of his thought and an appreciation of his person would create a clearer knowledge of his statements in a doubtful area of thought. This section is concerned with Oral Roberts' theological conceptions of his ministry.

The second section, "An Analysis of Oral Roberts' Practice," is an attempt to portray the relationship of the Oral Roberts ministry to the people who attend the crusades. This is the practical outworkings of his theological positions as they affect people.

Section three, "A Critique of Oral Roberts' Preachment and Practice," is not an attempt to take each aspect of Roberts' thought and make a critique of it, but only to take major thoughts and group them together to make an evaluation of the whole, as it relates to the Wesleyan evangelical theological position.

The Procedure. Research concerning the subject of healing, as preached and practiced by the Reverend Mr. Oral Roberts, began with initial correspondence with the Tulsa, Oklahoma office.

It was determined that in order for this study to demand intensive and broad validity it had to encompass as many areas of his ministry as possible.

1. The Oral Roberts Crusades were attended in Detroit, Michigan, and Youngstown, Ohio, for three days each to evaluate structure, procedures, and operation;

2. Interviews were obtained with Oral Roberts and members of his staff, particularly the Reverend Mr. Hart Armstrong, crusade administrator. Interviews were also held with a large number of persons attending each of the crusades;
3. All of the writings of Oral Roberts were thoroughly analyzed for theological content; the recorded tapes of his sermons were analyzed; in addition the writer participated in the services in which they were preached; and
4. Correspondence was maintained with the Tulsa, Oklahoma office for statistical information, as well as correspondence with individuals that the writer met during the crusades.

The primary residue of this study presents itself in the coherence of the meaning of salvation as it is applied to the somatic as well as the spiritual aspects of an individual's life. This is an effort to understand the theological concepts and practices of Oral Roberts in an attempt to understand the man, his message, and his ministry.

PART I

AN ANALYSIS OF ORAL ROBERTS' PREACHMENT

CHAPTER 2

THE LIFE OF ORAL ROBERTS

In order to understand the thought and ministry of the Reverend Mr. Oral Roberts it is necessary to understand some of the forces that have helped to shape his life. This is the only way that an honest evaluation and critique may be made of this man and his ministry.

Roberts' Background

Little did Roberts' grandfather, Amos P. Roberts, think that one of his progeny would stir the world when he moved from Alabama and settled in Indian territory which was later to become the state of Oklahoma.¹ But Oral Roberts has done just that, and grandfather Roberts' migration made possible the birth of the boy in an environment favorable to evangelism.

When Oral Roberts' father, the Reverend Mr. Ellis Roberts, gathered his children around the nightly family altar, little Oral took his place with the older children as their father and mother prayed that God might bless their family. Roberts says, "Papa and Mama believed their children were something special to God and they wanted Him to put His hand upon us and to watch over us, and that

¹Oral Roberts, Oral Roberts' Life Story as Told by Himself (Tulsa, Oklahoma: Oral Roberts, 1952), p. 38.

someday through His help we would be a blessing to the world."² This Baptist farmer-preacher thus gathered his five children, Velma, Elmer, Jewell, Vaden, and Oral, and taught them of Jesus.³

The eldest sister, Velma, who died at the age of nineteen as a result of epilepsy and pneumonia, was not the only invalid in the household of Ellis Roberts. His son, Oral, was "handicapped by a stuttering, stammering tongue and a pair of weak lungs that eventually landed him in an invalid's bed with tuberculosis in both lungs."⁴ The eldest son, Elmer, once invested his last thirty-five cents for gasoline to take Oral to a tent meeting. Oral says of the incident, "My brother Elmer invested thirty-five cents in my poor life and it paid off in one night for the complete healing of my body."⁵ His other sister, Jewel, gave him the first hope of healing, and though younger by two years, Oral was raised almost as a twin with his brother Vaden. Though the youngest of the family, this portion of the study is based on the life of Oral Roberts.

As "a child of the sawdust,"⁶ Granville Oral Roberts was born January 24, 1918, twelve miles from Ada, Oklahoma, on his father's

²Ibid., pp. 33-34.

³Ibid., p. 21.

⁴Oral Roberts, Deliverance from Fear and From Sickness (Tulsa, Oklahoma: Oral Roberts, 1954), book jacket.

⁵Roberts, Oral Roberts' Life Story as Told by Himself, p. 51.

⁶Will Oursler, The Healing Power of Faith (New York: Hawthorn Books Inc., Publishers, 1957), p. 178.

farm. Here he lived until he was a good-sized boy and until the family moved into the county seat town of Ada, where they lived when Oral ran away from home at the age of sixteen.

I was gone nearly a year, but I never got myself off my hands. In reality I had run away from my stuttering tongue, my weak body, my frustrated life, my inner conflicts, and my tormenting fears. I found these things went with me and I couldn't shake them off.⁷

Roberts' Illness

One of the precipitating reasons for his escapade was his chronic frailty of body, but the activating cause was his habit of stuttering. As a born stuttrer,⁸ this habit became a boyhood tragedy which threatened all of his social relationships. This lifetime habit of stammering was but a minor incident in reality, for the real affliction of Roberts' life was his tuberculosis. His description of the affliction is at once tragic and graphic: "It seemed someone had a knife and was cutting my lungs to pieces. My breath was being cut off. When I coughed, blood ran out the sides of my mouth."⁹ When Oral's father was advised to have his youngest son admitted into Eastern Sanatorium at Talihina, Oklahoma, Oral felt that he had come to the end of his way. When he heard the sentence of the doctor that there was tuberculosis in both lungs he

⁷ Roberts, Oral Roberts' Life Story as Told by Himself, pp. 42, 43.

⁸ Oral Roberts, God Is a Good God (Tulsa, Oklahoma: Oral Roberts Evangelistic Association, Inc., n.d.), p. 5.

⁹ Roberts, Oral Roberts' Life Story as Told by Himself, p. 43.

said, "I felt death in my body."¹⁰ This pronouncement by the physician destroyed any aspirations and hopes that he might have had for the future, which included being a lawyer and governor of the state of Oklahoma.¹¹ He knew that his maternal grandfather and a maternal aunt had died of the disease, and when he collapsed on a basketball court he thought that he had lost the battle. His youthful attitude toward life is indicated in the following remark: "I reached the end of the way when I was seventeen. I faced life with a stammering, stuttering tongue and with tuberculosis in both lungs. I had fought a desperate battle and had lost."¹² This is the opening statement of Oral Roberts' Life Story as Told by Himself, but the end was not as he had supposed. His physical illness was soon to be eclipsed by his spiritual experiences.

From the first hope of healing given him by his mother to the account of the incident given twenty-three years afterwards by an eye-witness, the Reverend Mr. Haskell Rogers,¹³ the physical healing of Oral Roberts has been a stabilizing factor in the meaning of his ministry. After having become God's "property" on

¹⁰Ibid., p. 16.

¹¹Ibid., p. 44.

¹²Ibid., p. 13.

¹³Haskell Rogers, "I Saw Oral Roberts Healed," Abundant Life, XII, No. 12 (December, 1958), 10, 11.

February 7, 1935, he went the further step of asking God for the healing of his body.¹⁴

Through the ministration of "Brother Moncey" in a tent meeting at Ada, Oklahoma, Roberts came to his moment of healing in the prayer line about eleven o'clock in the evening, as Moncey prayed a ten-second prayer for him.¹⁵ When this happened,

God saw me as I was and had faith that I could be changed. When I had faith there was a union of the faith of God in me and my faith in Him. I was set free. My TB was healed. I could talk without stuttering.¹⁶

Roberts' description of his healing of tuberculosis is given in his life story in these words:

Something struck my lungs, and I began tingling throughout my entire body. A beautiful light engulfed me, and the next thing I knew, I was racing back and forth on the big platform with my hands upraised, shouting at the top of my voice, "I am healed! I am healed! I am healed!"¹⁷

After the healing incident, Roberts went to his physician, Dr. Morey, who fluoroscoped his lungs at the Sugg Clinic in Ada, and found him to be in perfect health.¹⁸ He said of his healing, "I was not one

¹⁴Oral Roberts, Exactly How You May Receive Your Healing . . . Through Faith Including a Heart-to-Heart Talk on Your Salvation (Tulsa, Oklahoma: Oral Roberts, 1958), p. 47.

¹⁵Roberts, Oral Roberts' Life Story as Told by Himself, pp. 48-50.

¹⁶Oral Roberts, The 4th Man and Other Famous Sermons Exactly as Oral Roberts Preached Them from the Revival Platform (Tulsa, Oklahoma: Oral Roberts, 1958), p. 87.

¹⁷Roberts, Oral Roberts' Life Story as Told by Himself, p. 51.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 22.

who was healed instantly. I felt the power instantly."¹⁹ Haskell

Rogers said in his eye-witness account:

HAD I KNOWN WHAT THE FUTURE HELD, I would have taken much closer note of a miracle that I witnessed 23 years ago, a miracle that since has had direct effect upon the lives of thousands of people throughout the world. I saw a young Indian boy, weak, emaciated and dying with tuberculosis. I saw him healed in an instant by the power of God.²⁰

That young Indian boy was Oral Roberts.

Roberts' Ministry

Within two months of the time of his healing Roberts began preaching, but it was to be twelve years before the full force of the May 1935 message of God to Roberts was to affect his ministry.²¹

As a minister of the Pentecostal Holiness Church,²² Oral Roberts has pastored churches in Fuquay Springs, North Carolina;

¹⁹ Statement by Oral Roberts in a sermon at Youngstown, Ohio, July 28, 1959.

²⁰ Rogers, "I Saw Oral Roberts Healed," p. 10.

²¹ Roberts, Oral Roberts' Life Story as Told by Himself, p. 54.

²² The Pentecostal Holiness Church was originally organized under the name of Fire-Baptized Holiness Church in 1898 at Anderson, South Carolina. A year later another church was organized under the name of the Pentecostal Holiness Church and in 1911 the two groups united under the name of the latter at Falcon, North Carolina. The general theological position is that of the Methodist family of churches, with modifications. They maintain a strong premillennial position and consider that provision has been made in the atonement for healing. Mead says: "Divine healing is practiced but not to the exclusion of medicine" (p. 144). They lay emphasis upon three divine works of grace, i.e., justification by faith, sanctification, and spirit baptism characterized by speaking in tongues. In 1956 the church had 43,943 members and 1,045 churches. Frank S. Mead, Handbook of Denominations in the United States (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1956).

Toccoa, Georgia; Shawnee, Oklahoma; and Enid, Oklahoma.²³ During the years he served these latter pastorates he also enrolled for college work at Oklahoma Baptist University, Shawnee, Oklahoma,²⁴ and Phillips University, Enid, Oklahoma.²⁵ Also woven into his pastoral work was another aspect of academic life, that of the responsibility for teaching at Southwestern Bible College in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, one day a week.²⁶

It was during the time that he lived in Enid, pastoring the Pentecostal Holiness Church and attending Phillips University, that Oral Roberts made the greatest discovery of his life. He was in a rush to get to class at the university and almost forgetting to read his Bible that morning, he opened it at random and it fell at III John 2. During the following week he discovered three other verses, i.e., Acts 10:38; Luke 9:56; and John 10:10, which became the Biblical

²³"Evangelist Oral Roberts," Oral Roberts Press Kit File (Tulsa, Oklahoma: Oral Roberts Evangelistic Association, Inc.), p. 1.

²⁴Ibid. (Roberts attended this school during the 1943-45 period and received credit in the following courses: Religious Education in the Church, Missions, Bible, Teaching Procedures in the Church School, Life and Writings of Paul, Old Testament History Literature, The Science and Art of Preaching, Oral Interpretation of Literature, American Government, Life of Christ, Prophecy, Vocal and Literary Interpretation of the Bible, Public Speaking, Social Problems, and Composition.)

²⁵Roberts, Oral Roberts' Life Story as Told by Himself, p. 58. (Roberts attended this school during the 1946-47 period and received credits in the following courses: Sociology, Psychology, Personal Counseling, American Prose, and American Poetry.)

²⁶Ibid., p. 63. (At this school Roberts taught one class, Sunday School Administration, during the first year of its organization, 1946-47.)

basis for his healing ministry.²⁷ Roberts says of his discovery of these four primal verses, "A thrill came in my soul that I still feel. A fire began to burn, and it is burning in my heart right now. . . . From that hour Oral Roberts was a changed man."²⁸ When these verses captured his imagination, Roberts left his small pastorate in Enid to launch into a world-wide ministry.

Roberts' Divine Call

Though it was seventeen years before Roberts heard a direct call of God to a specific task, he always felt that he was called of God before he was born.²⁹ His mother's concurrence was in part retrospect and in part a prophecy of things to come: "Oral while you were yet in my womb the Lord told me you were His. He said His hand would be upon your life even before you were born and as long as you lived. You are His."³⁰ Because of the encouragement and faith that

²⁷ Ibid., p. 70ff. (These verses read as follows: "Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth." (III John 2); "God annointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him" (Acts 10:38; ". . . the Son of Man is not come to destroy man's lives, but to save them" (Luke 9:56); ". . . I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly" (John 10:10). (Note: All Scripture references in this work are from the King James Version, unless otherwise noted.)

²⁸ Roberts, Oral Roberts' Life Story as Told by Himself, p. 75.

²⁹ Oral Roberts, "Oral Roberts Talks about God's Surplus," Abundant Life, XII, No. 11 (November 1958), 2.

³⁰ Roberts, Oral Roberts' Life Story as Told by Himself, p. 34.

his parents had in his life and ministry, Roberts is providing for their physical welfare and he says he will continue to do so as long as they live and the Lord prospers him.

Throughout his life, Roberts states that he has heard the direct voice of God on seven occasions.³¹ Beginning with the time God called the name of Oral Roberts as he lay on a mattress on the rear seat of his brother's borrowed car as they drove to the healing service in Ada, Oklahoma, to the present, these messages of God to Roberts have been obeyed.

In May 1935, Roberts says that God called his name in much the same manner as He had called the name of Samuel and Saul in other days. When Roberts realized that it was God speaking to him he listened as God said, "Son, I am going to heal you, and you are to take my healing power to your generation."³² And so it was. The double miracle of healing of his tongue was preceded by Roberts' belief that he was to be healed, and he said, "Now for the first time, I knew why I was going to be healed. I was to take God's healing power to my generation."³³ The two miracles of healing done in his body were capped by the call to preach that Roberts received the

³¹G.H. Montgomery, "God's Seven Messages to Oral Roberts," Abundant Life, XII, No. 4 (April 1958), 14.

³²Roberts, Oral Roberts' Life Story as Told by Himself, p. 49.

³³Montgomery, p. 14.

same night.³⁴

He never forgot during the twelve years that followed, but before he heard the voice of God again it was May 1947, and the sound of the original voice had grown small. In his study at the Pentecostal Holiness Church in Enid, Oklahoma, Roberts brought his desperate searching and longing to a climax. He vowed never to rise from his prostrate position of prayer in his study until God spoke to him. Then the voice came for the second time. "From this hour you will heal the sick and cast out devils by my power."³⁵ Roberts describes his response and reaction to this promise in these words:

It seemed as if ten thousand volts of electricity surged through my body and that a thousand pounds were lifted from my shoulders. My head cleared, my voice became vibrant, my body trembled, and I let out a sigh that I shall always remember.³⁶

And upon hearing the voice of God for the second time, in what was the beginning of the Oral Roberts' ministry of prayer for the sick, he drove from his church study to the parsonage at 805 West Randolph Street to rejoice with his wife. He says of this vibrant experience of being closed in with God:

He let me see human beings everywhere as they really are-- sick, miserable, tormented. I heard their cries. I felt their pains. The shock of it . . . drove me into a ministry

³⁴Montgomery, op. cit., p. 15.

³⁵Roberts, Oral Roberts' Life Story as Told by Himself, p. 90.

³⁶Ibid.

dedicated to saving millions of souls, to taking the gospel to every creature in the world, and to healing the sick and afflicted.³⁷

One year later, May 1948, when God spoke to Roberts at the little crossroads town of Newata, Oklahoma, during a meeting as he prayed for the sick, he sat startled, trying to absorb what God said to him. It was this:

Son, you have been faithful up until this hour and now you shall feel my power in your right hand. You shall detect the presence of demons, you will know their number and name and will have my power to cast them out.³⁸

This was the third time God had spoken and it brought a decisive change to the ministry of Oral Roberts. This new point of contact in his right hand "gave him a confidence and an assurance that resulted in the healing of thousands of people."³⁹ On the first night that this new power came to him, he says it seemed as if it would tear his hand from his wrist.⁴⁰

In the same year, 1948, God came to Roberts in an audible voice for the fourth time in a hotel room in Denver, Colorado. This time God said, "There remains a healing for the sick body of my bride."⁴¹ Montgomery says, "From that moment on Oral Roberts

³⁷ Oral Roberts, "The Seven Things You Have to Deal with in Your Healing," Abundant Life, XII, No. 6 (June 1958), 3.

³⁸ Roberts, Oral Roberts' Life Story as Told by Himself, p. 109.

³⁹ Montgomery, "God's Seven Messages to Oral Roberts," p. 25.

⁴⁰ Roberts, Oral Roberts' Life Story as Told by Himself, p. 111.

⁴¹ Montgomery, loc. cit.

conceived the idea that every child of God has good health as a part of his heritage."⁴²

On January 12, 1950, God's voice was heard the fifth time by Roberts as it came to him above the roar of the airplane motors as he flew into Miami, Florida, for a crusade. This time God said to him, "My servant . . . this year you are to emphasize the power and presence of the Holy Ghost and tell the people to have an expectation for Jesus to come during 1950."⁴³ The effect of this message was noticed in the results of Roberts' ministry in the South Carolina and Florida crusades of that year when twenty-two thousand five hundred souls were won.⁴⁴

From one end of the nation to the other Roberts traveled, serving his Christ, and the voice of God never deserted him no matter where he was or what he was doing. Driving along the Columbia River in Oregon in 1954, God spoke to Roberts the sixth time. This time He said, "My son, if you will believe, you can conceive a plan that will save millions."⁴⁵ This was the birth of the Seven World Outreaches of Oral Roberts' Ministry!

In a hotel room God spoke again, this the seventh and last time to date. In January 1956, in Hong Kong, as the evangelistic party

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 26.

⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 27.

prayed, led by the Reverend Mr. Hart Armstrong, "Brother Roberts became conscious of another voice"46 This time God said, "If you will seek my joy, my pleasure and my faith, I will use you as an instrument to save ten million souls in the next ten years."⁴⁷ God had spoken the seventh time, and from that day on Roberts' ministry has been revolutionized.

Roberts, the Man

These are some of the factors that have helped to shape the life of Oral Roberts, but what kind of man is this whose ministry of faith and prayer has rocked an entire religious world? Answering this question, Roberts himself says, "I am just a simple man who loves Jesus Christ."⁴⁸

This fifty-two year old Oklahoma evangelist, standing six feet two inches tall, whose heritage is part Cherokee and part Choctaw Indian, is an engaging person. Cornell's description of his personality is apt:

There is an intriguing versatility about him.

In personal conversation or in small intimate groups, he's mild and easygoing, comfortable to be around. He speaks softly, is quick to laugh, and eagerly friendly. "Like every boy's favorite uncle," an associate said.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

But once he's on a floodlit platform, before one of his huge rallies, a striking transformation comes over him.

That casual, self-effacing quality gives way to robust decisiveness. He is positive, masterful, assured. His voice rings with authority. His whole body seems to pulse with new vitality. It's as if a switch had been thrown on a human dynamo. And the air grows electric.⁴⁹

With his red-headed wife, Evelyn, and their four children-- Rebecca, Ronald David, Richard Lee, and Roberta Jean--Roberts lives in a modest ranch style three-bedroom house, on a two hundred and forty acre farm near Tulsa, Oklahoma. When Roberts met his wife, who was teaching school in Texas, he promptly fell in love with her. He said after a fishing trip with her that the only thing they caught was each other. He supports his family on a salary which is described as being comparable to that of the pastor of any large church.⁵⁰ He says, "My salary is comparable to that of Billy Graham."^{51,52}

This is the man. These are the forces that have forged his life and ministry. This is the man whose thought and ministry will be under discussion in the following pages as it relates to the healing ministry that has been his.

⁴⁹George W. Cornell, "Man on Fire," Success Unlimited (Chicago: n.p., September 1958), p. 3.

⁵⁰Jack Roach, "Oral Roberts says: 'God Heals; I Don't'," Charleston Evening Post (Charleston, South Carolina: April 19, 1958).

⁵¹Norman Spell, "Oral Roberts Tells Life Story at Crusade," News and Courier (Charleston, South Carolina: April 24, 1958).

⁵²Cornell is insistent that sources close to Roberts confirm his salary figure to be "about \$27,000 a year." (Cornell, op. cit., p. 7.)

CHAPTER 3

ORAL ROBERTS' CONTROLLING THEOLOGICAL PREMISE

The basic theological premise of Oral Roberts is that "God is a good God." In the following pages, this theme is illustrated by his public ministry, his theological concepts, and his concept of the Biblical basis for his ministry.

The personal public ministry of the Reverend Mr. Oral Roberts begins as he dramatically enters the platform of the great "tent cathedral" and leads the expectant overflow audience in singing the chorus of the popular theme song of the crusade, "God Is a Good God." This done, the evangelist asks, "Do you love Jesus tonight?"

"Amen!" the audience responds.

"With all your heart?"

"Amen!"

Then follows a minute or so of concert-praising God all over the place. "Now," says the evangelist, "before you sit down, turn around and shake hands with three people near you, and say, 'Neighbor, Jesus is coming soon.'" The response to this request is as universal and as enthusiastic as to any of the others he makes during his hours of action.¹

Thus begins a service which is not concluded until the hymns

¹Oral Roberts and G.H. Montgomery (eds.), God's Formula for Success and Prosperity (Tulsa, Oklahoma: Oral Roberts, 1956), p. 149.

have softened to a silent echo, the sermon has been eclipsed by the crowd moving forward in repentance, and the sick have crossed the platform to be touched by the hands of Oral Roberts.

What factors have been responsible for the obvious success of a ministry that has complementary aspects of evangelism and healing?

ROBERTS' PREMISE

There is a singular feature of this ministry that he holds in his hands which presupposes all else. It is the factor of his own discovery, after much soul searching, that "God is a good God." It is in the application of the new-found conception of God that this concrete healing ministry began--a ministry that is definitive by its very structure. He has made this conception the basic tenet of a far reaching ministry, pervading many areas of the world and every class and rank of people. This is the one constant factor in all of the varying circumstances of his ministry to people--"God is a good God."

Roberts has coined the above descriptive phrase to illustrate a new conception of God that had made entrance into his mind and heart through his intensive reading of Scripture² and a profound searching and seeking after His will.³ He believes that this was a very

²Oral Roberts, Oral Roberts' Life Story as Told by Himself, pp. 70-75.

³Ibid., pp. 88-91.

climactic discovery as it dramatically changed his life and ministry. It shoved the peripheral limits of his influence from a church with a congregation of two hundred⁴ to a huge tent seating twelve thousand five hundred,⁵ and on to the world through radio, television, and the printed word. He says of this dynamic conception:

The greatest discovery I ever made was the discovery that God is good, totally good. I made this discovery while reading the Bible. I shall never forget when I first read III John 2, Luke 9:56, John 10:10, and other similar Scriptures. They changed my thinking and put me to believing right.⁶

This basic tenet takes a more propertied formation in the thought of Roberts when he becomes descriptive of God's desire for man. As a Being whose very nature is compassion and forgiveness,⁷ "God wants to save us, heal us, prosper us, bless us. This is His nature, His practice, His will."⁸ Each of these individual desires become a part of the total unity in the heart of God for man, and they further illustrate the foundational concept of the Million Souls Crusades that "God is a good God."

Yet each of these elements of salvation, healing, prosperity,

⁴Oral Roberts, A Man's Hand (Tulsa, Oklahoma: Oral Roberts Tract Society, n.d.), p. 13.

⁵"Oral Roberts' Evangelism is World-Wide Ministry," Oral Roberts Press Kit File (Tulsa, Oklahoma: Oral Roberts Evangelistic Association, Inc., n.d.), p. 1.

⁶Oral Roberts, Deliverance from Fear and from Sickness (Tulsa, Oklahoma: Oral Roberts, 1954), p. 12.

⁷Oral Roberts, "Everything God Has Is Yours," Abundant Life, XII, No. 1 (January 1958), 22.

⁸Roberts, Deliverance from Fear and from Sickness, p. 12.

and blessing must be united with others in the ministry of Oral Roberts, for salvation is more than a spiritual cataclysmic act. It is within the nature, practice, and will of God that these various elements are merely to be facets of the overall expression of total salvation, for "the literal translation of the word salvation is good health of soul, mind, and body."⁹

Roberts believes that God is hindered in this expression of complete salvation because what He is able to do in this regard is so directly related and co-ordinated with the active faith of mankind, that salvation can only have significance as men believe He will do these things.¹⁰

The concept of God held by man is a definite determinative factor relative to the areas in which God can work and the extent to which He can operate. It is not only the negative cerebration relative to the possibilities of God, but the emoting concerning the power of God, that circumscribes His manifestation of greatness. It is only through this thinking and believing that God is limited.¹¹ When the lack of faith on the part of our Lord's own people in His own town and in His own country denied Him the privilege of doing great

⁹Oral Roberts, Faith Against Life's Storms (Tulsa, Oklahoma: Oral Roberts, 1957), p. 42.

¹⁰Oral Roberts, Exactly How You May Receive Your Healing . . . Through Faith Including a Heart-to-Heart Talk on Your Salvation, p. 9.

¹¹Oral Roberts, Expect the Mass Miracle (Tulsa, Oklahoma: Oral Roberts Tract Society, n.d.).

"wonders" for them, because they lacked faith in Him, we can see an immediate example of the manner in which God can be confined relative to the demonstration of His healing power.¹²

This discovery, that "God is a good God," stands as the warp of the healing ministry of Mr. Roberts, into which is woven the woof of a patterned evangelistic ministry in much the same manner as the scarlet thread of redemption is woven throughout the warp of the Old Testament Scriptures. Without this elemental factor, the garment of Roberts' healing ministry is torn and incomplete. With it his ministry is captivating the imagination and lives of all classes throughout the world.

Every aspect of Roberts' ministry centers around this basic premise. Nothing is ever attempted or accomplished unless it is viewed in relationship to the dorsal of this primal conception. It forms the guiding core of his "seven-fold ministry" as well as his personal devotional attention to the command of our Lord. Were it not for this absolute foundational philosophy concerning the goodness of God, the positive and dynamic conception of the mission and ministry of healing that characterizes Oral Roberts would be invalid.

ROBERTS' CONCEPT OF GOD

For one singular concept of such a spiritual nature to so

¹²John 1:11: "He came unto His own and His own received Him not."

enlarge a common local ministry and bring to such conclusive fruition a world-wide ministry, there is inherent the necessity of a large view of God.¹³ This we find in Oral Roberts. A summarization of a man's concept of God is equally as difficult as the forming of an inclusive definitive statement concerning the attributes and properties of God, but Roberts says simply of his conception of God:

This is my concept of God: First of all, that God is a good God; second, that God intervenes in human affairs; and third, that he appears to people in the form of their need. This great concept dominates my entire life. I approach every problem in the light of the idea that God is a good God.¹⁴

" . . . God is as big in your life as you will believe Him to be."¹⁵ With such a conception of God as belongs to this man, one need not be surprised to hear him say that healing is for every individual man or woman who will believe. This miracle of healing is not being limited by a numerical quantity, but rather by the intensiveness of each person's faith. Because there is the provision of healing available for one single man there is the open provision of healing for every individual in the world.¹⁶ There is no difference in this

¹³Oral Roberts, God Is a Good God, p. 3.

¹⁴Oral Roberts, The Healing Stream (Tulsa, Oklahoma: Oral Roberts, 1959), p. 37.

¹⁵Oral Roberts, How Big Is God? (Tulsa, Oklahoma: Oral Roberts Tract Society, n.d.).

¹⁶Oral Roberts, If You Need Healing Do These Things (Tulsa, Oklahoma: Oral Roberts, 1957), p. 21.

basic need of man, though it may differ in its overt manifestations. One man is equal to another in the sight of God, and the will of God is that each person, without regard, should be healed. "He is just as willing to heal one as he is another."¹⁷ To support this he refers to the following Scripture: "Now when the sun was setting, all they that had any sick with divers diseases brought them unto him; and he laid his hands on every one of them and healed them" (Luke 4:40).¹⁸

As a means of documenting his statement that everyone can be healed as part of his rights as a Christian, Roberts quotes the following passages as representative of many others in the Bible, that illustrate the wide compass of God's healing power: Matthew 8:16; 14:35,36; 15:30,31; Mark 1:32-34; Luke 4:40; Acts 8:6,7; 28:9.¹⁹ It

¹⁷ Roberts, The Healing Stream, p. 26.

¹⁸ Oral Roberts (comp.), The Healing Scriptures (Tulsa, Oklahoma: Oral Roberts Evangelistic Association, Inc., 1959), p. 36.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 34-37. (These verses read as follows: "When the even was come, they brought unto him many that were possessed with devils: and he cast out the spirits with his word, and healed all that were sick" (Matthew 8:16); "And when the men of that place had knowledge of him, they sent out into all that country round about, and brought unto him all that were diseased; and besought him that they might only touch the hem of his garment: and as many as touched were made perfectly whole" (Matthew 14:35, 36); "And great multitudes came unto him, having with them those that were lame, blind, dumb, maimed, and many others, and cast them down at Jesus' feet; and he healed them: insomuch that the multitude wondered, when they saw the dumb to speak, the maimed to be whole, the lame to walk, and the blind to see: and they glorified the God of Israel" (Matthew 15:30, 31); "And at even, when the sun did set, they brought unto him all that were diseased, and them that were possessed with devils. And all the city was gathered together at the door. And he healed many that were sick of divers diseases, and cast out many devils; and suffered not the devils to speak, because they knew him" (Mark 1:32-34); "Now when the sun was setting, all that had any sick with divers diseases brought them unto

is this limitless willingness and earnestness on the part of God to use His ability to save and heal and bless that has been "the most exciting discovery of my life," says Roberts.²⁰

The healing of God as it is performed in the lives of men is just as broad as is His provision for the salvation of the souls of men. Just as God had gone to the extremity of Himself to provide this salvation for the soul, even so has He gone to equal lengths to provide for the healing of the body.²¹ His ability to heal is no less than His ability to save.

If the proper criteria have been met, even the smallest defect and disease, such as a headache, can be healed with the same degree of efficacy as the dramatic tragic diseases of life.²² Thus the most hopeless pathological diseases listed in the medical books cannot reach beyond the healing ability of God; for "God can heal

him; and he laid his hands on every one of them, and healed them" (Luke 4:40); "And the people with one accord gave heed unto those things which Philip spake, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did. For unclean spirits, crying with a loud voice, came out of many that were possessed with them: and many taken with palsies, and that were lame were healed" (Acts 8:6, 7); "So when this was done, others also which had diseases in the island, came, and were healed" (Acts 28:9).

²⁰ Roberts, Exactly How You May Receive Your Healing . . . Through Faith Including a Heart-to-Heart Talk on Your Salvation, p. 10.

²¹ Roberts, If You Need Healing Do These Things, p. 57.

²² Roberts, How Big Is God?

cancer, or any other malignant disease, as easily as he can heal a headache."²³ This ability of God to heal is not limited by the severity, rarity, or monstrosity of the disease, but rather by the simple element of the lack of faith on the part of the individual, as this lack of faith fails to provide an opportunity for a demonstration of His healing power.²⁴

Healing and the Bible

A God of such tremendous power, Who is desirous of using it for the good of man, is concerned that His people know Him and be partakers of His healing benefits. For this purpose God has provided a written record of Himself in the Scriptures, the record in which He reveals Himself through direct inspiration.

In speaking of the inspiration of the Bible, Roberts says, "Every single word in the Bible was directly inspired by God . . . ,"
and within every word of this inspired revelation is packed "the power of God."²⁵

Because of this direct revelation of God through inspired men, the Bible has a unique message for the body as well as for the soul. The Bible stresses the healing of the body, and because of this

²³ Roberts, Faith Against Life's Storms, p. 69.

²⁴ Roberts, Expect the Mass Miracle.

²⁵ Roberts, Exactly How You May Receive Your Healing . . . Through Faith Including A Heart-to-Heart Talk on Your Salvation, p. 55.

emphasis Roberts says, "the Bible is a healing Book."²⁶ This healing emphasis is shown in the fact that he documents this designation of the Scriptures by quoting fifty-two passages from forty different books, showing that God is interested in the healing of the body.²⁷

It is in this revelation that Roberts finds the passages that speak to him of healing and deliverance for the body. There are four specific verses in the New Testament that form the basic planks in the Scriptural proof for the healing ministry of Oral Roberts. These four passages are found throughout his writings as illustrative passages from which the healing power of God is demonstrated.

Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth (III John 2).

. . . God annointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him (Acts 10:38).

For the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them (Luke 9:56).

The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly (John 10:10).

In the Biblical basis for his ministry of healing, Roberts also makes reference to other passages of Scripture as illustrative of the healing purpose of God and to show that "God is a good God." Realizing that he cannot build a whole theological position around one

²⁶Oral Roberts, The Bible is a Healing Book (Tulsa, Oklahoma: Oral Roberts Tract Society, n.d.).

²⁷Roberts, The Healing Scriptures, pp. 6-19.

verse, namely III John 2, other verses are quoted.²⁸ Some of these important Scripture passages are found in the book of Job, Matthew 8:5-13,²⁹ James 5:15,³⁰ Matthew 8:17,³¹ Exodus 15:26,³² Luke 8:48, and Acts 3:16.³³

But all of these passages of Scripture and others that may be found in Roberts' compilation of verses relative to healing are forced to stand in the shadow of what he considers to be the most ultimately basic verse of all.³⁴ He reverts to John 10:10 and says of it, "To me the clearest evidence in the world for healing is Christ's personal promise in John 10:10: 'I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.'"³⁵ Not only is this particular passage the clearest evidence of the promise of physical healing, but he considers it to be "the greatest text in the

²⁸Roberts, God Is a Good God, pp. 12, 13.

²⁹Ibid., p. 13.

³⁰Oral Roberts, Oral Roberts' Best Sermons and Stories As Presented in His Great Evangelistic Campaigns Around the World (Tulsa, Oklahoma: Oral Roberts, 1956), p. 109.

³¹Roberts, The Healing Stream, p. 13.

³²Roberts, Faith Against Life's Storms, p. 35.

³³Roberts, Exactly How You May Receive Your Healing . . . Through Faith Including a Heart-to-Heart Talk on Your Salvation, p. 29.

³⁴Roberts, The Healing Scriptures.

³⁵Roberts, Exactly How You May Receive Your Healing . . . Through Faith Including a Heart-to-Heart Talk on Your Salvation, p. 18.

entire Bible."³⁶ When asked during an interview what passage of Scripture might be considered to be his life's verse, he answered without the pause of hesitation as he waited momentarily to enter the platform to preach for the evening service, "John 10:10. There we have the world contrasted with God. It shows both life and death."³⁷

Even though Roberts' primary theme that "God is a good God" pervades all of his ministry, characterizes every aspect of his life, and becomes the dominant thought of his theology, experience forces him to an admission that there are times in the life of an individual when circumstances and situations may cause one to feel that perhaps God is not such a good God after all. But in order that a person thus discouraged might be strengthened in his faith and have his doubts removed, Roberts suggests that one reach for his Bible and read the four primary verses once again. These verses (III John 2; Acts 10:38; Luke 9:56; John 10:10) will clear these doubts and an understanding that "God is a good God" will be reaffirmed.³⁸ When there is personal illness within the realm of Roberts' family and especially when there is illness in his own person he says that he frequently reads the eighth chapter of Matthew in order that his own

³⁶Roberts, The Healing Stream, p. 51.

³⁷Statement by Oral Roberts during an interview at Youngstown, Ohio, on July 29, 1959.

³⁸Roberts, Exactly How You May Receive Your Healing . . . Through Faith Including a Heart-to-Heart Talk on Your Salvation, p. 64.

faith might be strengthened.³⁹

Roberts' "Bible Deliverance Ministry"

Once the primacy of the theme and thesis that "God is a good God" began to penetrate and dominate the ministry of Oral Roberts, he began to be a changed man. One of the first sermons that he preached after he was firmly settled in his call to the healing ministry and after he began his "Bible deliverance ministry"⁴⁰ was, "If You Need Healing, Do These Things."⁴¹ In this message he attempted to present God to the people that came to hear him as he himself had come to know Him--as a God concerned with every aspect of their lives, both physical and spiritual. (This same emphasis that God is interested in both the physical and spiritual presented itself in a message titled: "The Master Key of Healing," which he preached in the crusade at Youngstown, Ohio, July 28, 1959.) As he preached this first message on healing, the fire of this new concept and conviction leaped out of his preaching and caught fire in the minds and hearts of those who filled the auditorium that eventful and prophetic night.

During this early period in the same campaign he also spoke on the book of Job. He says of his own preaching that night:

³⁹Roberts, Deliverance from Fear and from Sickness, p. 90.

⁴⁰Roberts, The 4th Man and Other Famous Sermons Exactly as Oral Roberts Preached Them from the Revival Platform (Tulsa, Oklahoma: Oral Roberts, 1958), p. 11.

⁴¹Roberts, God Is a Good God, p. 13.

I preached that God was a good God, that He came, not to afflict them, but to heal them; not to impoverish them, but to prosper them; not to beat them down, but to lift them up; not to destroy them, but to save them.⁴²

And thus he has been preaching from that day to this. From that early morning discovery of III John 2 in Enid, Oklahoma,⁴³ to his present world-wide ministry, Oral Roberts has been preaching with the same conviction and power that "God is a good God."

This great concept is evidenced in the entire ministry that obtains in the person of the Reverend Mr. Oral Roberts. He preaches it; he writes concerning it; his hands are branded with it; and his life is possessed with it. This concept has been the transforming factor in his life, and as the warp of his ministry, he has directed the full force of the Seven-Fold Outreach of his tremendous organization to presenting Christ as the Redeemer of the world and the Healer of men. And indeed, as his theme song says,

God is a good God;
Every heartache he understands.

There is healing power,
There are miracles,

In the touch of his wonderful hands.

What he's done for others,
He will do for you,

If you'll only believe
And trust him too;

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid., p. 14.

For God is a good God,
And his goodness he will show to you.⁴⁴

Even as this section opened with reference to the basic premise of Oral Roberts, so it closes with the chorus of the theme song of his crusades which gives suggestive reality to Roberts' theological thesis that "God is a good God."

⁴⁴Stuart Hamblen, God Is a Good God (Tulsa, Oklahoma: Oral Roberts Evangelistic Association, Inc., 1956).

CHAPTER 4

HEALING AND THE ATONEMENT

Salvation and healing are each to be studied in their relationship to the atonement. Roberts feels that before there can be a healing of the body as a result of the provisions of the atonement, there must be a healing of the soul, and for this reason he says, "Salvation comes first."¹ Salvation is first in this presentation because it is first in this man's ministry. Even in the face of seemingly indubitable physical miracles of healing, Roberts constantly affirms and reaffirms that "the saving of your soul is the greatest miracle in the world."²

THE ATONEMENT AND SALVATION

"There is a fellowship between the mother and child that was born in the valley of the shadow of death."³ Using this analogy of physical birth, Roberts illustrates the bond and relationship resultant of spiritual birth when an individual receives a joy unspeakable, a cup running over, restoration of soul, translation

¹Oral Roberts, Exactly How You May Receive Your Healing . . . Through Faith Including a Heart-to-Heart Talk on Your Salvation (Tulsa, Oklahoma: Oral Roberts, 1958), p. 45.

²Oral Roberts, Deliverance from Fear and from Sickness (Tulsa, Oklahoma: Oral Roberts, 1954), p. 55.

³Oral Roberts, How to Give Your Heart to God (Tulsa, Oklahoma: Oral Roberts Tract Society, n.d.).

from the kingdom of night to that of day, a divine forgiveness, and His eternal presence. This is the experience that caused Oral Roberts to say of his own spiritual birth, ". . . it was like stepping out of a starless night into a day of eternal light, . . ." ⁴ This is the gloriousness of that ignominious day when the Savior was crucified and took upon Himself the sins of the world

In light of the significance of salvation as held by Roberts, his use of this word must be understood in its total impact. Though the salvation of an individual soul is the greatest miracle in the world, it does not end there, for salvation includes the whole man. ⁵ This is well expressed in a characteristic phrase that is used frequently when Roberts speaks of either salvation as a spiritual act in the redemption of a soul, or as a physical act in the healing of a body. He often says, ". . . from the crown of your head to the soles of your feet." ⁶ He is expressing the completeness of the provision of the atonement for salvation and healing for the whole of man.

The practical application of this great atonement and its provisions is the experience of salvation in the individual soul. Roberts' expression of this experience is: "The Son of God accepts

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Oral Roberts, Faith Against Life's Storms (Tulsa, Oklahoma: 1957), p. 42.

⁶ Oral Roberts, Oral Roberts' Best Sermons and Stories as Presented in His Great Evangelistic Campaigns Around the World (Tulsa, Oklahoma: Oral Roberts, 1956), p. 38.

your earnest prayer for forgiveness, when he rolls away the burden of guilt, when he resolves your frustrations and delivers you from your tormenting fears."⁷ This is not only a definitive statement, but descriptive as well. This experience that Roberts has described is a part of the total experience of salvation. Though the term "being saved" is a common denominator to many schools of theological thought, it needs a definition in regard to the ministry of Oral Roberts. Though used at both extremities of the theological gamut, Roberts is explicit in his definition of the term. He says,

. . . that's the term we use to express Jesus Christ's coming into your heart, or being converted from sin, or being born again by the Spirit of God. I mean that God comes into your heart, that he forgives your sins, that you surrender yourself to him, and you know that Jesus is your personal Savior--⁸

Whatever else may occur, and whatever else may be the gracious results of this experience, it is definitely iterated that "the new birth is a transforming spiritual experience (II Corinthians 5:17)."⁹

The question of a jailor in charge of two missionaries (Paul and Silas) during an earthquake has continued to be pertinent throughout Christian history, and once again an answer is attempted in the life and mind of a man giving himself and his service in

⁷Roberts, How to Give Your Heart to God.

⁸Roberts, Oral Roberts' Best Sermons and Stories as Presented in His Great Evangelistic Campaigns Around the World, p. 20.

⁹Oral Roberts, If You Need Healing Do These Things (Tulsa, Oklahoma: Second Revised Edition, 1957), p. 26. (II Corinthians 5:17: ". . . if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.")

answer to that question. In answering the soul cry "What must I do to be saved?," Roberts says it is a three-fold step: (1) Let the thought become the act (cf. Luke 15:17-19); (2) The act becomes the surrender; (3) The surrender becomes the believing.¹⁰

In the process of making this three-fold step, one becomes a Christian, but it is not a mechanical step, for "Christ must become a real person to you before you can be a Christian."¹¹ Becoming a Christian is accomplished through believing in Jesus Christ: "your believing in him as your Savior will give you a change of mind, a change of heart, a change of thinking, a change of believing, and a change of living."¹² What happens when one becomes a Christian? Roberts spoke to a great audience in Detroit, Michigan, and said, "A deep peace comes upon you; a great joy rushes forth; there is a witness of Christ; and there is an assurance."¹³ All of this is co-ordinated into the singular experience of the new birth, and as a result of this tremendous experience one can know that he is saved.

Roberts' "10 Ways to Know You Are Saved"¹⁴ can be condensed

¹⁰ Roberts, Exactly How You May Receive Your Healing . . . Through Faith Including a Heart-to-Heart Talk on Your Salvation, p. 46ff.

¹¹ Statement by Oral Roberts in a sermon in the Detroit, Michigan Crusade on July 10, 1959.

¹² Roberts, Deliverance from Fear and from Sickness, p. 55.

¹³ Statement by Oral Roberts in a sermon in the Detroit, Michigan, Crusade on July 10, 1959.

¹⁴ Oral Roberts, 10 Ways to Know You Are Saved (Tulsa, Oklahoma: Oral Roberts Tract Society, n.d.). (These are as follows: (1) When Jesus Christ saves your soul you will feel released from your burden

into four mensurative scales against which may be laid the spiritual experience of an individual. A person may know that he is saved:

(1) if the repentance has been caused by godly sorrow; (2) when the belief has been placed in a Person--Jesus Christ of Nazareth; (3) when the Lord Jesus is received; and (4) when Jesus Christ is confessed before men.¹⁵ The primary Scriptural references at the point of assurance of salvation are John 5:24,25; Isaiah 53:6; John 1:29; Romans 3:23, 6:23, 8:16;¹⁶ and I John 3:14,¹⁷ all of which are illustrated by the latter: "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren."

Roberts' conception of salvation in the atonement is succinctly coerced into this explanatory statement:

of sin. You will experience a feeling of great joy in your soul. (2) Next, you will find within you the powerful emotion of love, for "God is love" (I John 4:16). (3) You know that you are saved, because no longer is there conflict between you and your Maker. (4) You will find your desires have changed. "Old things are passed away" (II Corinthians 5:17). (5) You will seek the fellowship of people who love God and think as you think. (6) After you are saved you will become a faithful supporter of the church. (7) When you are saved you will feel a personal responsibility to support God's work with your finances. (8) You will have peace of mind through faith. (9) A saved person believes in a better world. He has hope in the life to come. (10) Finally, you may know you are saved because you want to know more of God.)

¹⁵ Roberts, Oral Roberts' Best Sermons and Stories as Presented in His Great Evangelistic Campaigns Around the World, p. 20ff.

¹⁶ Roberts, Exactly How You May Receive Your Healing . . . Through Faith Including a Heart-to-Heart Talk on Your Salvation, p. 63.

¹⁷ Roberts, Oral Roberts' Best Sermons and Stories as Presented in His Great Evangelistic Campaigns around the World, p. 19.

Jesus Christ of Nazareth, Son of God and Son of man, upon the cross, reached up with the right hand of his divine nature and took hold of the hand of an offended God. With the left hand of his pure and bleeding humanity he reached down and took hold of the hand of offending sinners. With the last bit of strength he had he pulled man up and God down, reconciling man to God and God to man.¹⁸

THE ATONEMENT AND HEALING

When Jesus went to the cross He did more than die for the sins of the world, for upon that fulcrum He took upon Himself the infirmities and sicknesses of men.¹⁹ In this act of our Lord is a fulfillment of the prophecy of Isaiah.²⁰ Because of His sacrificial death upon Calvary's tree, adequate provision was made not only for the souls of men, but also for their bodies.

He healed the woman with a bloody issue. He healed a blind beggar, a nobleman's little girl (even raised her from the dead), the soldier's servant and Peter's mother-in-law. Why? Because that was his purpose in coming into the world. (Matthew 8:17)²¹

Roberts' illustration regarding the scene of Jesus' activity is that the Lord of Creation took a small portion of near eastern land and made it the front street of the world. It was transformed from the bridge of commerce between East and West into a little land suddenly grown large by the presence of one man--the Man of Nazareth.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 23.

¹⁹Oral Roberts, You Can Be Healed (Tulsa, Oklahoma: Oral Roberts Tract Society, n.d.).

²⁰Roberts, Oral Roberts' Best Sermons and Stories as Presented in His Great Evangelistic Campaigns around the World, p. 19.

²¹Roberts, You Can Be Healed. (Matthew 8:17--"That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying, "Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses.")

As Jesus traveled this front street of the world, He said to the sinful: "The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost"; to the sick He said: "Be thou made whole"; to the fearful He said: "Fear not, only believe"; and to the demon-possessed He said: "Come out, thou unclean spirit and enter no more into him forever."²²

Jesus came into the world and the force of His coming was primarily directed against four things: sin, disease, fear, and demons.²³ Yet, it was not against the person that Jesus directed His power, for it was not the sinner He hated, but rather the sinner's sin. It was His power against sickness that drove Him to heal men, for He loved the sick, but hated the sickness. He loved the demon-possessed, but hated the demons that possessed them; He loved the fearful, but hated their fear. Jesus did not come against the sinner, but rather against sin; not against the sick, but the sickness; not against the fearful, but the fear; not against the demon-possessed, but the demons.²⁴ Because of the direction of His hate, His love drove Him to a cross. Because of that love,

He offers, by his death on the cross, forgiveness of sin, health for sickness, deliverance for captivity, and Heaven

²²Oral Roberts, What Christ Offers You Today (Tulsa, Oklahoma: Oral Roberts Evangelistic Association, n.d.).

²³Roberts, Oral Roberts' Best Sermons and Stories as Presented in His Great Evangelistic Campaigns around the World, p. 47.

²⁴Roberts, What Christ Offers You Today.

forever. He backs his claims and provisions by his resurrection and the promise of his constant presence.²⁵

Roberts is definite and decided in his understanding of the place of healing in the atonement. Healing is a very definite part of the atonement, for God provided both for the salvation of a man's soul and the healing of his body. He feels that their place is equated in the Scriptures. In an interview with Hart Armstrong, crusade administrator, concerning this matter in the thought of Roberts, Armstrong replied that healing is in the atonement in the same capacity and with the same provisions as salvation. His descriptive word regarding the relationship of salvation and healing in the atonement is that they are "parallel."²⁶

Roberts, in speaking of this matter, says, "Healing for your body is in the atonement as much as salvation for your soul,"²⁷ because God's master plan of deliverance includes the salvation, healing, and resurrection of every living human being.²⁸ Christ's highest wish is that men may prosper materially and have physical health on an equal basis with the peace and power that they have

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Statement made in an interview during the Detroit, Michigan, Crusade on July 11, 1959.

²⁷ Oral Roberts, If You Need Healing Do These Things (Tulsa, Oklahoma: Standard Printing Company, 1947), p. 13.

²⁸ Roberts, Faith Against Life's Storms, p. 68.

within their souls.²⁹ Men have a right by reason of their inheritance to expect healing,³⁰ thus the a priori for Roberts' healing ministry.

Preaching on the subject of the centurion's servant, Roberts says that some people have reached the depth of spiritual living where they feel that it is a sacrilege to ask God to heal their diseases. He indicated that men ought to quit making religion just a matter concerning their souls and let it cross the boundary into the physical life wherein lies the need of healing.

It is for this purpose that Oral Roberts feels he has been thrust into the stream of humanity--to tell men that Christ loves them and that He died that they might have eternal life and that their bodies might be healed. The local chairman of a former crusade said of Roberts: "This man has been raised up to turn the pages back to New Testament Christianity."³¹ In a 1958 crusade, Harold Franklin, a machinist from Philadelphia, remained after the closing service in the Allentown, Pennsylvania crusade and helped to load chairs on one of the eight tractor-trailors. Why did he do this? He did it because he felt the nature of the Oral Roberts Crusade was that of the early church. He said, "The First Century Christianity is the pattern for the Christian Church. This type of

²⁹ Roberts, If You Need Healing Do These Things (Second Revised Edition), p. 15.

³⁰ Roberts, Exactly How You May Receive Your Healing . . . Through Faith Including a Heart-to-Heart Talk on Your Salvation, p. 25.

³¹ Statement from the platform during a service in the Youngstown, Ohio Crusade on July 28, 1959.

crusade fits the pattern."³²

In the matter of the relationship of the healing to the atonement, Roberts equates the two aspects of salvation and healing as they are applied to man. In his understanding of the relationship of a man's body to his mind and soul, his common sense born of experience and sincere study of the Scriptures has led him to a basic understanding of the people that place themselves in his hands. That the soul affects the body is a matter of observation, and as this relates to the atonement he says,

Healing for your body is more closely connected with your soul than you realize. Healing is more than physical, more than mental, it is spiritual. It involves an act of your soul.³³

But this is not the sum total of the healing process in men. Not all diseases are psychosomatic, and for these very real organic diseases men can expect healing. The prophet, seven hundred years before the Advent, spoke of the fact that the cross would be the provisional instrument of healing for men as he spoke of the "healing stripes" of the Christ.³⁴ "He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed"(Isaiah 53:5). This

³²"Allentown Crusade," Abundant Life, XII, No. 10 (October 1958), 12, 13. (Also cf. The Morning Call, Allentown, Pennsylvania, July 14, 1958).

³³Roberts, Deliverance from Fear and from Sickness, p. 55.

³⁴Roberts, If You Need Healing Do These Things, p. 22.

prophecy Roberts affirms to be a present reality and in each of these "Healing stripes" there is healing for a specific disease.³⁵ But the effect of these "healing stripes" can only have effect upon men if it is appropriated to the needs of men for physical healing. The necessity of this appropriation is shown in Roberts' conclusion: "We can approach God for healing only through faith that his Son, Jesus of Nazareth, 'took our infirmities and bore our sicknesses,' for it is only 'by his stripes' that we are healed."³⁶

The fact that God provided, through His only Son, for the redemption of men and the healing of bodies, will bring the world before Him judged. Men will stand condemned because they did not take advantage of this provision. These concomitant elements of healing and salvation were accomplished and completed through the atonement of Christ upon the cross when He said, "It is finished."

When we stand at the Judgment, God may say to us, "My Son died in your place. I provided salvation for your soul, healing for your body, provision for your life, deliverance from fear, from torment, from sin, from sickness. I gave those provisions through the death of my Son on the cross."³⁷

³⁵ Roberts, Oral Roberts' Best Sermons and Stories as Presented in His Great Evangelistic Campaigns around the World, p. 62.

³⁶ Roberts, Exactly How You May Receive Your Healing . . . Through Faith Including a Heart-to-Heart Talk on Your Salvation, p. 28.

³⁷ Oral Roberts, "Everything God Has Is Yours," Abundant Life, XII, No. 1 (January 1958), 22.

God and Sickness

Roberts is very specific when he speaks concerning the matter of sickness, for no matter the nature or extent of the affliction that befalls man, God is not responsible, for "God is a good God." It is Satan that is responsible, for God wills nothing but God for men, and anything that would destroy a person, such as sickness, oppression, or fear is not sent by God, but by Satan.³⁸

What does God think of sickness? Roberts outlines his thoughts on the matter in the following manner:

First. Sickness is simply an "oppression of the devil."³⁹ This is shown by the passage in Acts that reads: "God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him" (Acts 10:38). In reference to this passage concerning Jesus' healing ministry Roberts says that "when Jesus healed the people of their sickness--spiritual, mental, and physical--he was freeing them from the oppression of the devil."⁴⁰

It is only the part of logic to assume that sickness is of Satan for it certainly is not a part of God's plan, nor was sickness devised by God's will, and it most certainly is not a part of nor

³⁸ Roberts, Exactly How You May Receive Your Healing . . . Through Faith Including a Heart-to-Heart Talk on Your Salvation, p. 62.

³⁹ Roberts, If You Need Healing Do These Things, p. 23.

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 22.

native to the kingdom of God.⁴¹ It is that "evil monster," sin, from which springs "the unholy trinity of sickness, fear, and demons,"⁴² and these are of Satan.

It must not be assumed that a particular sickness is the result of a particular sin, though this may happen, but rather that it is the sin principle in the world that is the basic cause of sickness. This is the ultimate meaning of Job's situation, to show that specific sins do not automatically result in specific sicknesses. In other words, a person may be a Christian, living without sin, and still be sick. He is sick, not because he has sinned, but rather, because he has not exercised his faith for healing. His sickness is caused by the sin principle, and not the sins that he has committed.⁴³

"The Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them" (Luke 9:56), and anything that would seek the destruction of men must obviously be in direct diametrical opposition to the Son of Man. This lays the responsibility and accusation immediately at the doorstep of Satan. If God is not the author of sickness, then it follows that Satan must be responsible. Roberts says, "It is the devil's power that makes people as they are--full of hate, sin, war,

⁴¹Roberts, Exactly How You May Receive Your Healing . . . Through Faith Including a Heart-to-Heart Talk on Your Salvation, p. 5.

⁴²Roberts, Oral Roberts' Best Sermons and Stories as Presented in His Great Evangelistic Campaigns Around the World, p. 57.

⁴³Statement made in an interview during the Detroit, Michigan Crusade on July 11, 1959.

strife, sickness, and disease."⁴⁴ Then those that are "oppressed of the devil" are subject to sickness, oppression, and fear, because these are not sent by God,⁴⁵ but those that are freed by Christ are freed from these things and are no longer "oppressed of the devil."⁴⁶

Second. Sickness is a part of the "captivity of Satan."⁴⁷ It is only when God takes a hand in the affairs of men that this captivity is turned and overcome. Sickness is not the total captivity of Satan but it is the physical manifestation of the affliction of Satan because of the deeper spiritual captivity.

"If the Son therefore shall make you free, you shall be free indeed" (John 8:36). The only way to be freed from the captivity of Satan, with the inherent physical disease, mental oppression, and spiritual enslavement, is in the freedom of "the healing stream" of the blood atonement. This "healing stream" is not water with any of its attributes or properties, but rather the surging, overflowing stream of life itself.⁴⁸ This is the life into which men enter when they believe the Son, for this was His reason for coming, i.e., to turn again the "captivity of Satan," which is death and disease, to

⁴⁴Roberts, Oral Roberts' Best Sermons and Stories as Presented in His Great Evangelistic Campaigns around the World, p. 11.

⁴⁵Roberts, Deliverance from Fear and from Sickness, p. 89.

⁴⁶Roberts, If You Need Healing Do These Things, p. 22.

⁴⁷Ibid., p. 23.

⁴⁸Oral Roberts, The Healing Stream (Tulsa, Oklahoma: Oral Roberts, 1959), p. 1.

life--abundant life.⁴⁹

Third. God thinks of sickness as "part of the curse of the law."⁵⁰ This is clearly evidenced in the following passage:

If thou wilt not observe to do all the words of this law that are written in this book, that thou mayest fear this glorious and fearful name, THE LORD THY GOD; then the Lord will make thy plagues wonderful, and the plagues of thy seed, even great plagues, and of long continuance, and sore sicknesses, and of long continuance. Moreover he will bring upon thee all the diseases of Egypt, which thou wast afraid of; and they shall cleave unto thee. Also every sickness, and every plague, which is not written in the book of this law, them will the Lord bring upon thee, until thou be destroyed (Deuteronomy 28:58-61).⁵¹

Roberts quotes further passages which illustrate the curse of the law in the fact that disobedience brings affliction with such diseases as consumption, fever, inflammation, extreme burning, enerods, batch, scab, itch, madness, blindness, despair, trembling heart, failing of eyes, sorrow of mind, and worst of all, "thy life shall hang in doubt before thee."⁵²

In the affliction of these diseases upon man for his disobedience of the law, we find the curse of the law. But there is relief. By His atonement, Christ has made provision for healing so that man no longer need be subject to disease. No longer need man

⁴⁹John 10:10--"I am come that they might have life and that they might have it more abundantly."

⁵⁰Roberts, If You Need Healing Do These Things, p. 23.

⁵¹Ibid.

⁵²Cf. Deuteronomy 28:22, 27-28, 65-66.

suffer because "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us" (Galatians 3:13).⁵³

Fourth. Sickness is "something Christ took upon Himself and bore on the cross."⁵⁴ In the reference to and the fulfillment of the prophecy of Isaiah, Matthew refers to the act of God at the hands of men, and because of His death upon the cross, man can be freed of his infirmities and diseases.

They brought unto him many that were possessed with devils: and he cast out the spirits with his word, and healed all that were sick: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying, Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses (Matthew 8:16, 17).⁵⁵

Jesus' death, believes Roberts, is the supreme healing balm of the ages for in the spilt blood there are healing properties if men only believe. Christ not only died as atonement for sin, but He died that men, believing in Him, might have an abundant life, free from the sickness, oppression, fear, and affliction of the flesh. This was accomplished at Calvary when the temple veil was rent and the earth was covered with darkness, and our Lord breathed the completion of the atoning act when he said, "It is finished." The provision for sin and sickness was complete.

Fifth. God thinks of sickness as "something to be healed and

⁵³ Roberts, If You Need Healing Do These Things, p. 23.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 22.

destroyed by faith and prayer and special gifts."⁵⁶ God has provided a special "gift of healing"⁵⁷ in order that some may serve as special channels of blessing through whom God works for the relief of the physical afflictions of men. This gift of healing of the human body is not limited to those with the special gift of healing, for Jesus said that anyone who believed in His name can lay hands upon the sick and they will recover.⁵⁸ The church of which James was the pastor made practical application of this principle, for the injunction is given that when someone is sick the elders of the church should be called and the prayer of faith offered.⁵⁹ In addition to the gift of healing, God uses other means for the blessing of those that name His name.⁶⁰

All of this illustrates that God is not limited in the vehicle of His healing power, and the pertinent point is that no matter the channel, it is the will of God that disease and sickness be destroyed by faith and prayer and special gifts of healing.⁶¹

⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 23.

⁵⁷ I Corinthians 12:9--". . . to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit;"

⁵⁸ Mark 16:17,18--". . . these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; they shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover."

⁵⁹ James 5:15--". . . the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him."

⁶⁰ Roberts, If You Need Healing Do These Things, p. 23. (Cf. I Corinthians 12:6-11.)

⁶¹ Ibid.

Demons and Sickness

Roberts is more specific concerning disease and sickness than saying that it simply comes from Satan. Even as sickness comes from Satan, the matter does not end there. Even as Jesus said to His disciples that they would cast out demons,⁶² there is in the ministry of Oral Roberts a definite opposition to demons.⁶³ The Demonic influence is treated under the atonement because it is from this oppression in the form of disease and sickness that Christ came to redeem men. It is not the entity of demonology itself, but rather the relationship of demons to the individual in his physical health, that is under discussion.

"All my life I have been afraid of demons," says Roberts,⁶⁴ but to this man who was once fearful of this demonic power has been given a ministry against demons. He says of this special ministry:

. . . my special call came from God in May, 1947

 . . . Jesus spoke to me in an audible voice and said, "From this hour you will heal the sick and cast out demons by my power, . . ."65

This was not all. At a time of difficulty in healing a deaf child, Roberts indicates that he had never faced deaf spirits before

⁶²Cf. Mark 16:17.

⁶³Oral Roberts, The 4th Man and Other Famous Sermons Exactly as Oral Roberts Preached Them from the Revival Platform (Tulsa, Oklahoma: Oral Roberts, Fifth Revised Edition, 1958), p. 111.

⁶⁴Ibid.

⁶⁵Ibid., p. 112.

and was having little success when God spoke to him a third time in an audible voice, saying, ". . . you shall feel my power in your right hand. You shall detect the presence of demons and know their number and name and will have my power to cast them out."⁶⁶ And this power over demons, believes Roberts, has literally come to pass, for the instances are multiplied wherein demons have been cast out because Roberts could feel their number in his hand by the "strange pressure they make."⁶⁷ He says that "some of the most significant statements in the entire Bible concerning demons" are found in Ephesians 6:10-14a,⁶⁸ which says

Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, . . .

Roberts believes that if there is such power and magnitude it is well to understand them a little better because they have such a bearing on the physical health of an individual and this is all bound up in the provisions of the atonement. The pertinence of demons to physical health is shown by the fact that when a demon enters a person, that person assumes the characteristics of that particular demon.⁶⁹

⁶⁶Ibid., p. 113.

⁶⁷Ibid., p. 114.

⁶⁸Ibid., p. 111.

⁶⁹Roberts, Oral Roberts' Best Sermons and Stories as Presented in His Great Evangelistic Campaigns around the World, p. 61.

Thus when Legion was possessed of "at least 2000 unclean demons"⁷⁰ the "fires of insanity"⁷¹ burned within him because he assumed the characteristics of those particular demons. Further example is seen in the case of the daughter of the Syrophenician woman who was "demon-possessed, mentally ill."⁷²

The assumption of these characteristics is illustrated by the following examples of types of demons, though a complete enumeration is impossible: deaf and dumb, infirmity, epileptic ("foul spirit"), lying, sex demons, mob spirit (note the crucifixion), and mental demons.⁷³ Of all the kinds of demons, the most powerful are the "unclean demons."⁷⁴ Roberts says of this particular type of demon:

Those who have unclean demons have what I call "snake eyes." Their eyes look exactly like the eyes of a serpent. I am not talking about those who have epileptic spirits or who have a deaf and dumb spirit or a spirit of fear. I am not talking about that. I refer only to the unclean demons referred to in the Bible.⁷⁵

⁷⁰Roberts, The 4th Man and Other Famous Sermons Exactly as Oral Roberts Preached Them from the Revival Platform, p. 110.

⁷¹Roberts, Faith Against Life's Storms, p. 23. (Cf. Luke 8:26-36).

⁷²Roberts, Oral Roberts' Best Sermons and Stories as Presented In His Great Evangelistic Campaigns around the World, p. 42. (Cf. Mark 7:24-30.)

⁷³Roberts, The 4th Man and Other Famous Sermons Exactly as Oral Roberts Preached Them from the Revival Platform, pp. 121-139.

⁷⁴Ibid., p. 120.

⁷⁵Ibid., p. 115.

Demons work in three different areas of the personality,⁷⁶ i.e., there are "demons that derange the mind, demons that possess the soul, demons that enter the body and cause certain kinds of diseases."⁷⁷ Though there are millions of demons,⁷⁸ each with personality and power,⁷⁹ they operate in these three areas of the individual in relation to the sickness and affliction of the body.

Though sickness is of Satan and not of God, and though sickness, disease, and affliction are often caused by demons that possess the individual, this state of incapacitation need not continue, for God has provided a remedy if men will only believe and have faith. Roberts is specific in pointing out that it is needless to suffer, because "healing for the body and mind, as well as salvation for the soul is promised by the Savior to all who should believe."⁸⁰

Thus the concomitant effects of the atonement, i.e., salvation and healing, are each available in equal provision and benefit to men

⁷⁶ Ibid., p. 121.

⁷⁷ Roberts, Oral Roberts' Best Sermons and Stories as Presented in His Great Evangelistic Campaigns around the World, p. 61.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Roberts, The 4th Man and Other Famous Sermons Exactly as Oral Roberts Preached Them from the Revival Platform, pp. 114, 115.

⁸⁰ Roberts, Exactly How You May Receive Your Healing . . . through Faith Including a Heart-to-Heart Talk on Your Salvation, p. 24.

if they will only believe and release their innate faith.⁸¹ The generalized believing of a person must become a definite act of faith.⁸²

⁸¹Roberts, If You Need Healing Do These Things, p. 29.

⁸²Ibid., p. 17.

CHAPTER 5

THE CONDITIONS OF HEALING

If Jesus went about doing good, healing all that were oppressed in body by the devil, as is indicated in Acts 10:38, then, Roberts believes, it is the privilege of every child of God to be healed of physical infirmity.¹ Though there is an equation of the provision for both salvation of the soul and healing of the body in the atonement, there is a primacy given to the aspect of salvation of the soul in the order of attainment, for in the thought of Oral Roberts there is healing "for everyone who will become a follower of God."

THE PRIMARY CONDITION FOR HEALING: SALVATION

This primacy in the order of attainment is shown in his statement that healing for the body actually begins in the soul.² It follows that there must first be a healing of the soul before there can be a healing of the body. Roberts says that "there cannot be physical healing until a miracle has happened in your soul."³ This is true because salvation of the soul is God's greatest miracle and

¹Oral Roberts, Exactly How You May Receive Your Healing . . . Through Faith Including a Heart-to-Heart Talk on Your Salvation (Tulsa, Oklahoma: Oral Roberts, c. 1958), pp. 24, 25.

²Ibid., p. 27.

³Oral Roberts, If You Need Healing Do These Things (Tulsa, Oklahoma: Oral Roberts, c. 1957), p. 27.

the secondary aspect of healing can only have genesis when the first miracle happens. Since we have seen that the root of sickness and disease is the sin principle, to find physical healing there must first be a settlement of the sin question, and this is accomplished in the process of the new birth.

This principle of healing is illustrated by an incident during one of Oral Roberts' crusades which he held at Ada, Oklahoma, in 1949, only a block and a half from where he himself had been healed of tuberculosis. Roberts felt that the necessity of preaching to a large audience to lead some of them to Christ was more important than a single incident of healing. He says of this incident: "I felt the saving of 200 souls was worth more than a miracle of healing."⁴

Even though it is a fact that if you are God's child, he wants you to be healed, the two factors of operation, i.e., salvation and healing, are not absolute coordinates in that the activity of one does not necessitate the activity of the other. An individual "may get saved without getting healed," but the converse does not necessarily follow, for one "cannot get healed without a blessing for your soul."⁵

Though there is a great deal of importance attached to the

⁴Oral Roberts, "Greater Than All Telling is Jesus Christ, the Son of the Living God," Abundant Life, XII, No. 12 (December 1958), 4, 5.

⁵Roberts, If You Need Healing Do These Things, p. 125.

matter of healing, this emphasis should not be top-heavy in the mind of one who considers making a decision as a result of Oral Roberts' ministry. The "greatest miracle" is the salvation of the soul and this in turn becomes the prerequisite for healing of the body. One must become a Christian before he is qualified or equipped to seek healing. You can embrace the Christian religion without being healed, says Roberts, indicating the necessity of redemption. You can be healed, but you must be a Christian first.

Though phrased differently in two different books, the steps to healing are few and simple, but they may be considered as criteria for healing, in addition to personal salvation. In his book, Exactly How You May Receive Healing . . . through Faith Including a Heart-to-Heart Talk on Your Salvation, Roberts offers six steps that serve as criteria for healing. These he titles "Exactly How You May Receive Your Healing," and they are as follows:

1. Know that God wants to heal you;
2. You must want God to heal you;
3. Approach God for healing through faith;
4. Use a point of contact to make your believing a single act of faith;
5. How to receive help through my prayers: television, crusades, radio, literature, etc.;
6. Give the glory to God (cf. Luke 17:17).⁶

⁶Roberts, Exactly How You May Receive Your Healing . . ., p. 24.

In his book, If You Need Healing Do These Things, Roberts offers the same basic steps to healing as the above, though he has phrased them differently to gain a slightly different emphasis. He says, "take these steps for your healing";

1. Know that God's will is to heal you;
2. Remember that healing begins within;
3. Use a point of contact for the release of your faith;
4. Turn your faith loose now;
5. Close the case for victory;
6. Join yourself to companions of faith.⁷

In each of these presentations, in spite of the difference of phraseology, there are the common elements of the concept of healing of the body as the will of God and the desire of man unite. In order to accomplish this there is the necessity of faith, the use of a point of contact, and the affirmation of healing following the event. These things are common and are discussed in various phases of this paper.

Though there is a clear understanding of the necessary steps to healing, which might be simplified to the trilogy of (1) accepting the Person of Jesus; (2) being born again; and (3) turning faith loose, there is more involved than the mere mechanical performance of these things. There must be a keen expectation of healing power, an eagerness of faith that it will come, and a hope in the Healer--

⁷Roberts, If You Need Healing Do These Things, p. 20.

Jesus Christ. Roberts says, "Burn every bridge between you and the old affliction."⁸

In spite of all efforts to obtain healing by external means such as driving long distances to be touched by the healing hands of Oral Roberts, financial support of his ministry, et al, his admonition is that "healing does not come except as we meet Bible conditions,"⁹ primary of which is the necessity of a personal Christian experience.

THE SECOND CONDITION FOR HEALING: FAITH

Healing is not magic; healing is by faith in God. This faith is not restricted to a select group of the ill and afflicted, but it is available to all because anyone can have faith in God when he makes up his mind to do it. We do not have to pray for the gift of faith for it is already resident within the heart of man and needs only to be awakened and directed Godward (cf. Romans 12:3). It is not to be obtained for it is already in possession.¹⁰

Faith is God's gift to humanity and when it is sent out to God the yoke of physical, mental, and spiritual illness is broken. Roberts says that included in this general gift of faith is the prayer

⁸ Ibid., p. 37.

⁹ Statement made by Oral Roberts from the platform during the Detroit, Michigan Crusade, July 10, 1959.

¹⁰ Roberts, Exactly How You May Receive Your Healing . . ., p. 29.

of faith, the sign of faith, the command of faith, and among these general items of faith is the specific gift of faith for healing disease and performing miracles.¹¹

"It is significant that Jesus never accused anyone of not having any faith," says Roberts, and indeed He would not, for everyone has faith. The definition of faith that is given by Roberts is: "Faith is an inner certainty. It is an attitude you have developed by believing right about God. You believe it so completely that you cannot doubt it."¹²

There must be more than the mere possession of faith to make its powers real. There must be an exercise of faith in the act of believing. This is the master key of healing. This is illustrated by Jesus' use of faith as a key to release healing for a child when he said, "If thou canst believe . . ." (Mark 9:23). The obverse is likewise true. Without faith there can be no healing and this fact of unbelief is sin, the greatest sin in the world. For this healing faith there must be a definite transaction of faith. Roberts says, "When you have evidence for your faith, and begin to act upon faith, that makes your believing a definite transaction."¹³ Because of this faith there is healing for the body, and the fact that faith

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

is the key to healing is shown by Jesus' favorite statement: "Thy faith hath made thee whole."¹⁴

In spite of the fact that each person has an inherent faith he does not have an active faith until it begins to be exercised Godward. In speaking of a person having faith at this point, it is in the sense of an active, outgoing faith, and this, says Roberts, cannot be had unless first there is love.

Faith with the power of the faith of the centurion is what Jesus terms great faith, but this kind of faith can only be had by talking faith, thinking faith, reading about faith, and associating with people who have faith. But even then it is not a perfunctory matter, for this matter of faith must pervade every part of man's being. If one cannot believe mentally or intellectually, he cannot believe from the soul, and thus there will be no healing.

Faith has tremendous power and effect. So great is this power, says Roberts, that it even moves God into action. When anyone acts by faith in God, God is moved into performing miracles.¹⁵ Faith, used aright, can have effect even upon the physical world in which we live. Roberts conceives of faith as being such a vital, powerful thing that it is not confined to Jesus, for the faith of the disciples would have had an equal effect in stopping the storm on the Sea of

¹⁴ Oral Roberts, The Healing Stream (Tulsa, Oklahoma: Oral Roberts, c. 1959), p. 25.

¹⁵ Roberts, If You Need Healing Do These Things, p. 29.

Galilee as did the faith of Jesus had they only known how to release it.

This faith that is inherent in man, with such power and effect, cannot be limited by the factor of age. There is healing for the aged as well as for youth. Oral Roberts' counsel to the aged is that "you do not have to leave this world afflicted with painful and malicious diseases" for "no matter how old you are, the promise of healing is still yours."¹⁶ Examples of this principle are found in Moses, Joshua, Caleb, and thus the child of God can come to a ripe old age without becoming either decrepit or senile.

In quoting Christopher Woodward, a physician who is combining spiritual healing with his practice of medicine, Roberts' tract, "Healing for the Incurable," says, "There is no such thing as an incurable disease--and no one need die in pain. . . . there is no such thing as an 'easy' or 'difficult' case of healing in Christ's name."

Roberts adds his own testimony to that of Woodward by saying, "My own work as a minister of the gospel, and as one who pray for the sick, has brought me to the same conclusion: no disease is hopeless--none is incurable."¹⁷ Thus, we see, in part, the lack of limits upon faith.

¹⁶Oral Roberts, Healing For the Aged (Tulsa, Oklahoma: Oral Roberts Tract Society, n.d.).

¹⁷Oral Roberts, Healing For the Incurable (Tulsa, Oklahoma: Oral Roberts Tract Society, n.d.).

With the emphasis upon repentance and personal salvation, it must be understood that it is not the Christian religion that heals, but only through faith in Jesus Christ, its founder, can healing be obtained. There must be a realization that, through faith, there is mastery over every disease, but it comes only through the act of believing.

Roberts asks a pertinent question: "Do you want to be healed? Then all your faith must be poured into one single act of believing God for the healing of your body or the healing of your loved ones."¹⁸

Roberts' "Seven Rules of Faith"

This pouring out of faith can best be accomplished through Roberts' "Seven Rules of Faith":

1. Recognize sickness and disease as the oppression of the devil;
2. Believe the message;
3. Go where the power is;
4. Put your faith in God, not man;
5. Accept the correction of God;
6. Lose yourself;
7. Use a point of contact and recover yourself as you want to be.¹⁹

¹⁸ Statement made by Oral Roberts from the platform during the Youngstown, Ohio Crusade, July 28, 1959.

¹⁹ Roberts, If You Need Healing Do These Things, p. 71.

But the basic element is found in Roberts' counsel: "You will find the master key of healing in your own believing."²⁰

Reasons for Lack of Healing

But what if a person has done all that he can and has followed each of the above outlined steps and still is not healed? What should be his course of action? Roberts indicates that the best attitude to follow is that of Job when he said, "Though God slay me, yet will I trust him." And this attitude, instead of being a deterrent to faith, seemed to help Job relax and trust more completely, for he was evidently healed.²¹

There are various reasons why persons are not healed when they indicate that they would like to be. One of the more basic reasons for a lack of healing in some persons is that they do not understand how to believe. Their wrong believing many times includes the fact that they come to the Oral Roberts Crusades believing that he is the healer, and because of this wrong belief they cannot be healed, for the only way you won't be healed is to fail to understand that God is the healer, not Oral Roberts.²²

²⁰Oral Roberts, Deliverance from Fear and from Sickness (Tulsa, Oklahoma: Oral Roberts, c. 1954), p. 66.

²¹Ibid., p. 26.

²²A mimeographed report, dated July 10, 1959, by Hart Armstrong, crusade administrator, which was sent to the news media and other interested parties.

Another reason for a lack of healing that is sometimes evidenced among some that come to the crusades is that "they are too selfish to be healed." Others are not healed because in the ultimate reality of their desires they do not want to be healed. Roberts indicates that "often people think they want healing when subconsciously they are not certain whether they want it or not." This is often caused by what he terms the "sickness attitude" which is a personality crutch for many. This type of attitude often precludes any hope for healing and "without hope, as without faith, there can be no healing." These various factors, and many others, contribute to a lack of healing in the lives of many people that otherwise might claim the promises of God for healing.

We are moved by two master emotions--faith or fear, observes Roberts. The first of these has been discussed in relation to obtaining healing; the latter is discussed at this point in relation to the lack of healing for some people. Just as faith is an "inner certainty," even so "fear is wrong believing," a lack of certainty.²³ The power of faith for healing is very real, but even so is the power of fear a very real matter. Roberts observes that if you fear disease long enough, you will get disease. If you fear you won't be healed, you won't be healed.²⁴ In relation to fear of the "unholy

²³Roberts, Deliverance From Fear and From Sickness, p. 14.

²⁴Ibid., p. 13.

trio," death, failure, and poverty, Roberts includes himself among others who have observed the power of fear and wonder how much Job's fear had to do with his sickness.

He suggests that the following are God's three ways to stop being afraid: (1) identify your fears; (2) realize your fear is caused by your own wrong believing; and (3) practice your faith in God each day. The relationship of the two diametrically obverse elements of faith and fear is that faith is dominant over fear because it puts you in direct contact with God who is omnipotent.²⁵ This is the important emphasis in healing. Aside from personal salvation, the element of faith is the primary criteria for healing.²⁶

How to Keep Your Healing

In light of the discussion that has preceded relative to healing, an assumption that an event of healing has occurred would elicit the following counsel from Oral Roberts, whether he had been involved in the actual healing incident or not. He advises that the way to keep your healing is to follow these basic Christian principles:

1. Make up your mind you are going to live a Christian life regardless of what happens to you.
2. Cultivate your faith, and it will grow stronger.

²⁵Ibid., p. 20.

²⁶Roberts, Exactly How You May Receive Your Healing . . ., p. 23.

3. Seek a harmony with those people who have strong faith.
4. Think positive thoughts about life.
5. In times of discouragement or loneliness or confusion, read your Bible constantly.
6. Go often to the house of God and hear a good anointed minister.
7. Connect yourself with a cause that is greater than you.²⁷

These are only suggested steps to follow in order that an individual might keep the healing that has come as a result of burning every bridge of disease and changing his outlook on life, and his daily prayer should be that God would use the healing as a witness to others of His healing power.

The most concise response that Roberts might make in answer to the question of keeping a healing would be, "Keeping your eyes on Jesus, that is the secret."²⁸

²⁷Roberts, Deliverance From Fear and From Sickness, p. 87.

²⁸Ibid., p. 94.

CHAPTER 6

ROBERTS' CONCEPT OF HIMSELF IN HIS HEALING MINISTRY

In this whole discussion of healing, the primary point of interest lies in the stellar figure of Oral Roberts. The question foremost in the mind of those who attend the Oral Roberts Crusades is not whether God has the power to heal, but whether Oral Roberts is a channel of that power.

Oral Roberts' father was very definite in his conviction that God had His hand on Oral for a future ministry, and this paternal conviction was no less definite and strong than that of Oral's mother. His word to his son was a prophecy of things to come.

Oral, someday you will be a preacher. God will give you the largest meetings of your day. They will be so large others will go before you and prepare the way. All you have to do is go preach and minister to the people.¹

This prophetic word of the elder Roberts has almost literally come to pass in the unique "deliverance ministry" of Oral Roberts. It is a ministry whose very design is to help people turn their faith loose and whose curriculum vitae is healing of the body.

The successful ministry that obtains in Oral Roberts is due, in part, to the sincere conviction regarding his part in preparing for the second advent of the Lord. Of this fact he is just as convinced as he is that his own name is Oral Roberts. He says of his

¹Oral Roberts, Oral Roberts' Life Story As Told By Himself (Tulsa, Oklahoma: Oral Roberts, c. 1952), p. 34.

ministry, "I believe that God has raised me up and has given me a ministry that is designed to prepare his people for the coming of His Son."² For this reason Roberts feels that he is more seriously concerned with the fact of His coming than most people, because, as he says, "The Lord has revealed to me that I am to have a part in these last days."³ This is the fact that fills the whole horizon of his life and ministry.

ROBERTS AND THE POWER OF HEALING

As the Honorable Kerr Scott, former governor of North Carolina, warmly welcomed the Oral Roberts Crusade to Fayetteville, he said, "The power of the Man of Galilee is available to us today."⁴ In his welcome he thus stated the promise of the ministry of Oral Roberts through whose hands this healing power is being made available to man today.

Roberts disclaims any personal power of healing, and before every service, when the prayer line stands in readiness to be touched of his hands and to be the subject of his prayers, he says to the vast audience by way of clarification and explanation: "Before I pray for the sick tonight, I have this to say: I AM NOT A HEALER, I

²Oral Roberts, "The Day and Hour of the Lord's Return," Abundant Life, XII, No. 2 (February, 1958), 4.

³W.T. Jeffers, "Oral Roberts Talks About the Lord's Return," Abundant Life, XII, No. 2 (February, 1958), 20.

⁴"Oral Roberts' Evangelism is World-Wide Ministry," Oral Roberts Press Kit File (Tulsa, Oklahoma: Oral Roberts' Evangelistic Association, Inc., n.d.).

HAVE NO POWER TO HEAL ANYONE, I AM ONLY A HUMBLE INSTRUMENT IN THE HANDS OF GOD, WHO DOES THE WORK."⁵

There is a definite objection on the part of Roberts to a reference to himself as a healer, but when such a reference is made he offers a word of explanation: "I am not a faith healer, I don't believe in faith healers. But I believe in faith healing, which is a different thing."⁶ Thus he was quoted by Adon Taft of The Miami Herald, and in a like manner he must constantly re-affirm the fact that he has no personal power to heal. There is a continual attempt to stave off a faith in the personality of Oral Roberts as a healer, and to direct this faith Godward, for only with a faith thus directed can one hope for healing. Illustrative of his affirmation of a lack of personal healing power is his statement in his magazine Abundant Life where he says, "I do not heal. Only God can heal."⁷

The common mistake of people who come to Roberts for his healing ministry is that they heap praise upon the man that God uses, and this is a continual source of embarrassment. He realizes that people do this without any attempt to detract from the glory of God, but he says that it always embarrasses him when people unwittingly

⁵Oral Roberts and G.H. Montgomery (eds.), God's Formula For Success and Prosperity (Tulsa, Oklahoma: Oral Roberts, c. 1956), p. 154.

⁶Adon Taft, "Life Just Beginning for Oral," Miami Herald, January 25, 1958.

⁷W.T. Jeffers, "Do You Want God to Heal Your Body?" Abundant Life, XII, No. 6 (June, 1958), 12.

praise the vessel instead of the Creator.⁸

Roberts knows that the source of his power is the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, and that this power pours through his life only because of the power of the Holy Ghost. He says of his relationship to this ministry that is his, "If you take the cross of Jesus Christ from my life I remain a tubercular patient, a stuttering, stammering boy."⁹ Yet, because of the place that is given to the cross and Christ, his ministry has been given a world-wide prominence.

It is the ministry of this man that has been shaped by his hands. In his sermon "A Man's Hand," Roberts says "the shape of God's plan today is the shape of your hand,"¹⁰ and even as the plan of God is that man be delivered" in body and soul, even so people come from far and near to the Oral Roberts Crusades to find salvation and healing which is channeled through Roberts' healing hands. People are so desperate, they need God, they need healing and if they know someone has God's commission to heal the sick and to perform miracles in his wonderful name, they will come from any distance and do anything to receive deliverance through the power of God.¹¹

⁸Roberts, God's Formula for Success and Prosperity, p. 152.

⁹Roberts, Oral Roberts' Life Story as Told by Himself, p. 75.

¹⁰Statement made by Oral Roberts from the platform during the Youngstown, Ohio Crusade, July 29, 1959.

¹¹Taken from an interview held with Mrs. Vernon Snell during the Detroit, Michigan Crusade, July 11, 1959.

Because they come, Roberts feels that the healing power of God is released through his right hand, and the pressure of the diseases of man rise in protest to his healing hands, but deliverance is wrought when God's healing virtue surges into the person. Often, in the same manner, the power of demons rises in protest, but their power is challenged by God's power in Roberts' right hand.

Through his right hand, says Oral Roberts, goes both power for salvation of the soul, and for healing of the body. The purpose of God's use of Roberts' right hand, he feels, is that it is to be a sign to him that God is using him, also as a point of contact that will "help me turn my faith loose," and also to aid the faith of those whom he touches. It is a more definite sign to Roberts when God uses his right hand, for he says that he seldom feels anything in his left hand.¹²

When the Scriptures speak of "mighty signs" and indicate that the proof of an action will be in "signs following," Roberts feels that they are speaking of the things that serve as the visible proof of the presence and power of God guiding a man in his ministry. Examples that he gives of this type of symbol of God's presence and power are: Moses and his staff, Elijah's mantle, Samson's seven locks, the shadow of Peter, Paul's blessing of the handkerchiefs, the use the early church elders made of the anointing oil, and in this

¹²Oral Roberts, A Man's Hand (Tulsa, Oklahoma: Oral Roberts Tract Society, n.d.).

day Roberts feels that his own right hand that ministers in healing is such a sign.

Roberts refers to John 2:11 as being the beginning of signs as visible proof of God's power, but he says that the Bible never speaks of the end of these signs. This fact is further proof to him that God's power in his right hand is a sign for this age.

He says of signs,

When God gets ready to change the course of human history, to lift an empire off its hinges, to deliver lost and suffering humanity and save a generation, He does two things; He has a little baby born somewhere and when that child is big enough he puts a sign in his life and by that sign begins to deliver the people. God never, never, never moves without a sign.¹³

What are the procedures through which this ministry of healing is accomplished? The requisite elements for the individual to receive healing have been discussed above, but at this juncture more detailed consideration must be given to the methods, such as the prayer for the sick, that are used in the Oral Roberts Crusades. What part does the man play in this miracle of healing?

ROBERTS' MINISTRY OF PRAYER AND HEALING

If one were to ask Oral Roberts, as many have done, why he has given his life to this ministry of healing and why he makes the effort to pray for the sick, he would immediately reply with six specific

¹³W.T. Jeffers, "The Mass Miracle Is Near," Abundant Life, XII, No. 3 (March, 1959), 26.

reasons. The primary reason can be seen in the biography of this man at two points. He expresses the primal reason for his ministry of prayer and healing in these words: "I pray for the sick because God healed me and called me to pray for the sick."¹⁴ This was his commission: "From this hour, you will be anointed to pray for the sick."¹⁵

Another important, though admittedly secondary reason, for this unique ministry is found in the example of the Lord, for Roberts' reading of the Gospels has led him to the conclusion that "two-thirds of Jesus' ministry was spent in healing the sick and casting out demons."¹⁶

He describes this ministry of healing which was Christ's in the following words: "This is the portrait of the Great Physician: He was either on His way to heal, He was there delivering the captive, or He had just left and the captive was free."¹⁷ This was the example of Jesus Christ whose reason for coming into the world was to interpret life, to create an oasis in the desert and a path in the wilderness, to build a road into eternity, and to make the grave itself a road through which people could pass from this existence into a much better one. This was accomplished primarily through the

¹⁴ Oral Roberts, The Healing Stream (Tulsa, Oklahoma: Oral Roberts, c. 1959), p. 18.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 19.

¹⁷ Oral Roberts, If You Need Healing Do These Things (Tulsa, Oklahoma: Oral Roberts, c. 1957), p. 24.

healing ministry of Jesus which was a ministry to the whole man--a ministry to make men whole in soul, mind, and body, with healthy relations, healthy attitudes, and healthy habits.

His conviction that "the Bible must be fulfilled" (Matthew 9:17)¹⁸ and that in his specific ministry he is having a part in that fulfillment, and that this type of healing ministry "is the only hope of millions of people in these last days," are two additional reasons that he gives for praying for the sick.¹⁹ Further reason for this type of ministry of praying for the sick is that it serves as "one of the most effectual means of winning souls to Christ."²⁰ A Methodist Negro woman, interviewed in the 1959 Detroit Crusade, indicated that she felt Oral Roberts was called of God to preach salvation, and that the ministry of healing was added that multitudes might be drawn to his crusades to hear his message of salvation.

In his sermon, "The Master Key to Healing," in the 1959 Youngstown, Ohio Crusade, Roberts indicated that the centurion might never have listened intently to the words of Jesus had it not been for the illness of his servant. "I need healing," says Roberts, is often the thing that brings a person to God, but this is not enough.

¹⁸Roberts, The Healing Stream, p. 20.

¹⁹Ibid.

²⁰Ibid., p. 21.

You must be changed--you must be born again (John 3:3). Roberts, himself, is the first to acknowledge that the healings have become a most powerful instrument to win souls to Christ, for he never prays for the sick until he has led people to Christ to be saved.²¹

Roberts' final reason for praying for the sick grows out of the conviction that the coming of the Lord is soon and that healing of the masses "is one of the signs of the soon return of Christ."²² This return of Christ would be hastened if men would only believe in their hearts and open their lives to the healing power of God, for the time of the return of Christ "is determined by man himself through a crystallization of human opinion."²³

In reference to his ministry of prayer for the sick, Roberts says, "I pray for thousands of people to be healed and whenever I can get Oral Roberts in harmony with Jesus and get the people in harmony with Jesus, Jesus becomes our mighty Savior today to heal the sickness and diseases of our bodies."²⁴

In this respect he makes special mention of the blind and his concern for them. Though he has been unable to bring sight to as many as he would like, he says that when his faith is right and the

²¹Ibid.

²²Oral Roberts, Expect the Mass Miracle (Tulsa, Oklahoma: Oral Roberts Tract Society, n.d.).

²³Roberts, "The Day and Hour of the Lord's Return," p. 4.

²⁴Jeffers, "Do You Want God to Heal Your Body?," p. 12.

blind person's faith is right, God heals them.

The real secret of this healing ministry is not solely in the personal magnetism of Oral Roberts, nor in a new revelation concerning the power of God to heal, nor in the prayers of faith or the healing touch of Roberts, nor in a particular gift. The real secret of healing, says Demos Shakarian, an Armenian dairyman, is "in our ability to convince people to believe God."²⁵

Resources for Healing

Should a person seek and use other resources of help before coming to God for a direct healing through faith? Roberts would answer, "Ordinarily, yes." In an interview with the Oral Roberts Crusade Administrator, Hart Armstrong, he indicated that Roberts feels that in normal situations an individual should make use of the four natural means of healing that God has provided. He says that God chooses to operate in healing power, in normal situations, through means of good doctors, medicine, nature and climate, and understanding and love.²⁶

The Morning Call, an Allentown, Pennsylvania newspaper quotes Roberts as saying,

Healing that is accomplished through medical means comes from God. Medicine is a wonderful thing. But there are times and circumstances when medicine alone cannot heal.

²⁵ Roberts, God's Formula for Success and Prosperity, p. 48.

²⁶ Statement made by Oral Roberts from the platform during the Detroit, Michigan Crusade, July 11, 1959.

We never claim to have healed anyone. We pray for them. Then we tell them to go back to their doctor and see what God has done for them. Unlike Christian Scientists, we believe in medicine.²⁷

His position at this point only serves to illustrate the relationship of his ministry to that of the physician. He further points up his cooperative attitude by acknowledging that "the Lord uses many methods and many people. We are not the only ones; nor is our method the only one."²⁸ In speaking of the power of God to heal through the master key of healing-faith--Roberts says, "If you don't receive healing in my crusade, don't give up . . . there may be someone back home that can pray the prayer of faith and you will be healed."²⁹

It is not necessary for a personal ministry to an individual, says Roberts, because "Jesus Christ has made it possible for you to receive blessings of healing and help for other needs even if no minister can make contact with you."³⁰ Just because no one has come to a community praying for the sick is no reason for an individual to remain sick and suffering because "God is concerned that each man, each woman, shall be a healer--that each shall practice the

²⁷"Allentown Crusade," Abundant Life, XII, No. 10 (October, 1958), 12.

²⁸Ibid.

²⁹Statement made by Oral Roberts from the platform during the Youngstown, Ohio Crusade, July 29, 1959.

³⁰Oral Roberts, You Can Be Healed (Tulsa, Oklahoma: Oral Roberts Tract Society, n.d.).

Christian religion."³¹

Illustrative of the fact that Roberts feels a lack of necessity for his personal presence in ministering to the sick and afflicted is his use of a 'point of contact,' which he defines by stating that "A point of contact is anything you do whereby you release your faith, letting it go instantly to God for a specific desire or a specific answer to your prayer."³² It is something tangible used to touch something intangible; something material used to stimulate faith in something spiritual. When Roberts discovered the technique of the use of the point of contact it was one of the greatest discoveries he ever made, for here was something visible which could be used to touch the invisible.

The woman with issue had faith that Jesus could heal her, but she needed only a point of contact to release her faith, and Jesus' robe became this point of contact for her. For those that streamed into Jerusalem, says Roberts, the shadow of Peter was used as such a point of contact. Today, in the work and ministry of Oral Roberts, his right hand has become for him such a point of contact for the release of his own faith and the faith of others.

Various means can be used as a point of contact, none of which will be condemned if they enable a person to turn his faith loose.

³¹Ibid.

³²Oral Roberts, Exactly How You May Receive Your Healing . . . Through Faith Including a Heart-to-Heart Talk on Your Salvation (Tulsa, Oklahoma: Oral Roberts, c. 1958), p. 30.

He indicates that even as one reads the magazine Abundant Life it can be used as a point of contact and healing will result. Because it is often true in his personal life, Roberts says that the practice of tithing can be used as a point of contact.

The importance of the use of a point of contact is that it sets the time for healing (for without the setting of a time a person probably won't be healed), and it places a point of expectation for healing. The use of a point of contact, whether it be the right hand of Oral Roberts or a radio in the person's home, will not heal, says Roberts, but "it will help you turn your faith loose." This is the only reason to come to a man of God, i.e., to help you turn your faith loose that God may help and heal. A point of contact can not only be used for healing but for anything else that is within the will of God for man.³³

The supreme importance in which Oral Roberts is held by those who believe in his prayer and power to act as a channel of the healing power of God is illustrated by the letter of a Negro minister in South Africa to Roberts concerning the 'faith-cloths' and the ministry of healing that has been the part of Oral Roberts. This pastor wrote,

Brother Roberts, you have got to come to Africa and preach this message to our people. We have sent for prayer cloths in your office. We have put them on epileptic and demon-possessed people, insane people, crippled people, and they

³³ Ibid.

have been healed by God's power. If a prayer cloth from your body will do this, what could you do in person?³⁴

Though Roberts affirms that "there was no healing virtue in them as such,"³⁵ the use of these cloths as a means of releasing the faith of thousands in deliverance is still a further illustration of the ministry that is his and his personal relationship to this ministry.

Roberts' Limitations

Though the indication has been made previously that in the thought of Roberts there is no limit upon the healing power of God in His ability to heal each and every disease, it is a point in fact that in a consideration of the man that God uses it must be recognized that there are definite limitations. In answer to the question as to whether there were any incurable diseases, response was made by Armstrong in relation to the instrument rather than the Healer. He indicated that often the effectiveness of an evangelist was curbed by the limitations of his own "human experiences." He illustrates this by saying that Roberts is especially good with pulmonary diseases, goiter, and epilepsy.³⁶

The 'human experience' from which Roberts draws for his

³⁴Jeffers, "The Mass Miracle is Near," p. 26.

³⁵Prayer Cloth (Tulsa, Oklahoma: Oral Roberts Evangelistic Association, Inc., n.d.).

³⁶Statement made by Hart Armstrong, crusade administrator, during an interview in the Detroit, Michigan Crusade, July 11, 1959.

effectiveness with epilepsy is the fact that his oldest sister, Velma, died at age 19 with it. Armstrong indicated that whenever Oral sees someone in the prayer line with tuberculosis he feels a compulsion to crawl within the man's skin and breathe for him. Whenever there is someone in the audience who stutters, nearly everyone of them receive healing before they ever reach Roberts in the prayer line. These special gifts, in relation to the general gift of healing, stem from the "human experience" of the man.

The Mass Miracle

Roberts speaks of the present return of the Lord, and this is indicated by the current religious revival in the world. He feels that during the last days before He comes there will be a monsoon of healing with a "great wave of healing coming down from Heaven upon the sick bodies of mankind."³⁷ This will happen not only once but many times, and Roberts feels that his ministry is part of the preparation of the Bride of Christ. W.T. Jeffers, an editor of Abundant Life, said, "I know there is a new major phase ahead in mental, physical, and spiritual healings. Oral Roberts keeps preaching the 'Mass Miracle'."³⁸ Roberts, himself, feels that it is soon. He says, "It is my profound belief that many who shall read the words of Abundant Life this month shall be alive when Christ comes for his

³⁷ Roberts, Expect the Mass Miracle.

³⁸ Jeffers, "The Mass Miracle is Near," p. 27.

bride." This 'mass miracle' of healing will happen in a moment of time when a whole crusade audience will be healed at once.³⁹

"Masses are being healed for the Lord's coming,"⁴⁰ says Roberts, and the part that he is playing in the total drama is simply a fulfillment of the prophecy of his father: "God has his hand on this little stuttering, stammering child here."⁴¹ Roberts considers himself to be an instrument, not the only instrument, of God's healing power, and feels that as God continues to lay His hand upon him he will serve.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Roberts, Oral Roberts' Life Story as Told by Himself, p. 75.

PART II

AN ANALYSIS OF ORAL ROBERTS' PRACTICE

CHAPTER 7

ROBERTS' SEVEN-FOLD MINISTRY

The ministry of Oral Roberts is not limited merely to the confines of the public preaching of the gospel and praying for the sick. His ministry stretches to encompass the people of the world in a seven-fold outreach, and these seven outreaches are the means by which the original commission of Oral Roberts in May 1935¹ began to have a fulfillment. They are also the direct outgrowth of God's sixth message to Roberts.² The following information concerning these outreaches, from the office of Hart Armstrong, crusade administrator, is correct as of October 13, 1959.³

CRUSADES

Since Oral Roberts began his wide public ministry in 1947 there have been a total of 181 crusades in various parts of the United States, South Africa, Southern Rhodesia, Philippines, Australia, Puerto Rico,⁴ and Palestine.⁵

¹G.H. Montgomery, "God's Seven Messages to Oral Roberts," Abundant Life, XII, No. 4 (April, 1958), 14.

²Ibid., p. 26.

³Information contained in a letter from Ruthanne Sandidge, secretary to Hart Armstrong, Crusade Administrator, dated October 13, 1959.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Information About the Oral Roberts Evangelistic Association and the Abundant Life Prayer Group (Tulsa, Oklahoma: Oral Roberts Evangelistic Association, Inc., n.d.).

It is from this "heartbeat of the Oral Roberts' ministry"⁶ that the genius of the other forms of the seven outreaches stems. In the crusades Roberts has preached face to face with in excess of fifteen million people,⁷ and yet in spite of a cognizance of this great ministry he considers the work of the past twelve years to be only preparation for greater things to come.⁸

Services are conducted in a huge "cathedral tent"⁹ during the warm summer months, but during the winter months the crusades are conducted in auditoriums.¹⁰ The use of the giant "canvas cathedral"¹¹ grew out of experience. The available public auditoriums were often too small, and because of a poor arrangement of facilities there was often no place to pray for the sick and to counsel with the unsaved.¹² Because of these difficulties in the use of the municipal auditoriums, Roberts envisioned a huge tent that could be arranged to suit the

⁶W.T. Jeffers, "World Evangelism," Abundant Life, XIII, No. 5 (May, 1959), 19.

⁷Information contained in a letter from Ruthanne Sandidge, October 13, 1959.

⁸Jeffers, loc. cit.

⁹George W. Cornell, "Man on Fire," Success Unlimited (Chicago: n.n., September 1958), p. 4.

¹⁰Information About the Oral Roberts Evangelistic Association and the Abundant Life Prayer Group.

¹¹News release dated July 30, 1959, "Oral Roberts Makes Plans for Conclusion of Crusade."

¹²Oral Roberts, Oral Roberts' Life Story as Told by Himself (Tulsa, Oklahoma: Oral Roberts, 1952), p. 121.

needs of his type of ministry. The original plans included in the equipment for such a tent a Hammond organ, a Steinway piano, three thousand folding chairs, portable platform, portable lighting system, and tractors and trailers to transport this equipment.¹³

When the "tent cathedral,"¹⁴ which was one hundred feet wide and two hundred feet long, was first raised in Durham, North Carolina,¹⁵ it was the beginning of a great new avenue of ministry because of its increased capacity.

This tent ministry grew until Roberts was using a giant tent four hundred twenty feet by two hundred feet,¹⁶ measuring one quarter of a mile in circumference,¹⁷ and seating twelve thousand five hundred without crowding.¹⁸ This fireproof tent, the fifth in the Oral Roberts ministry, "half again bigger than a football field," had thirty-eight miles of rope and eighteen thousand yards of canvas. It was held in place with six hundred stakes and held up by aluminum

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 126.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 122.

¹⁶ News Release, "Rev. Oral Roberts Brings 'Million Souls for Christ' Crusade to Youngstown, Ohio, July 24 - August 2," Oral Roberts Press Kit File (Tulsa, Oklahoma: Oral Roberts Evangelistic Association, Inc.), p. 1.

¹⁷ Oral Roberts, Deliverance from Fear and from Sickness (Tulsa, Oklahoma: Oral Roberts, 1954), p. 63.

¹⁸ "Oral Roberts' Evangelism is World-Wide Ministry," Oral Roberts Press Kit File (Tulsa, Oklahoma: Oral Roberts Evangelistic Association, Inc.), p. 1.

poles, with the exception of the center poles which were steel. Lighted with fifty-five thousand watts of light, and equipped with an extremely sensitive public address system, this aluminum platform has been the scene of the modern phenomenon of Oral Roberts. With equipment costing "a quarter of a million dollars" and weighing one hundred seventy-five tons, Oral Roberts ministered to the people that sat in the nine thousand portable chairs. Transporting this equipment in seven tractor-trucks to the locations of the nation,¹⁹ Oral Roberts' ministry has been that of a man who knew that he had been called of God.²⁰

As a vital link between the ministry of Oral Roberts and the people of the world, it was through these crusades that people were reached with the message of salvation and healing.²¹

RADIO AND TELEVISION

Since Roberts began preaching on five radio stations in 1947, the preaching ministry of Oral Roberts grew to three hundred twelve stations, forty-three of which were overseas outlets, with an estimated listening potential of a billion persons. In addition,

¹⁹ Roberts, Oral Roberts' Life Story as Told by Himself, pp. 139-150.

²⁰ Oral Roberts, "Oral Roberts Talks about God's Surplus," Abundant Life, XII, No. 11 (November, 1958), 2.

²¹ Information About the Oral Roberts Evangelistic Association and the Abundant Life Prayer Group.

the weekly radio program was also carried on WRUL short-wave radio which was directed behind the iron curtain in the Russian language,²² with twenty-six million one hundred thousand speakers and receivers to receive the program.²³ It was estimated that about ninety-five percent of all radio sets in the United States could receive the gospel through the Oral Roberts ministry,²⁴ and W.T. Jeffers, editor of Abundant Life, said, "This is the instrument, and now is the hour."²⁵

The television beginning was made in a more auspicious manner in that it began on thirty-one stations in 1955 and this number increased to one hundred twenty-one stations,²⁶ eight of which are outside of the United States, all within the period of four years.²⁷ Estimate is made that at least ninety percent of all American people have viewed the Oral Roberts television program at least once.²⁸ Through the use of huge flood and spot lights which brilliantly light the platform and a large part of the audience; the use of four large

²²Information contained in a letter from Ruthanne Sandidge, October 13, 1959.

²³News Release, "Rev. Oral Roberts Brings 'Million Souls for Christ' Crusade to Youngstown, Ohio, July 24 - August 2," p. 3.

²⁴Jeffers, "World Evangelism," p. 18.

²⁵Ibid.

²⁶Information contained in a letter from Ruthanne Sandidge, October 13, 1959.

²⁷Jeffers, loc. cit.

²⁸Ibid.

Mitchell movie cameras plus smaller cameras of various types; and the use of telescopic lenses, the current television audience can be assured of a better view of the Roberts meeting than many even on the front rows.²⁹

The filming of the sermon, the evangelistic appeal, the response of the people, and the prayer for the sick have been the means of winning many thousands to Christ.³⁰ Because of this aspect of the Roberts' ministry thousands have written to Roberts to tell him that they have been saved or healed through this ministry of science.³¹ Roberts said in 1956 that "more than half of those who are saved through my ministry are being saved through the television programs."³² It is because of this fact that the radio microphones and the television cameras zoom in to pick up the ministry of Oral Roberts and to expand it to the glory of God.³³

Official recognition of the Oral Roberts radio and television ministry has been made through presentation of the New Jersey State Fair Blue Ribbon Award in 1958. In part the award read:

²⁹News Release dated July 29, 1959, "Oral Roberts Crusade Services to be Seen on Television Nationwide."

³⁰Ibid.

³¹Information about the Oral Roberts Evangelistic Association and the Abundant Life Prayer Group.

³²Oral Roberts, Oral Roberts' Best Sermons and Stories as Presented in His Great Evangelistic Campaigns Around the World (Tulsa, Oklahoma: Oral Roberts, 1956), p. 49.

³³Information about the Oral Roberts Evangelistic Association and the Abundant Life Prayer Group.

In behalf of the New Jersey State Fair Committee, New Jersey, and the public, I am honored and pleased to inform you that the Oral Roberts program has been selected as the outstanding program of its type and division on radio and television. It has rendered the most meritorious public service, inspiration and home enjoyment to its vast army of listeners and viewers of any program of this type on the airways during the past year.³⁴

This is an example of the effect of the Oral Roberts ministry through radio and television.

ABUNDANT LIFE PUBLICATIONS

The great "chain for God"³⁵ is being forged by the publication office of Abundant Life, and through this means, Roberts says, is linking three pairs of hands: the hands of the world, the hands of Oral Roberts, and the hands of God.³⁶

In 1948 Roberts began to publish a magazine under the title of Healing Waters which was primarily a magazine on healing, but, reflecting the shift in emphasis, the magazine has evolved through several mastheads to the present title of Abundant Life, with a circulation of four hundred thousand.³⁷ This is the parent publication, being the oldest and largest, carrying full length sermons and

³⁴"New Jersey State Fair Blue Ribbon Award Goes to Oral Roberts," Abundant Life, XII, No. 12 (December, 1958), 19.

³⁵Jeffers, "World Evangelism," p. 18.

³⁶Ibid.

³⁷Information contained in a letter from Ruthanne Sandidge, October 13, 1959.

articles by Oral Roberts, current reports of evangelistic crusades, with outstanding testimonies of healing and deliverance.³⁸

A pocket-size devotional guide, Daily Blessing, began charter publication in March 1959,³⁹ and within two months one hundred forty thousand persons had subscribed and it became an extremely popular publication.⁴⁰ The present circulation figure stands at two hundred twenty-three thousand copies.⁴¹

Still another part of this portion of the seven outreaches is a magazine for children called Junior Partners. This magazine is the result of a new format of the earlier children's magazine called True Stories. Through May 1959, one million five hundred five thousand copies of True Stories had been printed, with still two months remaining before the charter printing of Junior Partners in August, 1959.⁴² The new name and format of Junior Partners gave it a monthly circulation of fifty-seven thousand,⁴³ and this comic-strip story book, with puzzles, stories, prayers, drawing lessons, and a letter page is designed to reach boys and girls of all ages

³⁸Jeffers, loc. cit.

³⁹Daily Blessing (Charter Issue), Vol. 1, No. 1 (March, 1959).

⁴⁰Jeffers, loc. cit.

⁴¹Information contained in a letter from Ruthanne Sandidge, October 13, 1959.

⁴²Jeffers, loc. cit.

⁴³Information contained in a letter from Ruthanne Sandidge, October 13, 1959.

and interests.⁴⁴

These are not the only phases of the publication outreach. Not counting the library of books and pamphlets written by Oral Roberts, a discussion of the other phases would demand that mention be made of the publishing of Abundant Life tracts. In the two year period, 1956-58, the Oral Roberts Evangelistic Association published seven million four hundred eighty-eight thousand tracts, and records in the Abundant Life office show that eighteen thousand nine hundred fifty-five testimonies have been received from persons who have made decisions for Christ through these "paper missionaries."⁴⁵ Still another phase of this ministry is the Oral Roberts syndicated column, "Abundant Life," which is carried by over five hundred weekly newspapers in the United States and overseas.⁴⁶

LITERATURE DISTRIBUTION

A driving force behind this phase of the seven outreaches of Roberts' ministry is the fact that "seven hundred fifty million people of the past generation went into eternity without ever hearing the gospel story. This must not happen again."⁴⁷ These are the words of

⁴⁴Jeffers, loc. cit.

⁴⁵Ibid.

⁴⁶Ibid.

⁴⁷Hilliard Griffin, "Reaching Out to the World through L-I-F-E," Abundant Life, XII, No. 5 (May, 1959), 14.

Hilliard Griffin, Director of Literature Evangelism.⁴⁸

Roberts saw the opportunity for a ministry of literature and his arm of service was Griffin who directed the distribution of literature at the World's Exposition in Brussels, Belgium. To those who came to see was also given the opportunity to read the good news of deliverance. This ministry of Abundant LIFE (Literature of deliverance In all Languages For Every creature) literature was carried on in the five major languages through the distribution of one hundred thousand pieces.⁴⁹

In 1957 the Oral Roberts LIFE Crusade published twenty-two million pieces of literature in sixty-seven of the world's languages, as well as Braille.⁵⁰ With this record behind them, the goal for 1958 was fifty million pieces in seventy-five languages.⁵¹ This vast movement of literature distribution into areas of the world outside the United States stemmed from a phase of the seven outreaches that began in 1956 on a full-scale basis with the express purpose of taking the gospel to overseas countries in the native language of the people.⁵²

⁴⁸Hilliard Griffin, "L-I-F-E Goes to the World's Fair," Abundant Life, XII, No. 10 (October, 1959), 7.

⁴⁹Ibid., pp. 6, 7.

⁵⁰Ibid., p. 13.

⁵¹Ibid., p. 12.

⁵²Information contained in a letter from Ruthanne Sandidge, October 13, 1959.

This ministry was being carried forward in 154 countries and islands of the world;⁵³ and such men as Director Hilliard Griffin, Missionary Fred Reddington,⁵⁴ and native pastors⁵⁵ were using means such as a Pan-American flight bag,⁵⁶ a pontoon-equipped airplane, dugout canoes, and the donkey⁵⁷ to distribute more than two million tracts and cartoon booklets each month.⁵⁸

The most popular form of missionary literature is the cartoon book Happiness and Healing for You. This four-color cartoon book is provided to each country in their own language,⁵⁹ and it is often dropped from an airplane, swung ashore from a gospel boat, or left in simple stacks,⁶⁰ but it is taking the message of deliverance to the eighty-five percent of the world's people that do not speak English so that they might read it in their own language.⁶¹

Through this ministry of Literature of deliverance In all

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Griffin, "L-I-F-E Goes to the World's Fair," pp. 6, 7.

⁵⁵ Griffin, "Reaching Out to the World through L-I-F-E," p. 14.

⁵⁶ Griffin, "L-I-F-E Goes to the World's Fair," p. 7.

⁵⁷ Griffin, "Reaching Out to the World through L-I-F-E," p. 14.

⁵⁸ Information contained in a letter from Ruthanne Sandidge, October 13, 1959.

⁵⁹ Griffin, "Reaching Out to the World through L-I-F-E," p. 14.

⁶⁰ Griffin, "L-I-F-E Goes to the World's Fair," p. 7.

⁶¹ Griffin, "Reaching Out to the World through L-I-F-E," p. 13.

languages For Every creature (LIFE), with the sponsored "literature saturation"⁶² crusades in the various countries of the world, Oral Roberts is making definite progress in reaching every creature in every nation with the gospel message. In stating his goal, Roberts said: "It is my purpose to distribute the message of God's healing power through Christian literature to the entire world."⁶³ To date he did this in seventy-nine languages.⁶⁴

MINISTRY TO THE JEWS

With twenty million Jewish people scattered across the world, Myron Sackett, director of the Jewish Department of the Oral Roberts Evangelistic Association,⁶⁵ tried to obey the Bible command, "To the Jew first"⁶⁶ As Sackett ministered to the Jews of the world on behalf of Oral Roberts, he did so through a phase of the seven outreaches that began in 1955⁶⁷ when Sackett and Roberts met

⁶²Griffin, "L-I-F-E Goes to the World's Fair," p. 6.

⁶³Information about the Oral Roberts Evangelistic Association and the Abundant Life Prayer Group.

⁶⁴Oral Roberts, Exactly How You May Receive Your Healing . . . Through Faith Including a Heart-to-Heart Talk on your Salvation (Tulsa, Oklahoma: Oral Roberts, 1958), p. 33.

⁶⁵Information about the Oral Roberts Evangelistic Association and the Abundant Life Prayer Group.

⁶⁶Myron Sackett, "Can Israel Live Again?," Abundant Life, XII, No. 2 (February, 1958), 9.

⁶⁷Jeffers, "World Evangelism," p. 19.

and discovered that they shared a common vision.⁶⁸

Because of the success of this phase of the Oral Roberts ministry, the regular printing houses could not keep pace with the demand for Hebrew Bibles, so a firm in Sweden was contracted to print these Bibles on a monthly production schedule in excess of three thousand five hundred copies.⁶⁹ Through the distribution of two hundred thousand Hebrew Bibles since this ministry began in 1955, the slogan of the Jewish Department, "A Hebrew Bible in the hands of every Jewish person who desires one before Jesus returns,"⁷⁰ is gradually being fulfilled. The need was being met in a ministry of the "True Bread of Life"⁷¹ to Jewish people in the United States, Israel, and fourteen other foreign countries.⁷²

Roberts feels that one of the main reasons God wants the Jewish people to read the Bible is expressed in Isaiah 55:11: "So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but . . . it shall prosper in the thing whereto I send it."⁷³

⁶⁸Information contained in a letter from Ruthanne Sandidge, October 13, 1959.

⁶⁹Sackett, loc. cit.

⁷⁰Ibid.

⁷¹Ibid.

⁷²Jeffers, loc. cit.

⁷³Information contained in a letter from Ruthanne Sandidge, October 13, 1959.

"Can Israel Live Again?"⁷⁴ Roberts and Sackett believe that through a ministry of the Word of God Israel can live again.

MINISTRY TO THE INDIANS

"Indians are not neglected."⁷⁵ Since 1955, when this phase of the seven outreaches began, there have been six major Indian Crusades conducted by Oral Roberts.⁷⁶ He indicates that of the one-half million Indians in the United States, the ten million in Mexico, and the untold number in Central and South America, more than one-half of these have never heard about Jesus as a living Savior.⁷⁷

Roberts has taken advantage of his Cherokee and Choctaw heritage⁷⁸ to extend the upraised hand--the traditional sign of peace--to the Indians as he brings to them the message of salvation and deliverance.⁷⁹ For the first time in history the tribal council of the Navajo Reservation in Arizona has opened the door of their ceremonial grounds to a religious ministry.⁸⁰

In addition to the personal ministry of evangelism that

⁷⁴Information about the Oral Roberts Evangelistic Association and the Abundant Life Prayer Group.

⁷⁵Sackett, op. cit., p. 8.

⁷⁶Jeffers, loc. cit.

⁷⁷Information contained in a letter from Ruthanne Sandidge, October 13, 1959.

⁷⁸Jeffers, loc. cit.

⁷⁹"For Your Information . . . Evangelist Oral Roberts . . . A Brief Biography," Oral Roberts Press Kit File (Tulsa, Oklahoma: Oral Roberts Evangelistic Association, Inc.), p. 2.

⁸⁰Jeffers, loc. cit.

Roberts has been able to accomplish through the crusades, a large scale program of literature distribution has been carried on by the missionaries on the reservations, with sermon tapes and films being supplied free for the evangelization of these people.⁸¹ The fact that the television films were often shown as much as four times in a single evening indicated the interest of the Indian people in the gospel message, and the concern of the tribal chiefs showed the opportunity for a ministry among these stoic people.⁸²

MINISTRY TO THE WORLD'S CHILDREN

"The gospel story on a child's level"⁸³ might well characterize this ministry. As one of the seven outreaches it is aimed at "getting through" to the youth of the world with a message of salvation through the universal language of the comic book.⁸⁴

Beginning in 1955,⁸⁵ the publication of True Stories, a gospel story in comic book style, began a ministry to the children of

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Information contained in a letter from Ruthanne Sandidge, October 13, 1959.

⁸³ Information about the Oral Roberts Evangelistic Association and the Abundant Life Prayer Group.

⁸⁴ Information contained in a letter from Ruthanne Sandidge, October 13, 1959.

⁸⁵ Information about the Oral Roberts Evangelistic Association and the Abundant Life Prayer Group.

the world.⁸⁶ This was continued under the new title of Junior Partners, and there was a free distribution of these cartoon books in the hospitals, orphanages, and children's homes of the United States and overseas.⁸⁷ In addition to the millions of copies printed in English, more than six hundred fifty thousand copies of Happiness and Healing for You have been printed and distributed in fifteen languages of the world.⁸⁸ Thus the generations of tomorrow are being evangelized through a ministry to the children of today.

Pervading each of the seven outreaches of Oral Roberts' pulpit ministry stood a unique ministry carried on by silent Prayer Partners, who were a carefully selected group of consecrated workers in constant prayer twenty-four hours a day, every day.⁸⁹ This group of consecrated Christians stand at the "throbbing heart of the Oral Roberts Evangelistic Association"⁹⁰ ready to minister at any hour to people that called for help.

In the Headquarters of Oral Roberts Evangelistic Association, Inc., it is called "The Secret Place." To the people calling for help it is known as "The Abundant Life Prayer Room."

⁸⁶ Information contained in a letter from Ruthanne Sandidge, October 13, 1959.

⁸⁷ Information about the Oral Roberts Evangelistic Association and the Abundant Life Prayer Group.

⁸⁸ Information contained in a letter from Ruthanne Sandidge, October 13, 1959.

⁸⁹ Information about the Oral Roberts Evangelistic Association and the Abundant Life Prayer Group.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

But every hour of every day (around the clock) silent, consecrated workers listen to the stories of people in trouble--the sick, the oppressed, the distressed--and offer them hope and the strength of their prayers. Every request is listened to sympathetically and prayerfully. Every story is held in strictest confidence. Only the Prayer Partner and Oral Roberts know the identity of the caller.⁹¹

The flashing of the soft light on the telephone with its silent signal interrupts the meditation of the Prayer Partner, and lifting the receiver the caller hears these words: "Abundant Life Prayer Group; may I help you?"⁹² Often the question is met with the outpouring of a troubled heart, but as often as not it is met with only a heavy silence, or at best an uneasy breathing sound, but always the reason for the call is found in the words of a potential suicide: "Can you help me?"⁹³

Calls coming in from every state in the union, from all ten provinces of Canada and from fifteen foreign countries have made "The Secret Place" the center of a global operation,⁹⁴ and for this reason it has been the basis of the seven outreaches of Oral Roberts' ministry. For an average American "his telephone is as near . . . as his sorrow and his need of God,"⁹⁵ and because of this the Prayer

⁹¹Jeffers, "World Evangelism," p. 18.

⁹²"A Day in the Secret Place," Abundant Life, XII, No. 8 (August, 1958), 16.

⁹³Ibid.

⁹⁴Ibid., pp. 16, 17.

⁹⁵Jeffers, loc. cit.

Partners waited in "The Secret Place" to make of the common telephone an instrument of His glory.

The fearful, the sorrowful, the sinful--all find LUther 3-2191 to be a spiritual life line. And for them all, the prescription is the same--the sympathizing, understanding ear, the comforting promises from the Word of God, and instant, believing prayer.⁹⁶

Beginning at 7:00 a.m. on March 31, 1958, the Abundant Life Prayer Group began its first day's ministry and in the year that followed nineteen thousand twenty-seven communications were received. Sometimes the daily rate ran as high as one hundred seven communications, with a monthly average of telephone converts reaching forty-five.⁹⁷ Whether comforting the troubled with promises from the Word of God, or leading a man and wife sentence by sentence through a prayer of repentance across the miles, "The Secret Place" had become a place of power in one short year. One of the great compliments that came to this silent group of Christian workers was a short sentence from a letter received at the Tulsa office: "I never knew a telephone could mean so much."⁹⁸

Because God had faith in Oral Roberts,⁹⁹ he expanded his ministry through the seven outreaches to a world whose hurt he had

⁹⁶"A Day in the Secret Place," p. 16.

⁹⁷"The Secret Place Has Become A . . . Place of Power," Abundant Life, XII, No. 11 (November, 1958), 10.

⁹⁸Jeffers, loc. cit.

⁹⁹"The Secret Place Has Become A . . . Place of Power," p. 10.

felt and made his own.¹⁰⁰ Roberts worked tirelessly, but step by step, from the beginning of his tent ministry in 1948, in a tent holding three thousand persons, to the world outreach of his seven-point program, "the Lord has led him on. Then it was God's time to launch Souls Unlimited."¹⁰¹

"My cherished dream is to tell every person in the world--at least once--about Jesus,"¹⁰² says Roberts, and this he has attempted to do.

¹⁰⁰ Oral Roberts, The 4th Man and Other Famous Sermons Exactly as Oral Roberts Preached Them from the Revival Platform (Tulsa, Oklahoma: Oral Roberts, Fifth Revised Edition, 1958), p. 87.

¹⁰¹ Roberts, Oral Roberts' Life Story as Told by Himself, p. 159.

¹⁰² Jeffers, op. cit., p. 19.

CHAPTER 8

THE ORAL ROBERTS CRUSADES

One of the most immediate and impressive features of the Oral Roberts ministry has been the Crusades that he holds in sundry parts of the nation. It is at this juncture that a discussion of this phase of Roberts' ministry is pertinent with its basic component elements from beginning to end, from the invitation to the follow-up.

PUBLICITY

Whether the invitation to attend the Oral Roberts Crusade comes via a neighbor,¹ or in the form of a letter from Oral Roberts;² whether it comes by hearing an announcement on television,³ or by reading the announcement in Abundant Life,⁴ the invitation is always

¹Statement by Lillie Matthews, River Rouge, Michigan, during an interview at the Detroit, Michigan Crusade on July 10, 1959.

²Statement by an invalid from Dearborn, Michigan, resting in the invalid tent in an interview during the Detroit, Michigan Crusade on July 11, 1959.

³Statement by Mrs. Vernon Schnelle, Coby, Wisconsin, during an interview at the Detroit, Michigan Crusade on July 11, 1959.

⁴Statement by the Reverend Mr. Ernie Schingler, North India, a missionary in India for seven years, serving with the World-Wide Evangelistic Crusade. Mr. Schingler was visiting relatives in Pontiac, Michigan, while on furlough, and was interviewed during the Detroit, Michigan Crusade on July 11, 1959.

to attend a service whose atmosphere is destined to be electrified,⁵ and whose tone is "sober, fervently believing."⁶

One of the main sources of invitation to the people of an area to attend the Oral Roberts' Crusades is the space that is given in the local newspapers to a coverage of the crusade. Depending upon the local interest, newspapers often give both intensive and extensive coverage to this aspect of Roberts' ministry. Illustrative of this is the response of The Morning Call, an Allentown, Pennsylvania newspaper, to a letter written by an eager woman inquiring why the newspaper had not given as much space to Oral Roberts as was given to jazz singers, movie stars, and other celebrities. The editor of the paper published her letter and then answered it in an editorial with these words:

We have given Oral Roberts much more space in Allentown newspapers than any entertainer, singer, or movie star ever to appear here. In fact, only a few people have ever received as much publicity and news coverage as we have given to the Tulsa evangelist.⁷

Basil W. Hall, a columnist for the Charleston Evening Post, writing under the title of "Keeping Posted," is an example of the press corps that has been pleased with the co-operation received at

⁵Jack Roach, "Oral Roberts says: 'God Heals; I Don't'," Charleston Evening Post, Charleston, South Carolina, April 19, 1958.

⁶Tom Perry, "Rev. Oral Roberts Launches 'Souls for Christ' Crusade," The News and Courier, Charleston, South Carolina, April 19, 1958.

⁷"Allentown Crusade," Abundant Life, XII, No. 10 (October, 1958), 13.

the hands of the Oral Roberts organization.⁸ Part of this grows out of material that is furnished the newspaper by the Roberts organization. A press kit which includes several newspaper mats, glossy prints of Roberts, plus other shots, various information sheets, and reproductions of news clippings from other cities, is only the beginning of this co-operation.

But whether it is through the use of literature,⁹ or a notice from the Tulsa office,¹⁰ the purpose of using every avenue of publicity possible is to get people to come to the Oral Roberts' Crusades in order that he may minister to them with his message of deliverance. Otis Perkins, staff writer for The News and Courier (Charleston, South Carolina), quoted Roberts as saying, "I believe the most important thing I can do for you is to pray for your soul."¹¹ And for this reason the invitation is extended to "all people of all faiths" to attend the crusades.¹²

⁸Basil W. Hall, "Keeping Posted," Charleston Evening Post, Charleston, South Carolina, April 25, 1958, p. 1-B.

⁹Statement by a local representative of Blue Cross from Detroit, Michigan, during an interview at the Detroit, Michigan Crusade on July 11, 1959.

¹⁰Statement by Norma _____, Detroit, Michigan, during an interview at the Detroit, Michigan Crusade on July 11, 1959.

¹¹Otis Perkins, "Oral Roberts' Crusade Ends as Thousands Crowd Tent," The News and Courier, Charleston, South Carolina, April 28, 1958.

¹²"See and Hear Oral Roberts." (A three by five flyer used in initial publicity.)

Though an invitation is extended to all persons regardless of denominational affiliation, the crusades are always held on the invitation of Full Gospel ministers.¹³ When questioned as to whether other denominations were ever a part of the sponsoring group, Armstrong, crusade administrator, replied that they would be welcome but it seldom happened because other denominations are generally unsympathetic toward Roberts' type of ministry.¹⁴ An example of a sponsoring group is shown in the fact that the Oral Roberts Crusade at Youngstown, Ohio¹⁵ was sponsored by the Youngstown Area Full Gospel Fellowship, which consisted of twenty-two pastors and churches of the Assemblies of God, Church of God, Open Bible Standard, Pentecostal Holiness, Christian Assembly, and Free Gospel Churches.¹⁶ Roberts said of one of the host churches, the Pentecostal Holiness, "That's my church, you know, and I'm not ashamed of it."¹⁷

THE SERVICES

When all forms of invitation have been exhausted and all

¹³"Nondenominational Ministry of Oral Roberts has Interdenominational Appeal," Oral Roberts Press Kit File (Tulsa, Oklahoma: Oral Roberts Evangelistic Association, Inc.), p. 1.

¹⁴Statement by Hart Armstrong during the Detroit, Michigan Crusade on July 11, 1959.

¹⁵July 24 - August 2, 1959.

¹⁶"Fact Sheet . . . A Quick Glance at Crusade Data . . . ," Oral Roberts Press Kit (Tulsa, Oklahoma: Oral Roberts Evangelistic Association, Inc.), p. 1.

¹⁷Perkins, loc. cit.

preliminary steps of preparation have been completed, the day finally comes when the big tent is to be raised, the "tent cathedral" under which Oral Roberts will minister for approximately ten days to the people that come to the crusade.

A reporter for The New York Times, George Dugan, wrote that during the crusade at West Hempstead, Long Island, the custodian admitted about one hundred fifty people into the Island Garden Arena at three o'clock in the morning. The people come at every hour from many denominations and sects to see and hear Oral Roberts in action. In every crusade there are usually fifty-nine or more denominations represented in the audience, with the highest count being one hundred forty-six in the 1957 crusade at Columbus, Ohio¹⁸ in an audience of fifteen thousand.¹⁹

The better known groups--Methodist, Presbyterian, Lutheran, Episcopal, Congregational, Christian Science and Catholic--were liberally interspersed with Full Gospel churches, Jewish, Russian and Greek Orthodox, Mennonite, Seven Day Adventist, Reformed Church, Metaphysical, Rosicrucian, Friends (Quakers), Salvation Army, Amish, Brethren, Spiritual Science, Unity, Bahai and many others.²⁰

¹⁸"Oral Roberts' Evangelism is World-Wide Ministry," Oral Roberts Press Kit File (Tulsa, Oklahoma: Oral Roberts Evangelistic Association, Inc.), p. 2.

¹⁹"For Your Information . . . Evangelist Oral Roberts . . . A Brief Biography," Oral Roberts Press Kit File (Tulsa, Oklahoma: Oral Roberts Evangelistic Association, Inc.), p. 2.

²⁰"Nondenominational Ministry of Oral Roberts has Inter-denominational Appeal," p. 2.

But in spite of the attendance of the various denominations and sects, Roberts' audience poll reveals that the "no denomination" group is seventh or less from the top, and it is to this group "that the full appeal of Roberts' simple and forceful preaching is directed."²¹

THE SERMON

The question of G.H. Montgomery, editor-in-chief of all publications of the Oral Roberts Evangelistic Association, is pertinent: "WHY DO PEOPLE COME LIKE THIS? WHY DO THEY RESPOND TO THIS PREACHER LIKE THIS?"²² He said of his own experience as he sat under Roberts' preaching, "Oral Roberts is the only man on top of the earth who has ever held my attention for 2 hours and 15 minutes and then closed, leaving me wishing that he would go on!"²³ With "pointed and positive" preaching, which is at once dramatic yet not sensational,²⁴ Roberts makes the Scriptures come alive for his universal audience.

His dramatic description of the dice game at the foot of the cross of Christ is an example of this. There is no cross there; there are no gambling soldiers there. And yet you see them all.²⁵

²¹Ibid.

²²Oral Roberts and G.H. Montgomery (eds.), God's Formula for Success and Prosperity (Tulsa, Oklahoma: Oral Roberts, 1956), p. 147.

²³Ibid., p. 149.

²⁴Ibid., pp. 150, 151.

²⁵Ibid., p. 151.

The reason that Roberts preaches before he conducts the healing line is that he feels that first things must come first,²⁶ and the salvation of the human soul is God's greatest miracle.²⁷ In addition to this, he says that his own faith is strongest just after he has preached,²⁸ and the preaching of the Bible under the anointing of the Holy Spirit helps both the people and Roberts believe, in order that they may turn their faith loose for healing.²⁹ Cornell quotes Roberts concerning the function of preaching as being the means "to bring the faith of the people to a climax and to help them release their faith in God."³⁰

Roberts describes each sermon that he preaches as "a deliverance sermon,"³¹ and they are both inspirational³² and didactic³³ in nature. He said of his pulpit procedure,

²⁶Oral Roberts, Oral Roberts' Life Story as Told by Himself (Tulsa, Oklahoma: Oral Roberts, 1952), p. 143.

²⁷Oral Roberts, Deliverance from Fear and from Sickness (Tulsa, Oklahoma: Oral Roberts, 1954), p. 55.

²⁸Oral Roberts, Faith Against Life's Storms (Tulsa, Oklahoma: Oral Roberts, 1957), p. 48.

²⁹Roberts, Oral Roberts' Life Story as Told by Himself, p. 143.

³⁰George W. Cornell, "Man on Fire," Success Unlimited (Chicago: n.n., September, 1958), p. 5.

³¹Roberts, Oral Roberts' Life Story as Told by Himself, p. 147.

³²Ibid., p. 146.

³³Roach, "Oral Roberts says: 'God Heals, I Don't.'"

During the first half of our meetings I preach sermons that show people how to believe God. Sermons such as: What Everyone Should Know about Faith; You Are What Your Believing Is; Job--His Afflictions, His Fears; His Faith, His Deliverance and What His Experiences Mean to Us Today; The Master Key to Healing;³⁴ Demons; You Can't Go Under for Going Over and My Life's Story. During the second half I preach inspirational sermons such as: Samson and Delilah--Battle of Champions; The Fourth Man; It is Later Than You Think. Next to the last night I preach on A Man's Life which has won more souls than any other God has given me. The closing night I usually preach on David and Bathsheba--Battle of the Passions. These two messages often bring a thousand souls to Christ each.³⁵

THE INVITATION

Following his preaching, hundreds of persons surge toward the platform at the invitation of Roberts to stand before him and follow his leading in prayer, sentence by sentence. These persons are then directed to the prayer tent where they are met by personal workers from the sponsoring churches. After everyone has assembled, Hart Armstrong gives some general exhortation concerning their commitment to Christ.

One night in Detroit, Michigan,³⁶ there were approximately nine hundred converts and because of the number there were not enough personal workers, so they stood at the end of each row of seats rather than working with each person individually. General

³⁴The only specific sermon on healing in the series.

³⁵Roberts, Oral Roberts' Life Story as Told by Himself, p. 146.

³⁶July 11, 1959.

instructions from Armstrong included these introductory words: "I want you to know you are saved before you leave this tent tonight."³⁷ He further indicated that they had prayed after Oral Roberts in the big tent, now they were to pray for themselves in the prayer tent. Following prayer and counselling, cards were filled out giving the name, age, address, telephone, church preference, and race, in order that adequate follow-up work might be done. This information was recorded on a "convert list" which was given to the sponsoring pastors of the "service area" on the following night.

THE INVALID TENT

Meanwhile, Roberts has gone to the invalid tent in order to pray for the sick. Though the details may differ on occasion, prior to going to the invalid tent, Roberts has changed shirts in a small dressing room behind the platform, and has hurried across the intervening space between the main tent and the invalid tent with collar turned up to prevent a chill. Entering the invalid tent, which is closely guarded to prevent unauthorized persons from entering, Roberts begins to lay his hands upon the sick, praying softly and

³⁷On July 28, 1959, during the Youngstown, Ohio Crusade the procedure was to quote Romans 3:23, I John 1:9, and John 1:12. (Romans 3:23--"For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God"; I John 1:9--"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness"; John 1:12--"But as many as received him, to them gave he the power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name.") Armstrong concluded the preliminary instructions in the prayer tent with these words: "God will meet you here tonight."

reverently that God might heal them. The atmosphere is charged as Roberts slowly picks his way among the invalids lining the edges of the tent, and when he has touched and prayed for each person in the tent he leaves in the manner of a man deliberately proceeding under the responsibility of bringing God's healing power to the world.³⁸

Jack Roach, reporter for the Charleston Evening Post, observed that Roberts "seemed emotionally keyed up as he left this tent."³⁹ And indeed he was, for he was about to begin a phase of the evening service that was to exhaust him emotionally and physically.

THE HEALING LINE

Sitting coatless, straddling the microphone, Oral Roberts faces a line of people from many nationalities, creeds, classes, walks of life, with a variety of diseases, who have come to be touched by his hands. Exemplary of the types of disease in a healing line are those that came through the healing line on July 28, 1959, in the Youngstown, Ohio Crusade: reading block, muscular dystrophy, spastic condition, sugar diabetes, arthritis and paralysis, stutterer, left leg broken and in pain, heart disease, scar tissue on eyes, virus pneumonia, displaced vertebrae, skin disease, Parkinson disease, cardiac ailment in pulmonary area, emphysema (shortness of breath),

³⁸ Detroit, Michigan Crusade, July 11, 1959.

³⁹ Jack Roach, "9,000 Persons Hear Oral Roberts Open Nine-Day Crusade," Charleston Evening Post, Charleston, South Carolina, April 19, 1958.

mentally retarded (partially at birth, complete in adolescence), asthma and hernia, rheumatic fever, broken sacroiliac joint, cigarette habit, blindness, deafness, glandular overweight, cancer (three months to live), goiter on neck, and alcoholism.⁴⁰ The people who came through the healing line with these diseases represent the hurt of the world.

Anthony Harrigan said of these people that stand in the healing line facing Oral Roberts,

THESE ARE PEOPLE who aren't sheltered from the storms of life by money and friends and relatives who are in a position to help. Many are people at the fringes of modern life who don't know which way to turn. They want desperately to be healed and to have their children made well. But they want much more than any agency, public or private, can offer. They want their spirits raised. They want the ultimate in any life--faith.⁴¹

" . . . they want much more than any agency, public or private, can offer," said Harrigan. This is the secret of the healing line.

The Honorable Lee Braxton, mayor of Whiteville, North Carolina,⁴² said of Roberts when he saw him at the head of the healing line, "This is when I saw Oral Roberts as he really is."⁴³ It is in this phase of Roberts' ministry that Montgomery feels that

⁴⁰ The number of diseases and afflictions noted here is not meant to indicate the number of persons in the healing line. There were many others but these were the only ones announced publicly.

⁴¹ Anthony Harrigan, "Standing in Need of Hope," The News and Courier, Charleston, South Carolina, April 27, 1958.

⁴² Braxton was a member of the Oral Roberts organization in charge of radio and television activities.

⁴³ Roberts, Oral Roberts' Life Story as Told by Himself, p. 7.

he is criticized most harshly and misrepresented most unjustly. "Yet, here he is his humblest self."⁴⁴

Adon Taft, a columnist for the Miami Herald, asked, "Why a Healing Line?" Oral Roberts answered,

If I were to pray for individuals in their homes, I could only see about 20 a day. Also, healing comes through faith, and the Bible tells us that faith comes from hearing God's word, so I don't have the faith, nor does the individual, that we would have right after I preach the Word of God.⁴⁵

PRAYER CARDS

The administration of the healing line is done through the use of prayer cards which are distributed in each afternoon service, with the exception of the last service of the crusade.

There are four colors--yellow, pink, blue, and green--and each color series has 2600 cards, with one hundred cards for each letter of the alphabet. . . . the letter and color of your prayer card show how early in the Crusade you received the card.⁴⁶

The only exception to the color series is the use of nonalphabetized white prayer cards for invalids. The purpose of the prayer card is a matter of simple administration, and Roberts said,

When they come for a card, a minister gets a chance to talk to them to see that they understand that only God can

⁴⁴Roberts, God's Formula for Success and Prosperity, p. 154.

⁴⁵Adon Taft, "Life Just Beginning for Oral" (Remarks on Religion), The Miami Herald, Miami, Florida, January 25, 1958, p. 12-A.

⁴⁶Information for Those Who Wish Prayer for Healing.

heal, that they must have faith, and that they will sit through the preaching of the Gospel.⁴⁷

The card that is received by the individual seeking prayer for the healing of his body calls for only the most basic information. The key to the use of the card is the statement that is signed by the person on the prayer card before he goes through the prayer line:

I come to the Oral Roberts Million Souls Crusade of my own free will. I know that Oral Roberts or members of his evangelistic team cannot heal me nor pronounce me well--only God can heal. I will not testify that I am healed unless I am certain that God has healed me and I take full responsibility for desiring prayer for my healing. I understand that the time I get this card determines the order in which I am called, and that if I am present in the meetings I will have opportunity for prayer before the close of the Crusade. I understand that hundreds are present to be prayed for and I agree to wait until my card letter is called in alphabetical order.

I herewith give my consent to use my name, picture, and statements made or testimonials given by me, in any public manner desired. This includes but is not limited to television and radio programs, films, recordings, magazine articles, tracts and books.⁴⁸

It is this "gaunt procession of sickness and hope"⁴⁹ that Oral Roberts faces each night of the crusades that has caused him to be both praised and condemned by the people of the world. After praying with these persons he will frequently say to them, "If you are healed, your doctor will know it, and if you are not healed, he

⁴⁷Taft, loc. cit.

⁴⁸Prayer Card, Oral Roberts Million Souls Crusade.

⁴⁹Cornell, "Man on Fire," p. 5.

will know."⁵⁰ There is no disparagement of the medical profession for Roberts realizes the need of a proper balance between prayer and medical science. He says, "the doctors need the ministers and the ministers need the doctors."⁵¹ And with this attitude he offers the assistance of his prayers to those who are seeking healing of the body.

FOLLOW-UP

Even as the preliminary preparation and training was done by the local churches, even so is the follow-up work accomplished in the same manner. The first step is the compilation of the names of the converts into a list that is given to the pastors of the "service area" each night. Following this a letter is sent out over the signature of Oral Roberts to everyone that has been converted or who has been in the healing line, which offers encouragement and instruction. A Bible Study Course is offered free by mail to those that have been converted. In addition, a special class is held by Armstrong for the pastors and personal workers with suggestions for the follow-up work, all of which is done through the local churches.

⁵⁰ News Release, "Rev. Oral Roberts Brings 'Million Souls for Christ' Crusade to Youngstown, Ohio, July 24 - August 2," Oral Roberts Press Kit File (Tulsa, Oklahoma: Oral Roberts Evangelistic Association, Inc.), p. 2.

⁵¹ Roach, "Oral Roberts Says: 'God Heals; I Don't.'"

These are the basic elements of an Oral Roberts' Crusade, and whatever controversy his ministry may elicit it is a fact that "vast multitudes of men and women who have found God precious to their souls . . . will rise up in eternity to bless the man who showed them the way to God."⁵²

⁵²Roberts, God's Formula for Success and Prosperity, p. 158.

CHAPTER 9

OPINIONS OF ORAL ROBERTS' MINISTRY

The pregnant question in every geographic area in which Oral Roberts begins to raise the great "tent cathedral" for a Crusade, is, "What do you think of Oral Roberts?" It is also the question that will be the overtone of this chapter in the study of the Roberts' ministry.

Herein are presented a few illustrative and characteristic opinions at each end of the gamut regarding this man and his unique ministry. There has been no attempt to present a scientific sociological study of what people think of Roberts, but rather the procedure has been simply to glean, from personal interviews, Roberts' writings, and newspapers, a few answers to the initial question of this chapter. In addition, there has been some material included from various sources of publicity, for each of these in their own way represent still another answer to this question.

INDIVIDUALS

An un-named layman from Allentown, Pennsylvania, set the stage for any attempt to illustrate what Oral Roberts represents in the minds of many people when he said,

Oral Roberts is reaching people who the church often doesn't reach--hardworking people who somehow are not too sure of themselves. Something is wrong and they are honest enough

to admit it. They are groping and he offers them the simple Gospel of Christ rather than a theological lecture.¹

Just as this layman gave the keynote for a brief marshalling of opinions, even so Anthony Harrigan, feature writer for the Charleston, South Carolina, News and Courier, wrote, "Oral Roberts speaks to people who aren't sheltered from the storms of life."²

An example of the unsheltered people of whom Harrigan wrote, and to whom Roberts ministers, was an elderly Swedish woman, with an Indian husband, who handed the writer an envelope thinking he was a member of the Oral Roberts organization. Written on the back of the envelope, which she indicated contained a card and a small amount of money, were these words: (sic) "Pitkus and Augusta Swedis lik see your pastor Oral Roberts. In déss tenth 3 times to Friday today."³ This is a simple illustration of the meaning of the Roberts' ministry to sincere people who many of the larger churches have forgotten in their wilting compassion.

Illustrative of his concern is still another group for whom Roberts has a special personal affinity. This group is the American Indian. A young Navajo minister who served as Roberts' interpreter

¹Reported in the Sunday Call-Bulletin, Allentown, Pennsylvania, July 6, 1958.

²Anthony Harrigan, "Standing in the Need of Hope," The News and Courier, April 27, 1958, p. 12-A.

³This incident with the writer occurred at the Detroit, Michigan fairgrounds, where Oral Roberts was holding his crusade, at approximately 1:00 P.M., July 11, 1959.

during the Gallup, New Mexico Crusade,⁴ made a representative statement for his people:

In times past we have had white men come to us, not with the Gospel, but for other things--sometimes to exploit us. But Oral Roberts is a man who comes to us with a heart that is full of love, a representative of Jesus. We want to welcome him as an ambassador of Jesus Christ.⁵

Still there are others who have commented upon the meaning of this ministry and this man. Each of them in various manners indicate different facets of the impression that Roberts has upon those who sit under his ministry, or those who curiously watch, or those who are affected in their physical afflictions.

I thank God for your ministry because through it I received deliverance.

John Lezzieri
New York, New York

Brother Roberts, I want you to know that our faith came alive through your ministry.

Jac Oliver
Lachine, Michigan⁶

I know little about theology, but I am unshaken in my faith in God and that He had raised up Oral Roberts to reach our generation with the message of Bible deliverance.

Lee Braxton, Mayor
Whiteville, North Carolina⁷

⁴This crusade date was March 1, 1958.

⁵Evelyn Roberts, "The New Trail of Tears Leads to the Great Spirit," Abundant Life, XII, No. 5 (May, 1958), 18.

⁶W.T. Jeffers, "Do You Want God to Heal Your Body?," Abundant Life, XII, No. 6 (June, 1958), 12.

⁷Oral Roberts, Oral Roberts' Life Story as Told by Himself (Tulsa, Oklahoma: Oral Roberts, c. 1952), p. 10.

These comments may well be illustrative regarding Roberts' general preaching ministry, but when the basic question of this chapter is asked it is more often than not in reference to his healing ministry.

The expression of the pathetic plea of a young Negro mother for her blind son was this: "Man of God, I'm not asking much, I just want him to see."⁸

The attitude and faith of this woman was differentiated from that of another mother interviewed by the atmosphere of simple, open trust. This second mother, Caucasian, brought her three and one-half year old daughter to the Detroit, Michigan Crusade with a diagnosis of leukemia and a six-month life expectancy. She came because, in her own words, she had "everything to gain and nothing to lose."⁹

This mother's opinion of Roberts and his place in the healing ministry, as it related to her child, can be seen by quoting an abbreviated portion of an interview by the writer in which she indicated her reason for driving three hundred miles plus the boat trip across Lake Michigan to attend the crusade at Detroit, Michigan:

Mr. Breithaupt: Can you tell me just a little bit about what the doctors said about your little girl?

⁸This comment was made during a special crusade held for the Negro residents of the Durham, North Carolina area, as reported in Oral Roberts' Life Story as Told by Himself, p. 129.

⁹An interview with Mrs. Vernon Schnelle, Colby, Wisconsin during the Detroit, Michigan Crusade, July 11, 1959.

Mrs. Schnelle: Well, they said she had leukemia and she had six months to live.

Mr. Breithaupt: When was it you decided to come down here?

Mrs. Schnelle: I decided to come down here when my sister-in-law said she had a sister who was healed of a blood disease; and then I went to her and she told me how she had been healed--right then I decided.

Mr. Breithaupt: And the doctors had done all they could?

Mrs. Schnelle: Yes, they did.

Mr. Breithaupt: If you have an opportunity to go through the healing line, or whatever Reverend DeWeese suggests, do you feel that it is Brother Roberts' faith, or is it your faith, or is it a combination--what do you think?

Mrs. Schnelle: I think it's a combination of all three.

Mr. Breithaupt: Brother Roberts, yourself, and . . . ?

Mrs. Schnelle: God.

Mr. Breithaupt: Do you think that anyone can be healed?

Mrs. Schnelle: If they believe

Mr. Breithaupt: If they believe strongly enough?

Mrs. Schnelle: Yes.

Mr. Breithaupt: What part in the healing process do you feel Brother Roberts has?

Mrs. Schnelle: I just figured I couldn't do it alone--I could, I mean, but I just figured I should see him--he is near God

Mr. Breithaupt: Do you feel that this will be an instantaneous thing, or is it perhaps a process of getting better, or do you have any feelings as to how it will be done?

Mrs. Schnelle: I expect that when I take her to the doctor six weeks from now, that he will tell me that she is a lot better or healed.¹⁰

¹⁰ Ibid.

Both Miss Celia Maria Rodriguez,¹¹ Montevideo, Uruguay, whose father was an army colonel on a special mission as attache in Washington, D.C.; and Mrs. Bertha Casner,¹² Sturgis, Michigan, felt a common compulsion for attending the Oral Roberts Crusades. They each said, in their own words, that if they could only get to the Crusade they felt that they would be healed. Regarding the redemption centered healing ministry of this man and the effect that it has upon people in its various mediums, Gladys Irene Roddy, Holsapple, Pennsylvania, said: "I believe God began to heal me as I rededicated my life to him" ¹³

Henry Holt, president of a New York textile firm, complimented Roberts when he said, "Mr. Roberts did not heal me, but he led me to the God who did."¹⁴ Because of the integral part that Oral Roberts plays in the total healing ministry, and more particularly, the specific manner in which he uses his hands, he is often the subject of adverse criticism. But it is the touch of his hands that has served as a point of contact for the releasing of faith on the

¹¹"I believed if I could get to your crusade and have you pray for me, I would be healed." Oral Roberts, "How to Receive Healing," Abundant Life, XII, No. 3 (March, 1958), 31.

¹²"I felt that if I could attend one of your crusades and he prayed for me, God would heal me." W.T. Jeffers, "The Mass Miracle is Near," Abundant Life, XII, No. 3 (March, 1958), 26.

¹³Ibid.

¹⁴"Healing With Faith," American Weekly, February 17, 1957, p. 25.

part of many who walk through the healing line.

But for those who failed to receive healing for their bodily afflictions, what is their attitude? The attitude of Mr. and Mrs. Elmer H. Rager is representative of the attitude of many: "Our faith hasn't gotten strong enough yet to receive healing. We have felt closer to God since we were at the Crusade and were saved."¹⁵

We have seen by a few illustrative expressions what a few individuals think of Oral Roberts in his ministry of healing. There are other aspects of public opinion, however, as they are found in three particular journalistic incidents which are called into the record to illustrate another concept of the ministry of this man.

PUBLICATIONS

The first of these incidents that are related is the most adverse of the three. It is an article by Jay Nelson Tuck titled, "Oral Roberts: Faith Healing Faker" which appeared in the October 15, 1959, issue of the sensational magazine Confidential. This is a magazine that claims that it "tells the facts and names the names: with its correlary of having "no fiction--all facts." Reference is made to this writing for the simple reason that it has a place in answer to the basic question of this chapter.

In correspondence with Tuck, fourteen specific discrepancies

¹⁵ Mr. and Mrs. Elmer H. Rager, 2987 Hazelton Street, Sharpsville, Pennsylvania. The information in the text was gleaned from a form returned to the writer following the Youngstown, Ohio Crusade.

between the facts and Tuck's article were called to his attention with the request that if he could not document his destructive criticism he should write Roberts a letter of apology.

"'Cured' By Faith!, she dies." This is the lead for the second piece of journalism which is an example of a perennial presentation of sensational journalism that writes without the wisdom of the editorial pen. This is a news story concerning Mrs. Wanda Beach, 37, of Stanton, Michigan, who was "the tragic victim of a desire to be cured." The facts as the Detroit Times, July 6, 1959, reported them, were these: Mrs. Beach had been a diabetic since her infancy and had been treated several times at University Hospital, Ann Arbor, Michigan. She had claimed a cure of her diabetes as a result of having been in the Oral Roberts Crusade, yet she died at 5:15 P.M., July 4, 1959, at Mt. Carmel Mercy Hospital in Detroit where she had been taken by a police emergency vehicle at 2:40 P.M.

"Since an event of this sort is often interpreted by some as being caused by the ministry of prayer for the sick, or as a reflection upon the ministry," Hart Armstrong, Crusade Administrator, opened a personal investigation into the facts of this particular situation. This is what he reported: Mrs. Beach was not prayed for by Oral Roberts nor did she talk with him, and there was no prayer card for her. An informant, Mrs. Gussie Johnson, reported that Mrs. Beach "went on a sugar spree" and ate seven large ice cream cones and drank six cups of Pepsi Cola. She had been studying Christian Science and a practitioner had been called to minister to

her. The autopsy report by the County Medical Examiner, Dr. Edward Zawadski, indicated that death was caused by insulin withdrawal, though Mrs. Beach had been shorting herself for two or three weeks, for she had been administering the insulin to herself. The official autopsy report listed the cause of death as "diabetic acidosis and coma, with hypotension and cardio-respiratory failure."¹⁶

Roberts' attitude toward this, or any similar incident, is indicated in the words of the Armstrong report:

Evangelist Oral Roberts constantly affirms that he has no personal power to heal, that only God can heal, and if a person is healed or helped, it is God who heals. He is able only to pray and exercise his faith in behalf of the person, and to assist the person to send his own faith to God. Further, Mr. Roberts never asks that any person cease medication, give up a crutch or hearing aid, but rather instructs every person to return to the same doctor, have a complete medical examination, and act only upon the doctor's orders. These statements are made at every public meeting and on every television program. However, it is not possible for us to assume responsibility for the individual actions of those who attend our services. Mr. Roberts always says, "If you are not healed, you will need to continue the medication; if you are healed, the medicine will not be necessary any longer, but it is your doctor who should issue the order to stop medication."¹⁷

The third incident is of particular importance because it has been the source of much secondary criticism of the Roberts ministry of healing. The following extensive article was printed in the February 19, 1956, issue of The New York Times in still another

¹⁶ A mimeographed report, dated July 10, 1959, sent by Hart Armstrong, crusade administrator, to the local newspaper.

¹⁷ Ibid.

attempt to answer the question concerning Oral Roberts. Because of its importance it is quoted in full.

"On Faith Healing" by Jack Gould - For all the attention and publicity accorded to Billy Graham, there is another evangelist who appears to be edging him out on television and radio. The gentleman in question is the Rev. Oral Roberts, and his presentations would seem to pose a matter of fundamental policy for the broadcasting industry.

Brother Roberts, as he identifies himself, was in the news last week, it will be recalled, after he abruptly ended a tour of Australia because of the hostile reception he received in the Australian press. His program last week incidentally, overlooked this turn of events and spoke of his trip in most glowing terms of success.

The evangelist makes his headquarters in Tulsa, Okla., but, he is seen and/or heard over more than 400 TV and radio stations. He is understood to spend about \$20,000 a week for the purchase of time. He does not directly solicit funds but makes it unmistakably clear that he cannot continue on the air without "generous letters" from his audience.

The program of Brother Roberts is divided into two parts. The first part is devoted to a most impassioned delivery of a sermon. The second part - and the one quite different from any other TV presentation - is devoted to faith healing.

No one will dispute that faith can play an enormously vital role in hastening recovery from bodily ills. Similarly there need not be questioned the existence of miraculous recoveries that seemingly cannot be explained by medical science.

But it is quite another matter to pass miracles on a weekly basis and to claim on the screen, without even the most rudimentary proof, permanent cure of an endless variety of ailments.

Last Sunday evening Brother Roberts called up four persons to be helped. A woman said she had a swollen foot, the result of blood poisoning, and a bone infection. Doctors had been unable to cure, she explained. Brother Roberts struck her head sharply with the palm of his hand. The woman cried, "Hallelujah!" She said she was recovered and stomped her foot to prove it.

Another person receiving the ministrations of Brother Roberts was a man who said he had suffered from deafness and impaired sight. He explained that his hearing had improved just by attending the meeting; he said that God's presence just suddenly went through him. Brother Roberts put his hands on the man's ears and eyes. Then he gave him a hearing test. The man could hear a whisper.

The man then told Brother Roberts he had learned of the evangelist's work by watching and listening to him on television.

The climactic moment of the program was the case of a small boy who suffered from double club feet.

The youngster was held in the arms of a woman relative and before Brother Roberts invoked his power of faith, the youngster exclaimed with the help of some coaching, "Boy, am I a lucky duck?" He was going to be made well, he said.

Brother Roberts took the boy in his lap. As he placed his hands vigorously on the boy's feet he stressed that "the ligaments had been cut." Under such circumstances, Brother Roberts added, only a miracle, nothing else, now could enable the boy to walk. "Lord, when I put this child down, he's got to walk," he said. The boy scampered off the stage.

The TV presentation, according to the announcer, was sponsored by Oral Roberts. In short, here was the case of a man buying time on the air to present his own assured miracles. To have failed, obviously would have made totally incongruous the evangelist's guarded closing appeal for further financial support.

Evangelists have long been part of the American scene and no doubt always will be. So long as they adhere to purely religious objectives, their appearance on the home screen may be beneficial and worthwhile. Faith can come to men in different ways, and only the intolerant would presume to judge which is best.

But faith-healing would seem a different matter. To allow the enormously influential medium of television to be used week after week after week to show undocumented "miracles," with all their implied aspersions on the competency of medicine, seems contrary to the spirit, if not the letter, of the industry's code governing mature and responsible broadcasting.

Enlightened leaders of both the clergy and the medical profession recognize that theirs can be a fruitful partnership, that often one may achieve what the other cannot. But this has nothing to do with a gospel preacher making his own extemporaneous medical diagnoses and claiming magic results unsupported by the slightest shred of rational evidence. Brother Roberts, it may be noted, carefully avoids rigid comparative tests before and after his miracles.

From watching Brother Roberts on the screen there can be no question that, in so far as the evangelists on TV are concerned, he has gone a step further than the others. To try to heal a man's soul and restore his faith is one thing. But for a man to ask TV viewers to hold up their babies in front of the screen while he extends his hand to the camera, with a crystal-clear inference that this will heal the infant of bodily ills, is hardly an edifying use of a mass medium.

If Brother Roberts wishes to exploit hysteria and ignorance by putting up his hands and yelling "Heal," that is his affair. But it hardly seems within the public interest, convenience and necessity, for the TV industry to go along with him.

The outlets in this area carrying Brother Roberts are Channel 9 at 11:30 P.M. Sundays; Channel 13 at 8 P.M. Wednesdays, and Channel 8 (New Haven) at 8:30 A.M. Sundays. Of these respected stations, it must be asked whether they are allowing their standard of religious broadcasting to be determined by a faith healer merely because of his ability to pay for time. If so, their behavior is infinitely more distressing than anything Brother Roberts has done.

Because of this "very unfriendly article" Roberts sent a letter under the date of February 21, 1956, to many hundreds of faithful supporters of the Oral Roberts ministry in an attempt to persuade them to write The New York Times protesting the publication of such an article. He said, in part,

We feel it is time for our true friends to reply to articles of this type, as there is a definite possibility that the influence of such articles might in the not-too-distant future jeopardize our religious freedom in praying for the sick. YOUR OPINION is just as important as the

opinion of Jack Gould. He has given his opinion, now it is time that yours be heard.

On March 4, 1956, The New York Times printed a few of the letters that had been received concerning the Gould article. No doubt many of the letters came to the newspaper due to the prompting of Roberts' letter, but it cannot be unmarked that many of them were spontaneous reactions, both pro and con. The editors reported that as of March 4, 1956, they had received one thousand four hundred fifty letters with the "overwhelming majority supporting Mr. Roberts."¹⁸

These have been three journalistic attempts to answer the question regarding the ministry of Oral Roberts and it is significant that each of the three have dealt with reactions to different phases of his ministry. Tuck reacted to the man; the Detroit Times reacted to the healing message; and Gould reacted to the method. But in each reaction of the press, whether it be adverse, neutral, or positive, there is the perennial attempt to answer the harassing question, "What do you think of Oral Roberts?"

¹⁸New York Times, March 4, 1956, Section II, p. 9.

PART III

A CRITIQUE OF ORAL ROBERTS' PREACHMENT AND PRACTICE

CHAPTER 10

INFLUENCES UPON ROBERTS

Oral Roberts begins the story of his life with these words:

I reached the end of the way when I was seventeen. I faced life with a stammering, stuttering tongue and with tuberculosis in both lungs. I had fought a desperate battle and had lost.¹

This was Roberts, the lad, speaking, but because of the intervening years and experiences, Roberts, the man, said: "God has raised me up to take His healing power to my generation."²

TEMPORAL INFLUENCES

In the Southwestern environment in which his paternal grandfather had posited him, with the previously indicated familial consecration, with many of his experiences amidst the smell of sawdust, Oral Roberts was circumstantially directed for a place in the sun. With the prophetic words of both his father and mother reverberating in his ears as a clarion call, the thirty-five cent investment of his brother as a stepping stone, and the material and siblic consolation of hope for healing as a hand-rail, Roberts has risen to the place for which he felt that he was destined in even

¹Oral Roberts, Oral Roberts' Life Story as Told by Himself (Tulsa, Oklahoma: Oral Roberts, c. 1952), p. 13.

²Ibid., p. 49

the pre-natal stage of his life.³

Not the least of the formational factors of the Oral Roberts ministry of healing was his own illness with the complicating factor of a speech impediment. But the structure of his life was drastically and diametrically changed in the moment of his healing. As an important process in the relation of himself with his experiences to the totality of his ministry he said, "I owe my life, my all to healing. I never wanted to be saved until I found out I could be healed."⁴

Roberts refers to the speech difficulty that was present as a youth interchangeably as both stuttering and stammering, and though there is a technical difference between the two terms, it is not pertinent at this juncture. It is pertinent, however, to note that the speech difficulty of the lad, Roberts, may quite possibly have had a relationship to the healing of his tuberculosis. It can only be offered here as a theoretical supposition since it is doubtful whether anyone, even Roberts, can offer a conclusive judgment of the matter at this time.

Stuttering, as a medical problem, has evolved from the early concepts of it as being the result of a dry tongue (Hippocrates), or as the result of a thick, hard tongue (Aristotle), through a shift

³Oral Roberts, "Oral Roberts Talks About God's Surplus," Abundant Life, XII, No. 11 (November, 1958), 2.

⁴Roberts, Oral Roberts Life Story as Told by Himself, p. 51.

in organicity to a neuro-physiological aspect of the speech mechanism, to a conception of the problem as residing frequently within the psychic determination of the individual. The problem of stuttering is almost as ancient as speech itself, and in his problem Roberts stood in company with Moses, Aristotle, Virgil, Erasmus, Winston Churchill, and others.

Though a critical question must be raised regarding Roberts' description of himself as "a born stutterer," it will be noted that this impediment soon presented itself and became a major social problem for him as a teen-age boy. But in his own words he indicated that the problem was more basic than this for he says, concerning the year he was gone from home as a boy, "I never got myself off my hands."⁵ He found that his fears, his stuttering tongue, and his frustrated life could not be left behind. Herein lies the genesis for the germinal thought regarding the direct relationship between the healing of his stuttering and tuberculosis.

If there is to be any effective treatment of the stuttering problem it must be directed toward the whole individual and not the speech mechanism alone. The person must be considered in the light of his particular emotional faculties and expressions in both the interpersonal and intraphysic realms. This aspect of healing may have begun in his conversion experience which he dates as

⁵Ibid., p. 7.

February 7, 1935.⁶ The evangelical conception of conversion would demand that this be accorded more importance than a mere remote possibility, for his conversion may well have been the foundational element in both the healing of the speech impediment and the healing of the tuberculosis.

The abyssal experience of conversion may well have prepared Roberts for a progressive staging of his life in order that the intrapsychic difficulties might begin an evolution into resolution. And this new and dynamic spiritual experience may have been the beginning of a definite hope for the healing of his tuberculosis. In this respect it is felt that these two entities in the pathology of Roberts' life are possibly related, not that either are causal, but that the resolving of the spiritual problem in his conversion may have led to a resolving of his major emotional problems as evidenced by the healing of the speech impediment, which in turn may have created an atmosphere in which to believe God for the healing of his tuberculosis.

In May 1935, approximately three months subsequent to his conversion, Roberts felt that he heard the direct voice of God directing him with a commission that he was to take the healing power of God to his own generation. Roberts feels that the use of himself as such an instrument is the reason for his healing, though in the light of

⁶Oral Roberts, Exactly How You May Receive Your Healing . . . Through Faith Including a Heart-to-Heart Talk on Your Salvation (Tulsa, Oklahoma: Oral Roberts, c. 1958), p. 47.

his other commentaries concerning the criteria for healing, this cannot be validated in his own reasoning. Within the framework of his own thought, Roberts' healing must be taken out of the situation just indicated and must be placed within the affirmation that he was healed because he was a Christian and because he had faith that he would be healed.

These are the foremost formative elements from his background that have helped to shape the present healing ministry of Oral Roberts, but these are not all, for there have been influential incidents and circumstances from the ministerial aspect of his life that have had a great part in opening the way for his unique ministry.

SPIRITUAL INFLUENCES

There are four primary elements that have become as catalytic agents in the dissolution of many secondary and incidental features of his ministry into a ministry that is offering hope of healing to many of the world who are oppressed in body and spirit. These conspicuous elements are: his "discovery" of the four primal verses, the various experiences in which he felt that he heard the direct voice of God, the revelation that his right hand would be used as a point of contact, and the resultant feature of the ministry of the Seven-fold Outreach.

It is not the intention to discuss each of these features, but rather it is the purpose at this point to juxtapose the seven times that Roberts felt that he heard the direct voice of God and to make

an abbreviature to see whether there are any correlative and commutual features. There is not attempt herein to disparage Roberts' indication of his experiences of said nature, for who of the evangelical tradition has not felt the call of God to a ministry, and thus who is sufficient to say that the manner in which Roberts' call came was not auditory for him.

It would be absonant to intellectual veracity to ratify his projection of thought in relation to the voice of God without due consideration being given to the sociological, psychological, and theological formative elements involved, but it would be equally so to impugn his unfeigned conviction in this matter without investigation into its authentic components. The purpose of this reference to those seven experiences is to see if they are isolated, contingent upon circumstances, or whether they are relative to his ministry as a whole.

Though there may not be a strict organic and structural relationship between the seven messages, it is felt that there is an intimated progressive relationship. The alpha and omega of Roberts' receptual experiences were: ". . . I am going to heal you, . . ." and ". . . I will use you . . ." Interjacent are the progressive stages that led him from the first to the last.

In the first of the seven experiences Roberts received at once a promise and a commission, while in the last he received a condition and a commission. The promise resident in the first of these experiences was fulfilled within hours while the commission was

to be lost in a twelve-year aberration, only to be rediscovered in the prostration of a desperate searching. Through this process it moved in a graduated manner from a catholic commission to its specificated sequel. Still further particularization of the commission was revealed in the third of the experiences by the definition of the means and manner in which this healing ministry would be accomplished.

It is significant to note that the mean position in the experiences is occupied by the great prime thought underlying the whole healing ministry of Oral Roberts. Upon this nucleate divide are hinged the two aspects of the progressive revelation of the commission. On one side of the fourth and core experience lies the mechanical and specific elements of his preparation for the healing ministry, while on the distal side lies the outcropping of an understanding of the fourth and prime receptual experience.

Just as a definite pattern and maturation can be seen in the contingent experiences in which Roberts' feels he heard the direct voice of God in commission and direction, even so the same maturation of the man can be seen in his own story as he told it in Oral Roberts' Life Story as Told by Himself.

He began his story with these words: "I reached the end of the way when I was seventeen . . . I had fought a desperate battle and had lost."⁷ Seventeen years later he ended the story of his life

⁷Roberts, Oral Roberts Life Story as Told by Himself, p. 13.

with these words:

Listen to me, America:
 I love you;
 I have flown your skies,
 driven your highways,
 walked your hills,
 enjoyed your freedoms;
 I have preached to your masses,
 Won your lost,
 Healed your sick,
 Given you God's message for this hour.

Look for me, America:
 I will be preaching to you that God is a good God
 and the devil is a bad devil --
 That you are facing your greatest revival and this
 time it is a revival of signs and wonders, miraculous
 healings, deliverance of soul, mind, and body--
 That you will see, and this is a prophecy, your
 greatest power is not in your tanks and bombs, your
 dollars and guns, but in your faith and trust in God.

My America.
 I am one of your sons,
 the least of all your sons,
 but the spirit of deliverance is in me,
 a consuming fire is in my soul,
 a firebrand is in my hand,
 faith is in my message.

Look for me, my America:
 At the crossroads of your greatest cities,
 In the big tent,
 on your radios,
 on your television sets,
 For God has raised me up to take His healing
 power to my generation.⁸

Though Oral Roberts is a gifted man in many areas of his
 ministry in it all he says of himself: "I am just a simple man who
 loves Jesus Christ."

⁸Ibid., p. 111.

CHAPTER 11

INTEGRANTS IN ROBERTS' THOUGHT

There are a host of things within the framework of Oral Roberts' theoretical and theological thought which might find commentary herein, but it is the purposive appointment of this chapter to give attention to only two integrants, i.e., his concept of God and his concept of the atonement. At the same time some consideration is given to the appurtenants of each.

ROBERTS' CONCEPT OF GOD

The concept of God which this man holds is trinal in its aspects because of these constituent factors of his thought: first, God is a good God; second, God intervenes in human affairs; and third, God appears to people in the form of their need. Consideration of the first of these components will herein constitute a treatment of Roberts' concept of God for in its shadow the other features stand.

God is a Good God

When Roberts stated that " . . . God is as big in your life as you will believe him to be,"¹ he was tapping a resource of thought of which J.B. Phillips has shown the obverse side. In his book, Your God Is Too Small, Phillips has enriched the axiomatic truth of

¹Oral Roberts, God Is A Big God (Tulsa, Oklahoma: Oral Roberts Tract Society, n.d.).

Roberts' statement, when he said,

The trouble with many people today is that they have not found a God big enough for modern needs.

.....

Many men and women today are living, often with inner dissatisfaction, without any faith in God at all. This is not because they are particularly wicked or selfish . . . but because they have not found with their adult minds a God big enough to "fit in with" the new scientific age, big enough to command their highest admiration and respect, and consequently their willing cooperation.²

He illustrated this by his presentation of some common conceptions of God as chapter titles in his book, i.e., "Resident Policeman," "Grand Old Man," "Heavenly Bosom," "Managing Director," and others.

Roberts' whole thesis concerning the nature of God is inextricably bound up with, and exemplified by his statement that God is a good God. With reference to this conception Roberts said from the crusade platform, "I just discovered this and it is as fresh as if Jesus had just said it."³ Indeed, this may be true, but it is not the first time that this area of thought has been broached.

William Law, an English clergyman (1686-1761) wrote concerning this matter in the following words:

The greatest idea that we can frame of God is, when we conceive Him to be a Being of infinite love and goodness;

²John Bertram Phillips, Your God Is Too Small (New York: Macmillan, c. 1955), p. v.

³Statement made by Oral Roberts in a sermon during the Detroit, Michigan Crusade, July 11, 1959.

using an infinite wisdom and power, for the common good and happiness of all his creatures.⁴

Because of the tinge of mysticism in the writings of Law, possibly due in part to his admiration for the German theosophist, Jacob Boehme, the Wesley brothers broke with him. In answer to Law's statement regarding God, and other matters, John Wesley began an extensive letter on December 15, 1755, which was not finished and posted until January 6, 1756. In this letter Wesley indicated that instead of excluding the justice of God regarding suffering, as Law had done, it actually was an evidence of the goodness of God.⁵

Discovering that God was good, totally good, brought Oral Roberts into a new area of thinking, but in the flush of his discovery he has not sufficiently weighed the rectilineation of such a universal statement with the inferred and stated implications. It must be granted that, indeed, God is a good God - how could it be otherwise? This is not the point of dissent, but rather it is the pronounced universal implications of such a statement that call it into question. What does such a comprehensive statement concerning the goodness of God do to the complex and unsolved mystery of suffering?

Suffering

Nels F.S. Ferre speaks in terms of the meaning of suffering

⁴J. Brazier Green, John Wesley and William Law (London: The Epworth Press, 1945), p. 103.

⁵John Telford, The Letters of The Rev. John Wesley, A.M. (London: The Epworth Press, 1931), Vol. II, p. 346.

when he speaks of Christ's sufferings at Gethsemane and Calvary, and what these sufferings meant to God.⁶ But it is in the sense of a creative suffering and not fatalism or stoic resignation that Jesus speaks of suffering in these words: "When a woman is in travail she has sorrow, because her hour has come; but when she is delivered of the child, she no longer remembers the anguish, for joy that a child is born into the world."⁷ Such a creative suffering is in the of John 3:16 where it is used with the force of giving from oneself.⁸

Evelyn Frost is cognizant of the elements involved in such suffering, for she says,

Redemptive suffering . . . is the consequence of the going forth of the love of God in the heart of man to meet sin and disease, to bear the impact when love and sin meet, and in that impact to realize, continuously and progressively as the pain intensifies, the meaning and joy of eternal life for body, mind and spirit.⁹

Walter H. Clark speaks of suffering in terms that further carry the analogy of creative suffering in the travail of birth, for he speaks of the capacity of Judaism to transform the suffering of the exile and the dispersion into insights of profound significance that redeemed these people from oblivion. It was in these fierce

⁶Nels Ferre, The Christian Faith (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1942), p. 161.

⁷John 16:21.

⁸Cf. I John 4:9; Hebrews 11:17 (Genesis 22:1-19); Romans 8:32.

⁹Evelyn Frost, Christian Healing (London: A.R. Mowbray and Co., Limited, 1954), p. 352.

crucibles of suffering that their comfortable religious suppositions came through the refining fire.¹⁰ Perhaps it was in this reflection that the poet Goethe referred to the Christian religion as a "sanctuary of sorrow."¹¹

In the relationship of suffering to God's goodness, as Roberts considers them to be mutually exclusive, these questions must be raised: Were it not for suffering might there not be an inclination for the creature to be unable to distinguish himself from the Creator and get the projective notion that he is god? Is the desire to lessen pain per se in conformity with the spirit of the Gospels which record the crucifixion of our Lord?

The concept that God is a good God and therefore suffering is beyond the pale of His goodness must be disallowed on the basis of the evidence that Roberts has presented. The cross of sorrow, pain, and suffering stands at the center of Christianity--it cannot be otherwise.

The Primal Scriptures

Correlated to the basic concept of God are Roberts' four primal verses of Scripture that give basis to his healing ministry.¹² These

¹⁰Walter Houston Clark, The Psychology of Religion (New York: Macmillan, 1958), p. 173.

¹¹Ibid.

¹²Oral Roberts, Exactly How You May Receive Your Healing . . . Through Faith Including a Heart-to-Heart Talk on Your Salvation (Tulsa, Oklahoma: Oral Roberts, c. 1958), p. 62.

verses will each be briefly discussed in the light of the critique of Roberts' theory of healing.

III John 2 stands in a foremost position in the listing of these four verses because of its initial position in the discovery. As "discovered" by Roberts, this verse reads, "Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth." This is definitely speaking of bodily health as a chief element in prosperity, while at one and the same time there is an assumed prerequisite condition regarding the good health of the soul. But, is Roberts justified in reading into a prayer of the Apostle, a prayer that was made as an outpouring of Christian love, the doctrinal and revelatory significance of an authoritative promise of healing for all? Though it must be granted that John is here praying for health of body, health of soul, and prosperity in secular affairs, to make this verse a universal promise is to eisegete, rather than exegete.

Standing in a salient position, John 10:10 has specific reference to both the life and ministry of Oral Roberts. "The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly."

Roberts is correct in making reference to the matter of abundance, for this verse speaks of having life in full abundance, indicating a surplus much akin to the undistributed pieces in the incident of the feeding of the five thousand. But a point of

dissentience must be declared in Roberts' reference to the abundance of life. John the Beloved speaks in relation to spiritual life and nothing more. There is no reference to the physical attributes of life in relation to the abundance of physical blessings. John's word, _____, is indicative of the spiritual life that Christ came to give. In correlating verse ten with verse one where the allegory begins, it must be noted that the thief takes life, the shepherd protects life, while the Good Shepherd gives life. In verse ten Jesus is making a definitive explanation of the allegorical parable, and He said _____, indicating the emphatic contrast between Himself and _____. To say that Jesus is promising physical and temporal blessings as well as spiritual blessings in this descriptive picture of His mission is but to freight the verse with meaning that is not there.

Pristine in Roberts' conception that God is a good God, and the devil is a bad devil is Acts 10:38, "How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him."

As a result of reading this verse Roberts feels that since it is not God's will that His children suffer or be ill, illness and disease must therefore necessarily be caused by Satan. In a minor way this has been dealt with above. It is sufficient, at this juncture, to say that it is felt that to interpret this verse to mean that Satan alone is the author of sickness, disease, and suffering,

and that the purpose of Jesus coming into the world was to free men from this "oppression" and "captivity" is to make the verse say more than was intended by Luke.

Instead, this verse has a much broader base in that the oppression of Satan is more complex than the mere affliction of persons with disease and all that the phrase connotes. The

of this verse indicates the tyranny of Satan against an individual, and it is used in this sense of tyrannization in not only this passage but also the only other use of the word in the New Testament, i.e., James 2:6.

The translation of as 'delivered' rather than 'healed' allows the figure of oppression to stand without eisegeting this verse into saying less than the reality of its meaning. In one way Roberts makes this verse say more than it really does when he makes it a source for the thought that Satan is the only causal element in illness, yet in another sense the full import of the verse is lost by generally limiting the passage to physical affliction by Satan. This is not to say that some diseases may not be caused by the tyranny of Satan. It is only to say that Jesus delivered men from this tyranny in more than the physical.

In not one instance in the New Testament is the word used in which there is suggested any relationship between physical illness and diabolical tyranny. Aside from Acts 10:38, there are only two instances in which is used in reference to demons--Luke 8:2 and Luke 9:42--and these incidents bear no reference

to physical illness. Instead of reading this verse as "healing all that were oppressed of the devil," the more inclusive reading would be "delivering all that were tyrannized by the devil," which would convey the total meaning of the spiritual, mental, and moral oppression.

If the concession were made that only because of this "oppression of the devil" is there sickness, it does violence to the modern theories of disease that have been established, and rules out the real necessity of the physician.

Hiltner indicated that there are four causal factors in illness, which he defines as "the painful reality of experiencing impairment, whatever the cause."¹³ These, he says, are defect, invasion, distortion, and decision.¹⁴ Cobb classifies diseases by their etiology as geneogenic, histogenic, chemogenic and psychogenic,¹⁵ and with the views of these men as accepted, valid material in the knowledge of disease it cannot be concurred that all disease and sickness is of Satan. Human responsibility must be maintained regarding disease and health up to the limits of ability and capacity. Thus the categorical assignment of sickness to Satan and health to God is felt to be invalid.

¹³Seward Hiltner, "Healing," Pastoral Psychology, VIII, No. 80 (January, 1958), 76.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 73.

¹⁵Stanley Cobb, Foundations of Neuropsychiatry (Baltimore: Williams and Wilkins Co., 1941), pp. 205-225.

The last of the four verses that Roberts holds to be the basic Scriptural evidence for a healing ministry is Luke 9:56: "For the Son of Man is not come to destroy mens lives, but to save them." In this reading the King James Version stands almost alone. Even though this verse is one-quarter of the primal basis for the Oral Roberts ministry of healing, a discussion of it will find only a tabula rasa for the textual evidence for the inclusion of this verse is pertinently lacking. Not only does Tischendorf,¹⁶ whose critical apparatus is considered to be the best ever assembled, refuse to admit it, but Westcott and Hort,¹⁷ whose critical text is still considered to be the best available, deny it rank as well. This is not intended as a reflection upon the integrity of Roberts, for in his use of the King James Version this verse stands, but being based upon the Byzantine text which was not known earlier than the fourth century, it is doubtful whether this particular verse should be a part of his Scriptural platform since it is probably not genuine.

With this generalized critique of Roberts' concept of God, with its appurtenant of the four primal verses, we turn now to consider his concept of the atonement which brings the discussion directly to the matter of healing.

¹⁶Constantinus Tischendorf, Novum Testamentum Graece (Lipsiae: Giesecke and Devrient, 1869).

¹⁷Brooke Foss Westcott and Fenton John Anthony Hort, The New Testament in the Original Greek (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1953).

ROBERTS' CONCEPT OF THE ATONEMENT

Any discussion of the atonement and its relationship to healing must first consider the fact of the atonement per se and the One that made the atonement. It is mere quixotry to attempt only an understanding of the fruits of the atonement in Oral Roberts' thought without giving status to his thought regarding the meaning and purpose of the atonement.

There is no particular area in his writing that can be said to relate directly to a theory of the atonement, for it would seem that there is no integrated conception of the theoretical aspect. His only reference that can be considered in this respect is his statement concerning an "offended God."¹⁸ From this insufficient reference it may be drawn that there is a basic Anselmic theory of the atonement, which means that Christ as the Divine One could pay the price of sin demanded by an offended God because He was worthy, and as the Human One He could represent man. This concept fits into the general framework of his Christology.

The God-Man

Though standing at somewhat diametric ends in their theological positions, Oral Roberts, "the Oklahoma evangelist," and Nels F.S. Ferre, "a contemporary creative theologian," both speak of Jesus Christ

¹⁸Oral Roberts, Oral Roberts' Best Sermons and Stories as Presented in His Great Evangelistic Campaigns Around the World (Tulsa, Oklahoma: Oral Roberts, c. 1956), p. 23.

in common conceptions, to a point. Regarding the Person of the atonement both Roberts and Ferre speak of two distinct natures in the God-Man. This can be illustrated in Ferre's thought by his emphasis upon the enhypostasia with its insistence upon the independent reality of human nature both before and after the hypostatic union.¹⁹ Though Roberts would react to a statement quite as extreme as this, he does say, "The human body was Jesus but that divine spirit was Christ."²⁰ Both of these men in their antipodal theological positions border on, and have a tinge of, the Nestorianism of an earlier day.

The adoptionism figure is further carried in Roberts' statement that "death released Christ from the human body, that is all."²¹ The essence of Christ prior to Calvary is still further case in point regarding the two natures. Though it is felt that Roberts would categorically deny any accusation of Nestorianism in his thought, it nonetheless must be noted. He proceeds in a backward direction from the cross to the cradle when he says, "They did not kill Christ - they killed Jesus! Jesus was born in Bethlehem, but Christ was alive when the morning stars sang together and before God laid the foundations of the earth."²²

¹⁹Nels Ferre, Christ and the Christian (New York: Harper, 1958), p. 8.

²⁰Oral Roberts, The 4th Man and Other Famous Sermons Exactly As Oral Roberts Preached Them from the Revival Platform (Tulsa, Oklahoma: Oral Roberts, 1958), p. 127.

²¹Ibid.

²²Ibid.

Aside from the fact that evangelicals agree to the aspect of the two natures in the Son of God, it is felt that there is a definite lack of biblical, historical, or theological evidence and precedent for Roberts to distinguish between Jesus and Christ on the basis of the names. In spite of the fact that a distinction must be maintained between the pre-existent Unincarnate Word and the Incarnate Word, the arbitrary distinction in the name Christ is somewhat forced for Jesus Christ is "the same yesterday, and today, and forever" (Hebrews 13:8).

"And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth; we have beheld his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father." John 1:14 thus indicates that the Son of God became flesh and assumed a body, which is a basic difference between the Christian of John and the Greek of Philo.

Since Ferre's thought has been noted in this regard, his opinion at this juncture deserves comment by way of comparison with Roberts'. Even though Bender described Ferre as writing

existentially as a committed believer in the Incarnation and God's redemptive agape, he speaks of the Word becoming flesh in the sense of God entering humanity in the fullness of his nature in which Jesus' body, mind, and soul were human and subject to natural laws. Jesus, as the Son of God, was the outgrowth of the perfection of human nature in its right relationship to God, and was not the descent of God externally on man but was the organic fruition of the development of the human personality of Jesus.²³

²³Ferre, The Christian Faith, p. 113.

Wholeness

The atonement may be characterized as it applies to men by the single word "wholeness." Jesus' pertinent, disclosive question to the man lying on the edge of the Pool called Bethesda was this: "Wilt thou be made whole?"²⁴

In the elongating relationship between ministers and doctors the intra-relationship of and is becoming more evident. A patient is not a chemical retort in which controllable reactions can be measured, nor is he a person who can appropriate the benefits of the atonement without concern for the body. He is a person, a whole person, and salvation includes the whole man. Roberts' statement is this: "The literal translation of the word salvation is good health of soul, mind, and body."²⁵

Roberts' feeling that "healing for your body is more closely connected with your soul than you realize" finds concurrence in Hilton when he says that the separation of sin and sickness has been prematurely made.²⁶ This is true in the light of medical discoveries relating to psychosomatic illnesses, but the equal danger of equating sin and sickness, as did Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar,²⁷ must be avoided.

²⁴John 5:6. (The Revised Standard Version: "Do you want to be healed?" Perhaps the following reading, which includes a broader understanding of the term would be more meaningful: "Do you want to be healthy?").

²⁵Oral Roberts, Faith Against Life's Storms (Tulsa, Oklahoma: Oral Roberts, 1957), p. 42.

²⁶Hiltner, "Healing," p. 78.

²⁷Job 2:11ff.

It is a natural danger for a man such as Roberts to attribute all of the good things of life to God and all of the adverse things of life to Satan. When he says that God wants every child of God to have "personal knowledge of genuine salvation, health for the body, and prosperity,"²⁸ he is illustrating his concept that God is a good God.

"Wilt thou be made whole?" is the pointed question relating to the matter of the relationship of healing to the atonement.

Wholeness is growth, increase, and enlargement. This is evidenced by the question of Jesus directed at the man on the edge of the pool. Jesus' word was _____ which has an etymological relationship to _____. The inference that salvation and healing have a common basis is specifically illustrated in Acts 27:34 where a direct reference is made to health.²⁹ Of the forty-five times that _____ is used in the New Testament as the word for salvation it only once is used in reference to bodily health.³⁰ This does not negate the relationship of salvation and health, it only clears the argument, for as _____ finds its root in _____ there is the element of being made whole, which cannot but include the

²⁸ Oral Roberts and G.H. Montgomery, God's Formula for Success and Prosperity (Tulsa, Oklahoma: Oral Roberts, c. 1956), p. 11. Cf. also Oral Roberts, Deliverance from Fear and from Sickness (Tulsa, Oklahoma: Oral Roberts, c. 1954), p. 12.

²⁹ Acts 27:34: "Wherefore, I pray you to take some meat: for this is for your health: for there shall not an hair fall from the head of any of you."

³⁰ Twice it is used in the sense of freedom or deliverance.

on a sovereign basis.

Wholeness in relation to _____ and _____ is not the recent discovery of the healing ministries of this generation. Using the passage Luke 1:77 as a focal point, a consideration of a few translations will illustrate an earlier conception of this dynamic relationship. Note the words of the text: "to give knowledge of salvation to his people in the forgiveness of their sins."

Tyndale's interchangeable use of health and salvation is an obvious case in point. In his 1534 edition of the New Testament he translated this key phrase as "knowledge of salvation."³¹ The first Bible that was lifted from the type of the Mainz printer read scientiam salutis (knowledge of health).³² Martin Luther translated the phrase as Und Erkenntnisz des Heils using an adjectival form of the word which is suggestive reality to this type of relationship between health and salvation.³³

Even as the matter of wholeness has been of importance in a discussion of the relationship of healing and the person, Evelyn Frost speaks on the wholeness and completeness of the sacrifice.

The cry from the Cross, "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani," was not primarily an echo of physical suffering; Christ

³¹N. Hardy Wallis (ed), The New Testament Translated by William Tyndale - 1534 (Cambridge: The University Press, 1938).

³²The Gutenberg Bible (Facsimile) (New York: Brussel and Brussel, 1968).

³³Rudolph Stier (Reviser), Das Neue Testament Nach Dr. Martin Luthers Uebersetzung (New York: von der Amerikanischen Traktat-Gesellschaft, n.d.).

offered Himself wholly, and the anguish of soul was deeper than any physical pain; the Tetelestai marked the offering of the whole personality in sacrifice, a perfected and completed sacrifice; and the whole personality likewise entered into the resurrection life, for it was impossible that it could be otherwise.³⁴

Thus it was the _____ of Calvary that gave real meaning to the atonement.

In spite of the general agreement thus far, dissent at the point of the extent of the actual involvement of healing in the atonement must be made with the thought of Roberts. In his thought the provisions of the atonement include the wide range of salvation for the soul, healing for the body, provision for one's economic life, and deliverance from fear, torment, sin, and sickness. All of these were given through the death of Christ upon the cross.³⁵

Concurrence that healing is provided in the atonement does not mean that there is concurrence at the point of extent, quality or quantity. To place physical healing and spiritual salvation on a parallel basis and to equate them is to give undue prominence to the physical, in spite of the fact that salvation is presented by Roberts as the first of two equal provisions.³⁶

It is the revealed will of God that men find forgiveness and cleansing from the sin and the sins of life, and provision is made

³⁴Frost, Christian Healing, p. 347.

³⁵Oral Roberts, "Everything God Has is Yours," Abundant Life, XII, No. 1 (January, 1958), 23.

³⁶Roberts, Exactly How You May Receive Your Healing . . ., p. 25.

for them in the atonement because of the proffered redemptive experience. This, however, does not include the scars of sin and sins which can only be erased in the rapturous experience, and provisionally during this life through the sovereign will of God.

If equal provision for healing was made in the atonement it would mean that everyone who was a child of God had a right and a responsibility to be healed. This Roberts affirms to be the case. At this point the writer dissents in the light of the pragmatic situation and it is felt that this argument is infeasible and indefensible. Hart Armstrong, crusade administrator, indicated during an interview that theoretically it was not God's will to afflict any Christian with disease and illness, but that practically it did not work out that way.³⁷ The examples of the latter are manifest. Healing in the atonement with equal capacity and equal provision as salvation very obviously says too much, but this does not negate the case for healing as a part of the atonement in a more proper position.

In consideration of the fact that the extreme position of Roberts is herein rejected, it is not meant to be inferred that the matter of healing, as properly considered in relation to the atonement, is likewise rejected. Belief in spiritual healing must be maintained if the meaning of the atonement is kept clear, but this does not facilitate the classification of healing and salvation as

³⁷Statement made by Hart Armstrong, crusade administrator, in an interview during the Detroit, Michigan Crusade, July 11, 1959.

either concomitant or coordinate elements.

Spiritual Healing

At this tangence it is necessary to view spiritual healing from the viewpoint of definitions to gain a better perspective of that which is provisionally included in the atonement.

Wayne Oates aptly refers to the relationship of religion and healing in these words:

Personal religion in its full flower, unencumbered by the negative afterthoughts of a tired civilization, usually draws a straight line of connection between faith and health. No amount of exegetical casuistry can remove the practice of faith healing from the center of the reality of the person and work of Christ. Only a wish not to see it can blind one to the continuous constellations of faith healing, groups that have formed among Christians from the beginning of the Christian era until now. Only an ivory tower existence can insulate one from the knowledge of the variety of healing groups among Christians today.³⁸

The formal definition of spiritual healing as used in the Braden Study of Healing is as follows: "Healing effected through other than the recognized methods of scientific medicine and those of the trained psychiatrist, that is, healing wrought directly through religious faith in some sense."³⁹

In the definitive presentation Salzman distinguished between

³⁸ Simon Doniger (ed.), Healing: Human and Divine, Man's Search for Health and Wholeness Through Science, Faith, and Prayer (New York: Association Press, c. 1957), p. 229.

³⁹ A study done in the Chicago area to discover the prevalence of an interest in healing by a committee composed of Carroll A. Wise, W.E. Blakemore, and Charles Braden.

faith healing and spiritual healing, though more often than not they are used synonymously by other individuals. He says, "Faith healing implies healing through the application of faith or belief or conviction in a healer,"⁴⁰ while he says of the distal side of the distinction, "Spiritual healing is healing which occurs through the agency of spiritual forces, either by the intervention of man or by his mediation, but produced entirely by divine action."⁴¹

It must be noted in the light of the current interest in the relationship of religion and healing that a religious statement about healing is not ipso facto a statement about religious healing.

Spiritual healing is a dynamic, progressive relationship that is not invalidated by the abuse of the charlatans.

The criticism of the unbeliever that a belief in divine healing is a form of escape is equally invalid. There is no such implication in said belief, but rather it may be a desire to seek out the full measure and meaning of a healing relationship with God.

Frost is extremely relevant in her comment regarding Christian healing when she says,

Christian healing is essentially the operation of the laws of eternal life upon the spirit, mind, and body of man; the Christian whose life-principle is eternal life, must therefore essentially radiate life and thus be a channel of healing in proportion to his own hold upon eternal life.⁴²

⁴⁰ Shirley B. Page, "Some Further Observations on Sin and Sickness," The Journal of Pastoral Care, XIII, No. 3 (Fall, 1959), 147.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Frost, Christian Healing, p. 372.

Thus, though there is a definite relationship of healing in and to the atonement, it has been primarily the extent of that involvement that has been the point of dissent rather than the fact of the involvement.

A discussion of healing from a theoretical standpoint is often difficult because of the bias of the individual, yet there are principles of healing discoverable in the Scriptures that, if only appropriated, would prevent many of the excesses of some current healing ministries.

CHAPTER 12

ROBERTS AS AN INSTRUMENT

"I AM NOT A HEALER, I HAVE NO POWER TO HEAL ANYONE, I AM ONLY A HUMBLE INSTRUMENT IN THE HANDS OF GOD WHO DOES THE WORK."¹

Though Isaiah's reference to the man who said "I will not be a healer"² is stronger than the feeling on the part of Oral Roberts, there is a definite objection to a consideration of himself as a faith healer. Roberts does not consider himself to have any power but only to act as the channel for the healing power of God. The statement of his position is so obvious in his writings, et al, that it scarcely needs comment, and when he observes that "God is concerned that each man, each woman, shall be a healer . . . ,"³ he is speaking in the frame of reference of a channel rather than an inherent power.

The real test of the value of one's ministry is the adequacy of the underlying idea of God. Paul's criteria for the "saints in Jesus Christ who are at Philippi" are found in these words, which are applicable to the ministry of Roberts:

. . . If there is any encouragement in Christ, any incentive of love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, complete my joy by being in the same mind, having

¹Oral Roberts and G.H. Montgomery (eds.), God's Formula For Success and Prosperity (Tulsa, Oklahoma: Oral Roberts, c. 1956), p. 154.

²Isaiah 3:7.

³Oral Roberts, You Can Be Healed (Tulsa, Oklahoma: Oral Roberts Tract Society, n.d.).

the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. Do nothing from selfishness or conceit, but in humility count others better than yourself. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. Have this mind among yourselves, which you have in Christ Jesus, . . . (Philippians 2:1-5).

It is a generally valid criticism of the healing ministries being exercised by various individuals that they often assume more responsibility for healing than they have time to discharge, training to effect, or conditions to control. This criticism is superficially applied to the healing ministry of Oral Roberts, to be more extensively incorporated as he becomes aware of the need. Perhaps consideration of these three factors would enlarge and mature his healing ministry still further.

METHODOLOGY OF HEALING - HIS HANDS

One particular aspect of Roberts' healing ministry is the methodology involving the use of his hands.

A point of contact is extremely important in the methodology of Roberts for the release of faith, and it is important in more areas than merely that of salvation. It can be used for the meeting of financial needs, salvation, healing, and "for God to do anything within His will" Because of the importance of the point of contact and because of the manifestation in the use of his hands, Roberts has been severely criticized. In answer to the critic of the application of his hands upon the supplicant, Roberts says, "I feel

God's power most when I get hold of you that way."⁴

To the critic who comments that there is an indication that it is Roberts' hands that heal when someone comes through the healing line to be touched, it must be replied that we cannot be overly severe at this point without first considering a Scriptural incident in which the language is specific but the opposite inference is plain. Reference is made to the healing work of the Apostle in which he used his hands and healing was manifested. "It happened that the father of Publius lay sick with fever and dysentery; and Paul visited him and prayed, and putting his hands on him healed him" (Acts 28:8).

In spite of the fact that there may be a healing following the prayer and laying on of hands by Oral Roberts, it would be post hoc propter reasoning to say that since the healing came after the prayer and touch that these have been the cause of healing.

It is true there is a psychological reaction resultant of the human touch. This is illustrated in the reference to the manner of the physician as he ministers to his patients. Thus, this particular aspect of the Roberts' ministry has a sound psychological effect if properly administered.

In reference to many of the factors in the Roberts' public ministry of healing there are many features that might fall under the rasp of criticism due to a difference in theological and

⁴Oral Roberts, A Man's Hand (Tulsa, Oklahoma: Oral Roberts Tract Society, n.d.).

traditional background, but this basis is hardly sufficient to censure the man's whole ministry. Simply because Oral Roberts is ministering in a different manner than many others is not reason in itself to relegate him to the peripheral area of religious responsibility.

Need we note a like incident in the Gospels?

John said to him, "Teacher, we saw a man casting out demons in your name; and we forbade him, because he was not following us." Jesus said, "Do not forbid him; for none who does a mighty work in my name will be able soon after to speak evil of me. For he that is not against us is for us" (Mark 9:38-40).

There is a profound impression that little tolerance among self-labeled conservatives has generally been evidenced. Tolerance does not imply a lack of criticism, but there must be an understanding of this man in the light of his Pentecostal tradition and background if there is to be any fair evaluation of his ministry. There are elements that would be changed were the average conservative, evangelical minister involved in such a ministry, but such is not often the case.

Adon Taft, writing for The Miami Herald, comments in a vein that could well serve as a pattern in mensurating the overt procedural methods of Oral Roberts. He says,

Being raised in the home of a Pentecostal minister, Roberts is used to the language and customs of a religion that sometimes seems strange to outsiders. Raising his hands to heaven and exclaiming, "Hallelujah!" "Praise God!" is just as natural to him as saying a "Hail Mary" and crossing himself is to a Catholic or as saying "Sholom Alechum" and wearing a yarmilka is to a Jew.

In a like manner, laying hands on the sick and praying for them comes just as naturally to Roberts as wearing a St. Jude's medal and saying "Our Father" comes to a Catholic or wrapping the Tifillin on the arm while repeating the appropriate prayer comes to the Jew.⁵

Thus, with the naturalness of his religious background and tradition, Oral Roberts continues to minister in healing by laying-on of hands to command sin and sickness to depart in the name of Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of God.

SOURCE OF HEALING - ALL HEALING OF GOD

It is recognized throughout this discussion that Roberts affirms that all healing comes from God. This same type of affirmation of the divine source of healing may even be seen in the apocryphal writings of Jesus, the Son of Sirach of Jerusalem, in which he gives instructions concerning conduct in sickness.⁶ The important factor in relating this divine source is that God does the healing whether it is through the physician of the Ecclesiastious writings or through the ministry of Oral Roberts. "I am the Lord that healeth thee" (Exodus 15:26). From this keynote the whole patterned, prolific ministry of Roberts emerges.

There is a great deal of understanding concerning some of the causes of disease and their cure, but there is at one and the same

⁵Adon Taft, "Life Just Beginning for Oral," Miami Herald, January 25, 1958.

⁶The New English Bible, with the Apocrypha (Oxford: University Press, c. 1970). Ecclesiastious 38:9-15 (cf. 50:27 for author's name).

time a great mystery surrounding the pathology and healing of man. There is an indication of this mystery in that both the process of recovering from an illness and the healing of wounded or diseased tissues alike remain a mystery. But it is because of this miraculous mystery of healing that it is impossible to deny the facts even if one refuses to see in them a divine manifestation.

Must everything for which no natural accounting can be made be assigned to the miscellaneous category of a miracle? Because of the overtone of the miraculous in the Roberts ministry, and because of man's inveterate thirst for miracles, this element is inserted into this discussion of healing. Men want to believe in miracles, but they are afraid lest the scholarly, scientific atmosphere in which this age has been bathed be stifling to their belief.

John Wesley defines a miracle as an "extraordinary interposition of God,"⁷ but The Journal of the American Scientific Affiliation objects to the idea that the miraculous is merely a violation or suspension of the natural laws. This omits the relationship of miracles to the spiritual world in which in a miracle the physical world and spiritual worlds meet. On the other hand, it cannot be concurred, in reference to the Lourdes cures, that the supernatural cure consists of nothing other than a natural phenomenon, the speed and extent of which surpasses the ordinary rules.

⁷ John Telford, The Letters of the Rev. John Wesley, A.M. (London: The Epworth Press, 1931), Vol. II, p. 256.

There must be a compromise between the flat, unqualified fiat of Roberts that God intervenes in the affairs of men, and the uneffective thought of Carroll that miracles are nothing more than ordinary and natural processes telescoped into brevity. This may well be the case, but is it nothing more?

In an attempt to capture the spirit and understanding of a belief in miracles as they relate to the healing experience, note the words of John Wesley:

. . . I cannot but think, there have been already so many plain interpositions of Divine power, as will shortly leave you without excuse, if you either deny or despise them. We desire no favour, but the justice that diligent inquiry may be made concerning them. We are ready to name the persons of whom that power was shown which belongeth to none but God; (not one or two, or ten or twelve only;) to point out their places of abode; and we engage they shall answer every pertinent question, fairly and directly; and, if required, shall give all those answers upon oath, before any who empowered to receive them. It is our particular request that the circumstances which went before, which accompanied, and which followed after, the facts under consideration, may be thoroughly examined, and punctually noted down. Let but this be done, (and it is not highly needful it should at least by those who would form an exact judgment,) and we have no fear that any reasonable man should scruple to say, "This hath God wrought!"⁸

MANNER OF HEALING - BY FAITH

If the above is Wesley's criteria for proof of healing, perhaps an understanding of how this miracle of healing obtains in the life of men is important at this juncture to better understand

⁸Ibid., p. 258.

the ministry of Roberts. Roberts' answer is that healing comes by faith. It is in the promontory position of inspiring faith in faith that he stands. His life, his ministry, and his hopes all tend to encourage persons sitting in his congregation to have faith for the healing of their bodies.

Illustrations of the principle of action in faith is shown in these representative passages:

Hebrews 11:8-10 - "By faith Abraham . . . went out."

Matthew 11:13 - "Stretch forth thy hand."

John 9:7 - "Go wash in the Pool of Siloam."

Matthew 8:4 - "Show thyself to the priest."

Luke 10:29 - "Thou hast answered right; this do and
thou shalt live."

Faith is important but it cannot remain an incipient faith, it must become active.

Faith has always been necessary for any reality of healing, for frequently healing comes through faith in the healer. Faith in the techniques of healing, from their beginnings in magic to the present-day scientific devices, has often played a crucial role in the healing process.

To suggest, however, that because of the tremendous power of faith God is moved into performing miracles of healing is but to make God a utility. When there is an attempt to command God by the use of faith it is but a short step to magic. They are but religious witch doctors who practice magic using religious language.

A commanding of God to heal because of the proper presentation of the criterion of faith is approaching a Luciferian estimate of self and is not properly a meeting of the prerequisites for healing. Patients, impatient to get well, sometimes demand short-cuts and associate religious faith principally with instantaneous miracles, failing to realize that if God takes time and heals by physical laws the healing is still His act. Indeed, a patient's illness may be compounded and complicated by a bargaining approach to God for healing.

FAILURE TO OBTAIN HEALING

What of failure to obtain healing through the prayer of faith? Roberts says apropos the circumstances in which a person may fail to obtain healing: "There are times when I fail and I cannot determine the reason Maybe I wasn't ready or maybe the people weren't." There are failures and no one has claimed otherwise, contrary to popular reporting.

Frost makes this significant comment regarding praying for healing and then making an addenda of the conditional clause, "If it be Thy will." She says,

The "if" clause, therefore, is valuable as safeguarding from the selfish clutching at physical health, by which true well-being is denied; at the same time the "if" clause is very suggestive of a doubt whether the divine Fatherhood may not prefer the rags of disease for the returned prodigal, and thus the clause has become associated with the denial,

or partial denial, of the will of God as eternal life for the body as well as the soul.⁹

LOSS OF HEALING

One reason for a manifest loss of healing in some instances is that the healing has not been foundationally sure. If a disease merely moves from an original point of concentration to a psychoneurotic center, it is not healed, it has only changed its location. If some healings are of this nature they are destined to suffer relapse.

Another reason for the loss of a seeming healing is that some persons have claimed healing when they were never sick in reality, while obversely some have claimed healing who in reality were never well. With such tenuous basis for a claim of healing there is the definite reaction of the loss of "healing."

"Do the healings last?" This question stands out in the minds of those who are popularly concerned with the matter of Roberts' ministry. The answer is this: "It all depends upon the person. It's like anything else, some do, some don't . . . those who deal with doubt keep their healing . . . those who doubt lose their healing." The defense of the question of the loss of healing on Roberts' behalf assumes this form:

To be perfectly honest one must admit that some go and apparently are not healed. Hundreds who seem to be healed,

⁹Evelyn Frost, Christian Healing (London: A.R. Mowbray and Co., Limited, 1954), p. 351.

afterwards suffer relapse. But if these facts in any way indict his ministry, then every minister on earth stands indicted on the same charge, for all of us who believe in human life have had similar experiences, and the only reason we do not have more such experiences is because we do not minister to more people.¹⁰

What is to be done with the residue of seemingly incontrovertible examples of divine healing after all of the spurious claims have been sifted through? Can histology supply the criteria of proof needed to ascertain the genuineness of a healing experience. No, the healing must be more than physical or it cannot be genuine.

FOLLOW-UP

A report of the 1956 British Medical Association Committee indicated six specific reasons why it was difficult to follow up a healing. Their report, Divine Healing, and Cooperation Between Doctors and Clergy, made these salient observations regarding the improbability of a valid follow-up:

1. There may be mistakes in diagnosis which if true would allow a 'healing' in the light of a mistake;
2. There may be mistakes in prognosis which if circumvented would indicate a healing, but which may not necessarily be true;
3. There may be temporary alleviations of pain and freedom from usual symptoms;
4. There may be "remissions" in the progress of certain nervous diseases, tuberculosis, leukemia, et al;

¹⁰ Statement made by Hart Armstrong, crusade administrator, in an interview during the Detroit, Michigan Crusade, July 11, 1959.

5. There may be the occurrence of "Spontaneous" cures;
and
6. The pursuit of a course of ordinary treatment at the
same time as attending a healing centre.¹¹

The matter of judgment and evaluation of healing incidents demands the wisdom and bravery of brinkmanship. To be hypercritical on the one hand is to devaluate the validity of any instances of divine healing, while on the other hand to accept every statement of divine healing without a proper critical attitude is but to embezzle one's intellectual integrity.

To welcome without examination any story would surely be to lack a critical faculty and at times to do injury to the Divine Wisdom. But it would be just as imprudent to reject en bloc every story of the miraculous.

It is pertinent at this juncture to bring to summation the position of this paper regarding this chapter in which the man and the method of healing have been evaluated in several lights. Regarding the status question it must be remembered that the primary question is not (1) whether God is an answerer of prayer; nor (2) whether in answer to prayer He heals the sick; nor (3) whether His action in healing the sick is a supernatural act; nor (4) whether the supernaturalness of the act may be so apparent as to demonstrate God's activity in it to all right-thinking minds conversant with the facts. These things we believe.

¹¹ Divine Healing and Cooperation Between Doctors and Clergy
(London: British Medical Association, 1956).

The question at issue is distinctly this--whether God has pledged Himself to heal the sick miraculously on the call of His children and whether this applies to all who claim it. Does it mean for those who say that faith gives us a clear title to healing as well as salvation that it is the heritage of every Christian to be free from disease and bodily weakness? This, Roberts say, but this is the point of dissent of this paper.

The import of this chapter has been to touch, by way of evaluation, two main features of the practical aspect of the Oral Roberts ministry, i.e., the place that Roberts fills in the healing ministry, and the working out of this healing ministry in the lives of individuals.

Discussion of healing is not a matter of black-and-white, concise decisions. Judgment must be reserved to be rendered on an individual basis and the evaluation must be made in a creative manner to be worthy the subject.

CHAPTER 13

IMPLICATIONS FOR THE CHURCH

From the ministry of Oral Roberts this paper must glean some general implications for the Church lest it be invalid beyond the extent of analysis. Roberts has sensed this matter when he speaks of the relation of the body and the soul in these words: "There cannot be physical healing until a miracle has happened in your soul."¹

HEALING: THE CLERICAL AND MEDICAL PROFESSIONS

The aspect of wholeness must be again referred to in respect to the body and the soul and the task of the Church. Because of the problem of the ancient dichotomy of psyche versus soma there is a certain problem of psychogenesis. Yet, because of this psychogenic etiology of many diseases and illnesses, a dangerous error must be noted. One of the most persistent errors in this field is the belief that if emotional etiology in a case has been established, somatic medical management becomes unnecessary. The Church will encounter a long aberration of error if she refuses to validate the use of the physician, as has sometimes been the case. Unfortunately, history has shown that the Church has been prone to commit the care

¹Oral Roberts, If You Need Healing Do These Things (Tulsa, Oklahoma: Oral Roberts, c. 1957), p. 27.

of the soma to the physician alone and has hoarded the care of the psyche to herself in a separate attempt to heal. But this has not been successful and thus the growing relationship between the scapel and the cross.

Part of the reason for the discord between the professions is indicated by fear on the part of religious people that God might be forgotten, plus fear on the part of medical scientists that recognition of religion as a factor in healing might bias their conclusions. This has been a primary cause of the estrangement of religious faith from the science and practice of medicine which is now in the process of reconciliation.

The estrangement in reality has not been between science and religion so much as it has been between science and the quack. Quackery has invaded the field left vacant when the Church became inactive in a ministry of healing and began to favor pure psyche care. The Church is in recent years just beginning to realize that there is such a bond between the two that it is an impossible task to attempt to cure the psyche without reference to the soma, and vice versa.

John Wesley was a man extremely interested in the field of medicine and was as well qualified to be a physician as any man of his day, yet he did not divorce the two professions.² He felt the

²David Stewart, "John Wesley, The Physician," The Journal of the Wesleyan Theological Society (Concord, Michigan: Wesleyan Theological Society, Spring 1969), IV, No. 1, 29. " . . . (Wesley) became a minister so cosmopolitan and erudite that he can be

necessity for prayer for healing as well. Compilation of Wesley's references to prayer for healing in his journal has been made in Gems of Truth.

Even as Wesley did not make a divide between the professions, even so there must be a continuing relationship between them. The care of the suffering man has not always been divided between the priest and the physician. Once, the healing functions, mental and physical, were united in one hand. Whatever the explanation of the healing power of the medicine man or of the evangelist or of the holy water of Lourdes, there is little doubt that these agents often achieve a spectacular curative effect upon the sick, in certain respects even more dramatic than many of our drugs which we can analyze chemically and the pharmacological effects of which we know with great precision.

Spiritual healing is not something apart from the medical or clerical professions. It is an integral part of each and can become a very profound bond of unity between them. Spiritual healing agrees that there is a meaningful connection between illness and the psychology of the patient; it also agrees with the experiences of medical psychotherapy regarding the importance of the total individual situation.

This relationship between medicine and religion is captured in

classed as one of the more influential medical practitioners of his day and the greatest public health authority of the eighteenth century."

the portrait of Luke and Paul walking together through history as the ministers of Christ--the image of theology and medicine laboring in harmony for the redemption of man, for the saving of body, soul, and spirit. Because of this relationship of the professions in the care of man there are important implications for the Church.

IMPLICATIONS FOR A HEALING MINISTRY

The primary implication for the Church in regard to healing is that, "The restoration of Christian healing, because it must be natural and spontaneous, cannot be brought about by stimulated self-conscious effort."³

When people come to the Church for help they cannot be turned away in good conscience only to be engulfed by the sects and cults. Their blood will be upon the hands of the Church--hands that could reach out in healing if only the vision of the task of the Church were expansive enough.

Frost indicates her feeling about this matter.

The individuals who have come to the Church seeking this life for body and mind as well as for the spirit have a right to be given that which they seek, but they need also to be led to seek it in the right way, that it may be a healing which is radical and not merely a cure which may be superficial only. Sects and cults of healing often provide a superficial cure, for there is a surface resemblance between the two kinds of healing"⁴

³ Evelyn Frost, Christian Healing (London: A.R. Mowbray and Co., Limited, 1954), p. 363.

⁴ Ibid., p. 361.

Standing second in the quest of implications for the Church that may be appropriated from the ministry of Oral Roberts is found in the fact that the restoration of a healing ministry to the Church means that it must not be a body of healers but rather it must be a healing body.

If Christian healing is again to take the place in the first centuries, it will not primarily be by focusing attention upon the methods and techniques of treatment of the sick. Nor will it be by efforts to find evidential proof of healings to which the Church can lay claim, efforts which involve a close scrutiny of the history of individual cases, a task the impossibility of which is self-evident when the spiritual nature of Christian healing is recognized. The return of Christian healing must begin not with exterior activity but with interior vision and transformation. The Church must be not a body of healers but a healing body"5

A prime difficulty in relating the Church to any definite active program of healing is that "we accept healing in principle, but reject it in practice."⁶ This is an important observation that John Banks has made for it is often the secret of any relationship to this dynamic, pulsating galaxy of healing. The Church still possesses the key to the life and well-being of the physical as well as the spiritual in man but the power has not been withheld, it has only been unappropriated. When the Church returns to her early devotion to Christ and creates united fellowships, even remotely like the small body of men who went out in the power of the risen Christ

⁵ Ibid., p. 373.

⁶ John Gayner Banks, Healing Everywhere: A Book of Healing Mission Talks (San Diego, California: St. Luke's Press, c. 1953), p. 159.

and His Spirit to turn the world upside down, then a potent power to heal will once more surge through sick souls and minds and bodies.

A third implication which the Church must draw from the ministry of Roberts is that there is a responsibility for the Church in relation to healing to understand the 'how' of a ministry such as this. The fact that faith healing sometimes runs perilously near a profound heresy, i.e., making use of God for human ends rather than making God an end and ourselves the means, is apropos of the relationship of the Church to healing. The Church cannot with veracity maintain a hypercritical reflection upon such men as Roberts unless she is willing to open the vast resources of such a ministry and provide a sound evangelical healing ministry of her own. Only then will any critique find validity.

Frank B. Stanger's concept of the relationship of the Church to a ministry of healing is extremely valid and pertinent. With such a program as he outlines functioning dynamically, the Church can then be her own best critic and in turn have a right and responsibility to offer constructive criticism for the ministry of healing maintained by Oral Roberts. As a generalized statement, the Church in many quarters today has no right to even criticize his ministry because she is largely uninformed, however sophisticated she may appear.

Stanger lists five particular areas in which the completeness of a healing ministry may be maintained within the bounds of the overall ministry of the Church. Each of these five areas to which he refers are intradependent if a totality is to be maintained instead

of a fragmented ministry of healing such as is characterized by many splinter groups. These are the heads under which Stanger groups the activity of the Church:

1. The Teaching Ministry of the Church in Relation to Healing.

The Church must emphasize the truth that religion and faith and salvation relate to the total personality It must teach the principles of healthy living, and declare confidently that Christian living is the best prevention of diseases.

2. The Church's Ministry of Worship and Fellowship in Relation to Healing.

. . . Spiritual activities encourage growth in faith and character, and this in turn has a healing beneficence. The sacraments are also healing in their influences.

3. The Redemptive Ministry of the Church in Relation to Healing.

. . . We think in terms of the Church as the institutional channel through which flows the redemptive grace of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ . . . the Church must constantly point those who come under its influence to Jesus Christ, the great physician, and train them in the act of the discovery of His total healing power.

4. The Cooperating Ministry of the Church in the Field of Health.

The Church must cooperate with every other legitimate agency in the prevention of disease, in the case of the ill, and in the healing of those who are sick in soul, mind, and body The Church must be effective in its ministry to those who are ill and to those in hospitals and mental institutions.

5. The Church Should Afford Opportunities for Definite Healing.

. . . The Christian minister must be able to guide his people in taking the healing steps; and the Church

should conduct healing services.⁷

Thus, in his outline of the ministry of the Church in relation to healing Stanger has set out the task of the Church in fulfillment of the third implication.

In summary, we must note again, in brevity, the three major implications for the Church that may be drawn from the ministry of Oral Roberts. It is to these that the Church must turn before there will be any valid healing ministry provided by the Church for sick and suffering humanity. It is to these that the Church must turn if she is to ever be a valid critic of the ministries of men such as Oral Roberts.

FIRST: " . . . The duty of reaffirming the reality and permanence of the primitive gift of healing while relating it to the scientific practice of medicine as another power ordained of God"

SECOND: "The return of Christian healing must begin not with exterior activity but with interior vision and transformation. The Church must be not a body of healers but a healing body"

THIRD: The ministry of the Church in relation to healing must be a teaching ministry, a ministry of worship and fellowship, a redemptive ministry, a cooperating ministry, and a definite healing ministry.

In conclusion, these pointed words of Evelyn Frost, who stands

⁷Frank Bateman Stanger, Unpublished manuscript without a title, related to the healing ministry of the church.

in the arena of Christian healing studies, are very indicative of the true destiny of the Church:

It is hoped that, by recapturing once more the vision of her infallible power and her definite vocation to bring healing and fuller life to the body, and spirit of individuals and to the world so torn and ill at ease with social and international evils, the Christian Church may effectively save men and nations in the hour of their need, and thus fulfill her true destiny as the extension of the Incarnation of the Savior of the World.⁸

⁸Frost, Christian Healing, p. 8.

CHAPTER 14

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The purposive task of this study has been neither to derogate the ministry of the Reverend Mr. Oral Roberts, nor to coalesce its integrals into indiscernibility, but rather to examine the matter of healing in his ministry, identify his theological base, and analyze his theological conceptions and practices.

SUMMARY

The singular feature of the ministry of Oral Roberts is his basic premise that "God is a good God," which he has made applicable to a concrete healing ministry. This theme pervades his ministry, characterizes every aspect of his life, and has become the dominant thought of his theology.

Roberts' concept of God is totally simplistic, in these words,

This is my concept of God: First of all, that God is a good God; second, that God intervenes in human affairs; and third, that he appears to people in the form of their need. This great concept dominates my entire life. I approach every problem in the light of the idea that God is a good God.¹

Into this inclusive fabric is woven the design that healing of the body is as fundamentally incorporated into the crucifixion as is redemption, and that healing is the inheritance of all men without

¹Oral Roberts, The Healing Stream (Tulsa, Oklahoma: Oral Roberts, 1959), p. 37.

exception or restriction. This has become the a priori of his healing ministry.

The theology of Oral Roberts is simplicity itself. With him salvation is being saved. Jesus is the Savior of the world. God is a good God, and the devil is bad. Healing is being made well physically. With the addition of the baptism of the Holy Spirit in Pentecostal fullness, one may see the centralities of his theology. This is the sum total of his preaching.

The unperforable driving force that compels the ministry of Oral Roberts is his passion. He refers frequently to the words of Jeremiah, ". . . there is in my heart, as it were, a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I am weary with holding it in, and I cannot."² With "a feeling of destiny," "a singular desire to bring Bible deliverance to lost and suffering humanity," and a vision of "the world's hurt," Oral Roberts feels that he has been brought to a knowledge that "the spirit of deliverance is in me, a consuming fire is in my soul, a firebrand is in my hand"

No concept of God, no theory of healing, regardless of how valid and how consuming they might be, would sustain the rigors of a healing ministry without a personal passion, and herein is the nudas veritas of the ministry of Oral Roberts.

²Jeremiah 20:9.

CONCLUSION

Even as one's attitude toward the ministry of Oral Roberts will be colored by his own concept of God, even so will an attitude toward any dynamic healing ministry within the Church be determined by one's concept of God. Relative to his ministry, Emily Neal's comment is apropos when she says,

Oral Roberts will undoubtedly remain a controversial figure for as long as he continues to command such a tremendous audience; but I have observed . . . that as public knowledge has grown, hostility toward the Roberts ministry has diminished.³

The pragmatic test of the ministry of Oral Roberts will be the validating stamp of a divine coherence and direction, and the pros and cons of such a ministry will be consumed in its impression.

It is a considered judgment that definitive occasions of divine healing occur in the ministry of Oral Roberts. The methodology of his ministry is considered to be honest and unfeigned with absolutely no attempt at deception.

However, his concept of God is generally considered apart from the atonement with no apparent legitimate theological relationship. The simplistic conception of the mutual exclusiveness of God and suffering, and the superficial scriptural basis of the four primal verses, founded totally in the process of eisegesis, are compatible with his basic conception of God, but they are not

³Emily Gardner Neal, God Can Heal You Now (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., c. 1958), p. 95.

considered to be a substantial undergirding for a healing ministry.

Roberts equates all forms of healing, and apparently does not ascribe any cause to healing except the absolute divine intervention in the affairs of men. His acceptance of all purported healings as being acts of divine intervention is a failure to recognize the measure of psychological involvement manifest in those who come to be healed. His totally uncritical stance obviates a recognition of the importance of his charisma and induced suggestion to the healing of illnesses with a psychogenic basis.

This is not to mitigate against psychogenically induced illness being healed, nor is the author's suggestion that many valid healings that occur in Roberts' ministry are of a psychosomatic nature to be equated with a denial of the reality of divine healing. It is, rather, a recognition of realistic healings, induced by psychological dynamics, as being valid; as well as the amplification of the reality of divine healing.

Roberts would not make this distinction, but it must be drawn as being necessary to an adequate understanding of divine healing. Were it not made, Roberts' charisma and the absolutism of his conception of healing could serve as a utilitarian manipulation of God.

The basic problem of this work has not been the question of whether, when, how, or who God heals. Nor has it been the quality, extent, or nature of the healings that have apparently occurred.

The problem has been the question of whether God has pledged Himself to miraculously heal sickness upon the call of His children

and whether it applies to every child of God. Roberts would affirm that God has done exactly this in the atonement. The writer recognizes divine healing as a sound theological and scriptural truth, with activation in lives of individuals, but he cannot agree with the absolutistic dimensions as proposed by Roberts.

A singular question faces the writer in the last analysis of this study. It is this: "What do you think of Oral Roberts?" The Reverend Mr. Oral Roberts is considered to be an honest, upright Christian gentleman who is serving our Lord in a manner which many another member of the clergy might covet. His methods, being different from many of those who serve as his critics, are full of dynamic understanding. Difference in method between Roberts and the writer does not indicate a difference in passion and desire for the persons of the world who find their spiritual resources handicapped because of illness.

It is a forthright conviction, as a result of the study that has been made, that Oral Roberts has been part of the movement to reopen a fount of spiritual healing that has been closed by the debris of intellectual and spiritual philanderings. With strong reservations, as noted in the text, Oral Roberts is supported in his ministry of healing.

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