

2.6.4 Oral Roberts (b. 1918) and the Eschatological Gospel

According to his own autobiography, “Oral Roberts was born on January 24, 1918, to Ellis Melvin, a Pentecostal Holiness preacher, and Claudius Priscilla, whose faith for healing was strong . . . in a two room log cabin twelve miles northwest of Ada, Oklahoma” (Roberts 1995:7-9). Much like the prophet Samuel, from the womb Oral had the hand of God on his life and was called into His service by his mother: “Oh, God, the child I’m carrying in my body will be my last. My other children have black eyes, but I’m asking that You will give me a son with blue eyes and black hair. And if You’ll heal my neighbor’s child tonight when I pray for him, I’ll give You my son when he’s born. I vow this, Lord, if You only hear me” (Roberts 1995:4). Although he left home at sixteen, running from his family heritage and the call of God on his life, Roberts was brought back to God about six months later at Rev. George Moncey’s revival tent meeting, where he was healed of tuberculosis and his stuttering voice. It was there that he heard for the first time God’s personal call on his life: “You are to take My healing power to your generation. You are to build Me a university and build it on My authority and the Holy Spirit” (Roberts 1995:18-22, 30-6).

From that call at age eighteen in 1936, Oral Roberts began preaching. He soon met his wife-to-be Evelyn Lutman, a schoolteacher and daughter of a Pentecostal Holiness preacher, and they were married in 1938 (Roberts 1995:36, 39, and 47). From that point on, Roberts preached revivals, pastored several churches and attended Oklahoma Baptist University and Phillips University until 1947, when he began his healing ministry in Tulsa, Oklahoma. His ministry was based upon four motivations: 1) a word from God, “Son, don’t be like other men. Don’t be like any denomination. Be like Jesus, and heal the people as He did”; 2) thirty days of reading the four Gospels and Acts to see what they meant in relation to how Jesus healed; 3) the revelation

of the truth of wholeness and healing found in 3 John 2; and 4) a final word from God, “From this hour you shall have My power to heal the sick and to cast out demons” (Roberts 1995:52-7, 67-77, and 87).

In the early years of ministry, Roberts’ sermons were active stories based on Bible accounts. Even then, the Eschatological Gospel was part of these stories, as evidenced by his sermon entitled, “The Drama of the End Time” (Roberts 1995:110). In 1950, after three years in the healing ministry and doing tent revivals, Oral Roberts met Billy Graham and Dr. Harold Jeffreys of the International Church of the Foursquare Gospel in Portland, Oregon, and became yoked to the vision of the Eschatological Gospel. This was confirmed in the late 1950s when God gave Roberts another word about the second part of his call—to build a university: “There remains a healing for the sick body of My bride. I have raised you up to be the John the Baptist of your time in My healing ministry, and you are to be *a forerunner of a mighty healing for My people before My Son returns*” [emphasis added]. This call was confirmed in three ways: 1) through Ephesians 5:27: “That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish” (KJV); 2) that “healing would be an integral part of *getting His people ready for the end time* [emphasis added]”; and 3) by the soon-to-be mission of Oral Roberts University: “Raise up your students to hear My voice, to go where My light is dim, where My voice is heard small and My healing power is not known. To go even to the uttermost bounds of the earth. Their work will exceed yours, and in this I am well pleased.” Several years later, Pat Robertson (who had heard these words proclaimed at Oral Roberts’ Norfolk crusade), included the following statement in the commencement address at ORU: “Everyone should understand two things: First, Oral Roberts University is a miracle, and second, the healing that remains is soon to come, for *God wants a*

people delivered and ready for the second coming of His Son [emphasis added]” (Roberts 1995:159-60, 162).

This belief in the Eschatological Gospel of Both Comings by Oral Roberts has been confirmed over and over again in his life and has become interwoven throughout the nearly sixty years of his ministry. This is attested to by his books: *The Second Coming of Christ and Other Sermons by Oral Roberts* (1967); *God’s Timetable for the End of Time* (1969); *Christ in Every Book* (1975); and *Expect a Miracle: My Life and Ministry, Oral Roberts An Autobiography* (1995). More recently, an interview on *This is Your Day* August 20, 2004, by Benny Hinn, publicized Oral’s vision from God regarding the urgent need to teach and preach the Eschatological Gospel of Both Comings of Jesus Christ. And finally, the ongoing legacy of Oral Roberts University and its mission statement confirms this ministry of the Eschatological Gospel.