

ORAL ROBERTS: A MAN OF THE SPIRIT

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Abstract

This article explores the role that the experience of the Pentecostal baptism in the Holy Spirit played in shaping the ministry of Oral Roberts. It charts the development and importance of his experience from his early life and ministry, his launch into healing evangelism, and the founding of Oral Roberts University.

Introduction

Oral Roberts has rightfully been recognized as one of the most important religious figures in the twentieth century.¹ During the 1950s, Roberts became a household name through his large-scale tent crusades, innovative television programs, and dynamic preaching ministry. Over the last few decades, Roberts has received attention from scholars for his role as America's Healing Evangelist.² While Roberts' healing theology shaped his generation, there was another theological focus that permeated his preaching and teaching: the Pentecostal baptism in the Holy Spirit. Pentecostal historian, Vinson Synan, calls Oral Roberts the "Son of the Pentecostal Movement, Father of the Charismatic Movement" because of the profound influence he had on the Spirit-empowered movement.³ Reared in the home of a Pentecostal Holiness

pastor and evangelist, when Roberts launched into his own evangelistic ministry he adopted the typical full gospel message of Pentecostal revivalists summed up in the five-fold gospel, which was the heart of Pentecostal theology.⁴ Fellow Pentecostal Holiness evangelist and friend, G. H. Montgomery, summarized Roberts' theology:

With [Roberts], salvation is being saved. Healing is being healed. Holiness is getting right and living right. Jesus is the Savior of the world. "Our God is a good God and the devil is a bad devil." Add to that the baptism with the Holy Ghost in pentecostal fullness, and you have the theology of Oral Roberts, the sum and substance of his preaching.⁵

As an evangelist, Roberts' ministry focused on more than healing; he also led people into the experiences of salvation, sanctification, and the baptism in the Spirit. As Roberts' popularity and influence began to transcend traditional Pentecostal boundaries in the charismatic renewal of the 1960s and 1970s, he continued to proclaim passionately the importance of the baptism in the Holy Spirit. In fact, at every turn in the development of his ministry, Roberts' focus on the baptism in the Spirit propelled him to each new adventure, including his launch into healing evangelism, influence within the charismatic renewal, and the founding of Oral Roberts University.

This article will look at the important role the baptism in the Holy Spirit has played in the shaping of Oral Roberts' healing ministry. It will begin by exploring his own experience of Spirit baptism, the role this experience played in his initial ministry as an evangelist and pastor, and how the Spirit became the catalyst that led to his shift to becoming a healing evangelist in 1947. Next, I will show how Roberts' Spirit baptism became the primary force that enabled his healing ministry. Finally, I will explore the role his Spirit baptism played in the founding of Oral Roberts University. While a full study of Roberts' pneumatology is still needed, this study will seek to lay the groundwork for raising awareness of the indispensable place the baptism in the Holy Spirit had in the healing ministry of Oral Roberts.

Oral Roberts' Pentecostal Experience

Oral Roberts grew up in a somewhat typical impoverished Pentecostal family in the Indian Territory of Oklahoma. His parents, Ellis and Claudius, were sharecroppers who received the baptism in the Spirit when a frontier evangelist traveled to Pontotoc County, Oklahoma.⁶ The Pentecostal message preached at these revival meetings transformed their lives as they were saved, sanctified, and filled with the Holy Spirit. So significant was his parents' experience that they surrendered themselves to the ministry as Pentecostal Holiness pastors and evangelists. As a child, Oral Roberts traveled with his father to conduct brush arbor revivals around Oklahoma. Roberts recalls the many hours he spent sitting on wooden benches listening to Pentecostal preaching by his father and seeing his mother minister to the sick in the sawdust of the altars.⁷ Despite his Christian upbringing, at the age of sixteen, Roberts ran away from God and from his parents for a year until a bout with tuberculosis forced him to return home. For weeks, Oral's parents prayed by his bedside for Oral to "get saved." Then one night, with his father by his bedside, the power of the Spirit came upon him and he finally surrendered his life to Christ. But he was not yet healed. Not only that, he knew he was missing something: the baptism of the Holy Spirit. In July of 1935, Roberts sent his testimony to *The Pentecostal Holiness Advocate*.

I am happy and free because I have just been saved and sanctified. It is so glorious that I want everyone to know it I feel the call to preach very definitely, but before I recover and enter the work I must have the abiding Comforter, the Holy Ghost, to comfort me and help me overcome my infirmities.⁸

A few weeks later, Oral's family drove him to a revival being conducted by George Moncey in a nearby town. The suffering young Roberts was the last in the healing line, but as Moncey anointed him with oil and rebuked the tuberculosis, instantly he felt the power of God touch his hemorrhaging lungs.⁹ A few months later, in August 1935, he attended the annual Pentecostal Holiness Camp Meeting

in Sulphur, Oklahoma, hoping to receive the baptism in the Spirit.¹⁰ He was not disappointed. At the age of 17, he received the baptism with the Holy Spirit and spoke in tongues.¹¹ He later described this experience.

I remember the night I was baptized with the Holy Ghost. He took hold of my tongue, and I spoke in a manner I had never known in my life. I did not understand one word I said, for it was an unknown tongue, but I knew the Holy Spirit was speaking through me to God, and he gave me strength and relief. Inwardly, I knew I was praising and magnifying God, but it was the Holy Ghost who was vocally expressing my thoughts to the Lord.¹²

Although he knew he had received the baptism in the Spirit, he later lamented that he received little instruction in how to use the gift in his life. Roberts admits that he rarely spoke in tongues after this initial event and it eventually “faded away.”¹³ Roberts’ experience was not at all uncommon for Pentecostals in this era because many did not believe the act of speaking in tongues was under a person’s control.¹⁴ He comments, “I suppose I kept waiting for God to do it all . . . I kept waiting to be overwhelmed, for the new tongues to come pouring forth without my cooperation.”¹⁵ Although he did not fully understand the gift, he recognized that it was necessary for him to be qualified for full-time Pentecostal preaching ministry.

The Spirit of the Pastor and Evangelist

Shortly after his healing and Spirit baptism, Roberts joined his father in evangelistic meetings around Oklahoma. Soon he was ready to launch out on his own and received his license as a Pentecostal Holiness minister at the age of 18. During his first three years as an evangelist, Roberts reported 400 were saved, 125 sanctified, and ninety-eight received the baptism in the Holy Ghost.¹⁶ Despite his success and growing popularity, Oral and Evelyn were newly married with a young daughter, Rebecca, and managed only a subsistence living.¹⁷ To try to

provide more for his family, Roberts accepted his first pastorate at an independent Pentecostal church in Fuquay Springs, North Carolina, in November of 1941. In spring of 1942, he and fellow Oklahoma evangelist, Mildred Wicks, held a three-week revival in which fifty-three were saved, eighteen were sanctified, and three “went through” to the baptism in the Holy Ghost.¹⁸ Roberts was seeing a good deal of success as a pastor and even hosted a regular Sunday morning broadcast on a Raleigh, North Carolina, radio station. However, when the church refused to join the Pentecostal Holiness denomination, Roberts’ stay in Fuquay Springs was cut short and in September 1942 he accepted an assignment to pastor the Pentecostal Holiness church in Shawnee, Oklahoma.¹⁹ In these early days, Roberts showed loyalty to his denomination and their doctrines and was on his way to “a bright future in the denomination.”²⁰

During his time as the pastor in Shawnee, Roberts became a regular contributor to the denominational paper, *The Pentecostal Holiness Advocate*, writing articles that focused on encouraging his fellow ministers to pray for a Holy Ghost inspired revival. Roberts also wrote regularly in the *East Oklahoma Conference News (EOCN)*, where he proclaimed, “The greatest need of the hour for the conference is to have a revival to break out in every church.”²² The revivalistic tone of articles gained him notoriety among the Oklahoma Conference and in September 1943 he was asked to serve as the editor of the *EOCN*.²³ As the new editor, Roberts continued his emphasis on the need for revival, taking to the front page of the paper to ask, “Will God Repeat the Upper Room Revival?”

For the past two months your editor has been keenly conscious of the working of God’s Spirit in his own heart. In prayer, in the pulpit and in the parish I have been led to think more seriously on our need of Pentecost and God’s desire to send the Comforter to us than ever before.²⁴

Roberts lamented to his readers that although the movement began as a “latter rain” outpouring, he observed, “there seems to be a lack of desire on the part of many for the Holy Ghost.”²⁵ He continued

to accept invitations to do revivals and by the time Roberts left the Shawnee church, his small church had recorded “119 saved, 50 sanctified and 32 received the Holy Ghost.”²⁶ Although by all accounts he was a successful pastor, it was clear in his sermons and writings that at the core of his identity he was an evangelist, a reality that would ultimately ensure that Roberts would not be a long-term pastor.

The Spirit and the Healing Ministry

In 1945, Roberts left the church in Shawnee to pursue evangelistic work in North Carolina and for a short time took churches in Toccoa, Georgia, and Radford, Virginia.²⁷ But before long, he brought his family back to Oklahoma to attend college and in 1946 became pastor of the Pentecostal Holiness church in Enid.²⁸ Although Roberts was fairly successful in the eyes of his denomination, he was already searching for something more.²⁹ During a sociology class at Phillips University in Enid, he heard God speak. “Son, don’t be like other men. Don’t be like any denomination. Be like Jesus and heal like he did.”³⁰ For the next month, Roberts read through the Gospels and Acts to discover what gave Jesus his healing power. He recalls,

It was during those days that He reminded me that I had received the baptism with the Holy Ghost in 1935. He asked me if I knew what I had. When I replied that in all honesty that I did not, He reminded me that having the Holy Ghost was like having Jesus physically by my side; and, therefore, I could go forth and take His healing power to my generation.³¹

For the first time, Roberts understood that having the baptism in the Holy Spirit was the same as “having Jesus Christ in the flesh by my side.”³² He realized the baptism in the Spirit was not a denominational distinctive or even an important religious experience; it was a divine command from God.

This is the Pentecostal charge . . . it is the same today that it was then. We can no more go forth to do battle for the Lord with resistless power without the baptism of the Holy Ghost than the disciples could. His command for them to “tarry until” they were endued with Power from on high is His command for every one of us today.³³

From that point on, there was no going back for Roberts. What he had received through the baptism in the Spirit was all he needed to propel him into the healing ministry.

In May 1947, he set out to conduct evangelistic meetings with his new revelation about God’s power.³⁴ In June, Roberts teamed up with his old friend, Mildred Wicks, to conduct his first large-scale healing campaign in Newnan, Georgia.³⁵ Tabbed as the “greatest revival in the history of Newnan Church,” the crowd was so overwhelming that services had to be moved to the 730-seat municipal auditorium. *The Advocate* reports,

More than 500 people were anointed for healing and scores testified in writing that they were healed of cancer, heart trouble, goiter, loss of speech, deafness, blindness, lameness, ulcers, paralysis, double heartbeat, and other afflictions. Devils were cast out, minds were restored, souls were saved, sanctified, baptized with the Holy Ghost and hundreds were spiritually revived according to their own testimony.³⁶

Over the next four years, Roberts developed a methodology for his healing ministry grounded in the reality of the living presence of Jesus through the Holy Spirit. From that point on, all of the souls saved, the bodies healed, and the lives rescued through his ministry hinged on his identity as a man of the Spirit.³⁷

Roberts never considered himself to be a “faith healer,” as if he possessed some special power or gift; rather it was the power of the Holy Spirit that made healing possible. In fact, he even avoided calling it a gift, referring to it instead in terms of a “manifestation to meet

the needs of people” that, after it was delivered, made a full circle and “returned to God the Holy Spirit.”³⁸ He comments, “Once the manifestation of the gifts subsides, I am keenly aware that I am reduced to a position of lesser power.”³⁹ Because of this, in every healing line he would remind the people that he was an ordinary man. He would say, “I have no power in myself to heal; it is Jesus who heals. If you are looking to Oral Roberts to heal you, you will be disappointed.”⁴⁰ Roberts was able to overcome his feelings of ordinariness and insecurities only through waiting on the Holy Spirit to manifest his presence before he would attempt to go on the platform to minister.⁴¹ Roberts also would spend time praying in the Spirit before each service, a practice that he believed oriented him and prepared him to cooperate with the Spirit to minister healing to the hurting.⁴²

The Holy Spirit was not only the essential ingredient of his personal life and ministry; it would become an important aspect in his ministry in his crusades. While traveling on a plane to a crusade in Miami, Florida, in January of 1950, Roberts heard God audibly speak to him.⁴³ God said, “My servant . . . this year you are to emphasize the Holy Ghost and tell the people to expect Jesus to come during 1950.”⁴⁴ This revelation marked a new moment for Roberts. He was beginning to see himself not only as a healing evangelist, but also as a Holy Spirit evangelist who would bring a new generation into the baptism in the Holy Spirit.

The magnitude of this new calling was so transformative to him that when it came time for him to take the stage, he launched into the crusade “like a man from another world with the anointing of a personal, abiding Comforter.”⁴⁵ Members of his ministry team noticed “a new vigor and authority” that they had not seen before.⁴⁶ Roberts’ message the first night of the crusade was “Why You Must Receive the Holy Ghost” and at the conclusion of the message he invited people to come be filled with the Spirit.⁴⁷ Quickly, hundreds of people, many from various denominations, filled the altars to seek the baptism with the Spirit. The dramatic response in the crusades throughout the year confirmed the word of the Lord from that plane ride, which led Roberts to prophesy eagerly, “During 1950, I expect the greatest meeting the world has ever known, bring forth miracles unsurpassed, of mighty

outpourings of the baptism of the Holy Ghost and of the Holy Ghost dividing with nine gifts of the Spirit severally as he wills.”⁴⁸

Because his method of using a healing line was primarily designed for rapidly praying for the sick, Roberts began utilizing a seekers tent where he would invite seekers to come after the meeting to seek the Holy Ghost. Over the rest of the crusades of 1950, the tent was overflowing with seekers for the baptism in the Spirit. The Jacksonville crusade in March was met with even greater results than Miami as “thousands” went to the prayer tent to seek for Spirit baptism.⁴⁹ Two months later in Richmond, the ministry reported, “Hundreds prayed through to Bible holiness and the baptism in the Holy Ghost and fire. As high as 1,500 sought the Holy Ghost in one night in the huge prayer tent set up behind the main tent.”⁵⁰ In one night in Oklahoma City, an estimated 2,000 came forward to receive the baptism in the Holy Spirit.⁵¹ By May, Roberts was reporting that as many as fifty people in each service received Spirit baptism and that is was not unusual for “a thousand people to receive the Holy Ghost and fire in one of our 16-day meetings.”⁵² In total 1,176,000 people attended an Oral Roberts campaign in 1950 and although no official statistics were given, it is conservatively estimated from these reports that upwards of 5,000 people may have received the baptism in the Holy Spirit and perhaps ten times that number became seekers of the experience.⁵³ This emphasis was, however, short lived, as in 1953, Roberts turned his attention toward his “Million Souls” campaign.⁵⁴ The impulse to reach more lost people was certainly a consequence of the 1950 emphasis on the Holy Spirit, but it also led to the decrease in emphasis on the Holy Spirit within his preaching and his crusades in the latter part of the decade.

The Spirit and the Healing of the Church

By 1957, Roberts began feeling like the crusade ministry was beginning to level off and he was starting to get restless.⁵⁵ He admits, “No matter how large the crowds grew or how many thousands were healed, or how many souls were saved, I still felt a certain emptiness that would not go away.”⁵⁶ Feeling the need to begin to dream again, he reflected to his

readers, “The most dangerous place in the world for Oral Roberts to stop is right here and now—right where he is In 1959, you must not allow yourself to park either by your failures or successes This is God’s message to all men everywhere. ‘Don’t park here!’”⁵⁷

With these words, a new era of emphasis on the Holy Spirit emerged in Oral Roberts’ theology that would reach beyond the borders of his Pentecostal heritage. During the mid-1950s, Roberts benefitted greatly from his involvement with the Full Gospel Businessmen’s Fellowship International (FGBFI), which he helped to start.⁵⁸ He was drawn to the ecumenical nature of the movement that was primarily focused on the Holy Spirit’s work in believers’ lives. The success of FGBFI to bring renewal to believers in all denominations was mirrored in Roberts’ crusades, which were initially populated by Pentecostal believers. By the early 1960s, with the novelty of healing crusades on the wane, his restlessness led to a rediscovery of the importance of the topic of the baptism in the Holy Spirit.

In 1961, Roberts began once again to study the Holy Spirit, only this time he wanted to understand more fully the value of speaking in tongues.⁵⁹ Roberts made several discoveries that revolutionized his perspective about the value of speaking in tongues. First, as he studied the life of Paul, he realized tongues should be frequent rather than infrequent. Although completely committed to the doctrine of tongues as evidence of the baptism in the Spirit, he admitted that he “rarely spoke in tongues” in his early healing ministry.⁶⁰ Roberts grew up in a time in the Pentecostal church when tongues were thought not to be at the believer’s control.⁶¹ Rather than waiting for particular moments of inspiration to exercise the gift of tongues, he discovered that speaking in tongues was intended to be a “normal experience” as part of one’s relationship with God.⁶² It is from this revelation that Roberts developed the concept of tongues as the “language of the Spirit” and coined the term “personal prayer language.”⁶³ Second, Roberts found that increasing the frequency of praying in the Spirit had a direct influence on his ministry, supplying him with “more power in my ministry, more self-control, more eagerness and release.”⁶⁴ Speaking in tongues not only increased Roberts’ ministry of healing, he believed it increased one’s capacity to receive healing in the healing lines.⁶⁵ Another

new revelation for Roberts was the concept of speaking in tongues as the “release of the Spirit,” which was added to the concept of initial evidence.⁶⁶ He said, “[Speaking in tongues] is more than an evidence, more than a sign, more than for personal release in edification. It is also power release.”⁶⁷ The benefit of speaking in tongues, then, is that every time one prays, they release edification and power.

Following his 1961 pneumatological reawakening, the baptism in the Holy Spirit became one of the central emphases in his publications. The January 1962 issue of *Abundant Life* was dedicated entirely to the baptism in the Holy Spirit, something that had not been done since 1950. As the nation was becoming ever more embroiled in turmoil, Roberts felt that the Holy Spirit’s power was needed then more than ever. The new emphasis on the Holy Spirit, Carl Hamilton insisted, was not new at all considering “Brother Roberts has always credited the success of his ministry to the anointing of God’s Holy Spirit.”⁶⁸ However, he added, it did mark a new emphasis in that it was “being placed in a greater way than ever before.” His new practice of exercising the gift of praying in the Spirit was generating within his life a “greater anointing and a greater filling of the baptism of the Holy Spirit.”⁶⁹ Issues of *Abundant Life* also shared more individual stories of people who were baptized in the Spirit.⁷⁰ The whole ministry team seemed to be reinvigorated by the Holy Spirit emphasis.⁷¹

The newfound power and results in his meetings convinced Roberts that the church was on the verge of a new outpouring of the Spirit and that his ministry was playing a large role in the eschatological mission of the Spirit to bring about the healing of the church.⁷² After years of jealousy and criticism from those within his own Pentecostal family, Roberts was ready to spread his wings and become a father to the charismatic renewal of the entire church. He declared, “Pentecost is not a denomination. It is an experience. This is your hour to receive the baptism of the Holy Ghost. This is it.”⁷³ He believed that what the Spirit was doing in this generation had transcended denominational boundaries.

A great number of people in unexpected places in life are accepting the light on the truth of the baptism of the Holy Ghost today, and many are receiving the experience. Some of these are

ministers of the gospel, pastors of churches in denominations, which have not before taught the baptism of the Holy Ghost. All over the world this move is seen; people are seeing the power in the lives of those who have the experience; and their own lives have been blessed and revitalized as they have realized their need of the Holy Spirit and have received the experience. In our own crusades, hundreds are awaiting and receiving the baptism of the Holy Ghost in our morning prayer meetings.⁷⁴

Roberts believed his crusades were not only a place of healing of the physical body, they were ground zero for the charismatic renewal that would heal the whole Body of Christ. As crusade director, Hart Armstrong reported, “Thousands are responding to the new move of the Holy Spirit among the denominations, and are coming to the crusades to seek the baptism with the Holy Spirit.”⁷⁵ For the next two years, the great hunger for the Holy Spirit convinced Roberts that the “greatest Holy Ghost revival since the day of Pentecost is about to break upon the Church.”⁷⁶

The Spirit and the University

When Roberts began to sense a shift in his ministry in 1959, he knew it was towards something greater than simply using his crusades to bring people into the baptism in the Spirit. It was a whole paradigm shift in his ministry. In June 1960, Roberts announced to his partners, “God has spoken to me again.”⁷⁷ His new plan was to open a “soul-winning training program” in order to increase his overseas evangelistic ministry. The same month as the announcement, Roberts was having dinner with Pat Robertson when God spoke to Roberts these famous words:

Raise up your students to hear My voice, to go where My light is dim, where My voice is heard small and where My healing power is not known. To go to the uttermost bounds of the earth. Their work will exceed yours and in this I am well pleased.⁷⁸

These words reminded Roberts of what God said to him on his death bed at 17 years old: “Son, I am going to heal you and you are going to take my healing power to your generation. You are to build me a university and built it upon My authority and upon the Holy Spirit.”⁷⁹ With these words, a new era of emphasis on the Holy Spirit emerged in Oral Roberts’ theology.

In May 1962, the vision for a university became clearer as Roberts announced the construction of a new building in south Tulsa to house not simply a soul-winning program, as was previously announced, but America’s healing evangelist was going to build a university. Roberts told his partners, “To further fulfill God’s call upon my life to take His healing power to my generation, I feel the time has come to undertake by faith the greatest and most far-reaching step of all for the salvation of souls and to perpetuate this ministry that God has given me and committed to my trust. That is to build the ‘ORAL ROBERTS UNIVERSITY OF EVANGELISM.’”⁸⁰

To open the new University of Evangelism, Roberts hosted a week-long Ministers Seminar devoted to the topic of the Holy Spirit and the gifts of the Holy Spirit that was attended by more than 350 ministers from eleven different denominations. The goal was to simulate the type of classes Roberts envisioned would take place in the new university. The seminars were also a great opportunity to promote the university, which was set to open two years later.⁸² Oral Roberts, R. O. Corvin, David DuPlessis, Rex Humbard, and a host of other ministers shared in various classes all centered on the Holy Spirit. The climax of the seminar was the final evening when Oral Roberts laid hands on everyone in attendance to “release the power of the Spirit” in their lives.

The second Ministers Seminar, hosted in July 1963, yielded even greater results. One attendee declared, “I believe this is the greatest step forward to meet the spiritual needs of the world than anything that has happened since the Day of Pentecost.”⁸⁴ This time, Roberts included some charismatic speakers, such as Howard M. Ervin, a Spirit-filled Baptist pastor who earned a Th.D. from Princeton and who joined the founding faculty of the School of Theology at ORU in 1965.⁸⁵ The sessions were marked by anointed teachings and wonderful times of singing and praying in the Spirit. While most of the ministers were already Spirit-filled, one

great outcome of the ministry time was that “ministers who had not spoken in tongues for years, and some who had not spoken with spiritual utterance since the day they were baptized with the Holy Spirit were experiencing an uninterrupted flow of divine language.”⁸⁶ Similar “Youth Seminars” for prospective college students were designed to give a taste of the spiritual atmosphere that they would encounter at ORU, which were some of the earliest prototypes of the college weekend tradition.⁸⁷ These seminars in the seminal years of the university sent a very clear signal to the Pentecostal and charismatic community: Oral Roberts University will be a school that is built on the Holy Spirit.

The task of building a university from the ground up was overwhelming to Roberts. Once again he had to draw upon the resources he had in the Holy Spirit to lead the way. The only thing he knew to do was to walk the barren acres of the plot of land at 81st and Lewis and pray in the Spirit. Roberts recalls, “I was literally groaning and praying and crying out, ‘Oh God, help me! Show me the way!’”⁸⁸ Each time the Spirit would well up in him, he would pray in tongues and then ask God for the interpretation. This process was “exhilarating” for Roberts and gave him a hunger to pray regularly in this manner.⁸⁹ As he received the interpretation of his prayers, he testified “the Lord revealed to me the most astonishing knowledge and showed me the broad outline of how to build a university.”⁹⁰ This practice of “praying in tongues with interpretation” became a distinctive feature of his pneumatology.⁹¹

From that point forward, many of the details of the university, including the shape of buildings and the design of the curriculum, would be revealed to Roberts through interpreting what God was speaking through the “language of the Spirit.”⁹² One specific aspect of the campus that was directly revealed through the interpretation of the Spirit was the Prayer Tower. God instructed Roberts to put it in the center of campus to represent that the Spirit will be the “center of the University.”⁹³ The two-hundred-foot futuristic cross-shaped design was crowned with an “eternal flame” symbolizing the baptism in the Holy Spirit.⁹⁴ The dramatic height of the tower would serve as a constant reminder to students and faculty that ORU was built on prayer, particularly the practice of praying in tongues with interpretation. The

tower would also house an “upper room” designed to introduce a new generation to the power of the Spirit.⁹⁵

In addition to these external designs, Roberts designed the curriculum to reflect the centrality of the Spirit in relation to the intellect in his concept of whole person education. He comments, “In this atmosphere of educational excellence and Holy Spirit guidance, a philosophy of total education will be carried on for our children.”⁹⁶ In order to ensure that ORU would maintain its Holy Spirit focus, Roberts recruited the finest Spirit-filled Ph.D.s he could find and instituted a policy that required all faculty to be baptized in the Spirit and committed to the Spirit-filled life.⁹⁷ Roberts knew that some mainline schools had educated faculties that had no spiritual life. Then there were Pentecostal schools that had the Spirit, but the faculty were not highly educated. Roberts set out to do what no other Christian college had managed to accomplish: assemble a faculty that consisted entirely of professors who were “Spirit filled and holding a doctorate or masters.”⁹⁸ From the top to the bottom, ORU would be “built on the Holy Spirit.”

The Holy Spirit in the Now

In the days after Oral Roberts University opened, the demands of being a university president occupied much of Roberts’ attention. On campus, the student body was exposed to Roberts’ ministry and teachings through weekly chapel meetings and campus revivals. After folding the tent for the last time in 1967, Roberts was committed to raising up students and empowering the next generation to take healing to the “uttermost bounds of the earth.” Born out of the original vision of the University of Evangelism, Roberts wanted the university to focus on world evangelism and mobilizing “World Action” healing teams. These teams of students, led by Spiritual Life Director Tommy Tyson, were organized to take Roberts’ message of healing and baptism in the Spirit to the world. Roberts described,

World Action Team is a new term which God gave to me a few weeks ago. The World Action Teams will be ORU students, sent to different nations to use their professions—whether doctors,

lawyers, teachers or ministers—to further the Gospel of Christ. Where there's a crisis nation, look for a World Action Team from ORU—in schools, hospitals, villages and cities, working with the missionaries.⁹⁹

This new mission Roberts viewed as the ultimate fulfillment of God's word in 1947 and perhaps his final mission. He says, "I see the remaining time left as the most important opportunity of my life to preach the Gospel, to win souls, to heal the sick, to lead people into the infilling of the Holy Spirit, to expect miracles across the earth."¹⁰⁰ What began as a vision for his own life would now be replicated in his students. To prepare these students to go into "every man's world," Roberts would first need to hold meetings on campus to encourage students to be filled with the Spirit. Beyond just teaching them a doctrine, Roberts wanted to impart to these students the Spirit's power by demonstrating the ministry of laying on of hands and how to release their faith.¹⁰¹

The early momentum created at ORU received a sudden shock when in March 1968, Oral Roberts announced his intention to join the Methodist Church. Having maintained his credentials with the Pentecostal Holiness Church for over thirty years, the ecumenical appeal of his ministry had reached a point that it had transcended the Pentecostal base to include a wide range of denominations. This move raised speculation that perhaps Roberts was moving from his classical Pentecostal views to a more charismatic view of Spirit baptism.¹⁰² Roberts assured the faculty, staff, and students of ORU,

I am a believer in Bible holiness . . . I am completely committed to the Pentecostal outpouring, the baptism in the Holy Ghost, and the gifts of the Spirit in the fullest meaning of those terms. And I have carefully inquired on more than one occasion with the bishop and the top officials with whom I have talked if they understood what I am and what they would expect from me. And they have said in essence . . . we need a strong Pentecostal infusion and you epitomize this in the world. And we urgently

and desperately need this outpouring within our movement
I am Pentecostal and will be until the day I die I believe if I
can to be a Christian gentleman and exhibit the love of the Spirit
toward my Pentecostal brethren, that over a period of time it can
be demonstrated that I am a Pentecostal through and through.¹⁰³

Roberts' primary motivation in changing denominations was not doctrinal; it was in order to be able to expand his ministry of bringing healing and the baptism in the Spirit to the "historic church." While the move was ultimately detrimental to Roberts' support base, it was thought to be in service to God's call to bring healing power to his generation.

Over the next few years, as some were still questioning if Roberts was shifting his theology, a new opportunity to establish the centrality of the baptism in the Holy Spirit arose at ORU. In 1972, Oral Roberts University received its first endowed chair when a wealthy British businessman left money in his will for the establishment of an academic "Chair of the Holy Spirit" at ORU.¹⁰⁵ The recipient of this chair was, of course, Oral Roberts. From this funding, Roberts created a class called "The Holy Spirit in the Now" that would be taught to the students at ORU over the next decade. The classes were filmed live in the Mabee Center before more than 1,500 students each semester and included Roberts' teaching on the baptism in the Holy Spirit, releasing the "prayer language," the gifts of the Spirit, and other topics about living the abundant life. From 1972–1982, "The Holy Spirit in the Now" became one of the signature features of academic life at ORU in which thousands of ORU students sat under Roberts' teaching on the Holy Spirit. Roberts also distributed several hundred thousand copies of the transcripts of the classes to his ministry partners free of charge and offered audio recordings of the tapes for a seed-faith gift.¹⁰⁶

Conclusion

This article has sought to chart the role of the baptism in the Holy Spirit in the life and ministry of Oral Roberts. While it will be left to other studies to outline more fully the specifics of his pneumatological

views, we have seen that Oral Roberts was a man of the Spirit whose ministry was shaped by the experience of the baptism in the Spirit. While healing certainly was at the center of his ministry, the baptism in the Holy Spirit with the distinctive feature of speaking in tongues was a consistent emphasis threaded throughout the entirety of his career. Every major ministry turning point in Roberts' ministry was marked by his rediscovery or reemphasis on the Holy Spirit in his life. It solidified his calling to ministry, launched him into the healing ministry, provided the platform for being a leader in the charismatic renewal, and inspired the dream of building a university.

While Oral Roberts will always be known as a healing evangelist, this study has demonstrated that there were actually two distinct but interdependent aspects of Roberts' ministry. During the first phase of his crusade ministry, healing and evangelism were the primary emphases, but the ministry of the baptism in the Spirit was certainly present and many thousands sought and received it in his crusades. As a revivalist, Roberts knew that the power of the Holy Spirit would change lives, save souls, and bring healing to the hurting. Following the establishment of ORU, Roberts entered into the second phase in which the Holy Spirit became primary and healing became secondary to his theological identity. Roberts understood that as "God's Man of Faith in Power," if he were to die, his legacy and the healing ministry would die with him. In order to preserve his legacy and ensure that the healing ministry would be passed on to the next generation, he knew he needed to pass on the source of his power that made him a worldwide icon of healing evangelism. By guiding a new generation to discover the importance of the baptism in the Holy Spirit and the value of speaking in tongues, Roberts was able to multiply his influence so God's promise that "their work will exceed yours" would come to pass and healing would continue to be ministered "to the uttermost bounds of the earth." Roberts' legacy is a complicated one, filled with incredible accomplishments, die-hard convictions, imaginative brilliance, as well as moments of chaos and controversy. But there is one undisputable legacy of Oral Roberts that is attested to by generations of crusade attendees, television viewers, and students and faculty who have walked the iconic grounds of Oral Roberts University over the past decades. Oral Roberts was a man of the Spirit.

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Notes

- 1 Vinson Synan, "Oral Roberts: Son of Pentecostalism, Father of the Charismatic Movement," *Spiritus: ORU Journal of Theology* 2:1–2 (2017), 5.
- 2 For a full biography of studies of Oral Roberts, see "Oral Roberts: A Short Bibliography" in this volume.
- 3 Synan, "Oral Roberts: Son of Pentecostalism, Father of the Charismatic Movement," 8.
- 4 D. William Faupel, *The Everlasting Gospel: The Significance of Eschatology in the Development of Pentecostal Thought* (Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), 27–30.
- 5 G. H. Montgomery, "Oral Roberts in Action," *Healing Waters*, September 1951, 6.
- 6 Oral Roberts, *Unleashing the Power of Praying in the Spirit* (Tulsa, OK: Harrison House, 1993), 59. Roberts' father was a Methodist and his mother was a Baptist. As a family, they rarely attended the Methodist church before their conversion.
- 7 Oral Roberts, *Expect a Miracle: My Life and Ministry* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1997), 10–11; Oral Roberts, *Oral Roberts' Life Story as Told by Himself* (Tulsa, OK: Oral Roberts, 1952), 23.
- 8 "Testimonies," *Pentecostal Holiness Advocate*, 11 July 1935, 14.
- 9 Roberts, *Oral Roberts' Life Story as Told By Himself*, 50. Roberts testified that following Moncey's prayer, his lungs began to tingle, he saw a light above him, and he ran on the stage declaring "I am healed! I am healed! I am healed!" Furthermore, Oral Roberts, "Faith for Healing," *Pentecostal Holiness Advocate*, 2 October 1947, 6, recounts that it was the anointing with oil that served as a "point of contact" that released his healing.
- 10 *Pentecostal Holiness Advocate*, 8 August 1935, 15. David Harrell, Jr., *Oral Roberts: An American Life* (San Francisco, CA: Harper & Row, 1985), 37, incorrectly places his Spirit baptism in August 1936.
- 11 Oral Roberts, "Why You Must Receive the Holy Ghost," *Healing Waters*, May 1950, 15; Oral Roberts, *The Baptism with the Holy Spirit and the Value of Speaking in Tongues Today* (Tulsa: Oral Roberts, 1964), 10.
- 12 Oral Roberts, "The Miracle Power of the Baptism of the Holy Spirit in Your Life," *Abundant Life*, January 1962, 7–8.

13 Roberts, *The Baptism with the Holy Spirit*, 10.

14 Roberts, "Why You Must Receive the Holy Ghost," 7. Roberts held this view until later in his ministry.

15 Roberts, *The Baptism with the Holy Spirit*, 36.

16 *The East Oklahoma Conference News*, 5 October 1939, 1. Cf. Daniel D. Isgrigg and Vinson Synan, "An Early Account of Oral Roberts' Healing Testimony," also included in this volume.

17 Roberts, *Expect a Miracle*, 53.

18 Oral Roberts, "Great Revival at Fuquay Springs," *Pentecostal Holiness Advocate*, 22 October 1942, 15. Roberts recognized that by taking a pastorate, he was risking his ability to take calls for revivals and evangelism, but the work there was urgent and he was already seeing success.

19 Roberts, *Expect a Miracle*, 54; "Change of Address and Radio Program," *Pentecostal Holiness Advocate*, 22 October 1942, 15. Taking the Shawnee church was a sacrifice at first, but by the time Roberts had been there a year he had already seen several wage increases and even noted in the *EOCN* that his salary was the highest in the area at \$40 per week. *East Oklahoma Conference News*, October 1943, 4.

20 Synan, "Oral Roberts: Son of Pentecostalism, Father of the Charismatic Movement," 8.

21 Oral Roberts, "Temptation of the Pastor," *Pentecostal Holiness Advocate*, 4 November 1943, 5, 10; Oral Roberts, "By-Passing the Holy Ghost," *Pentecostal Holiness Advocate*, 20 January 1944, 4; Oral Roberts, "Getting the People to Jesus," *Pentecostal Holiness Advocate*, 11 October 1945, 3-4; Oral Roberts, "Our Sleeping Giant," *Pentecostal Holiness Advocate*, 15 November 1945, 3, 14; Oral Roberts, "The Revival We Must Have Now!" *Pentecostal Holiness Advocate*, 27 March, 1947, 4-5.

22 Oral Roberts, "Greatest Need of the East Oklahoma Conference," *East Oklahoma Conference News*, 5 March 1943, 1. Roberts commented, "The greatest need of the hour is for the conference to have a revival to break out in every church that will bring us preachers in closer contact with Jesus Christ and our church members into a deeper spiritual condition."

23 *The East Oklahoma Conference News*, September 1943. Roberts also started a preaching journal for pastors called *The Preacher's Helper* in which he provided sermons on a variety of topics including "Entire Sanctification," "The Baptism in the Holy Ghost," faith, and an intense call to revival called "Three Things The Church Must Do—Now!" *The Preacher's Helper*, May 1943. Roberts' editorial notes, "For several years your editor has seen and felt an urgent need for a magazine that was devoted exclusively to the needs of preachers." It was intended to be a monthly publication. Roberts proposed the idea to the conference early in 1943. See, Oral Roberts, "We Need," *Pentecostal Holiness Advocate*, 28 January 1943, 3.

24 Oral Roberts, "Will God Repeat the Upper Room Revival?" *East Oklahoma Conference News*, November 1943, 1. Roberts was particularly critical of pastors who left the full time ministry to take good paying wartime defense jobs during WWII. He

chides, “Preachers, if you love Jesus like you ought to love Him, you will preach His gospel and you will put HIM first place in your life even if you have to go hungry, sleep on the church benches (yes, tho I am young I have done just that and so have many ministers in this conference), and walk with your shoes almost off your feet, with the blood running between your toes. Our pioneer preachers did it and shouted the victory all along the bloody trail.”

25 Roberts, “Will God Repeat the Upper Room Revival?” 1.

26 B. B. Scrivner, “201 Experiences in Shawnee in Three Years,” *Pentecostal Holiness Advocate*, 23 August 1945, 13.

27 “Editors Mail,” *Pentecostal Holiness Advocate*, 11 October 1945, 2; “Roberts to Radford,” *Pentecostal Holiness Advocate*, 24 January 1946, 15. Apparently Roberts quickly withdrew from the arrangement in Radford following his recruitment to serve as the secretary for the new Southwestern Bible School in Oklahoma. “We Present Our Board,” *Pentecostal Holiness Advocate*, 11 April 1946, 11.

28 “Editors Mail,” *Pentecostal Holiness Advocate*, 3 January 1946, 2.

29 Roberts, *Expect a Miracle*, 64.

30 Roberts, *Expect a Miracle*, 67.

31 Roberts, *The Baptism with the Holy Spirit*, 10.

32 Oral Roberts, “Why You Must Receive the Holy Ghost,” *Healing Waters*, May 1950, 6.

33 Oral Roberts, “Divine Ammunition in the Book of Acts,” *Pentecostal Holiness Advocate*, 17 July 1947, 4–5.

34 Harrell, *Oral Roberts*, 81.

35 “Healing Revival in Newnan Church,” *Pentecostal Holiness Advocate*, 17 July 1947, 10–11.

36 “Healing Revival in Newnan Church,” 10.

37 Roberts, “Why You Must Receive the Holy Ghost,” 6, comments, “Everything wrought in my ministry since that day has been done by the Holy Ghost working through me as an instrument. He has been to me as though Christ stood by my side as I preached the gospel or prayed for the sick.”

38 Roberts, *The Baptism with the Holy Spirit*, 74.

39 Roberts, *The Baptism with the Holy Spirit*, 75.

40 Roberts, *Expect a Miracle*, 103–12.

41 Roberts, *Expect a Miracle*, 105. This practice not only insulated him from his insecurities; it was necessary to keep him from being seduced into taking credit for God’s miraculous power.

42 Roberts, *The Baptism with the Holy Spirit*, 47. He unashamedly admitted, “Before I enter the healing line I often pray quietly in tongues until I am edified and released.”

43 Roberts, “In the Clouds with God,” 2. This was the fourth time Roberts claimed God spoke directly to him, each time being marked as pivotal turning points in Roberts’

ministry. He recalls, "Three times before . . . once in 1935, 'I am going to heal you and you are to take my healing power to your generation' . . . once in 1947, 'From this hour you will heal the sick and cast out demons by my power' . . . once in 1949, 'You have been faithful up to this hour. Now you will feel my healing power in your right hand: you will detect the presence of demons, will know their number and name and will have my power to cast them out.'"

44 Roberts, "In the Clouds with God," 2.

45 Roberts, "In the Clouds with God," 12.

46 "Great Holy Ghost Outpouring in Miami Meeting," *Healing Waters*, March 1950, 14.

47 Roberts, "Why You Must Receive the Holy Ghost," 6.

48 Roberts, "In the Clouds with God," 12.

49 "Jacksonville Campaigns Break all Records," *Healing Waters*, May 1950, 5. The report comments, "It was impossible to get an accurate count of those who were filled, but the number must have been in the hundreds."

50 Edward Boyce, "Richmond and Old Dominion Stirred Through Roberts," *Healing Waters*, July 1950, 4.

51 S. N. Greene, "What the Oral Roberts Campaign Meant to Oklahoma City," *Healing Waters*, October 1950, 4.

52 Oral Roberts, "Why You Must Receive the Holy Ghost," 7. Other accounts of numbers include "several hundred souls who received the Pentecostal baptism" in Goldsboro, North Carolina. *Healing Waters*, July 1950, 1–2. The Memphis Crusade reported that "many hundreds earnestly prayed for the baptism in the Holy Ghost." James E. Hamill, "Report of the Memphis Meeting," *Healing Waters*, August 1950, 4–6. A small crusade held in Shawnee, Oklahoma, reported that "over 1,000 came forward at the close of the Saturday night meeting to be sanctified and filled with the Holy Ghost." George R. Harris, "609 Saved in Shawnee," *Healing Waters*, December 1950, 16.

53 "Over One Million Attend Roberts Meetings the First Nine Months of 1950," *Healing Waters*, December 1950, 4.

54 Harrell, *Oral Roberts*, 120–22, contends that Roberts shifted from wanting to be America's Healing Evangelist to "America's leading soul winner." The decline in emphasis coupled with the new emphasis on evangelism also resulted in a name and format change for the OREA magazine. In 1953, the magazine name was changed to *America's Healing Magazine* for three short months, then to *Healing* for another six months. In July, Roberts changed the name once again and the format to *Abundant Life*, reflecting a new era of emphasis on the abundant life concept from 3 John 2. Roberts' seemingly short attention span and propensity to move on rapidly to new ideas was one of the attributes that enabled him to accomplish so many different initiatives throughout his life.

55 Harrell, *Oral Roberts*, 181–82.

56 Roberts, *Expect a Miracle*, 157.

- 57 Oral Roberts, "Don't Park Here!" *Abundant Life*, January 1959, 3.
- 58 Synan, "Oral Roberts: Son of Pentecostalism, Father of the Charismatic Movement," 10.
- 59 Roberts, *The Baptism with the Holy Spirit*, 37.
- 60 Roberts noted in 1950, "I rarely speak with tongues because God seems to use my tongue in my own language in a manner that pleases Him. I seek no change because I want His will, not mine. I know that a mighty thrill goes through me when God takes my tongue and uses it for His Glory, either in my own language or as I speak under the Spirit of God as they did on Pentecost morning." Roberts, "Why You Must Receive the Holy Ghost," 7.
- 61 Aaron Freisen "Classical Pentecostal Liturgy," in Mark J. Cartledge and A. J. Swoboda, eds., *Scripting Pentecost: A Study of Pentecostals, Worship and Liturgy* (London: Routledge, 2017), 64–65, points out that although Pentecostals were adamant that speaking in tongues was the evidence of Spirit baptism, they did not expect "that all Spirit-baptized believers could speak in tongues whenever they wanted." The shift to the "at-will" use of tongues did not emerge until the beginnings of the charismatic renewal, which, although overlooked by Freisen, found voice in the teachings of Oral Roberts. Cf. Aaron Friesen, *Norming the Abnormal: The Development and Function of the Doctrine of Speaking in Tongues in Classical Pentecostalism* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2013), 133–35.
- 62 Roberts, *The Baptism with the Holy Spirit*, 19.
- 63 Harrell, *Oral Roberts*, 465. Freisen "Classical Pentecostal Liturgy," 64, points to the charismatic Catholic, Killian McDonnell, as the originator of this concept in 1968. However, Roberts was teaching this concept since the early 1960s. Although the exact term "prayer language" did not emerge in Roberts' vocabulary until the 1970s, he regularly spoke of tongues in terms of a concrete and "divinely directed language" of the Spirit. See Oral Roberts, "You Shall Be Baptized with the Holy Ghost Not Many Days Hence," *Abundant Life*, January 1964, 2; and Roberts, *The Baptism with the Holy Spirit*, 22, which comments, "When one prays through his spirit, it is his spirit in cooperation with the Holy Spirit that forms the words of a new language through which the deepest feelings of inner being are expressed to God."
- 64 Roberts, *The Baptism with the Holy Spirit*, 37.
- 65 Jim Nash, "Taking the Gospel to the People," *Abundant Life*, June 1963, 7. "What has it to do with healing? . . . It has a lot to do with healing. When you speak in tongues as the Spirit gives utterance to your tongue, your soul is in harmony with the Holy Spirit."
- 66 Roberts, *The Baptism with the Holy Spirit*, 37.
- 67 Roberts, *The Baptism with the Holy Spirit*, 29.
- 68 Carl Hamilton, "How God Met People's Needs at the Hutchinson Crusade," *Abundant Life*, February 1962, 3.
- 69 "Speaking Personally . . .," *Abundant Life*, February 1962, 2.
- 70 An example of this is "They Testify at the Crusade . . .," *Abundant Life*, January

1962, 10–11, in which every testimony includes not only a story of healing, but also that they received the baptism in the Holy Spirit.

71 “Team Members Talk About the Crusade,” *Abundant Life*, January 1962, 4.

72 Roberts, *Expect a Miracle*, 159, notes that God told him, “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.”

73 W. C. Armstrong, “Miracle in the Valley,” *Abundant Life*, January 1962, 4.

74 Oral Roberts, “The Miracle Power of the Baptism of the Holy Spirit in Your Life,” *Abundant Life*, January 1962, 9.

75 William C. Armstrong, “No Stopping Place,” *Abundant Life*, November 1963, 2.

76 Steve Durasoff, “Jacksonville Crusade,” *Abundant Life*, May 1963, 23.

77 Oral Roberts, “God Has Spoken to Me Again,” *Abundant Life*, June 1960, 6–9.

78 Roberts, *Expect a Miracle*, 162.

79 Roberts, *Expect a Miracle*, 158.

80 Oral Roberts, “A Spiritual Revolution throughout the Earth,” *Abundant Life*, May 1962, 6–10. All caps are original. According to this account, Roberts planned this “university” to be “a free tuition” ministry training Bible school offered very much in the model of early Pentecostal Bible schools. He announced, “We will use the Bible, God’s Holy Word, as our text-book. Those invited to attend will already have their academic education. Our teaching will be centered on how to bring deliverance by the miracle power of God to the people.”

81 *Abundant Life*, April 1963, 1–12.

82 *Abundant Life*, April 1963, 9. In an afternoon talk about the vision for the university, Roberts and Corvin commented, “We intend to offer the BA and BS degrees, then in the 70’s we plan to add some graduate schools. Ultimately, we plan four graduate schools which will offer the master’s degree—political science, business administration, education and a theological seminary.”

83 “Released for Service,” 17. As one attendee described, “A great tidal wave of the Holy Spirit came up over that hill where ORU stands and broke with such a mighty release of power that night that it seemed as though that hill was the highest mountain ever created and God was leaning right on in with His mighty hand.”

84 “Released for Service,” 14.

85 Ervin joined the founding faculty and became a regular speaker on the baptism in the Holy Spirit in Roberts’ Holy Spirit seminars. A few years after joining the faculty, Ervin became a prominent scholarly voice for the charismatic renewal when he published one of the first scholarly defenses of the Pentecostal doctrine of Spirit baptism in his book, *These are Not Drunken as Ye Suppose* (Plainfield, NJ: Logos International, 1968). For more on Ervin’s legacy, see Daniel D. Isgrigg, *Pilgrimage into Pentecost: The Pneumatological Legacy of Howard M. Ervin* (Tulsa, OK: Word & Spirit Press, 2008).

86 “Released for Service,” 17.

87 The first Youth Seminar was attended by 450 students who spent a week on the newly forming campus in 1963. Yvonne Nance, "Youth Set on Fire by the Holy Spirit," *Abundant Life*, September 1963, 2–7.

88 Roberts, *Expect a Miracle*, 173.

89 Roberts, *Unleashing the Power of Praying in the Spirit*, 46, admits that he does not receive an interpretation every time he prays in the Spirit. But, he is convinced that one can learn to grow in receiving the revelation knowledge of the Spirit by praying with interpretation.

90 Roberts, *Expect a Miracle*, 174.

91 Roberts, *Unleashing the Power of Praying in the Spirit*, is devoted entirely to this one topic. This work compiles all of Roberts' teaching on the subject, at times drawing word for word from previous books and articles. While this book contains stories and teachings from Roberts, the overall lack of style and at times unsophisticated tone uncharacteristic of Roberts' other writings suggests to this author that a ghostwriter at Harrison House compiled these teachings in this volume.

92 Roberts, *Expect a Miracle*, 177–80.

93 Roberts, *Unleashing the Power of Praying in the Spirit*, 87.

94 Oral Roberts, "Why Build a Prayer Tower?" *Oral Roberts University Outreach*, Winter 1966, 7–10. Early architectural drawings of the Prayer Tower were designed with more of a space-age crown design. But by 1966, the concept had been morphed to that of a "20th Century cross, one that challenges the youth of a nuclear space age" to place an importance on prayer. The tower was slender to portray the "inner man of the person standing on the inside." The height of the tower was designed to inspire man to "reach toward God." Included with the tower was a series of "prayer gardens." The Prayer Tower was to be the permanent home of the OREA Prayer Group, which was available to answer calls for prayer 24/7.

95 Oral Roberts, "My Eighteen Hours with God in Miami, Florida," *Abundant Life*, May 1963, 7. "One of the buildings upon the University campus will be the Abundant Life Prayer Tower which will rise over 100 feet above the ground, with cloven tongues of fire burning perpetually at its top, symbolizing our complete dependence upon the Holy Spirit. It will house our prayer group as well as provide an 'Upper Room' for prayer and meditation by both students and visitors. We expect many to receive the Holy Spirit in this upper room."

96 Oral Roberts, "Eight Major Goals of the University," *ORU Witness*, July 1964, 3.

97 Roberts, "Eight Major Goals of the University," 3. R. O. Corvin, "Religious and Educational Backgrounds in the Founding of Oral Roberts University," (Ph.D. diss., University of Oklahoma, 1967), 155–56, 168. This policy, while fitting for the founding of the university, became an issue later as maintaining an exclusively Spirit-filled faculty became more of a challenge as the university grew. Harrell, *Oral Roberts*, 222, 248.

98 Oral Roberts, "We Are Releasing a New Force," *ORU Witness*, April 1964, 2–3. Roberts admits that at first the board of regents thought this to be an impossible goal.

Yet, many of the finest Spirit-filled academics were moved to come to ORU to be able to thrive in an academic environment that was also Spirit-filled.

99 “A Challenge to Become Turned on Christians,” *Abundant Life*, March 1968, 20.

100 Oral Roberts, “I Expect Miracles across the Earth,” *Abundant Life*, May 1968, 2.

101 “A Challenge to Become Turned on Christians,” 17–19.

102 This claim was predominantly expressed by Harrell, *Oral Roberts*, 293, who claims that Roberts “discarded” his Pentecostal view of Spirit baptism and speaking in tongues as evidence in order to moderate his views to be more acceptable to his new Methodist colleagues and those in the charismatic stream. But Harrell misunderstands Roberts’ intentions. Roberts shifted the language of Pentecost to phrases like “release of the Spirit” and “prayer language” not to convey new concepts of the Holy Spirit, but to communicate his Pentecostal belief to a different audience that did not understand the traditional language used in Pentecostal circles. Roberts never backed off his belief in tongues as the sign of Spirit baptism. In fact, it could be argued that he emphasized speaking in tongues more than his Pentecostal contemporaries.

103 Oral Roberts, “My Decision to Enter the Methodist Denomination,” faculty meeting, Oral Roberts University, 15 March 1968, <http://digitalshowcase.oru.edu/oruav/7/>.

104 Harrell, *Oral Roberts*, 297–99.

105 Oral Roberts, *Holy Spirit in the Now I* (Tulsa, OK: Oral Roberts University, 1974).

106 *Abundant Life*, March 1974, 16.

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