Oral Roberts Essay, Research Paper

Oral Roberts was 17 years old when his life was changed by a dramatic religious experience. It was late July 1935 when his older brother Elmer took him to be healed. The 6 foot tall young man who only weighed 120 pounds was stricken with Tuberculosis. In the car on the way to the revival Oral sensed that cosmic forces were focused on him. He was prepared to be healed when Geo. W. Moncey, an evangelist and divine healer prayed upon Oral. Automatically Oral was healed. Previous to the healing Oral had been too weak to stand up on his own, all of a sudden he jumped up on the stage and ran back and forth shouting he was healed..

Oral’s dad, Ellis Roberts, was a preacher and evangelist for a Pentecostal Holiness church. He was against such things as infidelity, evolutionism, sexual recreation, drinking alcohol and dancing. Tobacco, jewelry, tea, coffee, transparent female garments, polygamy and theological liberalism were also amongst the vices of his father. Oral believes that his upbringing prepared him for the moment of his healing.

There were several events surrounding the birth of Oral that became part of his ministry’s hagiography. Oral’s mother, Claudius, went to a sick child while she was pregnant with Oral to try and heal the child. She promised God that she would give her child to him if he would heal the sick child. The child was healed and she knew God had promised her a “little preacher”.

As a child Oral was mischievous and lively. But also shy, self-conscious, extrovert and poor. His self-consciousness came from his stutter and the fact that the kids made fun of him. To try and make him feel better his mom would tell him that she gave him to God. He was God’s property and one day he would preach the gospel. His father always said that Oral would have the greatest revivals of his time. Oral tried to put those thoughts out of his mind, but they always remained. His playmates nicknamed him preacher. Something told Oral that he was a child of destiny.

As a teenager he joined the Methodist church. He did so out of peer pressure and not from religious faith. By the time he reached high school he was tall and a good athlete. He played baseball for a local team which included future major league pitcher Harry Brecheen. The girls were crazy about Oral. His reputation was that he was too fast to date the daughters of the mare careful parents. At the end of his sophomore year he had dreams of athletic fame, university study, a law degree and a political career.

Oral left home and moved about 50 miles away to play basketball. His parents threatened to send the police after him. Oral said that if they did he would just keep leaving until they let him go. They all prayed together and Oral left. Oral realized years later that he had left because he was sick and tired of being poor. He began to believe that his parents’ religion was a roadblock to his ambitions. He resented the fact that his parents’ made him attend church and Sunday school. To him Christianity seemed repressive and confining, he ran away to get away from the lord.

When Oral moved to the new school there was new success. He was elected class president, he was a honor student, editor of the school newspaper, cheerleader for the football team and a member of the basketball squad. In addition to his school activities he also held three part time jobs and completely supported himself. He lived in the home of a local judge. There he built fires and did chores in return for room and board. He also worked in a store and became a reporter for his hometown newspaper. While Oral was living with the judge he started to hang out with the wrong crowd. He taught Sunday school but basically he taught the kids how to play ball. He also started drinking and becoming an immoral person.

During the final game of the Southern Oklahoma basketball tournament, Oral collapsed. This was the end of his teenage rebellion. He was taken back to his parents. They told him that he must be saved. While lying in bed with his mother, father and nurse around him praying, Oral opened his eyes and saw Jesus’ likeness in his father’s face. He started crying for Jesus to save him. A few weeks after that night was the memorable night that he was healed.

The morning after he was healed Oral was back in bed weak. His mother kept telling him to not lose faith, it was normal for him to be weak while trying to regain his strength. Later Oral went to see the Dr. to be fluoroscoped and his lungs were found to be absolutely perfect. Oral said years later that he now had scars on his lungs and when he is examined by his physician they talk about those scars. That is his proof that he had tuberculosis and they are his proof that he is healed.

When Oral was better plans were made for Oral and his father to begin a father and son revivalist team. Oral ended up spending the summer preaching with some other Pentecostal Holiness youngsters. Oral received his call to preach the night he was healed. When fall came Oral joined his father in holding meetings. By December they had more calls for revivals than they could accept. This led to Oral becoming the leader of the Pentecostal Young People’s Society and later elected secretary.

Oral was first licensed as a minister in 1936 at the East Oklahoma Conference Camp. He began a full-time faith healing ministry by 1948. In 1954 his healing services were broadcast on TV. In 1968 Oral became a Methodist and founded Oral Roberts University. The university was the first charismatic college. The City of Faith was erected next to the university and combined medicine and prayer. By age twenty he was known and effective as a preacher. He was married to Evelyn Lutman Fahnestock on Christmas Day 1938. In 1941 he was elected by the Eastern Oklahoma Conference as a clerical delegate. That same year Oral began to be busy and productive. He conducted revivals all along the East. In such states as North Carolina, Georgia and Virginia. Also in 1941 he accepted a call to pastor a church in Fuquay Springs, North Carolina. This signaled a sharp change in career aims and lifestyle.

He had published two books at this point and recorded two songs with Evelyn. He had been Chairman of the Conference Committee on Education and Publication. While Chairman he sponsored a fund-raising service for Emmanuel College at the Eastern Oklahoma camp meeting. He raised $70 to furnish a dormitory room in the new building at the college.

During his pastorate in Fuquay Springs Oral did what he had to do to build up the church. He preached everywhere he could. Including street corners and sometimes he put a loud speaker on top of his car and drove around playing records to attract attention. When a crowd gathered he would preach to them. He left the church in Fuquay to return to Oklahoma. Where he accepted a call to pastor a church in Shawnee. He stayed there three years. In which time the church membership grew from 42 to 95 and the yearly revenue grew from $1,700 to $8,700. When Oral arrived in Shawnee he immediately began broadcasting over two radio stations. Paying for the broadcasts out of his own pocket. By 1945 he was being paid $2,366 a year, the highest salary in the Eastern Oklahoma Conference.

By the mid -1940’s Oral had changed his field of expertise to religious education. He began to view himself as a Sunday school expert. He attention was also captured by the establishment of a Pentecostal Holiness college in Oklahoma. Oral toured until the end of 1944 raising money for the new school. He resigned from the church in Shawnee to return to school and get a doctor’s degree. That idea was short lived when Oral agreed to be a pastor in North Georgia in the fall. By January the Roberts family was back in Shawnee and Oral had reenrolled in school.

Oral received an urgent phone call one day telling him that one of the deacons of the church had dropped a motor on his foot. Oral went to the deacon and placed his hand upon his foot and said “Jesus heal”. The deacon was fine and stood up and stomped his foot with no pain. Another incident happened when a mother interrupted a meeting that Oral was in and asked him to heal her sick child. Oral prayed and then the baby looked up at him and smiled.

Oral continued to preach in the church and attend school. One day he was in class and he heard a voice telling him to be like Jesus Christ and bring healing to people. Oral went to the church one day and said he was not leaving until God spoke to him. He did, and God spoke to him and said to begin a ministry of healing and that he would have God’s power to pray for the sick and to cast out devils. God was calling Oral to a healing ministry. Oral began holding Sunday afternoon healing services. On his radio program he preached messages on divine healing.

He rented a building and scheduled a service. On that Sunday afternoon at the service there was about 1,200 people present. There was an offering. The total of the offering covered the expenses with some left over. He delivered a sermon. Later that sermon was published and read by millions. As a result of that sermon he received invitations from eight states to come and evangelize. Oral resigned as pastor to face an uncertain future as an evangelist.

Oral was one of the most influential religious leaders in the world. He is known for his leadership and publicity given to the Pentecostal and charismatic movements (Pentecostalism’s glamorous offspring) since WWII. Thanks to Oral the Pentecostal religion surged around the world in the decades after the war. In the 1980’s a Pentecostal spokesman claimed that fifty million people throughout the world had received the baptism of the Holy Spirit. It was predicted that by the end of the century half of the world’s Protestants would be Pentecostal.

Roberts was the leader of a generation of dynamic revivalists. Who took the Pentecostal message of healing and deliverance around the world in the years after 1947. Roberts brought traditional Pentecostal and charismatics together in a series of dynamic conferences. These conferences explored the theology of the Holy Spirit.

Oral Roberts is responsible for four decades of healing revivalism. He has personally touched over a million human beings. Several million more answered his call to accept Christ. Tens of millions more have heard him preach and pray on radio, television and in films. Oral has also influenced a variety of celebrities to be baptized by the Holy Spirit.

Roberts influenced modern Christian history through his use of media, especially TV He started filming his healing crusades for TV in the 1950’s despite the financial risks. These crusades shocked and outraged many, but they tapped the curiosity of millions more. More important than his films was Oral’s return to TV in a 1969 series of prime-time specials.

Oral Roberts is forever linked with religious healing. After all it was religious healing that launched his ministry and religious healing that built the City of Faith complex in 1981 in Tulsa.

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