
Editorials

ORAL ROBERTS GOT HIS 20 YEARS

Twenty years ago, faith healer Oral Roberts thought he was on the verge of being “recalled” by his Maker — or at least that’s what he wanted his faithful to think. At that time, he pleaded with God, “Give me 20 more years.” Those two decades have now come and gone, and many have forgotten — or are unaware — of the sad legacy contained therein.

It was in 1987 that Roberts was conducting what was, at the time, his largest fund-raiser ever. He said he needed \$8 million dollars to resuscitate his medical school project. The medical school itself was the result of another of Roberts’ calls from God.

This story really started 10 years earlier. In February 1977, Roberts’ daughter Rebecca, along with her husband and four other people, were killed in a small-plane crash in Kansas. After the accident, a grieving Roberts retreated to the California desert, where he said he received a vision from God. In that vision, he said he was told to build the City of Faith, a 60-story medical clinic, a 30-story, 777-bed hospital, and a 20-story research tower in Tulsa, Okla.

Roberts’ plan — or as Roberts would have had people believe, God’s plan — met opposition from the very beginning. Representatives from Tulsa’s other hospitals

protested the proposal. Roberts received a license for the hospital only after he reduced his request to 294 beds, a distinct decrease from what Roberts said God had called for.

It was during this legal dispute that Roberts had another of his purported visions: the 900-foot Jesus. “There I was face to face with Jesus Christ, the Son of the Living God,” he told his partners. This “Jesus,” he claimed, stood 300 feet taller than the 600-foot City of Faith.

The complex was completed in 1981 at a cost of about \$150 million. While the project appeared to be a completely functioning medical center, it was little more than a facade. In February 1983, only four floors of the hospital were open and carried a normal patient load of 75 to 85 people.

While the medical school and facilities continued to suffer financial distress, Roberts said he received another word from the Lord. In January 1986, Roberts said God chastised him for not sending the medical teams out to the nations as he had been commanded to do. Roberts then said God told him: “You are on the last rung of the ladder. Your next move, you will be standing in front of Me, telling Me why you’ve not sent My Healing Teams and put My medical presence in the nations.” God then added, “I want you to believe you can raise the eight million dollars it takes to run the medical school so you can give scholarships to all the medical students.”

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There is also an obsessive focus on Satan and demons. Our focus is to be Christ (Colossians 3:1-2, Hebrews 12:2). Richard Mayhue reminds us of our great resources in Christ for true spiritual warfare:

"...our Lord Jesus Christ has not left us defenseless. Let me show you the arsenal that is at our command. The Saviour's victory at Calvary (John 12:31, Rev. 12:11). The promise of overcoming (1 John 5:4-5; Rev. 21:7). The intercessory ministry of Christ (John 17:15, 20). The knowledge of Satan's tactics (2 Cor. 2:11). The believer's spiritual armor (Eph. 6:10-17). The Holy Spirit's indwelling power (1 John 4:4). The believer's prayers (Matt. 6:13; Eph. 6:18-20; Mark 9:29). The instructions for defeating Satan (James 4:7-8). The sure knowledge that Satan has been rendered powerless with regard to death (Heb. 2:14). The encouragement of ultimate victory (Rev. 20:1-10)."²⁸


The Bible is clear that a Christian cannot be possessed by demons. The Christian is the temple of God's Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is greater and more powerful than any and all demons and cannot be dispossessed (1 John 2:14, 4:4, 5:18).

Therefore, Christians are not to focus on or obsess about demons or the demonic. Believers are to take the apostles' example, realizing that Christ and His grace are stronger than demons, and we simply present the Gospel to all. As Paul instructed, the Gospel is "the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes" (Romans 1:16). The demonized, whether real or imagined, are no exception.

Endnotes:

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2. Jon Trott, "Bob Larson's Ministry Under Scrutiny," *Cornerstone* magazine, Vol. 21, Issue 100, pg. 42.
3. See further "Exorcism" in Everett F. Harrison, Editor-in-chief, *Baker's Dictionary of Theology*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1960, pg. 206.
4. See further, Alfred Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1965, Vol. 2, pp. 770-776.
5. Matt Meagher, "The Exorcist," *Inside Edition*, May 16, 2000.
6. E-mail correspondence from Scott Mikusko to M. Kurt Goedelman, Feb. 1, 2007. Copy on file.
7. Jay Grelen and Doug LeBlanc, "'This is me, this is real,'" *World* magazine, Jan. 23, 1993, pg. 7.
8. "The Exorcist," op. cit.
9. "Bob Larson Ministries," Charity Navi-

gator. The URL for this organization is: www.charitynavigator.org.

10. Matt Meagher, "Bob Larson, The Exorcist," *Inside Edition*, Nov. 14, 2006.
11. Ibid.
12. The URL for Bob Larson Ministries web site is: www.boblaron.org.
13. *The Geneva Study Bible*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1995, pg. 1831.
14. "The Exorcist," op. cit.
15. Bob Larson, *Bob Larson presents Spiritual Freedom*, Aug. 5, 2006.
16. Bob Larson, *Bob Larson presents Spiritual Freedom*, Aug. 12, 2006.
17. "The Exorcist," op. cit.
18. William Alexander, *Demonic Possession in the New Testament*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1980, pg. 7.
19. Matthew Bunson, General Editor, *2004 Our Sunday Visitor's Catholic Almanac*. Huntington, Ind.: Our Sunday Visitor Publishing, 2004, pg. 137.
20. Frederick S. Leahy, *Satan Cast Out*. Carlisle, Penna.: Banner of Truth Trust, 1990, pg. 88.
21. See further, *Demonic Possession in the New Testament*, op. cit., pp. 28-29.
22. *Satan Cast Out*, op. cit., pg. 171.
23. "The Exorcist," op. cit.
24. *Satan Cast Out*, op. cit., pp. 180-181.
25. Ibid., pg. 181, italics in original.
26. G. Richard Fisher, "Demonic Operation - The Deliverance Game of Modern Day Exorcists," *The Quarterly Journal*, Vol. 26, No. 4, pg. 22.
27. *Demonic Possession in the New Testament*, op. cit., pp. 132-133.
28. Richard Mayhue, *Unmasking Satan*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Kregel Publications, 2001, pg. 156. 

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Three months later, Roberts said God reminded him with these words: "I want you to get this going in one year or I will call you home. I've got to do something to get the attention of my people. If I have to call you home, I'm going to do it."

As the months passed, donations to Roberts' cause did not match what he had asked for. In nine months, less than half of the \$8 million had been raised. On Jan. 4, 1987, Roberts confessed on television that unless he came up with \$4.5 million, his days were numbered.

"If we don't turn it around by March, God's going to call me home. Please help extend my life. Please help me open the nations. Please help me turn the medical school around. We're well on our way. We lack \$4.5 million between now and March. Help us," Roberts pleaded.

While many were appalled at the idea that God would hold Roberts hostage, Roberts said it was not unscriptural. "If the partners of [the Apostle] Paul had not come to him with the money, his life would not have been extended. It's in the Bible. It's happened all over again," Roberts told his viewing audience.

"You know, God is actually obligated to meet our needs when we give of our seed faith," Roberts' wife Evelyn said. It was a win-win situation. You give, Oral lives, and God is *obligated* to meet your needs. It can't get much better than that.

Roberts closed out the broadcast that day by praying:

"Father, I've delivered my soul today. I can do no more by myself, than what I am doing. Please help me. Give me new partners; cause my regular partners to pick up this burden. Extend my life, let me live beyond March. Let me finish my work on earth. *Give me 20 more years.*"

The strategy worked. A Florida dog-track owner sent Roberts what he needed, sparing us from finding out if the threat against Roberts would be carried out. However, the City of Faith sat vacant for several years before being sold to a group of investors for commercial development. It turned out to be a monument to a false prophet.

God has now given him those 20 years. And in those two decades Roberts has, time and again, shown himself to be a false prophet. Roberts claims to speak with divine unction, but in fact states ill-conceived ideas from his own mind and attributes them to God, much as the prophets of Jeremiah's day:

"Do not listen to the words of the prophets who prophesy to you. They make you worthless; they speak a vision of their own heart, not from the mouth of the LORD. ... I have not sent these prophets, yet they ran. I have not spoken to them, yet they prophesied" (Jeremiah 23:16, 21, emphasis added).

Roberts repeatedly has had to retreat to silence about his failed prophecies or, when he did address them, has claimed he did not "possess all the information." This, of course, discredits Roberts' claim to speak for the Almighty, unless God is not omniscient or willfully misinformed him.

During these past 20 years, Roberts also continued an unhealthy affiliation with and indulgence of other false prophets and aberrational teachers, including Benny Hinn and Paula White. It is a sad legacy: A litany of false prophecies that kept his "partners" sowing their financial "seed-faith" to keep his dreams alive. The Apostle Peter warned of such teachers when he wrote:

"Many will follow their shameful ways and will bring the way of truth into disrepute. In their greed these teachers will exploit you with stories they have made up. Their condemnation has long been hanging over them, and their destruction has not been sleeping" (2 Peter 2:2-3, NIV).

—MKG

NEWS UPDATES

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Ownby's schoolmate, Mitchell Hults, who gave investigators a detailed description of a white Nissan pickup truck in the area at the time of Ownby's disappearance. That clue eventually led to the discovery of the two boys.

Throughout the Hornbeck story, there were many individuals who never stopped offering the hope that Shawn would safely return home. Yet the outcome proved to be a major embarrassment for one prominent psychic, who offered no hope to Shawn's family.

Four months after Shawn's disappearance, his mother and stepfather sought the help of popular psychic Sylvia Browne. Browne appeared on the Feb. 26, 2003, broadcast of *The Montel Williams Show*. The parents were in the audience and were able to interact with the psychic. When she was asked if Shawn was still alive, Browne shook her head and said, "No." Shawn's mother wept at her answer.

Browne also gave Shawn's parents and the audience a description of the abductor, "The guy was dark-skinned. Although he wasn't black, he was more Hispanic-looking. [He] had real long dark hair and strange enough, Hispanic, he had dreadlocks." The man with whom Shawn had been living with and who has been charged in the abduction is a white male who bears no resemblance to the man Browne described.

A week following Shawn's rescue, his parents told CNN reporter Anderson Cooper that they were told if they wanted to talk further with Browne they could, "at her normal standard fee." Those who have monitored Browne's operation said she charges \$700 for a session lasting from 20 to 60 minutes.

Psychic debunker James "The Amazing" Randi, on the Jan. 26 broadcast of *Larry King Live*, said Browne's methodology was standard fare for clairvoyants. "These people, when they're wrong, they're usually dramatically wrong. When they're right, they're only right with common things that you would expect to be true," Randi told King. The probability was that Shawn had been killed and Browne echoed that expectation, Randi noted.

Browne, on her web site, countered the accusations saying, "I have **never** nor ever will charge anyone who seeks my help regarding a missing person or homicide. ... To be accused of otherwise by James Randi and others like him is a boldface lie. ... As I have stated on Montel, on my radio show, in my books and in each of my lectures, I cannot possibly be 100% correct in each and every one of my predictions. I have never claimed to be."

—MKG

TELEVANGELIST SUED BY FAMILY

The positive-confession theology of televangelist Darlene Bishop has her headed for court as a result of a lawsuit brought by the four children of her late brother. Darrell "Wayne" Perry, a country songwriter, died in May 2005 of throat cancer.

Perry's children have accused their aunt of wrongful death, clergy malpractice, and fraud. The lawsuit alleges that Bishop persuaded her brother to suspend chemotherapy treatment in favor of divine healing. In a separate lawsuit, which went before a judge on Jan. 5, Bishop was accused of probate irregularities and the