

Bosworth Matters

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F.F. Bosworth's Ministry to John G. Lake

How a Simple Question Led to a Spiritual
Breakthrough – and Years of Fruitful Ministry

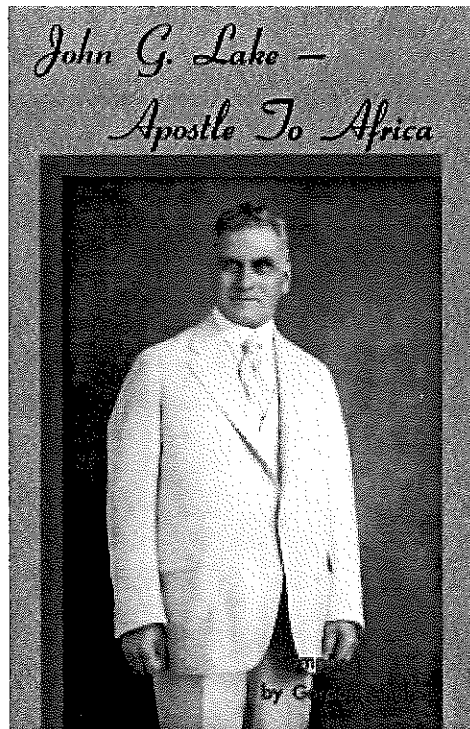
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Author, *F.F. Bosworth: The Man Behind Christ the Healer*

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F.F. Bosworth played a pivotal role in John G. Lake's quest for a deeper life in the Spirit. His efforts are recorded in *John G. Lake: The Complete Collection of His Life Teachings* (Whitaker House, 2005), which is compiled by Roberts Liardon.

In 1907, several months after Charles Parham's visit to Zion City, Ill., Bosworth, who

experienced his own Pentecost on October 18, 1906, gave Lake a gentle nudge to move him to the next level in his walk with God.

Bosworth's assistance, as it turned out, helped to pave the way for Lake to receive the baptism in the Spirit with the evidence of speaking in tongues. Lake would go on to experience a divine encounter that would take him to Africa and other parts of the world.

Bosworth's contribution to Lake's development occurred in three ways, each of which may be seen as an act of divine providence.

First, Bosworth used his own home for prayer meetings where Lake and others could come and learn about the Pentecostal experience. In 1904, Bosworth received a visit by the wife and sister-in-law of Charles Parham. According to historian Kemp Pendleton Burpeau, Lake had the privilege of meeting both of the women during that time. "The meeting played a most prominent role in Lake's religious development," Burpeau noted.

Second, Bosworth coaxed him into delving deeper into his faith and his walk with God. Bosworth accomplished that with a simple question: He asked Lake about his willingness to fully commit himself to Christ. "Lake," he said, "When are you going to surrender to Jesus?"

Third, Bosworth and Tom Hezmalhach (who was called Brother Tom), knelt and prayed with Lake, who then and there surrendered himself to the Lord. From that point on, he began seeking the Lord for sanctification and the baptism in the Holy Spirit.

Lake's account of his meeting with Bosworth and Hezmalhach begins with his introduction to Hezmalhach in the home of Bosworth. It ends with the three of them praying, quite literally, on a sidewalk. Lake recalled:

Some months before I was baptized, (1907) I sat in a cottage meeting at the home of Brother Fred Bosworth. Brother Tom was preaching. At the close of the meeting, he came to me and said, "Brother, what is your name?"

I said, "John Lake."

He replied, "John Lake, as I was preaching, Jesus told me, John and I are going to preach together."

I laughed, replying lightly, "I wish it were so, but I can't preach. I am not where I ought to be with God."

He said, "Never mind. Jesus is going to fix you up."

Some months later as he visited our town again, one day I joined Brother Tom and Brother Fred Bosworth on the sidewalk. As we walked down the street, I stepped between them, taking each by the arm. Brother Bosworth turned to me, saying, "Lake, when are you going to surrender to Jesus?"

I said, "Anytime, Fred."

Tom turned to me saying, "Do you mean it!"

I replied, "I do, Tom." We all three fell on our knees on the sidewalk and right there I surrendered to my Lord. Then I sought God for sanctification and my Baptism in the Holy Ghost.

In October 1907 the Lord in His goodness baptized me with the Holy Ghost after several months of deep heart searching and repentance unto God at the home of a friend.

That Bosworth would suggest the need to surrender was not surprising, given his own background. After all, that is what he had been taught and what he experienced before his own Pentecostal experience. Bosworth, it should be noted, was present when Marie Burgess received the Spirit baptism. "As he watched her receive the baptism, he became so hungry that the power of God fell on him," wrote historian Gordon P. Gardiner in *Out of Zion into All the World* (Companion Press, 1990). During that time, Gardiner explained, "The seekers were taught that they should be sanctified before they could receive the baptism." Because of that view, some of the believers became discouraged, according to Gardiner. However, in Bosworth's case, he reportedly came to a prayer meeting with a made-up mind and an attitude of surrender. Citing a woman who attended the meeting, Gardiner wrote: "The bandmaster of our city [F.F. Bosworth] came in and said, 'I put the last thing on the altar coming up the hill.'"

According to Kemp Pendleton Burpeau, Lake received the Spirit baptism in October 1907, exactly one year after Bosworth had received the same gift. Burpeau wrote that Lake received the Spirit "with tongues (glossolalia), healing power, and other charismatic gifts. This baptismal empowerment was apparently distinguishable from his prior religious experiences in magnitude and comprehensiveness."

Lake's account is certainly clear and concise. It seems credible, and in a certain way, inspiring. He undoubtedly saw his time with Bosworth and Hezmalhach as something that was vitally important to his life and ministry. But despite their assistance, he chose not to mention them in his booklet, *My Baptism in the Holy Spirit and How the Lord Sent Me to Africa* (Divine Healing Institute, n.d.). When one considers the presumably close relationship that he had with the two, the omission of their names is a puzzling surprise.

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