

Bosworth Matters

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F.F. Bosworth Mentioned in Gerald W. King's Book, Disfellowshipped: Pentecostal Responses to Fundamentalism in the United States, 1906-1943

Oswald J. Smith's Defense of His Healing Ministry is Noted

By Roscoe Barnes III

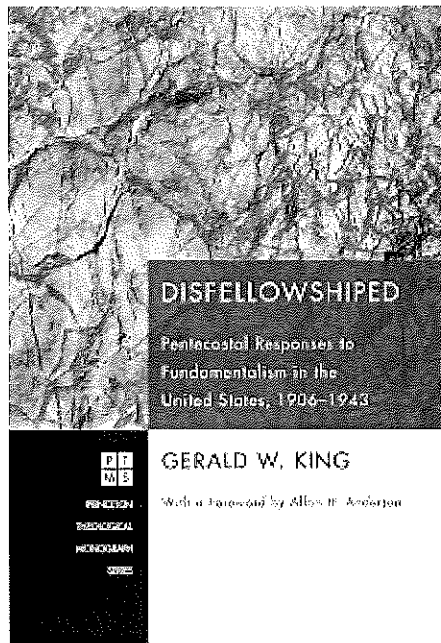
Author, *F.F. Bosworth: The Man Behind Christ the Healer*

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In Gerald W. King's book, *Disfellowshipped: Pentecostal Responses to Fundamentalism in the United States, 1906-1943* (Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2011), F.F. Bosworth is one of several Pentecostal pioneers who goes to battle on theological issues with some of the leading Fundamentalists of his day.

Despite the disagreements that certain critics had with his Pentecostal background, including his teachings on divine healing, some of them accepted his healing reports as genuine. Oswald

J. Smith, on one occasion, went so far as to defend Bosworth, according to King. He also notes Harry A. Stemme testified to being healed while reading Bosworth's book, *Christ the Healer*.

Information on King's book is available [here](#).

King holds a Ph.D. from the University of Birmingham (UK). His book offers a critical look at the roots of Pentecostalism and how it grew in relationship to Fundamentalism. King describes the heated tension between the well-known figures who spoke in tongues and the fundamentalists who forcefully opposed the Pentecostal practice. Despite their disagreement, however, King suggests the "two movements held far more in common than in contrast."

Bosworth found himself in a number of theological skirmishes on the issues of evidential tongues, a position he opposed, and divine healing, which he fiercely advocated. Through his writings (in books and magazines) and public forums, Bosworth defended the doctrine of divine healing with passion and unwavering conviction. Not one to flee a fight, he clashed with Pentecostals and Fundamentalists alike. His debates with both camps are well documented.

Bosworth is mentioned in several places in King's book. One place in particular made me think of the healing of the crippled man at the temple gate called Beautiful in Acts 3 and the reaction of the critics in Acts 4:16:

"What shall we do to these men? Because indeed a notable miracle has been done through them, as can be plainly seen by all who dwell in Jerusalem, and we can't deny it." -- World English Bible

In Bosworth's case, King recounts instances in which people defended him because of the divine healings that could not be denied. Some of the church leaders, who were critical of Pentecostalism, were so convinced of the reported healings in Bosworth's ministry that they embraced him, even though he spoke in tongues. It is possible, writes King, that some of his supporters did not know about his practice of speaking in tongues.

Here's what King wrote about Oswald J. Smith's endorsement of Bosworth during the evangelist's 1921 revival meetings in Canada:

Bosworth initiated a campaign in Toronto's Massey Hall in 1921. The meetings were hosted by Oswald Smith, who had recently switched alliances from the Presbyterians to the CMA. Smith suffered from occasional eye trouble himself, which were exasperated by intense headaches. Blurry vision once hindered him from noticing Bosworth's presence when Bosworth slipped into his church. As a test of faith, Smith stopped wearing his glasses. His eyesight gradually improved while the headaches dissipated. Smith defended Bosworth by confirming the healing of three other participants in the meetings. Though approving of Bosworth's ministry, he was still critical of pentecostalism.

Like Smith, who was highly regarded in his day, Harry A. Stemme also believed in the healing ministry of Bosworth. In fact, he had a personal testimony that supported Bosworth's claim that "many have been healed through their own faith which came to them while reading ... this book (*Christ the Healer*)." King noted Stemme's experience as follows:

Ever thirsty for spiritual guidance, (Stemme) haunted F.F. Bosworth's campaign in Joliet, where an old-time revival had broken out. The meetings lasted from August 1930

to May 1931. Stemme had received healing once while at Wheaton and now obtained it again while poring over Christ the Healer, adding, "I thank God for Brother Bosworth ... Though I do not agree with all this man of God teaches." However, it was not enough to persuade him to join the pentecostals, and he even seemed unaware like Oswald Smith that Bosworth spoke in tongues.

Closing thoughts

King seems certain in his belief that neither Smith nor Stemme knew that Bosworth spoke in tongues. He suggests there is no evidence that shows either of them had any knowledge of this part of Bosworth's life.

King's position, though well presented, leaves me wondering why they did not know. After all, Bosworth was a famous evangelist with a long list of publications to his credit, including the booklet, *Do All Speak with Tongues?*, which was published by a number of sources, including The Christian Alliance Publishing Company.

In 1921 his authorized biography, *Joybringer Bosworth*, was published with a chapter featuring Bosworth's message (same as booklet) on tongues and his own Pentecostal experience. A second edition of the book appeared in 1927. Bosworth promoted the biography in his magazine, *Exploits of Faith*. As I write this, I'm looking at a full-page advertisement for the second edition of the biography in the February 1930 issue of the magazine.

Smith and Stemme, I'm sure, were both well-read men. They were astute leaders who were known for their knowledge and sound judgment, among other things. When I consider the breadth and strength of their intellectual capital, it is simply hard for me to think they were both uninformed about an evangelist they respected. Given the history and wide circulation of Bosworth's literature, it seems highly unlikely that neither of them knew about Bosworth's Pentecostal experience and his position on tongues.

Note: My book, *F.F. Bosworth: The Man Behind Christ the Healer*, can be purchased at <https://www.cambridgescholars.com/ff-bosworth-16> with a **25% discount**. Use the discount code: bosworth25.

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Questions about the research and commentary on F.F. Bosworth may be directed to Roscoe Barnes III, Ph.D., via email at doctorbarnes3@gmail.com or roscoebarnes3@yahoo.com. For updates on F.F. Bosworth history, simply follow this blog or @Roscoebarnes3 on Twitter. #ChristTheHealer