

**Bosworth Matters**

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## Donald Gee's Unflattering Mention of F.F. Bosworth

**By Roscoe Barnes III, Ph.D.**

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

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**Donald Gee (1891-1966)**

In his excellent book, *The Healer-Prophet William Marrion Branham: A Study of the Prophetic in American Pentecostalism* (Mercer University Press, 2000), Dr. C. Douglas Weaver shared an unfavorable comment about F.F. Bosworth that was attributed to Donald Gee. The comment appeared as a footnote in Chapter Three, which is titled, "Branham and the Healing Revival, 1947-1955." It followed Weaver's description of William Branham's evangelistic campaigns in South Africa in 1952. The campaign was considered a major success by Bosworth and others,

including Gordon Lindsay. Weaver cited Joseph D. Mattsson-Boze who called the South Africa meetings "the greatest outpouring of the Holy Ghost that that country has ever seen."

In the footnote to that comment, Weaver wrote: "Donald Gee cited a report of F.F. Bosworth about the South Africa campaign to point out the tendency of deliverance evangelists to exaggerate their claims for the sake of propaganda." Weaver's source for the claim of exaggeration is Gee's book, *Wind and Flame* (Heath Press, Ltd., 1967). Gee was a noted author, prolific writer, respected pastor and conference speaker. He helped to establish the Assemblies of God in Great Britain and Ireland in 1924. He wrote well-reasoned articles about Pentecost and the divine healing movement. Generally astute and balanced in his judgment, Gee did not shy away from presenting constructive criticism when and where he felt it was due.

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**"It has to be confessed that in a few regrettable cases commercialism vitiated the testimony." -- Donald Gee**

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In Gee's view, the most prominent evangelistic healing campaigns of the 1950s were held by American revivalists whose ministries were "accompanied by a flood of propaganda, especially as they reached out beyond the United States." Gee, who was sometimes direct and scholarly in his critiques, believed there was a place for mass evangelistic campaigns and divine healing. He voiced concern, however, about some of the practices of the healing evangelists. "It has to be confessed that in a few regrettable cases commercialism vitiated the testimony," he asserted. "The tragic volume of human physical suffering tempts exploitation by those who claim power to heal."

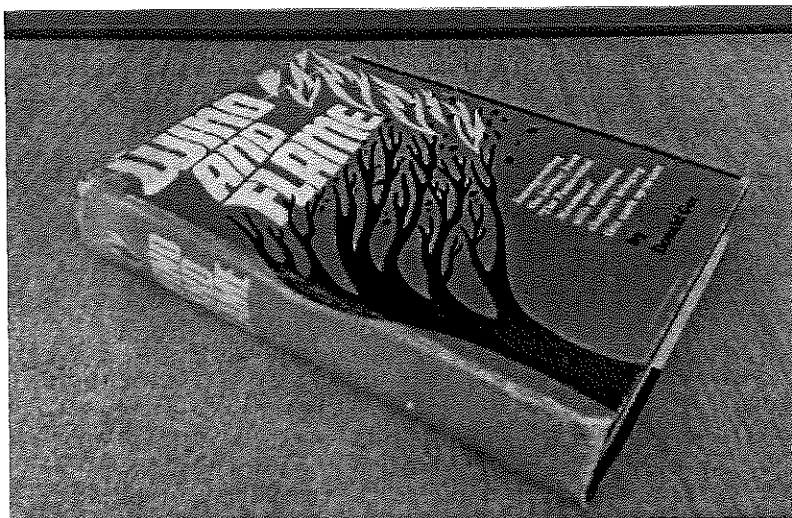


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While he conceded some of the preachers "brought undoubted blessing to multitudes," he also

believed some of them made exaggerated claims about miracles and the success of their respective ministries. His comments about Bosworth are presented in the excerpt that follows.

## Excerpt from *Wind and Flame*

As typical of these campaigns, I have before me some extracts from the diary of F.F. Bosworth, published in the *Herald of Faith*, relative to meetings in South Africa which he visited with William Branham and Earn Baxter. He wrote – “At the hotel in Durban this morning there was just one subject – the wonderful meetings on Sunday ... The meetings in the race course cannot be described. Some estimated the crowd in my meeting at 10.30 a.m. to be from 80,000 to 100,000 ... Last night’s meeting was the most wonderful service Brother Branham ever had. Thousands were in tears. The love of God seemed to fill the atmosphere of the entire race track. It melted all hearts to tears. I saw Indian mothers holding their babies and weeping with their hearts melted to love and worship ... Seeing this multitude during three short showers with no shelter over them, and hearing them sing like angels, melted Brother Branham. The love and worship were beyond anything that can be described.

“Miracles were wrought as Brother Branham pointed them out in all directions. And then came the committal and mass prayer when Brother Branham rose to the greatest height of his life as in a moment, when he reached his last word, it seemed as if heaven fell on the people and God healed thousands all at the same time. Those with club feet, others paralyzed, some that had never walked from birth, that were closest to the platform climbed the steps to show the audience what God had done for them. A sea of people in all directions stood to give their hearts to Christ, Thousands of Indians and natives among them. Many times the 3,000 converted on the Day of Pentecost responded to Brother Baxter’s appeal to accept Christ”.

### Donald Gee’s assessment

Admittedly these are the words of enthusiasm, but they were not written for publication, but for a relative in the U.S.A. Such crowds, and such ministry, produces many resultant problems before those professing conversion begin to become disciples and are shepherded into assemblies of God’s people. Many never go further than the excitement of the campaign, but at any rate a mass of raw spiritual material is gathered for pastoral care and teaching. The more regular and less spectacular aspects of the Movement provide greater permanent results. But all have had their place.

Gee was a man of deliberate thought. He was known for being lucid and quite persuasive in his commentary. However, his perspective on this topic seems lacking. A key reason is that he made a claim by implication without providing any hard evidence. Yes, he presented excerpts from Bosworth’s letter (which was published as a report), but he did not explain why he questioned Bosworth’s report or why he situated his report in a section of the book that highlighted concerns about healing evangelists. Without evidence, one is left to see Gee’s claim or assertion as merely an opinion and not a statement of fact.

To be fair, however, Gee did not actually say that Bosworth made exaggerated claims. Instead, he used Bosworth’s letter to address the challenge of discipleship when seeking to help new

converts in mass evangelistic meetings. Since he cited the letter in the very section where he wrote about "propaganda" and "commercialism" in healing ministries, it is not surprising that his depiction of Bosworth is viewed in a negative light.

In the section in question, which is titled, "The Problem and Power of Propaganda," Gee began his argument by presenting his concerns about the ministry practices of healing revivalists. He immediately followed that material with Bosworth's letter using the following words: "As typical of these campaigns, I have before me some extracts from the diary of F.F. Bosworth." That line, in my view, placed Bosworth in the company of people who erred in some way, the people that Gee had just criticized.

Some readers, understandably, might also derive the idea of "exaggeration" from Gee's statement at the end of Bosworth's letter: "Admittedly these are the words of enthusiasm." That line may have been a statement of truth, but in my opinion, it also implies an element of doubt about Bosworth's claims.

Gee's overall assessment of Bosworth's report may have been accurate and on point. However, his argument is weakened by a lack of pertinent information that could be found in answers to the following questions:

Did he check the numbers mentioned in Bosworth report? Was he present in the meetings? Did he acquire images of the meetings or reports that contradict Bosworth's letter? Did he seek to verify Bosworth's numbers by checking with reliable sources in South Africa? Did he ask Bosworth about the accuracy of his numbers and claims?

Unfortunately, the answer to each of those questions is probably "No." While Gee's concern about discipleship and mass campaigns is laudable, reports (by implication or otherwise) of Bosworth making exaggerated claims, at least in *Wind and Flame*, seem to be without merit.

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**Note:** My book, *F.F. Bosworth: The Man Behind Christ the Healer*, can be purchased here 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. (<https://www.roscoebarnes.net/>), 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.

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