

Bosworth Matters

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Website: ffbosworth.strikingly.com

F.F. Bosworth and Thoro Harris

A Moment in Black History

By Roscoe Barnes III, PhD

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

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#ThoroHarris



Thoro Harris

Songwriter, Composer, Publisher

(1874 - 1955)

Photo from Cyberhymnal

Much has been written about F.F. Bosworth's relationship with prominent revivalists and Pentecostal church leaders. However, very little has been written about his work with African Americans. A famous photo shows a picture of him in a group with William J. Seymour. As it turns out, Seymour was one of only a few well-known blacks that Bosworth came to know. Another prominent and highly respected person of color that played a role in his ministry was Thoro Harris. Harris was a hymnist whose writing and publishing brought him name recognition and success. He and Bosworth shared a love for music. The two worked together during the 1920s.

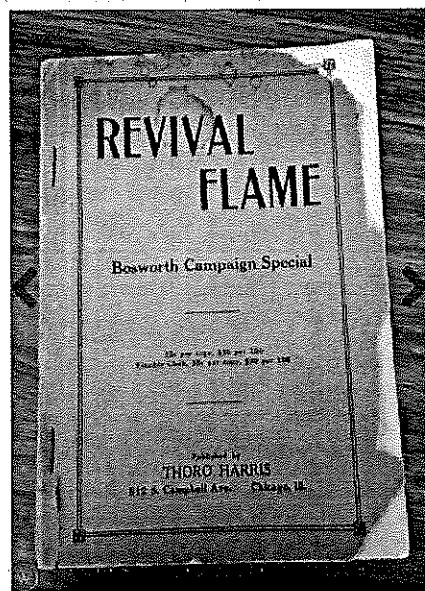
Bosworth used Harris' services to publish the songbook, *Revival Flame: Bosworth Campaign Special*. The extent of Bosworth's relationship with Harris is not known. However, given the quality of the book published, it appears that he fully endorsed the ministry of Harris. The book consists of 138 pages. While 12 of the songs included were written or arranged by B.B. Bosworth, most were written by Harris. The significance of the Bosworths' relationship with Harris is underscored by the fact that just over a decade earlier, F.F. suffered a severe beating for preaching to blacks in Hearne, Texas. Also, during the 1920s, segregation was actively practiced in the United States.

Harris, who has also been called a Pentecostal gospel songwriter and composer, was born on March 31, 1874 in Washington, D.C. His mother was white and his father was black. Historian Dale H. Simmons described Harris as a child prodigy whose compositions in the Methodist Holiness style found appreciation among Pentecostals. According to Darrin J. Rodgers, director of Flower Pentecostal Heritage Center, Harris "was well-loved across the racial and theological divides within the Holiness and Pentecostal movements."

In his article, "Remembering the Assemblies of God's Black Heritage," Rodgers noted Harris' success in working with different church groups. He explained that Harris "moved seamlessly in both white and black circles, as well as in both Holiness and Pentecostal churches." Harris, he wrote, "made a substantial impact on Assemblies of God hymnody in its early decades."

Historian Estrela Y. Alexander suggested Harris' work was also respected by Aimee Simple McPherson, who often featured the singing of Negro spirituals in her church. In Alexander's book, *The Dictionary of Pan-African Pentecostalism, Volume One* (Cascade Books, 2018), she wrote about Harris' contribution to McPherson's ministry. She observed: "McPherson's regard for prolific African-American hymn writer, Thoro Harris, led her to work with him to compose at least two hymnals for the congregation."

Harris died on March 27, 1955 in Eureka Springs, Ark. He was 80 years old.



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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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