

## **The Preacher Who Blasted F.F. Bosworth**

### **A Look at Dr. Arno C. Gaebelein and His Criticism of Pentecostals and Healing Evangelists**

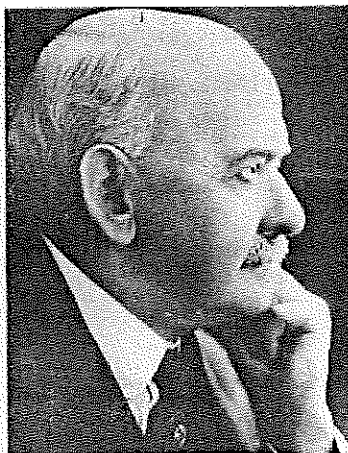
By Roscoe Barnes III, PhD

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

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**Dr. Arno C. Gaebelein**  
(1861 - 1945)

The preacher who criticized F.F. Bosworth on the pages of Moody Bible Institute Monthly magazine, was none other than Dr. Arno C. Gaebelein (1861-1945).

In a message that appeared in the March 1922 issue, Gaebelein accused Bosworth of quackery and deception. He asserted Bosworth's teachings and reports of miraculous healing were "unscriptural" and false. He suggested "faith healing is closely coupled with the gift of tongues delusion." In his view, Bosworth's dramatic claims of divine healing were nothing more than "a lying delusion (and) abominable falsehoods." He also said he investigated reports of healing in Bosworth's meetings and found no evidence of a genuine miracle or healing.

Moody's publication of Gaebelein's attack prompted Bosworth to meet with the magazine's editors to defend his ministry.

Whenever people criticized the ministry of Bosworth or raised doubts about his reports of miraculous healings, Bosworth typically drew on the Bible and physician-verified testimonies to support his arguments. He often used what I call the "Notable Data Argument" or NDA (taken from Acts 4:16). I define NDA as the Pentecostal method of proving a point, establishing a supernatural claim -- or supporting a position -- by using trusted experiences that are widely accepted and validated by objective sources, such as medical professionals.

During his two-hour visit with Moody editors, Bosworth focused on the headlines in The National Labor Tribune that were criticized by Gaebelein. He offered the names of witnesses, including those who reported being healed. He also provided the names of the physicians who confirmed the healings. The editors agreed to do an investigation.

### **Who was Arno C. Gaebelein?**

Gaebelein, a noted and prolific author, was born in Germany. He emigrated to the United States in 1879, two years following the birth of Bosworth in 1877.

Gaebelein became well known as a dispensationalist and a fierce critic of faith healing. He also became notorious for his attacks on the Pentecostal claims of speaking in tongues. Gaebelein was a proud Fundamentalist.

As a Methodist minister, he held conservative values and was known for his passionate ministry to Jewish immigrants. Gaebelein was apparently gifted with a natural talent for learning languages. Despite having no college or seminary training, according to StudyLight.org, "Gaebelein was a devout student and fervently studied and mastered Hebrew, Aramaic, Syriac, and Arabic."

Gaebelein held an honorary doctorate. He wrote many books and delivered talks at many conferences. However, he is probably best remembered as the Fundamentalist who assisted C. I. Scofield with his work on the *Scofield Reference Bible*.

In addition to his Bible commentaries and his books on Bible prophecy, he wrote a treatise on divine healing titled, *The Healing Question: An Examination of the Claims of Faith-healing and Divine Healing Systems in the Light of the Scriptures and History* (Publication Office "Our Hope," 1925). An online version of the book is available at BibleBelievers.net. See it here or follow this link: <https://web.archive.org/web/20131012215646/http://www.biblebelievers.net/Charismatic/kjc/heal1.htm>

The book, published three years after the conference in which he blasted Bosworth, shows that his criticism of Bosworth did not end on the pages of Moody magazine. In Chapter Seven, which is titled, "An Examination of the Works and Results of Divine Healers," Gaebelein continued his theological assault on Bosworth without abatement.

### **He was the 'John MacArthur of his day'**

When it came to Pentecostals, faith healing, and claims of miracles, Gaebelein was an outright

skeptic and harsh critic. While he believed in the power of prayer, and that God sometimes used it as a means to bring healing, he did not believe in miraculous healing as promoted by Pentecostal revivalists. As a cessationist, he believed that the sign-gifts ended with the apostles. He likened the promotion of miracles in newspapers to carnival advertisements.

Gaebelein had strong feelings about healing revivalists. He unabashedly heaped biting criticism on Bosworth, Aimee Semple McPherson, Charles Price, and John Alexander Dowie, among others. However, he seemed to reserve his best ammo for Bosworth. In his pointed comments about the man who authored *Christ the Healer*, Gaebelein used words that were colorful. His language was condescending. In addition to Bosworth's teachings, he challenged the claims of divine healing that were a staple of Bosworth's ministry. He especially decried the plethora of sensational headlines about miraculous healings.

Simply stated: Gaebelein was the John MacArthur of his day. Like MacArthur, he spent a considerable amount of time finding fault and bashing -- in print and in lectures -- those with whom he disagreed. He was unapologetic in his unrelenting crusade and toxic diatribe against Pentecostalism.

Gaebelein's skepticism towards Pentecostals can be seen in the actual title of his 1922 message, which was delivered at a conference held by Moody Bible Institute. Titled, "Christianity vs. Modern Cults," the message appeared in the March 1922 issue of *Moody Bible Institute Monthly* magazine, the forerunner of *Moody Monthly Magazine*.

### **Pentecostalism viewed as 'delusive' and 'dangerous'**

Gaebelein began his message with a reference to 2 Corinthians 11:13-14, which states: "For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light." (KJV) He followed this verse with a passage in Acts, which he used as a springboard for his misguided argument against Pentecostals. He used the following opening that includes a warning by Paul:

It was a memorable scene in apostolic days when that great man of God, the Apostle Paul, tarrying for a while in Miletus, on the Carian coast of Asia Minor, sent for the Elders of the church in Ephesus. Here in this seaport he delivered his farewell address, after which they fell around his neck, kissed him and wept sore, sorrowing that they should see him no more. Tender were his words. But he also gave them words of warning of what should happen after his departure. "For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse, or perverted things, to draw away disciples after them." (Acts 20:29-30).

Without going any further, it is clear that Gaebelein viewed faith healers as "false apostles" and peddlers of "fake healings." He believed that Pentecostals preached a false gospel and that so-called miracles were cultic in nature and possibly signs of Satan transforming himself into an angel of light. Gaebelein placed Pentecostals in the category of "those who teach perverted things." Consequently, he argued, they were guilty of causing division in the church. He wrote:

We are especially concerned at this time with certain teachings which of recent years have come into prominence. We have reference to the Pentecostal movements, claiming a revival of the gift of tongues, as well as the gift of healing. These movements have become worldwide in a very short time, and have led to serious schisms in the body of Christ and have brought to light certain features and evidences, which show that the power which is at work, is not, as it is claimed, the

power of God and of His Spirit. These Pentecostal-healing-gift of tongues cults claim that they are manifestations of the supernatural, similar to those which happened in the beginning of the age. We shall show that while there are unquestionably supernatural manifestations, that these manifestations cannot be of God."

### **His view on origin of Pentecostal movements**

It is interesting to note his comments about the origin of the Pentecostal movements. He identified Azusa as the place where it all began. He also acknowledged how it spread to other nations. At the same time, Gaebelein's own racism could be seen in his comment about "colored folks" being "excitable and emotional."

And now for a description of the movement, or movements, for there are several. We shall call it simply Pentecostalism. It started about twenty years ago in a meeting place among colored people. This place is located on Azusa Street, Los Angeles, Calif. Everybody knows how excitable and emotional colored folks are. They claimed that there had been a wonderful outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Wild scenes were enacted with shoutings and other outward demonstrations, including talking in strange sounds, which was branded as the restoration of the gift of tongues. In a very short time the thing spread in every direction and the same phenomena of talking in a strange or unknown tongue appeared, almost simultaneously in different parts of the country and in foreign lands, like England, Germany, Sweden, Norway, China and India. In this respect it reminds one of the movement of Spiritism of some eighty years ago, when the spiritistic phenomena also spread like wild-fire.

For Gaebelein, evangelism and revivals are not necessarily signs of the divine when it comes to the rapid rise of the Pentecostal movement. While he admitted there were supernatural elements at work, he insisted the supernatural activity was not of God. His use of the term "wild-fire" might call to mind MacArthur's term, "Strange fire." Both he and MacArthur attributed the works of God to the works of Satan, which, in my opinion, is no small error.

Gaebelein gave considerable attention to a number of topics that were commonly taught among Pentecostals. He discussed whether Pentecost could ever be repeated and whether speaking in tongues was the initial evidence of Spirit baptism. He argued, of course, that Pentecost was a one-time event that will not be repeated. He strongly disagreed with the Pentecostal teaching on evidential tongues. "The whole Pentecostal movement rests upon an unscriptural foundation," he said.

Gaebelein said the Pentecostals have an erroneous view of "Baptism in the Holy Spirit." He suggested every believer receives the baptism when they experience the new birth. Gaebelein also attacked the practice of "tarrying" for the Holy Spirit. He questioned the authenticity of "interpretation of Tongues," and he warned about so-called divine visions.

His vitriol, however, did not stop with these topics. Not surprisingly, it included other issues like women preachers: "A woman's place in religious matters is not that of leadership; she is not called to usurp man's place and become the teacher. It is undoubtedly true that in Corinth the women had taken up this sign gift and babbled, though some women do not need a gift in this direction, for they have it naturally. But Pentecostalism ignores completely this divine injunction."

### **Conclusion**

In order to support his views about Pentecostalism, Gaebelein used anecdotes that focused on

activities that were bizarre and highly questionable. Some of the cases he cited were extreme to the point of being ridiculous and undoubtedly would have raised concern among Pentecostals. However, since his aim was to refute Pentecostalism -- and his focus was on doctrinal error and bad behavior -- he said little to nothing about the positive aspects of the Pentecostal movement.

Even so, it is worth noting that he made a few points that were legitimate and warranted. After all, no movement or church is perfect and without problems. For example, Gaebelein was on point in his argument about tarrying meetings. For there is nothing in the Bible that suggests believers must tarry in order to receive the Spirit. He was also justified in his condemnation of the false vision by a woman that claimed the Antler Hotel would be destroyed by earthquake. He was correct to issue warnings about the dangers of demonic activity.

Unfortunately, like John MacArthur, Gaebelein's message, though well intended, suffered from three main issues: 1. He painted with a broad brush. He used a few extreme cases to incriminate an entire movement. 2. He attributed practically everything in the movement to demonic influence. That was something based more on his opinion and not the Bible. 3. He ignored all of the good, both the spiritual and physical, that was being done by Pentecostals to bless people and bring souls into the kingdom.

In conclusion, I submit that Gaebelein's argument in the 1920s might have been viewed as fresh, valid, and even substantial. However, when viewed today (in 2020), it is clear that his argument was not only tired and unbalanced, but it was lacking in sound hermeneutics. May we learn from his mistakes.

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## Christianity vs. Modern Cults

by Dr. Arno C. Gaebelein

**Note:** Below is an excerpt from Dr. Arno C. Gaebelein's message, "Christianity vs. Modern Cults," which was delivered the week of February 1-5, 1922, during the Founder's Week Prayer and Bible Conference. The conference was conducted by The Moody Bible Institute. Gaebelein's message appeared in the March 1922 issue of *Moody Bible Institute Monthly* magazine, the forerunner of *Moody Monthly* magazine.

### Unscriptural Healing

As to miraculous healings. As stated in the beginning faith healing is closely coupled with the gift of tongues delusion. A closer examination of this phase is not possible at this time. I shall confine myself to a very few remarks.

There is made a most astonishing claim that the miracles of the Apostolic Days are being performed once more. Healings and miracles were always claimed in spurious movements of the past.

But now the "healing movements" have taken on tremendous proportions. Healings are claimed by many cults, if not by all cults which are propagated by demon powers. Years ago I stood before a veritable mountain of crutches, surgical appliances and bandages, in a monastery in Central Russia. Pilgrims from

all over Russia had come the Lawra, in "holy" Kieff, to get healing by touching the bones of saints of long ago. They were healed. I have been to St. Anne de Beau-Pre, in Quebec, and saw the same thing there as well as in the Louvre of France. Then there is Mormonism, that vilest of all religions, worse than the snake worship of the Hopi Indians; they claimed to have miraculous cures.

Christian Science is a cult of demons, and here too are the claims of miracles of healing. Spiritism has connected with the healings and other signs. So has New Thought, and the ever multiplying physical cults for which new names are constantly coined. Dowieism, that cunning mixture of truth and error, founded by one who claimed to be some great one, claims miracles of healing. But above all, the different Pentecostal sects claims to have wonderful healings, veritable miracles.

So do others, like the Bosworth Brothers. They seem to utilize a certain Labor organ for advertising purposes. Let me read to you what appeared in head lines in a single issue, the claims which are made by these men. And let me add that in Toronto, Detroit, and other places numerous cases have been investigated and it was found that not one was genuine; these men and others have been challenged to bring forth evidences that what is reported is true. I have investigated the supposed miracles of Mrs. McPherson and other healers with the same results. But let me read the sensational claims printed in the "Labor Tribune." All appeared in one issue: "Wholly deaf healed." "Nervous twitching cured." "Specialists said incurable—healed." "Sick 20 years; operated on 14 times; prayed for and healed." "Was deaf but now hears." "Had nervous prostration; had 28 doctors in 21 months; instantly healed." "Ear drum gone; 17 doctors failed; now instantly healed." "Had paralysis; healed by reading the 'Labor Tribune.'"

### **Fake Healings**

"Miracles and Wonders at the Bosworth meetings." "Ear drum restored after being removed." "Had many diseases; prayed for; cured." "Had eczema 14 years; cured." "Indian fighter and rough rider known as ossified man wins in terrific fight against death." "Foul, revolting cancer healed through prayer." "Tried 20 doctors; instantly healed." "Born paralyzed, now well." "Right leg one and a half inch shorter than left leg; anointed and leg made as long as the other" "Eighty years old; healed of rupture." "Living without kidneys; world's most miraculous case healed." ...

Just look at it! An ear-drum removed, we suppose by an operation, and then miraculously restored. A woman living without kidneys. It is purely a religious humbug, a lying delusion, abominable falsehoods. As to the "miracle woman," Mrs. McPherson, there have been so many exposures of her "healings" that no further word seems to be needed.

The matter of answered prayer in case of sickness is an entirely different matter. Every believer knows the promise our Lord has given, that if we ask any thing in His name, and if it is in accordance with His will that it shall be done. Into this I cannot enter at this time. Nor can I point out the different passages of Scripture which are misused by these Pentecostal and other healers.

### **Cessation of Certain Gifts**

Let me state a few facts in conclusion. Certain gifts in the body of Christ have disappeared. Miracles and signs were prominent in the beginning of this dispensation for they were needed then. The beginning of the age was Jewish and the Jew "asks for a sign." He wants to see and then believe. As long as the New Testament revelation was not complete these sign gifts, on account of their evidential character, were prevalent even among the Gentile believers, as it was the case in Corinth. But when God had completed His Word and given all He had to reveal to man, then the true character of the age became evident. It became as it is still, the age of Faith, and not the age of sight. The heavens became silent. No more

revelation, no more visions, no more prophetic, no more angelic manifestations, no more miracles, Man is to believe, to trust, to walk by faith.

Furthermore these sign gifts, like the gift of miracles, the gift of tongues and the interpretation of tongues are not needed for the completion of the body of Christ, nor for the perfecting of the saints. Please compare here I Corinthians 12:28 with Ephesians 14:11-13. Why are the sign gifts mentioned in the former passage and why are they omitted in the epistle in which the full revelation concerning the church, the body of Christ, is given? For the simple reason that these gifts are useless for the real edification of the body of Christ.

But may we not expect a revival of apostolic power and gifts, a revival of signs and miracles, before the Lord comes? Pentecostalism claims this, but what saith the Scriptures? The age ends not in a restoration of miracles, but it ends in apostasy. Yes, signs and miracles and wonders will appear in the very close of this age, but these will be the miracles and wonders of Satan's masterpiece, the coming man of sin. (2 Thess. 2.)

I wonder if these present day claims and delusions, these most subtle manifestations of demon powers are not the way-preparers of greater delusions? Surely Satan stalks about in the garb of an angel of light. God help His true church to resist him and hold close to the Truth of God.

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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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