***Bosworth Matters***

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Website: ffbosworth.strikingly.com

**Did Bosworth Go Too Far?**

Paul Rader and other Alliance leaders initially accused

him of placing too much emphasis on divine healing

By Roscoe Barnes III, PhD

Author,[*F.F. Bosworth: The Man Behind "Christ the Healer"*](https://www.cambridgescholars.com/ff-bosworth-16)

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| https://1.bp.blogspot.com/-LwHfh_LrLB0/XqRd0Zq4CMI/AAAAAAAAMFQ/C4cVz7QqpT4e8sq3BNvnrP6GMVfU1mwlgCLcBGAsYHQ/s320/Rader_Paul.jpg |
| **Paul Rader**(1878 - 1938)Photo credit: hymntime.com/tch |

In the 1920s, a time when [F.F. Bosworth](https://figshare.com/articles/F_F_Bosworth_An_Overview_of_His_Life_and_Ministry_Preprint_/11594607) saw unprecedented growth in his salvation-healing ministry, prominent leaders in the Christian and Missionary Alliance (C&MA) began to question certain aspects of his ministry. Alliance President Paul Rader voiced concern about the emphasis on healing, according to [Dr. Paul L. King](https://paulkingministries.com/about/). In his book, [*Genuine Gold*](https://www.amazon.com/gp/product/0978535200/ref%3Ddbs_a_def_rwt_bibl_vppi_i8)(Word & Spirit Press, 2006), King noted "some tension arose in the Alliance" after [reports of dramatic healings in meetings](http://ffbosworth.mystrikingly.com/blog/what-oswald-j-smith-discovered-in-the-revival-meetings-of-the-bosworth-brothers) held by Bosworth and his brother. King cited C&MA historian Lindsay Reynolds, who said Rader "felt that the Bosworths were making a dangerous mistake in giving healing the prominence they did." With this conviction, King wrote, "Rader discouraged Alliance churches in Canada from inviting them back."

Rader, however, was not alone with this view. King identified Alliance Home Secretary E.J. Richards as another critic of the Bosworth brothers. Richards warned Alliance members about the thrust of their ministry. Without actually naming the Bosworths, Richards cautioned that “a few individuals in our ranks” emphasized “the spectacular” while magnifying “certain phases of truth out of just proportion to the other part of our testimony.”

Details of how Rader and others came to believe Bosworth was in error are not known. Did Bosworth preach more about healing than he did salvation? Did he devote an unusual amount of time in his meetings to praying for the sick? Did he teach as if healing of the body was more important than healing of the soul?

Whatever it was that happened, the two of them apparently worked out their differences. It is possible that they simply came to an agreement or mutual understanding. Or they might have made a compromise in the interest of fellowship and the saving of souls. It is also possible that Bosworth might have modified, in some way, his method of ministry. King observed:

Less than two years later ... Rader’s concerns were evidently alleviated and their relationship was reconciled, as Rader welcomed the Bosworths warmly to his new church in Chicago. Rader continued to invite Bosworth to be a speaker at his Chicago Gospel Tabernacle through the end of the decade.

**Was he guilty of being extreme?**

Without evidence, one obviously cannot speak with certainty about the matter in question. However, there is still room for speculation that is guided by what is commonly known about [Bosworth](https://figshare.com/articles/F_F_Bosworth_in_South_Africa_pdf/2525002). Even though little to nothing is known about the tension that arose -- and what might have transpired in personal talks between Rader and Bosworth, an informed opinion, based on a review of [Bosworth's life history](https://figshare.com/articles/F_F_Bosworth_s_Defense_of_Divine_Healing_A_look_at_his_use_of_the_Notable_Data_Argument_NDA_/11219585), might offer insight into the situation.

Did Bosworth go too far? It seems unlikely given his history. For instance, [Bosworth has been consistent](https://figshare.com/articles/F_F_Bosworth_Recording_A_Review_of_His_Message_on_Mass_Faith_and_His_Unchanging_Belief_in_Divine_Healing/11786262) in his belief that healing, while necessary, is not as important as the salvation of the soul. He taught that salvation includes healing of the body as well as healing of the soul, but he also taught that the promotion of healing can draw multitudes into the kingdom of God. In short, he believed that healing was a tool, God’s method of advertisement, to bring people to faith in Christ.

Bosworth’s position on this matter can be seen throughout his ministry. He wrote about it in his books. He mentioned it in his sermons. He also demonstrated this belief via actual ministry. His position on the role of healing can be seen in this excerpt from his classic, *Christ the Healer*:

If Christ and His apostles could not draw the multitudes without miracles, does He expect more from us? Instead of the “ministry of healing” diverting from the more important matter of salvation for the souls, we have seen more happy conversions in a single week than we ever saw in a whole year of evangelistic during the thirteen years before the Lord led us to preach this part of the Gospel in a bolder and more public way. As soon as our revivals get under way, hundreds nightly crowd forward to give their hearts and lives to God, and whole cities are put to talking about Jesus. Other evangelists who have visited our revivals are now proving this to be true in their own meetings.

[Bosworth](http://ffbosworth.strikingly.com/blog/12-mistaken-claims-about-f-f-bosworth)admitted in *Christ the Healer* that some people opposed his ministry of healing, but he maintained that he was simply following the instructions and examples in the Bible. “What is the matter?” he asked. “Is there anything wrong in obeying the Lord’s command to ‘make known His deeds among the people?’” Miraculous healings were so effective in Bosworth’s meetings they had an ecumenical impact on the community. Not infrequently the healings drew people from many different faith groups. “I have never seen anything that would so break down all the barriers, and bring the people from every quarter, as the manifestation of the Lord’s compassion in healing the sick,” Bosworth said. He also boasted of thousands of people coming to Christ in a single meeting.

During intense revival meetings in 1921 in Toronto, Canada, thousands of people attended the services, filling Massey Hall to capacity. Hundreds were turned away. Reynolds recounted the news as follows: “Day after day, newspapers printed long reports of the meetings, listing names and addresses of those claiming to have been healed at the meetings. At one service, a doctor from Brantford testified that one of his patients had been ‘absolutely cured of cancer of the breast.’”

Newspapers captured the drama of the meetings and reported on Bosworth’s preaching: “Evangelist Bosworth places the main emphasis on spiritual blessing, urging men to seek first the Kingdom of God and Christ as their Saviour, and then look to Him as the bearer of their infirmities and healer of their sicknesses.” Even the *Alliance Weekly* noted his balanced approach to ministry. The magazine commented: “As is known, Brother Bosworth emphasizes salvation and sanctification in their proper order, and hundreds are saved, in addition to those who are healed as a result of the prayer of faith.”

 **Why the opposition?**

So, if the Bosworth brothers were not guilty of going too far, then what prompted Rader and others to accuse them of such? Perhaps it was simply a misunderstanding or the perception of things gone awry because of the excitement in the Bosworth meetings. Admittedly, some of the headlines for the healing testimonies were quite sensational. To some, no doubt, they were simply unbelievable or probably too good to be true. Even so, the reports of healing caught the attention of many. “Because of the numerous healings at Bosworth campaigns, the media usually featured this aspect of their ministry,” wrote Reynolds.

[King, who is intimately familiar with C&MA history](https://paulkingministries.com/shop/anointed-women-the-rich-heritage-of-women-in-ministry-in-the-christian-and-missionary-alliance/) and [charismatic movements](https://paulkingministries.com/shop/only-believe-examining-the-origin-and-development-of-classic-and-contemporary-word-of-faith-theologies/), believes it is possible that Rader judged the meetings from a distance and based his opinion on secondhand sources. King presented his view in an email dated April 28, 2020:

From the information I have, I would venture to guess that Rader's tension with Bosworth was probably not from a personal encounter, but from other reports to Rader about Bosworth. Apparently, some in the Canadian Alliance group at the time were not fully "Alliance," not necessarily fully believing the Alliance positions on healing and the baptism in the Spirit, particularly R.V. Bingham, who eventually left the Alliance.

King suggested there also might have been “apparent Pentecostal excesses” that made people uncomfortable. He explained they “may have associated Bosworth with those excesses even though he had left the Assemblies of God for the Alliance.”

“John Salmon, the founder of the Alliance in Canada and VP of the Alliance for several years, had passed away,” King wrote, adding Salmon had been active in the Pentecostal movement. “Perhaps after his passing, the Canadian Alliance began to back off for a while, although in the mid-1920s, there was a resurgence of charismatic manifestations in the Canadian Alliance (in part stirred by Bosworth, and by Charles Price and T.J. McCrossan.”

[King, who has written extensively about Alliance leaders](https://paulkingministries.com/shop/nuggets-of-genuine-gold-simpson-tozer-jaffray-and-other-christian-and-missionary-alliance-leaders-on-experiencing-the-spirit-empowered-life/), said he wondered if Rader’s ties to Moody Bible Institute might have also influenced him in some way. After all, he pointed out, Rader had been pastor of Moody Church in Chicago. That background initially might have made him “less open to the charismatic emphasis in the Alliance,” King explained.

There was also the issue of John Alexander Dowie, who had a history with A.B. Simpson and Bosworth. According to King, this history might have been another reason Alliance leaders had reservations about Bosworth’s ministry. King expressed this view as follows:

A.B. Simpson and early Alliance leaders had been concerned about keeping balance and had been concerned about healing crusades like those of John Alexander Dowie. Dowie had wanted Simpson to join him in healing crusades. Simpson told him no, saying that he had four wheels on his chariot (the Fourfold Gospel), not one. Dowie became more extreme and attacked Simpson verbally (Dowie was against all use of medicine; Simpson allowed it on occasions).

King mentioned an interesting incident that occurred when Simpson and Dowie were both speaking in Pittsburgh. Dowie had planned to criticize him, but he apparently “choked on a chicken bone at dinner and could not speak,” King said. “Someone told Simpson, and Simpson responded, ‘I left that man in God's hands a long time ago.’"

As for Bosworth, he “had come out of Dowie's Zion City ministry, and some may have negatively associated Bosworth with Dowie,” King said. At any rate, Rader and the Bosworths eventually became close. By the mid-1920s, they were ministering together. King surmised:

I expect that between his greater openness and seeing that Bosworth was not the wild Pentecostal that others may have portrayed him to be, and the fact that both Bosworth and Rader had a heart for evangelism, they became friends, along with Oswald J. Smith. In 1926, Rader preached for 3 months at Aimee Semple McPherson's Angeles Temple, when she had gone missing.

**Conclusion**

As has been shown, Bosworth was not the extremist that he was accused of being, and he did not go too far in his emphasis on divine healing. Contrary to what some had thought, he preached a message that was in line with Alliance teachings, and he stressed the need for salvation of the soul over the healing of the body. His balance in preaching the Gospel and leading people to faith in Christ was noted in newspapers and Christian periodicals.

It is commendable that he and Rader became close friends and fellow servants in the preaching of the Gospel. Their history presents important lessons in leadership. First, it shows the importance of personally engaging a person who has been accused of being in error. Instead of relying on hearsay and secondhand reports, it is necessary to meet with the accused. Second, their history is a reminder of the need for actual research into matters involving controversy, especially accusations against a brother or sister in Christ. After all, as the saying goes, there’s always two sides to a story. “The first one to speak sounds true until you hear the other side and they set the record straight.” (**Proverbs 18:17**, *The Passion Translation*) Third, this situation offers a model for ministries under fire. When Bosworth was criticized, he remained faithful. Instead of retaliating, he continued to do what he was called to do. Like Nehemiah, he was doing a great work, and he refused to stop (**Nehemiah 6:3**). He did not allow criticism or complaints to damper his enthusiasm for winning souls and praying for the sick.

**Further reading**

King, Paul L. *Genuine Gold: The Cautiously Charismatic Story of the Early Christian and Missionary Alliance.* Tulsa, OK: Word & Spirit Press, 2006.

Reynolds, Lindsay. *Footprints: The Beginnings of The Christian & Missionary Alliance in Canada*. Toronto, Canada: Christian & Missionary Alliance, 1982.

-----. *Rebirth: The Redevelopment of the Christian and Missionary Alliance in Canada, 1919-1983.* Canada: Christian and Missionary Alliance in Canada, 1992.

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Reminder: "F.F. Bosworth History" is now on Twitter. Follow @bosworth\_fred

Note: My book,*F.F. Bosworth: The Man Behind "Christ the Healer,"* can be purchased[**here**](https://www.cambridgescholars.com/ff-bosworth-16)with a 25% discount. Use the discount code: **BOSWORTH25**.

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