

F.F. Bosworth

F.F. Bosworth:
The Man behind “Christ the Healer”

By

Roscoe Barnes III

**CAMBRIDGE
SCHOLARS**

P U B L I S H I N G

F.F. Bosworth: The Man behind "Christ the Healer", by Roscoe Barnes III

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For Barbara A. Foster, my sister;
and William A. Hollins, my childhood friend and brother in Christ.

“The biographer must be a sort of bifurcated animal, digger and dreamer; for biography is an impossible amalgam: half rainbow, half stone.”

—Paul Murray Kendall, *The Art of Biography*

“For only with the help of your imagination can you develop what is probably the most useful capacity a researcher can have—the ability to spot the relationships between facts that at first glance appear to have no connections whatsoever.”

—Milton Lomask, *The Biographer's Craft*

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PREFACE

This book is about the life and ministry of Fred Francis Bosworth (1877-1958), a Pentecostal pioneer, famous healing evangelist, and the author of *Christ the Healer* (1948). Among the leaders in Pentecostal Church History, Bosworth was one of the few men who played a role in both the early years of the Pentecostal movement and in the healing revival of the post-World War II era. He frequently found himself in the midst of exciting (and sometimes controversial) meetings that had historical significance. According to Faupel (Faupel 2008), Bosworth was “a most fascinating person” who appeared “in the right places” at the right time.

When the Pentecostal movement exploded in 1906 in Zion City, Ill., Bosworth was present and became a participant and leader in the movement (Gardiner 1990; Bosworth no date; Perkins 1921). When the famous revival meetings of Marie Woodworth-Etter occurred in 1912 in Dallas, Texas, Bosworth was pastor of the church that hosted the meetings (Alexander 2006; Warner 1986; Woodworth-Etter 1916). A few years later, when the Assemblies of God was being formed as a legitimate denomination, Bosworth served as one of the AG leaders; he also made waves when he opposed the AG’s belief that speaking in tongues is the initial sign that one has been baptized in the Holy Spirit (Sumrall 1995; Alexander 2006).

Bosworth also was present as a mentor to Evangelist William Branham and other tent revivalists in the 1940s and 1950s (Lindsay 1950). Throughout his many years of ministry, he conducted some of the largest evangelistic healing campaigns ever held in the United States and Canada. His writings on divine healing influenced many church leaders of his day, as well many who claim healing ministries today (Osborn 1950; Chappell 1988; Lindsay 1950; Simmons 1997).

Personal interest

I became interested in Bosworth during the late 1970s. At the time, I was a teenager and deeply involved with a Pentecostal church. I began preaching at 17 while a member of the Church of God (Cleveland, Tenn.). After fellowshipping with a number of Pentecostal church groups, I became interested in several tent preachers, Pentecostal writers and televangelists, including Kenneth E. Hagin, the father of the Word of Faith movement. Hagin, I found, had been influenced by Bosworth; he used his book, *Christ the Healer*, as a required text for his school, Rhema Bible Training Center (Parkman 2004). Hagin also mentioned Bosworth in his sermons, as did T. L. Osborn, a famous missionary evangelist. Their respect for Bosworth was the thing that piqued my curiosity and started me on a quest to learn more about the man behind the book on divine healing.

I should note that I initially viewed Bosworth through a subjective lens that was filled with admiration, but my view of him changed as I matured and began a serious study of his life and theology. Instead of being only a preacher to emulate and a figure to admire, he became a historical source that demanded serious scholarship, critical analysis and objective study. This resulted in a vigorous effort on my part to study him professionally and without personal biases.

Current research

Despite the tremendous impact that Bosworth has had in history and on today's generation of Christian leaders, there is little known about his life story. His son, Robert V. Bosworth, has noted: "Little has been written concerning the life and ministry of F.F. Bosworth and his brother, Bert, as it relates to *Christ the Healer* and their healing ministry" (Bosworth 2000). Indeed, while many people are familiar with Bosworth's book, few know much about the man behind the book.

Although a number of devotional profiles have been written on Bosworth, most of the critical work has focused on his theology and teachings (Jacobson 2003; McConnell 1995; Hanegraaff 1993 & 1997; McArthur 1993). The most prominent themes have been his views on evidential tongues and his views on divine healing in the atonement of Christ (Alexander 2006; Anderson 2004; Hollenweger 1972; Blumhofer 1993; Synan 2003). Some writings have sought to link him with the writings of E.W. Kenyon who emphasized faith and positive confession in the

ministry of healing. Others have emphasized his influence on the Word of Faith movement, which has roots in the writings of Kenyon and Kenneth E. Hagin. (McConnell 1995; Simmons 1997; McIntyre 1997; Lie 2003; Perriman 2003).

Given the lack of research available on Bosworth’s life history, I felt compelled to study his life and extract from it the secrets of his success. I wanted to understand his struggles and his controversies, and uncover the lessons from his life that might apply to today’s ministers who are engaged in divine healing ministries.

F.F. Bosworth builds on four earlier works: *Joybringer Bosworth: His Life Story*, 1st Edition, by Eunice M. Perkins (1921); *Fred Francis Bosworth: His Life Story*, 2nd Edition, by Eunice M. Perkins (1927); *Bosworth’s Life Story: The Life Story of Evangelist F.F. Bosworth, as told by Himself in the Alliance Tabernacle, Toronto* (no date); and a serial biography by Oscar Blomgren Jr., published in the 1960s in *Herald of Faith*.

Perkins’ books were considered the official, authorized work on Bosworth. While they undoubtedly achieved their purpose, the books, which have long been out of print, fall short in a number of areas. For the most part, they are not critical. Instead, they are more hagiographic in nature. Additionally, important dates and details about certain events are omitted. Little background is given on key figures, like Mattie Perry, who played an important role in Bosworth’s life. Also, the books only cover his ministry up to 1927. Since Bosworth lived -- and ministered -- until 1958, there is much that is not covered in the early biographies.

Like Perkins’ works, Blomgren’s work on Bosworth is brief and also hagiographic. One helpful feature of his writings is its inclusion of events that occurred beyond 1927.

It is my conviction that readers of American Church History should take another look at the ministry of Bosworth in order to understand the historical roots of divine healing as practiced by today’s Pentecostals. Bosworth’s legacy is alive and well and his book on healing remains a popular classic. Because of his role in two major revival movements, and his massive evangelistic healing campaigns, a study of his life will shed light on the social, business and spiritual aspects of a movement that has produced some of the largest churches in the United States and other countries.

Goals and contributions

In writing this book, I had several goals in mind: First, I wanted to remind researchers of the important role that Bosworth played in Church History and his influence on the Word of Faith movement and the preachers of the prosperity gospel. Second, I wanted to provide a critical analysis of his life and identify some of the influential factors that contributed to his achievements as a healing evangelist. Third, I wanted to offer a tribute of sorts to the man who inspired me on a personal level, and paved the way for mass evangelism in the United States and abroad. Fourth I wanted to present little known facts that were instrumental to his success. Finally, I wanted to encourage further research on Bosworth and his contributions to Pentecostal theology.

In terms of contributions, this book provides historical insight into Bosworth's life that would be of interest to students and researchers of Church History. It is the first work to offer an extended treatment and critical analysis of the major events in his life and ministry.

Aside from its academic qualities, the book provides practical insight for engaging in an evangelistic healing ministry today. In other words, *F.F. Bosworth* may adequately serve as a model for ministry and a useful tool for ministers and lay people of all levels of experience. It can also be seen as an inspiration-filled handbook for the healing ministry that provides practical information through examples.

In addition to students and researchers, the book would be well suited for pastors, evangelists, missionaries, and any Christian who wants to minister to the sick. It is designed for reading as a devotional, or as a workbook for small group studies. It also may serve as a textbook. It would be ideal for Bible institutes and college/seminary courses in Evangelism, Missions, Pastoral Ministries and Church History.

Further research

A book of this nature (and size) will obviously have certain limitations in terms of its scope and the quantity of research it presents. As Barzun and Graff (1970) have noted, "a writer cannot 'tell all.' No one wants him to." Yet, it provides enough of the research, the kernels of insight and essential facts about the topic that it should still lead to more dialogue and future research on Bosworth and Pentecostal Church History.

In March 2007, I had the privilege of presenting a paper on Bosworth. It was at the 2007 conference of the Society for Pentecostal Studies in Cleveland, Tenn. After my presentation, Dr. Kimberly Alexander, assistant professor of Historical Theology at the Church of God Theological Seminary, presented a Response. She stated:

Barnes is to be commended for lifting up the very important role Bosworth played in early Pentecostal history. The longevity of publication of his book, *Christ the Healer*, testifies to his contribution...Most significantly I think, and a point worthy of further exploration, is Bosworth's importance as a bridge between the early Pentecostal movement and the later post-WW2 healing revival.

Barnes' focus on Bosworth has the potential of helping us to re-focus and re-establish our identity. I look forward to hearing about his future discoveries in this un-mined repository (Alexander 2007).

If this book succeeds in creating a forum for future discussions and research on Pentecostal history, and the place of divine healing in contemporary churches, then I will be happy. If it becomes a catalyst for dialogue between Pentecostals and Evangelicals, I will be more than pleased.

—Roscoe Barnes III
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Lastly, special thanks are owed to my agent, Bob Diforio, and the editors of Cambridge Scholars Publishing. Without their help, this book would not exist.

INTRODUCTION

This research on Fred Francis Bosworth (1877-1958) is part of a larger work the author has done for a Doctor of Philosophy degree in Church History in the Faculty of Theology at the University of Pretoria, South Africa. The content for the five chapters was taken from the author's thesis, *F.F. Bosworth: A Historical Analysis of the Influential Factors in His Life and Ministry*. The work was conducted under the supervision of Prof Graham Duncan.

Though presented as excerpts (or partial chapters) of a larger work, this book provides important insight into the life history of Bosworth. Among other things, it answers questions about his development and reveals how his childhood experiences were linked to his work as a healing evangelist. It chronicles his growth in the ministry, and recounts some of the suffering he endured in spite of his success. It also reports the growth he experienced during his final years of ministry.

The purpose of this work is to explore Bosworth's life and ministry in order to identify and analyze some of the factors that may have contributed to his success as a famous healing evangelist. The aim is to show how certain factors—secular and religious—may be used in the preparation for a healing ministry or other religious vocation in a Christian context. It is believed that knowledge of these factors, and how they work in a person's life, will allow Christians to know more about the role of various experiences and events in ministry development, and in the shaping of a life for other religious work.

Method of research

The research for this work was essentially qualitative in nature. It was conducted using the historical case study method. Data were acquired from multiple sources that included personal interviews, periodicals, audio recordings, photographs, books and letters.

In terms of interviews, three of Bosworth's relatives were contacted. Only one of them offered assistance. Efforts were made to interview Robert V.

Bosworth, the son of the famous evangelist. However, he could not provide assistance because of a serious illness. In an email to the author he wrote:

I have had a massive stroke, and am paralyzed on my left side. I cannot stand, and am in bed most of the time. I believe every word my father wrote in *Christ the Healer*, I believe every promise in the Word, so I am trusting the Lord for my recovery. You can understand clearly that I cannot collaborate with you on the biography of my father (Bosworth 2004).

Most of the sources used are housed in archives available through Flower Pentecostal Heritage Center (<http://ifphc.org>), Holy Spirit Research Center (<http://www.oru.edu/university/library/holyspirit>) and David du Plessis Archives at Fuller Theological Seminary Library (<http://www.fuller.edu/archive>). Other material is available through the Christian & Missionary Alliance National Archives: (<http://www.cmalliance.org/whoware/archives/alifepdf.jsp>).

Once collected, the data from these sources were reviewed and analyzed for prominent themes and patterns. This information was categorized under certain headings and then interpreted.

Summary of findings

The data yielded interesting facts about Bosworth. It was found that while his teaching on healing—and his Pentecostal experience—had a tremendous impact on his life, they were not the only factors that contributed to his success. This research revealed that his development as a healing evangelist was shaped by experiences that were secular and spiritual, negative and positive. They were experiences that occurred in his childhood and adulthood.

Key factors in his development included his employment, music, crises and conflicts, Christian women, divine healing experiences and his experience in missionary evangelism. Through these factors, he encountered turning points that left an indelible impression on his life. These turning points included his healing of Tuberculosis, his Pentecostal experience in Zion City, his revival meetings in Dallas, his resignation from the Assemblies of God, his epiphany in Lima, and his epiphany in South Africa.

Given the limited space of this work, an important point should be noted: Since the book consists only of excerpts from the author’s doctoral research, no attempt is made to present all of the findings, propositions, theoretical perspectives and other discoveries provided in the thesis. For instance, a key feature of the doctoral research that is not delineated here is the analysis using Social Cognitive Career Theory. Pioneered by Bandura (1986) and later Lent et al (1994), SCCT holds that a person’s career choices can be determined by a person’s self-efficacy beliefs, outcome expectations and performance. The model as used by Lent is based on Bandura’s social cognitive model. Lent focuses on a person’s interest, choice and goals, three factors that can help predict or determine a career choice. Despite the omission of the SCCT feature, and other information from the thesis, this work still serves its purpose in presenting new insight into Bosworth’s life history.

Overview of content

Unlike other books and profiles that have been written on Bosworth, *F.F. Bosworth* is the first book to offer a critical analysis of his life and ministry from the beginning to the end. Though presented in chronological order (and in a version shorter than the thesis), it is primarily a topical work that focuses on the major turning points and achievements throughout his life.

In the interest of full disclosure, it should be noted that four of the chapters were initially published in peer-reviewed journals; and one was presented at an academic conference. All of the chapters have been revised for this publication. Their use in this book is by permission of the respective editors and publishers.

Chapter 1, “F.F. Bosworth,” provides a general overview of Bosworth’s life and ministry. A version of this chapter appeared earlier as “F.F. Bosworth: A Profile in Divine Healing Ministry,” and was published in *Refleks: Med Karismatisk Kristendom I Fokus* (4-2-2006, 71-82).

Chapter 2, “His Experience with Persecution,” offers a critical look at the suffering Bosworth endured for preaching to an African-American audience in Texas. It was initially published as “Persecuted for Christ: A Defining Moment in the Life of F.F. Bosworth.” It appeared in *Refleks: Med Karismatisk Kristendom I Fokus* (5-1-2006, 89-97).

Chapter 3, “His Experience with Christian Women,” highlights the role of the people who left an indelible impression on his life from the time of his conversion to his healing of tuberculosis, his Pentecostal experience and his fulltime ministry as an evangelist. It is a slightly revised treatment of “F.F. Bosworth and the Role of Women in His Life and Ministry,” that first appeared in *The Journal of the European Pentecostal Theological Association* (Vol. XXVII, No. 1, 2007, 25-38).

Chapter 4, “His Experience in Divine Healing,” is an analysis of Bosworth’s development as a healing evangelist. It is based on the paper, “Experience as a Catalyst for Healing Ministry: Historical Evidence and Implications From the Life of F.F. Bosworth,” that was presented at the 36th Annual Meeting of the Society for Pentecostal Studies in Cleveland, Tenn. It was published in the 2007 SPS conference proceedings.

Chapter 5, “His Experiences in South Africa,” presents an analysis of his discoveries during the final years of his ministry. It was first published as “F.F. Bosworth in South Africa: A Historical Analysis of His Later Ministry And Healing Methodology.” It was featured in *Africa Journal of Pentecostal Studies* (December 2007, 76-91).

In the “Conclusion and Implications,” the author provides an interpretation of the findings and suggests what the research means for the Pentecostal/Charismatic church, and Christians in general. This work ends with an Appendices that includes a Chronology Timeline of Bosworth’s life, a partial list of his most popular publications, a sermon on divine healing, an article on the controversy surrounding “speaking in tongues,” and two reports on his evangelistic healing campaigns. The sermon was selected because it sums up Bosworth’s beliefs on divine healing; the article on “tongues” expresses his fundamental beliefs about the Pentecostals’ insistent that speaking in tongues is the initial sign that one has been baptized in the Holy Spirit. The meeting reports are included to give readers a sense of the excitement and success of Bosworth’s evangelistic efforts. The reports also provide a look at how the Bosworth meetings were promoted.

Conclusion

As may be seen from the overview, *F.F. Bosworth* goes beyond the typical profile that is found online, in books, and other literature. It offers a vivid narrative of the evangelist, but it does more. Instead of being merely a devotional treatment or an exercise in hagiography, it provides critical analysis, interpretations and propositions. In short, it presents a fresh look at the man behind the classic teachings on divine healing.

ABBREVIATIONS

Ac	Acts
AG	Assemblies of God
C&MA	Christian and Missionary Alliance
Cor	Corinthians
Fla.	Florida
Ga.	Georgia
Ill.	Illinois
Ind.	Indiana
Jn	John
Lk	Luke
Mich.	Michigan
Mo.	Missouri
Pa.	Pennsylvania
SCCT	Social Cognitive Career Theory
TB	Tuberculosis

CHAPTER ONE

F.F. BOSWORTH

AN OVERVIEW OF HIS LIFE AND MINISTRY

Fred Francis Bosworth (1877-1958) was a Pentecostal pioneer, famous healing evangelist, musician and author who held large evangelistic healing campaigns in the United States and Canada during the early decades of the 20th century. With his brother, Burton B. Bosworth, often working with him, he reportedly led more than a million people to Christ (Gardiner 1990:7). He was considered by scholars and ministers alike to be one of the most successful healing evangelists of his era. He reportedly received more than 225,000 written testimonies of healing, and his book, *Christ the Healer*, is a classic that has been in print since 1924 (Bosworth 1924b & 1948:16).

Though he spent most of his life as a member of the Christian and Missionary Alliance, he was well respected among Pentecostals and holiness groups. As a young man, he brought Pentecost—and the first Assemblies of God church—to Dallas, Texas. The church he founded, Dallas First Assembly of God Church, is thriving to this day (Loftis 1992:7-10).

His legacy

The impact of Bosworth's teachings continues to be felt in many parts of the world. Many of today's mega Charismatic/Pentecostal churches and other ministries, including those of T. L. Osborn, Kenneth Copeland, Fred Price, Benny Hinn and the late Kenneth E. Hagin, have been greatly influenced by his work. Osborn, a prominent missionary evangelist of the 20th century, has said: "Old F.F. Bosworth used to share a lot of secrets with us" (Harrell 1975:15). Vast numbers of Word of Faith churches read Bosworth's teachings with great excitement. His book is a required text at Rhema Bible Training Center in Tulsa, Okla. (Parkman 2004).

Prominent leaders have often showered Bosworth with praise because of his message and ministry. Gordon Lindsay, founder of Christ For The Nations Institute, worked with Bosworth during the preacher's senior years. He described him as being a real gentleman and having a "sweet and godly spirit" (Lindsay 1982:151). Bosworth, he writes, was "one of the nation's greatest authorities on the ministry of Divine Healing" (Voice of Healing 1948a:4). T.L. Osborn agrees: "He has conducted some of the largest and most successful healing campaigns in America's history" (Osborn 1950:83). William Branham, whose ministry played a pivotal role in the life of Osborn, said that nobody knew more about divine healing than Bosworth (Branham 1956: <http://www.nathan.co.za/message.asp?sermonum=323>).

To church leaders in South Africa, Bosworth was an "Apostle of faith," and a "20th century pioneer of the ministry of the miraculous" (Stadsklev 1952:130-136). Says one writer: "Again and again, under his ministry, we saw deaf spirits cast out and eardrums recreated. No case of sickness daunted the enthusiastic faith of this veteran warrior. He labored unceasingly and we certainly learned to love him" (Stadsklev 1952:130). Observing through the eyes of a scholar, P.G. Chappell writes: "[T]here went out from Zion a number of famous independent healing Pentecostal evangelists who would achieve national and international prominence. Among this group and perhaps the most successful was Fred F. Bosworth..."

His controversy

Bosworth enjoyed his share of praise, respect and popularity among those who adhered to his belief system, but he also attracted criticism for both his message, and his method of ministry to the sick. The criticism of his work occurred throughout his lifetime. It came from non-Pentecostals and those considered classical Pentecostals.

Speaking in tongues

Perhaps the one controversy for which Bosworth is most famous is his position on "speaking in tongues" as the initial evidence of the baptism in the Holy Spirit. Bosworth had received the experience and spoke in tongues in 1906 while in Zion City, Ill. However, he did not believe that tongues were the only evidence of the Spirit baptism (Gardiner 1990:5-7; Perkins 1921). He also did not believe that everyone who spoke in tongues had received a genuine Spirit baptism (Perkins 1921; Alexander 2006 &

2007). In 1918, Bosworth resigned from the Assemblies of God over the issue and he put his position in writing. In a letter to his Pentecostal associates, he wrote:

Error in teaching is another cause of trouble, and is mainly responsible for so much of the superficial work and consequent irregularities which Satan has used to turn aside thousands of hungry souls. The purpose of this letter is to point out what I consider a serious doctrinal error, the elimination of which will solve many of our difficulties, besides opening the way for more of the manifestations of the Spirit, and a much deeper work of God. The error to which I refer is the doctrine held by so many, that the Baptism in the Spirit is in every instance evidenced by the initial physical sign of speaking in other tongues as the Spirit gives utterance, Acts 2:4, and that this is not the gift of tongues, referred to in Paul’s letter to the Corinthians. 1 Cor. 12” (Perkins 1921:56-57).

Emphasis on healing

Bosworth’s biographer and other writers suggest that he used a balanced approach in preaching about healing (Nelson 1921:4; Perkins 1921). In other words, he emphasized the topic of salvation as the most important focus of his work while viewing healing as secondary or even supplementary. However, when his fame grew and large numbers of people began to flock to his meetings in search of healing, criticism arose about the emphasis he was giving the subject. King (2006) notes that some of the criticism came from his own denomination, the C&MA. He writes:

However, some tension arose in the Alliance at this time as president Paul Rader “felt that the Bosworths were making a dangerous mistake in giving healing the prominence they did,” consequently Rader discouraged Alliance churches in Canada from inviting them back. Likewise, Home Secretary E.J. Richards cautioned at the General Council, “There are possibly a few individuals in our ranks that seek the spectacular and magnify certain phases of truth out of just proportion to the other part of our testimony” (King 2006:197).

Bosworth and Rader later reconciled and became close friends (King 2006). Bosworth often held revival meetings in Rader’s Gospel Tabernacle in Chicago (Blomgren 1963:7-8).

Another point worth mentioning is that Bosworth did not go to extreme by preaching against the use of medicine (Bosworth 1948:67). However, his belief that healing is in the atonement struck many as extreme or unorthodox. This was particularly true among cessationists. As a result, he

was sometimes challenged to public debates on the issue (Bosworth 1924a:77-78; Perkins 1921).

British Israelism

One of the most surprising periods of Bosworth's life was the mid-1930s when he accepted the heretical teachings of British Israelism (also called Anglo-Israelism), and was forced to leave the C&MA (King 2006:235). King writes that he lost favor with the church (King 2006:227).

British Israelism is a teaching that suggests that people of Anglo-Saxon or European heritage hold a special place in the plan of God. Even more, it suggests the white race is one of the lost tribes of Israel. Jacobsen observes:

This view of history was cobbled together as a kind of grassroots myth in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. The movement had no founder as such. This theory asserts that various Anglo-Saxon peoples are the ten lost tribes of Israel. Typically those who have favored this view have also supported a white-supremacist understanding of history and culture (Jacobsen 2003:369-370n33, 370n35).

During the summer of 1944 Bosworth “was welcomed back into the C&MA” after he recanted British Israelism. “Bosworth and his wife, Florence, then held credentials with the Alliance from 1947-1951 as evangelists” (King 2006:242).

Ministry associations

At various times in his ministry, Bosworth associated with well-known people who were controversial in one or more areas of their ministry. During the early 1900s, he lived in Zion City, Ill., where he worked for John Alexander Dowie (1847-1907), who had built the small town as a Christian utopia (Cook 1996). Dowie referred to himself as “Elijah” (Hardesty 2003:53; Faupel 2007). Dowie also held a radical view of divine healing. He believed “that sickness held the church in its grip because of erroneous teaching that sickness originated with God, as judgment or as an instrument of perfection. In his view, sickness was a indicator that there was sin in the believer.” Dowie also believed that the use of medicine was unacceptable for the believer (Alexander 2006:59, 61).

In 1912 Bosworth invited Maria Woodworth-Etter (1844-1924) to hold revival meetings at his church in Dallas, Texas. Woodworth-Etter was known as the “trance” evangelist who often went into trances for extended periods of time while in the pulpit (Hardesty 2003:122-123; Warner 1988:901). She also had been criticized for giving a prophecy that did not come to pass (Warner 1988:901).

Bosworth spent his final years traveling with Evangelist William Branham (1909-1965) who reportedly operated with a supernatural gift of healing. Branham claimed to be directed by an angel who assisted him in identifying people—and their illnesses—supernaturally. He would then pray for their healing or announce they had been healed (Lindsay 1950). Like Dowie, Branham also “became quite controversial in some of his beliefs and practices” and later called himself “a forerunner of the coming of Christ” (King 2006:242, 248n12). King (2006) acknowledges this controversy. He includes a description of Branham’s background and the reaction of Pentecostals to his ministry:

Branham had been associated with non-Trinitarian oneness Pentecostalism and operated with supernatural knowledge about people, which some regarded as telepathic or mediumistic. Years later he claimed he was a forerunner of the coming of Christ and was shunned by Pentecostals such as Gordon Lindsay (King 2006:248n12).

His link to E.W. Kenyon and the Word of Faith movement

Much of the criticism against Bosworth in recent years has focused on his ties to E.W. Kenyon and his influence on the leaders of the Word of Faith movement (Riss 1988:517-518; Simmons 1997). Kenyon (1867-1948) was a popular author, traveling minister and host of a radio program (Lie 2003; McIntyre 1997). He had a tendency to be extreme in some of his views and “his writings place a peculiar emphasis on faith....” (Lindsay 1982:75). Some writers believe his teachings are based on New Age Thought or modern day Gnosticism (McConnell 1988). In addition to his emphasis on faith, he stressed the need for confession as an essential way to appropriate the blessings of God (Kenyon 1983 & 2000; Bosworth 1948; McIntyre 1997). Kenyon also taught that Jesus died spiritually on the cross and suffered in hell and became the first man to be born again (Kenyon 1983). Kenyon was revered by Osborn (1950) and his writings have been plagiarized by many in the Word of Faith movement, including Kenneth E. Hagin, founder of Rhema Bible Training Institute in Tulsa, Okla. (Simmons 1997; Lie 2003).

It has been suggested that Bosworth may have met Kenyon in Chicago, Ill., at some time before 1910 (Simmons 1997:295). In 1948, Bosworth included the chapter, “Our Confession,” in his book, *Christ the Healer*. At the end of the chapter, he pays tribute to Kenyon and his writings. From 1948 onward, Bosworth spoke about the importance of “confession” as an expression of faith and the catalyst for obtaining the blessings of God.

His media coverage

At the peak of his ministry, a time when his meetings shattered attendance records in many cities, both the secular and religious media took notice. Frequently, they featured reports about the throngs of people who came for healing and spiritual help. They published reports about healings and miracles. They also covered Bosworth’s debates on the topic of divine healing. “Years ago as a boy [I remember] that news of the great Bosworth healing campaigns reached the daily newspapers even in the far west,” recalls Lindsay in *The Voice of Healing*. “In those days enormous crowds gathered to hear the Bosworth party” (*Voice of Healing* 1948b:1). Similar comments were made by Roberts (Roberts 1949:4).

Du Plessis, who was known as “Mr. Pentecost” (Slosser 1977), once commented on the highly publicized revival meetings that Bosworth held in 1928 in the Chicago Gospel Tabernacle. “Fred Bosworth received a lot of publicity in the *Chicago Daily News* and other metropolitan newspapers when a large number of students who were attending a school for the deaf were miraculously healed, their healings causing the school to close” (Du Plessis 1958:10).

Describing him as a “well-known evangelist” along with his brother, *The Alliance Witness* reported “there were many unusual instances of divine healing” in the Bosworth meetings (*Alliance Witness* 1958:15). In Durban, South Africa, when Bosworth was 75, a local paper gave this dramatic story:

Mr. E.C. Dennis, 45, of 365a Flower Road, Clairwood, stood on the platform at Greyville, blocking his left ear. He had not heard with his right ear since he was seven. Another Evangelist, the Rev. F.F. Bosworth, whispered into his right ear, and Mr. Dennis repeated combinations of numbers over a microphone. The crowd, mostly Natives and Indians, cheered as they heard him say: “I am healed” (Stadsklev 1952:125).