



National Library  
of Canada

Acquisitions and  
Bibliographic Services Branch

395 Wellington Street  
Ottawa, Ontario  
K1A 0N4

Bibliothèque nationale  
du Canada

Direction des acquisitions et  
des services bibliographiques

395, rue Wellington  
Ottawa (Ontario)  
K1A 0N4

*Your file    Votre référence*

*Our file    Notre référence*

## NOTICE

The quality of this microform is heavily dependent upon the quality of the original thesis submitted for microfilming. Every effort has been made to ensure the highest quality of reproduction possible.

If pages are missing, contact the university which granted the degree.

Some pages may have indistinct print especially if the original pages were typed with a poor typewriter ribbon or if the university sent us an inferior photocopy.

Reproduction in full or in part of this microform is governed by the Canadian Copyright Act, R.S.C. 1970, c. C-30, and subsequent amendments.

## AVIS

La qualité de cette microforme dépend grandement de la qualité de la thèse soumise au microfilmage. Nous avons tout fait pour assurer une qualité supérieure de reproduction.

S'il manque des pages, veuillez communiquer avec l'université qui a conféré le grade.

La qualité d'impression de certaines pages peut laisser à désirer, surtout si les pages originales ont été dactylographiées à l'aide d'un ruban usé ou si l'université nous a fait parvenir une photocopie de qualité inférieure.

La reproduction, même partielle, de cette microforme est soumise à la Loi canadienne sur le droit d'auteur, SRC 1970, c. C-30, et ses amendements subséquents.

**AIMEE SEMPLE MCPHERSON:  
“THE FORGOTTEN EVANGELIST”**

**Frances Dalton-Rheaume**

**A Thesis  
in  
The Department  
of  
Religion**

**Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements  
for the Degree of Master of Arts at  
Concordia University**

**Montreal, Quebec, Canada**

**April 1996**

**c Frances Dalton-Rheaume, 1996**



National Library  
of Canada

Acquisitions and  
Bibliographic Services Branch

395 Wellington Street  
Ottawa, Ontario  
K1A 0N4

Bibliothèque nationale  
du Canada

Direction des acquisitions et  
des services bibliographiques

395, rue Wellington  
Ottawa (Ontario)  
K1A 0N4

*Your file    Votre référence*

*Our file    Notre référence*

The author has granted an irrevocable non-exclusive licence allowing the National Library of Canada to reproduce, loan, distribute or sell copies of his/her thesis by any means and in any form or format, making this thesis available to interested persons.

L'auteur a accordé une licence irrévocable et non exclusive permettant à la Bibliothèque nationale du Canada de reproduire, prêter, distribuer ou vendre des copies de sa thèse de quelque manière et sous quelque forme que ce soit pour mettre des exemplaires de cette thèse à la disposition des personnes intéressées.

The author retains ownership of the copyright in his/her thesis. Neither the thesis nor substantial extracts from it may be printed or otherwise reproduced without his/her permission.

L'auteur conserve la propriété du droit d'auteur qui protège sa thèse. Ni la thèse ni des extraits substantiels de celle-ci ne doivent être imprimés ou autrement reproduits sans son autorisation.

ISBN 0-612-10835-X

## **ABSTRACT**

### **AIMEE SEMPLE MCPHERSON - "THE FORGOTTEN EVANGELIST"**

**Frances Dalton-Rheaume**

Aimee Semple McPherson has been described as the most successful evangelist of the 1920's and 1930's. In spite of this, serious scholarship about her is notably absent from historical records. What little that has been written about McPherson has, for the most part, been derogatory, and feminist writers have all but ignored her. Why has McPherson, who has been described as "perhaps the most charismatic and controversial woman in modern religious history"<sup>1</sup> been largely ignored by religionists? How significant a role did gender play not only in her success but in the vituperous attacks on her character which arose as result of this success? Was there a conflict between the socio-religious culture and the personality of McPherson?

The thesis will examine the historical background of sectarian Christianity which formed the back-drop of McPherson's life and ministry, from a feminist perspective. It will detail McPherson's life and her rise to prominence. Her Foursquare Gospel church and its theology, together with its practices and rituals will also be examined. Attention is drawn to the divine healing aspect of this church, an aspect which was responsible for so much of its success. The thesis will try to identify who McPherson's followers were, and what part the location of the Angelus Temple, situated in Los Angeles, played, if any, in contributing to her fame.

Finally, the thesis will address the subject of the character of McPherson, her motivation and social agenda and ultimately, it is hoped, shed some light on why Aimee Semple McPherson became "the forgotten evangelist."

---

<sup>1</sup> McWilliams, Carey. "Sunlight in my Soul" in *The Aspirin Age*. p.49.

**AIMEE SEMPLE MCPHERSON**  
**“THE FORGOTTEN EVANGELIST”**

**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

<b>Chapter:</b>	<b>Page</b>
I	LITERATURE AND RESEARCH METHOD ..... 1
II	HISTORICAL BACKGROUND ..... 6
III	BIOGRAPHICAL DATA ..... 12
IV	THE INTERNATIONAL CHURCH OF THE FOURSQUARE GOSPEL - ITS BELIEFS, PRACTICES AND FOLLOWERS ..... 36
V	THE ROLE OF ZEITGEIST AND GENDER AS POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE FACTORS IN MCPHERSON’S MINISTRY .. 52
VI	SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS ..... 68
	BIBLIOGRAPHY ..... 79
	APPENDIXES
	A. “Story of My Life” ..... 84
	B. “My Wonderful Vision” ..... 104
	C. Chronology ..... 111

## **CHAPTER I**

### **THE LITERATURE AND RESEARCH METHOD**

Aimee Semple McPherson can rightfully be considered one of the most colourful, controversial, and famous evangelists of the 1920s and 1930s. This study of her began, then, with a need to try and understand why it is that she appears to have been relegated to a marginalized position both in religious and feminist historical records. From the outset the goal of this study was to try and determine what it was about the character and person of McPherson which resulted in her becoming what can rightly be categorised as “the forgotten evangelist”. The data studied provided partial answers to some very basic questions such as: Why did Aimee Semple McPherson decide to become an evangelist? What constituted her personal background for this career ? When did her preaching career start and what was her theology? How significant a factor in her success was the social milieu in this historical time frame? It also revealed that McPherson was subject to much criticism and hostile condemnation both in and out of the pulpit. Was gender a major contributing factor in eliciting these negative appraisals? Certainly, it would seem from all the material scrutinised, that very few people who came into contact with McPherson were indifferent to her, viewing her either as “saint or sinner”. For the numbers who overflowed her religious venues night after night,

year after year, the former designation was not considered too strong. Who were these people? Why did they feel so positive about McPherson in spite of well-publicised negative commentary on both a personal and public level? It is acknowledged that her success depended on their continuous support, therefore, trying to identify them should contribute to a more accurate insight into not only McPherson but also, the socio-religious milieu of the era in which she flourished.

### **SIGNIFICANCE OF STUDY:**

This study is intended to be significant to students of both religion and feminist studies for a number of reasons. First, Aimee Semple McPherson was remarkably effective as a preacher if she is judged in terms of her ability to attract, hold, and influence audiences. She attracted large audiences and as an itinerant evangelist Aimee Semple McPherson conducted revival meetings in dozens of towns and cities. The most frequent problem encountered was finding an auditorium large enough to accommodate the crowds. She never lost this power to attract throngs -- on the evening before her death she addressed an audience of 10,000 in Oakland, California.

Through her charismatic persona, McPherson held the attention and loyalty of her audiences. Her resident ministry began in 1923 at the new Angelus Temple, which had a seating capacity of more than 5,000 people. For some twenty years she continued to overflow this auditorium on almost every occasion that she preached there. She influenced her audiences. For example, in less than three years McPherson secured monetary contributions from her audiences to build the Angelus Temple, a structure valued at one and a half million

dollars. By today's monetary standards the amount stated is equivalent to approximately seven/eight million dollars.

Second, Aimee Semple McPherson's career was remarkable because it was achieved by a woman. She began her preaching approximately six years before the 19th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution went into effect, i.e. before women even had the right to vote. "Career woman" was not a commonly accepted nor even familiar term. Furthermore, Aimee Semple McPherson was a Christian Fundamentalist. She subscribed to a conservative theology which lay great stress on the authority of the bible, its infallibility and accuracy. If strictly adhered to this philosophy would have prevented any woman from occupying a pulpit. In light of this fact, I began this study with the assumption that Aimee Semple McPherson was the most conspicuously successful example of a woman who overcame the obstacle of prejudice against women preachers.

Mary Baker Eddy, the renowned founder of the Christian Scientist sect was considered when making the above assessment. Baker Eddy achieved at least equal fame and certainly had a greater influence upon American religious history than did McPherson. However, Baker Eddy was primarily a writer and lecturer, not a preacher. In fact, according to Edwin Dakin, she never set foot in the Mother church that had been erected to her glory; perhaps she never even saw it.<sup>1</sup> In contrast, while the amount of McPherson's writing could not be considered minimal by any standard, (she wrote three autobiographies), her preaching career over a period of thirty years was so large, an accurate estimate of all her proselytizing is difficult to assess.

---

<sup>1</sup> Dakin, Franden Edwin, *Mrs. Eddy*. p.374



Third, a study of Aimee Semple McPherson is significant because a church, The Foursquare Gospel, founded and developed primarily through her ministry and charisma; together with her spoken words outlived her. Up until today, this church remains very active in its home base city of Los Angeles. In addition, according to the Church literature, it also has 611 branches of the church in leading American cities, and over 363 Foreign Mission Stations around the globe. The present active membership of the International Church of the Foursquare Gospel, including that of the Angelus Temple, is 74,855.<sup>2</sup>

### THE LITERATURE:

The most recent work on Aimee Semple McPherson is in the form of a biography by Daniel Mark Epstein entitled *Sister Aimee: The Life of Aimee Semple McPherson*, published in 1993. Written for popular consumption, it does not attempt to present an analysis of the life of McPherson from a historical/religious perspective but rather, writing using the technique of flash-backs, it gives to the reader a good, if somewhat overly-glowing, account of McPherson's life.<sup>3</sup> Prior to the book by Epstein the only other biography of Aimee Semple McPherson was written in 1931 by Nancy Barr Mavity. A study done in 1957 on the Revival Method in America included an analysis of the work of McPherson along with two other well known evangelists, Billy Sunday and Billy Graham. This study was made to "consider the adaptation of the revival method made by these three evangelists, each representing a definite trend during the period under investigation."<sup>4</sup> A Ph.D. dissertation by Wm. McLoughlin's is referred to in part in this thesis.<sup>5</sup> Many magazine and newspaper articles were available for

---

<sup>2</sup> "History of the Foursquare Church". Pamphlet donated by the Foursquare Church, Los Angeles, California.

<sup>3</sup> It provided me with sources of relevant data, which is gratefully acknowledged.

<sup>4</sup> Lacour, Lawrence L. "A Study of the Revival Method in America 1920-1955. p.106.

<sup>5</sup> McLoughlin, Wm. "Aimee Semple McPherson: Your Sister in the King's Glad Service", in *Journal of Popular Culture*, Winter, 1968.

information regarding McPherson's personal life as, during the height of her career and popularity, rarely a day went by when she was not mentioned in the popular press.

## **METHODS AND PROCEDURES**

My methodology in this study has two chief components. It is first of all textual, relying primarily on primary sources, in an attempt to come to an understanding of both McPherson and the social climate in which she flourished. Second, compatible with the latter, I used the sociological method of research as it was important to determine to what extent the prevailing social and economic factors contributed to McPherson's phenomenal success. This method was aligned with the question of gender; which socially and historically has defined the role of women, their place in society, and their acceptance or rejection by society based on its approval or disapproval, as determined by this socially assigned role. The role of religion, while one which may at times in this study appear over-shadowed by the details of the personal dramas which were a part of McPherson's life, is one of utmost importance. The socio-religious culture of the 1920s and 1930s have an important place in this study, as will be seen in the analysis of the *Zeitgeist*. Within the data are claims that McPherson was motivated more by money than faith. However, while undeniably large amounts of money were contributed by her loyal followers, all accounts point to it being used by McPherson for the propagation of her faith. McPherson's record as both a preacher and healer will be examined closely in this thesis to determine why religious and feminine history has chosen to forget this evangelist.

## **CHAPTER II**

### **HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

Historically, religion has been one of the most important phenomenon for defining the role of women in culture and society. While to designate it as a universal definition is problematic, nevertheless it is certainly safe to state that Christianity manifested an ideology which situated men in a position of dominance, and women, subjugation. This has had a profound effect upon the way women and men have experienced their respective roles both in relation to their existence and interaction with each other. Christianity, with its elevation of an exclusive male, patriarchal God, while not alone among the major religious traditions, has a history of excluding women from all but a supportive or participatory role in ecclesiastical procedures and leadership.

In spite of the above reality, there was an area of Christianity which provided an avenue down which many Christian women could choose to walk in order that they might fulfil their religious yearnings to the fullest, i.e. "sectarian Christianity". While the nature and character of "sectarian Christianity" is one for scholarly debate, popular understanding points to a rather simple definition: those groups which consciously set themselves apart from the culturally dominant beliefs and practices of a particular time and place. Using

this simplified definition makes it appropriate to label the Shakers, the Christian Scientists, the Mormons, the Perfectionists and the Pentecostals as "sectarian".<sup>1</sup>

As Barbara Zikmund points out, "contemporary religious studies have noted the masculine bias and limited attitudes toward women in most Western religion. However, within sectarian Christianity, particularly in the United States, this masculine bias has been modified . . . American women have claimed and gained personal and political rights years before their sisters in other parts of the world." Zikmund further maintains that the development of feminism and the growth of sectarian Christianity in America are not unrelated.<sup>2</sup>

The middle of the nineteenth century witnessed an upsurge in sectarian Christianity. Its growth in America was accompanied by a similar growth in the feminist movement. Barbara Welter writes that from 1800 to 1860 "American religion underwent a feminization process". The correlation between feminism and sectarians is explained by Welter as "a period when women began to move out of the home into the broader society to occupy themselves in ways other than keeping house and raising children reflected in the increased visibility of women in the life of the churches".<sup>3</sup> The foregoing would lead one to conclude that women wanted a more active role in religion than teaching Sunday school. The options open to them were threefold. One, a woman could take up missionary work. This would enable her to practice her old religion in a new setting. Two, she could join a new religion which gave women a more active role, e.g. Spiritualism. A third option, and one that was chosen by the majority of women was to continue to

---

<sup>1</sup> Lacour, Lawrence L. "A Study of the Revival Method in America 1920-1955. p.106.

<sup>2</sup> Zikmund, Barbara Brown. "The Feminist Thrust of Sectarian Christianity" in *Women of Spirit*. p.213.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*

worship within the mainstream denominations and at the same time increase their commitment in that sphere which had always been allotted to them - the care of the children, the sick, the disabled and other women.<sup>4</sup>

Beverly Wildung Harrison has called the latter group "soft feminists". These she described as women who, while aware of the subtle changes in the church and society, accepted the social dictates of woman's place. While content to accept the traditional view of themselves by their male counterparts as "different" or of a "special nature", "soft feminists" experienced a certain amount of emancipation which allowed many of them to move beyond the boundaries of home action. Eventually, however, the basic premise of inequality and female second-class status, even in the churches, deprived women in the mainline churches of their full intellectual self-respect.<sup>5</sup>

Sectarian women were not interested in the approach of "soft feminism". While some withdrew from the churches and denied the claims of all religion, large numbers turned to new forms of religious expression "to meet their rising awareness of themselves and the world." As Zikmund states, "in a world dominated by male standards and control, it is also significant that women actually founded or established several sects and that many more exercised significant power in sectarian organisations. These women provide the contemporary church with inspiring historical models."<sup>6</sup>

It has been argued by Lacour that women religious leaders, because of the reality that in patriarchal societies they are excluded from claiming authority of office (formal

---

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>5</sup> Harrison, Beverly Wildung. "Sexism and the Contemporary Church: When Evasion Becomes Complicity."

*In Sexist Religion and Women in the Church.* p.195-216.

<sup>6</sup> Zikmund, "The Feminist Thrust of Sectarian Christianity" in *Women of Spirit.* p.219.

status), typically claim authority derived from charisma (personal traits).<sup>7</sup> Susan Sered maintains that for socio-political reasons women, in both the religious and secular spheres, are unable to attribute their leadership status as resulting from their own conscious efforts but instead tend to attribute it to outside factors; spirits, ancestors, easy exams, anything but their own innate ability was given credit for their hard-earned achievements.<sup>8</sup> So it was in those areas where roles based on "gifts of the Spirit" were recognised that there was likely to be space for women. The Holy Spirit was recognised as one who could endow women or other marginal persons with spiritual gifts. The Scriptural Pentecostal tradition of Acts 2:17 declares that the prophetic spirit was poured out on the "maidservants" as well as the "manservants".

The Pentecostal or holiness churches are rooted in the nineteenth-century and began as a phenomenon of the American frontier at a time when evolution, biblical criticism and comparative religion began to challenge the authority of the biblical revelation.<sup>9</sup> Affirming to fundamentals of the Christian faith in order to counter these challenges they emphasised the gifts of the Holy Spirit, especially healing. Leaders and founders of these churches have been described as "...guided by natural ability, religious fervour, and pragmatic practices usually associated with the secular world."<sup>10</sup> Theirs is a special concentrated ministry of preaching and music organised in such as way as to present the Gospel of Jesus Christ to members of groups and in crowds, the goal being the acceptance of Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord. The components of revivalism derive their

---

<sup>7</sup> Lacour, Lawrence L. "A Study of the Revival Method in America." p.106.

<sup>8</sup> Sered, Susan Starr. "Conversations with Rabbanit Zohara: An Exploration of Gender and Religious Autobiography" in *Journal of the Academy of Religion* LXIII\2 p.249-263. (1994)

<sup>9</sup> Lacour, Lawrence L. "A Study of the Revival Method In America: 1920-1955. p.106-107

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid*

power from the use made of attention, motivation, and suggestion. Leaders depend on their personal characteristics and in the use they make of emotional rather than logical proof.<sup>11</sup> It was in these founding or renewal movements of Christianity that many women would find a greater space for leadership.

While the accepted theological view in Christianity is that female leadership was forbidden by nature (a characteristic of present, fallen nature), through holiness and ecstasy a woman could transcend "nature" and participate in the eschatological sphere. She anticipates the order of salvation of heaven. In this eschatological order, sex hierarchy is abolished for the asexual personhood in which there is "neither male nor female". Holiness or rising to the transcendent, therefore, can be a way for women to claim an equality with men. The use of Pentecost and baptism of the Spirit as central metaphors for the experience of holiness reinforced the idea that believers could expect extraordinary gifts and manifestations of power. This led naturally to a charismatic concept of leadership and ministry. Preaching was not a product of human effort or training endorsed by the proper ecclesiastical authorities, but rather the result of direct influence of the Spirit. For women, the importance of this belief system must be recognised as significant. In principle, by eliminating the gender factor it put women on a par with men and afforded them the same opportunity to express their religious convictions.

Foremost among the twentieth-century revivalist leaders, and one who has been described as "one of [perhaps] the most charismatic and controversial woman in modern religious history", to emerge from the above background, was Annee Semple McPherson.

---

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid*

McPherson, it is certain, could not be labelled a “soft feminist,” nothing in her lifestyle would meet Harrison’s criteria for this designation. Zikmund claimed that she “was not a feminist, but her strong and visible leadership carried a message of female leadership that became an inspiration to many women.”<sup>12</sup> However, as Susan Setta points out, the term *feminist* is a difficult one to define, especially historically. She writes, “If a feminist is an individual who calls into question the prevailing status of women, confronts and overthrows patriarchal role assignments, and incorporates feminine language into her/his religion, then McPherson qualifies as a feminist.”<sup>13</sup> I am not quite as confident as using this criteria, although she (McPherson) is on record as having stated:

Sex has nothing to do with the pulpit and parts don’t make preachers.  
It is brains not sex that makes preachers.<sup>14</sup>

However, the aspect of McPherson’s feminism is but one facet in the overall picture of her. By the end of this thesis the reader should have sufficient insight with which to formulate an evaluation of the character of this “forgotten evangelist.”

---

<sup>12</sup> Zikmund, Barbara Brown, “The Struggle for the Right to Preach” in *Women and Religion in America* p.193-205

<sup>13</sup> Setta, Susan M. “Patriarchy and Feminism in Conflict: The Life and Thought of Aimee Semple McPherson” in *Anima Nine/2*. p.128-137.

<sup>14</sup> Los Angeles Times January 8th, 1935.



### **CHAPTER III**

#### **BIOGRAPHICAL DATA**

Aimee Semple McPherson (1890-1944), is one of the few women responsible for founding a religious society of her own and sustaining her organisation in the face of assaults sacred and secular. McPherson's zealous and single-minded personality established an institution at the head of which a woman stood as the unique interpreter of God.

Though standing in the tradition of strong female leadership in nineteenth-century sectarian movements, Aimee Semple McPherson was very much a twentieth-century figure.<sup>15</sup> Aimee", as she was called by her followers, was certainly the most colourful, famous, and controversial woman evangelist of the 1920s and 1930s. She had the largest following of any female evangelist in American religious history and founded the International Church of the Foursquare Gospel which is still very active today. The

---

<sup>15</sup> Zikmund, "The Feminist Thrust of Sectarian Christianity" in *Women of Spirit*, p.220.

Angelus Temple in Los Angeles, headquarters for this church, is a monument and testimony to McPherson's remarkable ability as a preacher who was able to attract, hold, and influence large numbers of people. At the time of her death, when called upon to eulogise McPherson, Dr. Howard P. Courtney of the Angelus Temple is quoted as saying:

Today, we are here to commemorate the stepping up of a country girl into God's Hall of Fame. Along with Zwingli, Huss, Wycliffe, Savonarola, Luther, Wesley, Whitfield, Knox, and Moody, Aimee Semple McPherson takes her place with the greatest of spiritual leaders.<sup>16</sup>

In view of the above, one might well ask the question why this thesis is subtitled "the forgotten evangelist"? To have secured a place among such revered and notably all-male illustrious religionist, one would have thought it would automatically have secured a place in the annals of religious history. Yet, in spite of the fact that her popularity far exceeded any of her male contemporaries, scholars have not studied McPherson as frequently as they have studied the male revivalists of the same period. Most of the material written about McPherson's ministerial career, both during her lifetime and since, with few exceptions, could be described as less than flattering, e.g. *Aimee Semple McPherson: High Priestess of the Jazz Age*.<sup>17</sup>

Given her unqualified success and popularity, the question that arises is why this important evangelist has been dealt with in such a summary fashion. The only full-length study on McPherson written by a woman, Nancy Barr Mavity's *Sister Aimee*, was published in 1931. Acknowledging that McPherson's claim to be a chosen representative of God most certainly necessitated on her part the overcoming of both theological and

---

<sup>16</sup> McWilliams, "Sunlight in my Soul" in *The Aspirin Age*. p.79.

<sup>17</sup> Dacre, Douglas, *Macleans*. November 15, 1951. p.12-82.

social prejudice and her exposure to anti-feminine bias, a closer look at her life and ministry is in order.

Who was this woman whose life affected so many people and elicited responses in them ranging from adoration to derision? Aimee Semple McPherson was born Aimee Elizabeth Kennedy on October 9, 1890, on a farm at Salford, just a few miles from Ingersoll, Ontario, Canada. Her parents were also Canadian born. Her mother Minnie Pierce Kennedy, came from Lindsay, Ontario. She was orphaned at the age of twelve and then made her home with the Salvation Army workers. At fourteen, Minnie Pierce married James Morgan Kennedy in Ingersoll, Ontario. At the time it took place, Kennedy was a widower of some fifty years with grown daughters from a previous marriage.

Aimee Elizabeth Kennedy's birth in October, 1890 was, according to her biography *This is That*, no ordinary one but part of a greater plan for the salvation of the world. Her mother, Minnie Kennedy, had been active in the Salvation Army before her subsequent marriage to Aimee's father, James. Illness and the demands of marriage deprived Minnie of serving the Lord in keeping with what she felt was her true destiny. Anxious to make good her pledge, Minnie knelt by her bed and made the following vow:

"Oh , Lord, you called me to preach the Gospel, but sometimes I have failed you and cannot go. But if you will only hear my prayer, as You heard Hannah's prayer of old, and give me a little baby girl, I will give her unreservedly into your service that she may preach the word I should have preached, fill the place I should have filled, and live the life I should have lived in your service."<sup>18</sup>

---

<sup>18</sup> McPherson, *This is That*. p.16.

Turning to the window and pulling back the curtain Minnie was engulfed in a ray of sunlight which ".....framed the window, lighting it with divine radiance, hope and courage, and swept on into the room, flooding it with golden glory."<sup>19</sup> Clearly in Aimee's re-telling of this event was the affirmation to her followers that her birth had special significance and legitimised her role in the predominately male clergy, decreed, as implied, that it was by the direct intercession of God.

It came as no surprise to Minnie when she gave birth to a daughter. In Aimee's own words, "the great torrent of love and desire for personal service, which has hitherto flooded my Mother's soul, was now turned into a new channel - the one absorbing, all-important business of her life became the bringing up of the baby in the way she should go. At six weeks of age [I] was publicly consecrated [to] the service of the Lord. Mother fulfilled her vow and [gave] the child for which she prayed."<sup>20</sup>

Until she was seventeen, Aimee spent her life on the farm, "as a farmer's daughter". These early years she described in her sermon, *From Milkpail to Pulpit* (Appendix A). Nancy Barr Mavity, in her biography of Aimee says of her early milieu "the economic, social and intellectual resources of life on the little Canadian farm were of the most sterile and restricted sort".<sup>21</sup> Aimee's mother "ruled the roost". Aimee's autobiographies says little of her school days but Mavity states that "Aimee was a natural leader and popular with her schoolmates". Already there was manifest in her what Mavity referred to as "that singular and ultimately undefinable ability to win the crowd---the innate

---

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>21</sup> Mavity, Nancy Bar. *Sister Aimee*. p.3.

personal quality which, for lack of a more exact term, we call magnetism."<sup>22</sup> In her often-delivered autobiographical lecture, McPherson also refrained from mentioning her not infrequent teenage rhetorical successes. She won, it is recorded, silver and gold medals in "those WCTU oratorical contests which were so important a feature in village and small town life in the early years of the century" She also "spoke pieces" from the Sunday-school platform, and was given the leading part in the amateur theatricals of church and school.

Aimee took a strong interest in the Bible at an early age. At five she "could recite whole chapters out of the Old and New Testaments for the edification of visitors." But as she grew older her interest dwindled and she began to be distracted by novels, dances, and other worldly seductions. She recalled with shame a dance she attended which was held, to make matters much worse, in the Presbyterian Church. Minnie attempted without success to prevent her going.

My dress and slippers were purchased and I went to my first dance radiantly happy on the exterior, but a little heavy and conscience-stricken on the interior, for I knew that Mother was sad and praying alone at home. It seemed a very proper affair, however. My first dancing partner was the Presbyterian preacher. Other good (?) church members were there---surely Mother must be mistaken or a little old-fashioned in her ideas.<sup>23</sup>

Aimee's exposure to the evolutionary theories of Darwin engrossed her to the point where she felt she was "slipping into the state of atheistic indifference". Her readings of Darwin, Ingersoll, Paine and Huxley, among others, had shaken her understanding of the origin of all life and eventually she faced the perplexing dilemma of the evolutionist vs.

---

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>23</sup> McPherson. *This is That*. p.22.

the fundamentalist. In her autobiography she explained this mental turmoil by saying "My heart was so confused. About this time there were many other happy things to do, and I thought I'll brush the whole thing aside". (Appendix A).

According to her autobiography, Aimee's confusion was swiftly assuaged by her encounter with a "tall young man, six feet two inches in height....His was a frank, kindly face, with Irish blue eyes that had the light of heaven in them, chestnut brown hair, with one rebellious curl which would insist in falling down close to his eye no matter how often he brushed it back."<sup>24</sup> His name was Robert Semple and he had come from Northern Ireland to preach the Gospel in Canada. Aimee's recounting of this meeting leaves her readers with the impression that her attraction to him was strong enough to conclude that it could come under the adage of "love at first sight". Robert corresponded with her after he had moved on from Ingersoll, encouraging and instructing her in the ways of the Lord. "Never before nor yet since that time," she confessed, "has it been my privilege to read such letters as those that came from the inspired pen of this saintly man of prayer. He walked and lived and breathed in the atmosphere of heaven."<sup>25</sup> Just eight months after their first meeting, August 12, 1908, Aimee and Robert were married. Semple was twenty-one; she, just a few months short of eighteen.

After they were married, Robert Semple preached in small Canadian towns, then in Chicago in small mission churches. He worked at odd jobs by day and preached at night, saving money for a trip to China, where he planned to make his life bringing ".....`yellow

---

<sup>24</sup> McPherson. *Story of My Life*. p.22.

<sup>25</sup> McPherson. *This is That*. p..55.

pearls' to [God]."<sup>26</sup> During these months, at night when the day was over, "....he'd (Semple) just sit down and teach me the word of God." (Appendix A).

In the spring of 1910 the Semples sailed to Ireland to say good-bye to Robert's parent. After a brief respite there, they went to London, the point of their sailing for China. Here they would meet a fellow-Canadian who would be responsible for McPherson's first public speaking engagement. Cecil Polhill, a Christian millionaire, was a gracious host.<sup>27</sup> The Semples stayed in his mansion for a week and were chauffeured around to all the places of interest. The afternoon before they were due to embark, with Semple away attending meetings in an effort to garner support of his mission, Aimee was approached by their host to preach a message at a meeting he was attending that evening. This came as something of a shock and a dilemma for Aimee. As she wrote in the third of her autobiographies, "If I told him I was no preacher he might think me a poor prospect for the mission field. If I agreed and did poorly I might be even more disgraced."<sup>28</sup> She said nothing, which was interpreted by her host as yes and a car came to pick her up at seven that evening and delivered her to ".....a building which covered and entire city block." What happened next, she describes as follows:

I was ushered into a huge, crowded rostrum. Gasping I gave one petrified glance over the vast audience which rose in tiers to the very top of the fifth balcony of the auditorium. Some fifteen thousand were assembled in convention, and many speakers were lined up ready to deliver their messages. Closing my eyes I prayed through chattering teeth, "O L-l-l-lord, if you ever h-helped me in my l-i-f-e, h-h-help me n-n-now!" My Bible fell open at Joel 1:4, and the verse seemed to stand out in boldfaced type. Feeling much like a swimmer beginning a high dive, I commenced. "That which the palmerworm hath left hath the locust eaten; and that which the locust hath left hath the

<sup>26</sup> McPherson. *Story of My Life*. p.64.

<sup>27</sup> McPherson. *Aimee's Life Story*. p.44.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid* p.46.

cankerworm eaten; and that which the cankerworm hath left the caterpillar eaten."

Palmerworms, locusts, cankerworms, and caterpillars! God bless me! What a text for a beginner! I knew that I was about to faint. But suddenly something happened. The power of the Holy Spirit fell upon me till I trembled like a leaf. Then the Lord took possession of my tongue even as he had when on that memorable day He had baptised me with Pentecostal fire, only this time it was in English. The words seem to flow without conscious volition or self-will. It seemed as though I was caught away by the oratory of another.<sup>29</sup>

Aimee, though not yet twenty, was participating in the destiny she would claim had been fully formed in her from the time of her birth.

Her destiny with Robert Semple, however, would be short-lived. After only a few months residence in China they were both stricken with malaria and dysentery. On August 12, 1910, they celebrated their second wedding anniversary, but a few days later Robert died. One month later Aimee gave birth to a daughter, named Roberta Star in memory of her husband. In November of the same year, together with her daughter, she left China and returned to the United States.

Upon returning to America, Aimee went to New York City to be with her mother who was then working at the Salvation Army headquarters. To stay active in church work, Aimee gave small missionary talks in New York. She also travelled to Chicago bringing along her baby Roberta, where, in an effort to recreate the happiness she had known as Robert's assistant, she helped out in the churches where he had once ministered, doing chores such as playing the piano, passing out hymn books, and occasionally helping to raise money for missionary funds. However, the frail health of the baby together with an

---

<sup>29</sup> McPherson. *Aimee - Life Story of Aimee Semple McPherson*. pp. 46-47



aching loneliness were instrumental in her decision to return to the farm of her childhood in Ontario.<sup>30</sup>

Fifteen months after her return from China, in the Spring of 1912, Aimee married a grocer named Harold McPherson. The reason she gave for this union was out of a longing to make a home for her baby. The scarcity of details accorded this event in her autobiography indicates to me that in it there was a minimum of joy and passion and certainly no love. Before entering into the marriage Aimee made it quite clear to her husband to be, that her "...heart and soul was really in the work of the Lord" and made him promise he would permit her to return to the work of the Lord, "if at any time in my life, He should call me..."<sup>31</sup> On March 23, of the following year Aimee gave birth to a son and named him Rolf.

After the birth of her son, Aimee experienced a series of illnesses. Several operations were performed but each one brought with it complications which left Aimee feeling worse instead of better. She interpreted these illnesses as punishment from God for failing to carry out her pledge to work for Him. Despite pressure exerted on Aimee by both her husband Harold and her mother-in-law to adopt the role of a housewife and "be happy and act like other folks", Aimee continued to languish in her hospital bed, lacking the strength or the will to recover until one day:

"Everything grew black. Someone said faintly, "She's going!" Then that last ringing call, which I shall never forget---"Now will you go?" I knew it was "GO" one way or the other! With the little remaining strength I possessed, I gasped inaudibly: "Yes--Lord--I'll--go."<sup>32</sup>

---

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid* p. 70.

<sup>31</sup> McPherson. *This is That*. p. 73.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid* p. 74.

In March, 1915 Aimee, together with her children, left the McPherson home and her husband of three years. She returned to her mother who agreed to take care of the children. She also sent a telegram to Harold which said:

I have tried to walk your way and have failed. Won't you come now and walk my way? I am sure we will be happy.<sup>33</sup>

It would be almost two months before Harold joined Aimee, by which time she was fully involved in evangelist prayer meetings. Initially her role in these meetings was one of helper until a chance occurrence, which would radically affect her future. In her own words:

And then one day the preacher lost his voice, Praise the Lord! and he, he, well, you know I mean--Praise the Lord!--He gave me my opportunity. He, they asked me if I'd preach. Shake! I--I fairly shook all over. And I, I stood there and I couldn't say anything, but somehow or other I preached. Ah-- the love of God streamed in my soul! Hallelujah! (Appendix A)

The following months were busy ones for Aimee as she undertook to preach at every opportunity. In the winter of 1916 the McPhersons drove to Florida leaving Roberta with her grandmother and taking Rolf with them. While in Florida Aimee preached in Jacksonville, Tampa, Pleasant Grove, Durant and St. Petersburg. In the spring invitations to preach brought the family to the North. Aimee preached in Savannah, Georgia. She spent almost a month in Long Branch, New Jersey, and almost two weeks in Port Jefferson. The following three months were filled with preaching engagements which took her to such cities as Huntington, Long Island, Boston, Mt. Waite, Framingham, and

---

<sup>33</sup> McPherson, *The Story of My Life*. p.86-87.

Washburn, Maine. In some places her appearances were repeat performances. Aimee was building a reputation of note.

In the winter of 1917, the family again went to Florida. It was during this second visit to the South that Harold McPherson left his wife, never to return. He suggested that Aimee enlist the aid of her mother. Mrs. Kennedy would prove to be an efficient business manager. All of the correspondence, family chores, and financial matters were shifted to her. This left Aimee free to concentrate on just preaching.

With her two children and Minnie Kennedy, Aimee embarked on a revival tour of the middle states and the south, making converts readily and increasing her reputation as an effective evangelist. Then she set out upon a cross-country auto tour in her "Gospel Car." This was the year 1918 and the automobile was still considered to be revolutionary technology. It certainly was indicative of Aimee's strength of character and faith in the Lord that she would undertake such an onerous venture. The car would prove to be not only a means of private transportation but also a vehicle for publicity as well. In order to attract the attention of the public in St. Petersburg in Florida, and as a result of explicit instructions from the Lord to "Decorate your car and join the parade!", Aimee bedecked the Gospel Car and joined a parade along the main street.

With palmetto, gray moss, ferns and delicate greens, I transformed wheels, fenders and body of the automobile into a beautiful green hill. White sheets were stitched together to form a little tent which I placed on this miniature hill. Of course the tent was replete with rigid poles, guy ropes and little colored flags! Upon the side of the tent I painted the words: "JESUS SAVES! REPENT AND BE CONVERTED! I'M ON MY WAY TO THE TENT REVIVAL--R. U?"<sup>34</sup>

---

<sup>34</sup> McPherson. *This is That*. p.135.

McPherson reports that, judging from the crowds that came to her meeting that night the message together with her Gospel Car proved very effective.<sup>35</sup>

Aimee's ministry continued to be quite mobile. She travelled all over the United States and also preached in her native Canada. As both fame and money increased, the services were moved from outdoor settings to diverse indoor accommodations. Auditorium and theatres were rented; meeting halls often sufficed and sometimes any empty building was sought for revival conversion purposes. Aimee once filled the Coliseum in San Francisco; preached in an armoury in Akron, Ohio; held services in an empty lumber storehouse in Piedmont, West Virginia; conducted revivals in a wheat warehouse for two days in Turlock, California; spoke in an ice skating rink in Alberta, Canada; and once held forth in an opium den in Chinatown, Los Angeles. Among her most unusual venues was an appearance in a boxing arena in San Diego, California, in 1921, when she spoke during the intermission between fights (See Appendix A). In order to attract attention to her revival crusade in San Diego in the same year, Aimee preached a sermon to a crowd gathered around an airfield, then boarded an aeroplane and flew over the city throwing out fifteen thousand handbills advertising her meetings. One can imagine the impact of what must have been seen as a daring, even death-defying gesture on the part of this young, attractive messenger of the Lord, who was willing to risk all in, what was viewed by the majority of the people at this time, the rather risky undertaking of a ride in this relatively new mode of transportation. And this, in order to deliver a invitation "from on high" to the masses, urging them to join the converted. Aimee was always quick

---

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid*

to utilise the latest developments in modern technology as a means of furthering her ministry. She was the first woman to hold a Federal Communications Commission broadcaster's license and the first woman in the world to preach a sermon over the wireless telephone. In the winter of 1924, radio station KFSG (Kall Four Square Gospel) went on the air. Seventy years after this "charismatic pioneer media preacher" inaugurated her great "Cathedral of the Air", Radio Station KFSG, the third radio station established in Los Angeles, continues to broadcast daily.<sup>36</sup>

In 1919, Aimee became a permanent resident of Los Angeles in a house built for her by loyal followers. This home provided a stable environment for Roberta and Rolf who remained in the care of Minnie Kennedy while Aimee was travelling about the country fulfilling the speaking engagements which her mother had arranged. The following year she bought a lot adjacent to Echo Park in Los Angeles and it was on this site that the Angelus Temple was erected.

On January 1, 1923, Sister Aimee dedicated Angelus Temple, a Class A fireproof structure with a seating capacity of 5,300. The exterior of the dome, coated with a mixture of ground abalone shells, glistened, while the interior sparkled with show- business glitter. There was an orchestra pit and a proscenium arch. At the rear of the stage drapes hung on either side of a baptismal pool, framing a mural of the River Jordan. Above the stage the 30-foot facade of the organ spanned the entire wall, accented by a painting of Christ with one hand pointing toward heaven and the other toward Sister Aimee's rostrum. Backstage were costume rooms, a set-construction department, rehearsal areas, and a smaller auditorium.<sup>37</sup>

The blending of evangelism and entertainment would prove to be a great success and contribute greatly to Aimee's increasing fame.

---

<sup>36</sup> Lothrop. Gloria. "West of Eden" in *Journal of the West*, p.50.

<sup>37</sup> Lothrop interview with Olive G. Cooksie, L.A. as quoted in "West of Eden" in *Journal of the West*, (April 1988) p.53.

In addition to the Angelus Temple in 1926 McPherson founded the Angelus Temple Evangelistic and Missionary Training Institute, better known as the Foursquare Bible College, where both women and men were trained in ministry. It soon had 1,000 students enrolled in its day school, night school, and summer school and was turning out 300 ordained ministers, missionaries, and evangelists each year to spread the Foursquare message. Many of these graduates (men and women) took posts as pastors of Foursquare churches which had sprung up around the country in the wake of Aimee's various revival tours. By the middle of the sixties, the missionary college of the Foursquare Church had 3,000 graduates whose work took them all over the world.<sup>38</sup>

On May 18th, 1926, Aimee Semple McPherson disappeared from Venice, California, where she had gone for a swim with her secretary, Emma Schaefer. Prior to her reappearance, two divers were drowned looking for her under the pier near where she had last been seen. One ardent follower swam out to find her and he too was drowned. Thousands of her adherents kept vigil on the beach, praying, singing and crying. Aeroplanes swept the water searching for her body. On June 23rd she appeared early in the morning at a cottage in Agua Prieta, across the United States-Mexican border from Douglas, Arizona. According to Carey Williams:

Sister Aimee's reappearance in Douglas, with her fanciful account of the kidnapers, "Rose" and "Steve" and "Jake", was one of the most sensational news stories of the 1920's. It hit the front page in almost every newspaper in the world.<sup>39</sup>

On her arrival in Los Angeles from Douglas, McWilliams estimated the reception at thirty thousand people.

---

<sup>38</sup> McLoughlin. "Our Sister in the King's Glad Service." In *Journal of Popular Culture*. (Winter 1968)

<sup>39</sup> McWilliams. Carey. "Sunlight In My Soul" in *The Aspirin Age*. p.69.

In the ensuing weeks Aimee urged the law to produce her kidnappers. On September 17, 1926, a criminal complaint was filed charging her with a conspiracy to obstruct justice. A lengthy trial followed, but on January 10, 1927, The District Attorney, Asa Keyes, on the grounds of insufficient corroborative evidence, suddenly moved to dismiss the trial. Thus ended an eight-month span of newspaper fame and attention in which, among other allegations, Aimee was accused primarily of leaving her ministry to embark upon a relationship with her radio station director, Kenneth Ormiston.<sup>40</sup> She dismissed the accusations as “absurd and insulting”. Aimee also staged a show in her Temple called “A Devils’ Convention”, in which she depicted what she referred to as her persecutors. The convention she explained, was assembled for the purpose of plotting the destruction of the Angelus Temple by an attack on her credibility.

“Dozens of hideous devils, armed with pitchforks, emerged from the vapors, fumes, and fires of hell to grimace and dance on the stage. As they emerged from the dungeons of iniquity, she introduced them to the audience as the ministers of Los Angeles, members of the grand jury, law-enforcement officials, vice-lords, and the “kidnappers”, “Jake”, “Rose”, and “Steve”. Dressed in a stunning white-on-blue evangelical costume, Sister turned, at the door to the hearing room, Bible clasped to her breast, and said: “I am like a lamb led to the slaughter”.<sup>41</sup>

Extensive research into this very critical period of Aimee Semple McPherson’s life shows that few writers have accepted the story told by her of her disappearance. However, no published or unpublished works have been found to prove or disprove her narrative of kidnap and escape.

---

<sup>40</sup> “Aimee M’Pherson in Rumor Tangle”, headline in the *New York Times*, August 20, 1930. p.3.

<sup>41</sup> McWilliams, Carey. “Sunlight In My Soul” in *The Aspirin Age*. p.71.

The kidnapping affair and its incumbent notoriety seemed to precipitate a series of negative events for Aimee in the ensuing months. She was simultaneously beset by family disputes, numerous lawsuits together with losses from ill-advised business ventures.

From 1927 until her death, Sister Aimee travelled extensively in the United States and abroad both in Europe, the Holy Land, and the Orient. In 1930 while debate continued regarding the truth of her disappearance, she conducted a successful nationwide tour of 46 cities in 21 states, preaching 336 sermons to more than two million people and broadcasting sermons from 45 radio stations. She averaged a first-page story in Los Angeles newspapers at least three times a week. "Readers sought every detail about her weight-reduction diet, her Lake Tahoe campground, and her sale of cemetery plots."<sup>42</sup> In 1931 Aimee married for the third time. David L. Hutton was ten years her junior and barely a year passed before she was divorced again.

From 1937 on, Aimee's local press popularity waned. Accounts of her departures and arrivals to and from vacations, other respites and travels appeared conservatively in print. One of the last official "welcome homes" occurred, recounted McWilliams,

"... in 1939, when she was greeted by bands, pom-poms, and thousands of followers who, under the direction of a cheerleader, shouted: "S-I-S-T-E-R! Rah! Rah! S-I-S-T-E-R!!" Stepping from a train and carrying a bouquet of six dozen American Beauty Roses in one hand and a bird in a gilded cage in the other, she was modestly attired in a form-fitting white silk suit, fuchsia Chinese collie hat, fuchsia gloves and scarf, and she wore a single large gardenia."<sup>43</sup>

Aimee Semple McPherson died on September 27, 1944, in the Leamington Hotel in Oakland, California. She had delivered her famous, oft-given lecture, "The Story of My

---

<sup>42</sup> Lothrop, "West of Eden" in *Journal of the West*. p.53.

<sup>43</sup> McWilliams, "Sunlight In My Soul" in *The Aspirin Age* p.78.



Life", the evening before to an audience of ten thousand in the municipal auditorium. A coroner's jury returned a verdict that her death had been caused "...by shock and respiratory failure due to an overdose of barbital compound and a kidney ailment."<sup>44</sup>

For days after her death, devout thousands attended perpetual services at the Los Angeles Temple. Five hours before her burial sightseers began their vigil among the gravestones of the burial site. Though only 2,500 invitations were issued for the committal service, 8,000 brought flowers and crashed the gate. *Life* magazine described her funeral thus:

"Up the Lane of Sorrow, flanked on the left by 25 ministers holding American flags and on the right by another 25 holding banners of the Foursquare Gospel, 16 pallbearers carried Aim's 1350-pound bronze casket. Box like objects at left are resting frames upon which pall-bearers rested the heavy casket every six feet up the steep ascent. They nearly dropped it several times."<sup>45</sup>

As stated previously, when called upon to eulogise Aimee, Dr. Howard P. Courtney of Angelus Temple is quoted as saying:

"Today, we are here to commemorate the stepping up of a country girl into God's Hall of Fame. Along with Zwingli, Huss, Wycliffe, Savonarola, Luther, Wesley, Whitfield, Knox, and Moody, Aimee Semple McPherson takes her place with the greatest of spiritual leaders."<sup>46</sup>

While, doubtless, scholars and historians might well take issue with some, if not all of the above comparisons, a woman who could arouse such love and devotion and blind loyalty in the hearts of thousands of people possessed qualities that, perhaps, justified certification to "God's Hall of Fame". I felt that a repetition of the above eulogy was justified as it demonstrates the extent of the high esteem that McPherson aroused in some

---

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>45</sup> "Aimee Semple McPherson" in *Life*, October 30, 1944.

<sup>46</sup> McWilliams, "Sunlight in My Soul", in *The Aspirin Age* p.79.

segments of the male population including some evangelists, who were also some of her most potent enemies. Dr. Courtney was a member of the Angelus Temple, which might have been a factor in his high appraisal of McPherson, but to rank her with such esteemed, notably male, spiritual leaders reveals that, at least in death, McPherson's gender did not prove a negative attribute.

An analysis of this biographical data appears, to offer answers to the first three questions at the beginning of this work, i.e. Why did McPherson become an evangelist? What was her background for this career and how did it begin? Making an assessment of an historical personage, and especially one who elicited much diversity of opinion, necessitates the separation of fact from fantasy, reality from conjecture. Within these boundaries, what then can be said with certainty about the personality and character of McPherson? That her temperament was energetic and dynamic is unarguable. From a very young age she enjoyed being the centre of attention and had the ability to charm an audience. With the obvious encouragement of her mother, Mrs. Kennedy, who also had an intense interest in the church, McPherson found the work of the church offered her the perfect arena in which to express her positive personality. Her gregarious nature coupled with her lack of fear of audiences enabled her to pursue her calling with exceptional effect. Even the most sceptical of her critics and journalists wrote with grudging admiration of her "electric quality", "developed sense of humour", and spoke of her as "a woman who possessed more vitality and energy perhaps than any other - a personality possessed of

radiance and charm."<sup>47</sup> She was clever and intelligent. Comstock, one of her most severest critics, wrote of her:

But no personality can long be impressed unless the personality is in itself remarkable. And Mrs. McPherson's magnetism is of that inexplicable sort which occurs but rarely in a puzzled world. I confess to having felt it like a warm and overcoming current. My intellect may have sat back disdainfully but I was relieved when the lady broke her appointment with me; had I met and talked with her as I intended, I am far from sure that I should have been able to write this article dispassionately."<sup>48</sup>

People marvelled at her stamina and vitality. For three years after the Angelus Temple opened she preached every single night and three times on Sunday to the thousands who jammed the building. She personally created, directed, produced, and executed all the myriad activities of the church. She edited two magazines and published various volumes of sermons and hymns. She wrote, rehearsed, directed, and starred in the dramatic productions which took place every Sunday in the Temple. All this in addition to establishing a radio station which sent all her sermons and other religious programs across the airwaves of Southern California.

One of the major features of her Temple was the Commissary, a huge storeroom always kept full of food, clothing, blankets, and household items of all sorts which she distributed to the needy of Los Angeles and vicinity without charge and without, as she self-consciously put it, respect to race, creed, or colour. Within the first twelve months of its existence the Commissary provided 40,000 free meals and 16,000 items of clothing for the poor, and in the depression years these figures grew astronomical. She urged her followers to demonstrate their concern for other less fortunate by bringing to the Temple

---

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>48</sup> Comstock. "Prima Donna of Revivalism". *Harper's Monthly Magazine*. December, 1927 p.18.

some item for the Commissary, i.e. food, clothing, canned goods etc.<sup>49</sup> For McPherson Christianity was not only something to believe in and sermonise about but required concrete action. Unfortunately, her humanitarian work did not receive the media exposure it surely deserved, her critics preferring to concentrate on what they perceived as the more flamboyant aspects of her ministry.

McPherson was the first person in Los Angeles, perhaps in California, to provide free telephone time-service; anyone in the city could get the correct time simply by calling the Temple. But more importantly, there were always trained Christian counsellors on hand by the telephones to answer calls for spiritual or practical help throughout the day or night. She organised the women's and men's Bible classes, children's Sunday schools, committees which sent men and women out all over the city to pray and sing and bear gifts to the needy in hospitals, rest homes, orphanages, jails, and prisons. In addition she somehow managed to find enough time to oversee the studies of the more than 1000 students in her Bible College plus erect and organise a prayer tower, where a stream of praise and requests were directed to heaven twenty four hours a day, every day, by volunteers who took turns in two hours shifts.<sup>50</sup>

As to how sincere McPherson was in her endeavour to achieve her prime goal, that of winning souls for Jesus, I must rely on a sample of the recorded testimony of those who observed her in person. Typical of the impression she left upon people is that as quoted by a minister of the Methodist Episcopal Church:

Unlike any other great evangelist I had ever seen, Sister McPherson depended absolutely upon the power of the Holy Spirit and prayers of

---

<sup>49</sup> McLoughlin. "Our Sister in the King's Glad Service" in *Journal of Popular Culture*. (Winter 1968) p 168

<sup>50</sup> *ibid*

believers to move upon the hearts of unbelievers as they came by hundreds and hundreds from all over the great auditorium. She did not depend upon any type of emotionalism, warnings of wrath or death-bed stories, nor does she permit personal workers to go out to implore folks to make a decision for Christ, but at the close of each of her wonderful messages she would simply say, "Let us pray."<sup>51</sup>

Another minister of the Presbyterian church, commenting on the impression McPherson left upon the people of Birnley, Australia said:

I have no hesitation in saying that I have never heard anyone preach Jesus so thoroughly, so persistently, so lovingly, so winsomely, as this handmaiden of the Lord, Mrs. Aimee Semple McPherson."<sup>52</sup>

Even an intellectual writer of the day, in an article whose overall tone was one of scorn, had to say of McPherson:

I see no grounds for the absurd statement made by a great many intelligent writers that she is not religious. If not, then neither was Mohammed. I have heard her proclaim the gospel and I solemnly testify that I have never beheld one more painfully bent upon the salvation of souls.....<sup>53</sup>

From all the evidence it would seem that, with the exception of a brief period in her formative teen years, McPherson accepted the fact that her destiny would be in the service of God.

Her successes as an evangelist were accompanied by the vicissitudes of a marriage-on-the-run. During these months of itinerant preaching Harold McPherson, her second husband, performed odd jobs and helped to create an atmosphere of marital harmony. However, when the spot-light of attention fell on his wife alone which, not surprisingly,

---

<sup>51</sup> McPherson. *This is That*. P.446 - quoting E.C. Fintel, pastor, First Methodist Episcopal Church, Scottsbluff, Nebraska.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid* . p.494 - quoting Rev. R.A. Green, pastor of the Presbyterian Church, Birnley, Australia

<sup>53</sup> McWilliams. "Sunlight In My Soul" in *The Aspirin Age*. p.73.

was often the case, he became merely Sister Aimee's husband. This precipitated moodiness on his part which resulted in a number of quarrels.<sup>54</sup>

McPherson's marriage to Robert Semple certainly contributed an important phase in her background. He undoubtedly introduced her to a greater understanding of the Bible and its implications. Her love and devotion to him was, upon his premature death, projected into what she felt was a need to continue his ministry in his stead. One could speculate as to whether or not McPherson would have achieved her phenomenal evangelical career had Robert Semple lived and her role been confined to that of a supportive spouse, or would the force of her personality have ultimately dominated and led the more timorous Semple down the path of fame she herself subsequently trod?

It is the purpose of this chapter to present pertinent biographical data about McPherson. The data can be summarised as follows: McPherson was born into a strict religious atmosphere. From an early age she was exposed to fundamentalist thinking and practices and raised on a literal interpretation of the bible. She received a basic level of formal education. She received the call early in life to dedicate herself to the Christian ministry.

She translated her call into an itinerant effort to win souls. Three marriages, one ended by death, the other two in divorce, produced two children but no domestic harmony. Intensive travel and an extremely large number of preaching experiences in a vast number of situations and conditions prepared McPherson with ample background to establish a permanent church. With forceful and imaginative tactics she achieved fame and

---

<sup>54</sup> Epstein. *Sister Aimee: The Life of Aimee Semple McPherson*. p.120

notoriety. After her resident ministry was well established her personal life afforded the press every chance to increase her renown, albeit in a mostly negative fashion.

When studying an historical character, and relying on third party sources, one is always confronted with the problem of authenticity. It must be acknowledged that personal bias is an element which can not be ignored. As can readily be seen in an examination of the numerous observations made by people who had direct knowledge of McPherson, the opinions expressed by them, both to the nature of McPherson's proselytising and personal conduct are polarised such that it makes it very difficult to determine fact from fiction without knowing the individuals' motivations.

One aspect of McPherson's character that most everyone seems to have agreed upon was that she was charismatic. The word charisma has undergone varying extensions of its meaning from that of its original definition, i.e. the Weberian analysis applicable to a person who is viewed as endowed with supernatural qualities by her/his followers. This definition does not merit acceptance if one wants to stay neutral about the operation of divine grace and I prefer to take this position. However, *charisma* also refers to a relationship between an individual and other persons, based on a message which the potential leader pronounces, and the message's relevance to conditions of dissatisfaction, distress, or despair experienced by potential followers.<sup>55</sup> An insight into the prevailing tensions of the time under discussion, and description of McPherson's adherents which is given in the upcoming chapters, will clarify this claim.

---

<sup>55</sup> Hexam. *Concise Dictionary of Religion*, p.48.

The intensity of charisma, or the magnitude of a charismatic leader's success, depends on several interrelated factors which lend themselves to accurate measurement or empirical verification: The strength of the leader's personality, the appropriateness of the leader's message to the social climate, and the severity of distress which potential followers endure. It is not easy for an objective observer who neither shares the distress nor perceives the message's pertinence to distinguish between charisma and fanaticism, on the one hand, or charisma and pathology, on the other.<sup>56</sup> This point is demonstrated quite succinctly by McPherson's detractors. While she can also rightly be referred to as charismatic in the more secular meaning of the word, i.e. as a member of a Christian movement who is identified as being part of a group, in this instance Pentecostalism or Revivalism, which believes in the manifestation of gifts of healing, speaking in tongues, and prophecy as the gifts of the Holy Spirit,<sup>57</sup> when I refer to her *charisma* I am using the term in what has been referred to as "Kennedy charisma", i.e. a person with a gift of leadership based on human quality without any reference to the supernatural.<sup>58</sup>

McPherson, said something to her audience which was very different to what they were accustomed to hearing. There was no brimstone and fire in her orations but a joyous and upbeat message delivered with music and laughter. Her disciples' initial response and ongoing faithfulness reveal that what she said provided a new context for them in which to evaluate their social circumstance and a new way in which to live.

---

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> *Concise Dictionary of Religion* p.48

<sup>58</sup> *Ency. Of Religion*, p.218.



## CHAPTER IV

### THE INTERNATIONAL CHURCH OF THE FOURSQUARE GOSPEL: ITS BELIEFS, PRACTICES AND FOLLOWERS.

The theology of Foursquare Evangelism is described and explained in McPherson's book, *The Foursquare Gospel*. Said McPherson:

It was during the Oakland campaign, in the summer of 1922, that God led me, one night, to speak on the prophet Ezekiel's vision, as recorded in the Book of Ezekiel, the first chapter, the fourth to tenth verses. Verse ten was dwelt upon at great lengths, as the Spirit spoke through me in revealing power. It reads:

As for the likeness of their faces, they four had the face of a man, and the face of a lion, on the right side; and they four had the face of an ox on the left side; they four also had the face of an eagle.<sup>59</sup>

"The Foursquare Gospel is not a new fangled or modern religion," stated McPherson in her catechism, "but is the simple old-fashioned Gospel as set forth and taught by the Lord Jesus Christ when he was on earth." Explaining the fundamental nature of her Gospel, McPherson wrote:

.....{it} is absolutely and soundly fundamental, for the written Word of God, rightly divided, is the principle, rule, law, and article which serves as the ground work of our system. In fact the Word of God IS our system.<sup>60</sup>

---

<sup>59</sup> McPherson. *The Holy Spirit*. p.178.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid* p.35.

After an explanation and description of the Foursquare Emblem and Flag there followed in *The Foursquare Gospel* the statements of the doctrines of the Foursquare message. These doctrines were four in number for obvious reasons and listed four cardinal points of view, as follows:

1. Jesus Christ the Saviour.
2. Jesus Christ the Baptizer with the Holy Ghost.
3. Jesus Christ the Great Physician.
4. Jesus Christ the Coming King.

The first doctrine was essentially the idea that Christ was the Saviour of mankind.

Drawing mainly from the picture of the Lord which the Gospel of Saint Luke offers, McPherson structured her first corner of the Foursquare Gospel as representing the perfect man. "Luke shows them (the cultured, educated Greeks) the ideal perfect man", she wrote, "the Lord Jesus Christ, who sacrificed His ideal Self for an ideal."<sup>61</sup> This idea was depicted on the Foursquare Emblem by the face of a man and on the flag by the colour red.

The second doctrine, illustrated by the colour gold on the Foursquare flag and symbolised by the face of a lion on the Emblem, had to do with the power of Christ. In the first quarter of this religious philosophy, Christ was presented as the "Son of Man;" in this quarter as the "Son of God." The Gospel of Saint John offered the primary idea and inspiration. Wrote McPherson:

As the Lion symbolizes power . . . as the Lion represents the Lord Jesus Christ as the All-Powerful Giver of Power . . . as Jesus said that HE

---

<sup>61</sup> Ibid p.78.

would send the Holy Ghost . . . and as Jesus said that the power would come with the baptism with the Holy Ghost . . . then the Face of the Lion represents Jesus Christ as the Baptizer with the Holy Ghost.

The third doctrine presented the idea that Christ was the Great Physician, the Healer. This tenet was the basic expression according to the Gospel of Saint Mark. Here Christ was presented as "The Servant." His colour on the flag was blue and on the Emblem of Foursquare Evangelism was the face of an ox as the symbol.

The fourth cardinal doctrine reflected the inspiration from the Gospel according to Saint Matthew. Presented as "The King" and represented by the colour purple and the face of an eagle on the flag and emblem respectively, this proposition stated the inevitability of the second coming of Christ.

In addition to these four corners of the Foursquare Gospel, McPherson outlined what she called "The Foursquare Declaration of Faith". The following "credenda" as she called them were twenty-three in number, and listed as follows:

1. The Holy Scriptures.
2. The Eternal Godhead.
3. The Fall of Man.
4. The Plan of Redemption.
5. Salvation through Grace.
6. Repentance and Acceptance.
7. The New Birth.
8. Daily Christian Life.
9. Water Baptism.
10. The Lord's Supper.
11. The Baptism with The Holy Spirit.
12. The Spirit-Filled Life
13. The Gifts and Fruit of the Spirit.
14. Moderation.
15. Divine Healing.
16. The Second Coming.
17. Church Relationship.
18. Civil Government.
19. The Final Judgement.

- 20. Heaven.
- 21. Hell.
- 22. Evangelism.
- 23. Addendum.

Under each topic divisional sub-points of belief were outlined and supported by Scriptural testimony both from the Old Testament and New.<sup>62</sup>

What can be concluded from the above is that McPherson's theology was not a radical departure from that of other Protestant philosophies, but rather an eclectic reorganisation of some basic religious principles of the New Testament. McPherson chose to organise her Foursquare Gospel on the fundamental ideas stated in the Gospels according to Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John of the New Testament. She did not supplement her catechism, stated in *The Foursquare Gospel*, with any writings of a non-scriptural nature. McPherson explained the fundamental nature of her Gospel as "... any doctrine founded on the written word of God, rightly divided, is fundamental." "The Foursquare Gospel," she continued,

... is absolutely and soundly fundamental, for the written word of God, rightly divided, is the principle, rule, law, and article which serves as the ground work of our system. In fact the Word of God IS our system.<sup>63</sup>

In 1922 McPherson stated for the first time her proposed "Biblical Constitution" for her followers. It was predictably simple both in form and content. It was a mixture of Methodism and the elements of Salvation Army thinking, and a definite reflection of her early religious background.<sup>64</sup>

---

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid* p.133.

<sup>63</sup> McPherson. *In The Service of the King*, p.35.

<sup>64</sup> Lacour. "A Study of the Revival Method in America: 1920-1955." p.106.

A major contributing factor to McPherson's success was the reputation she built as a divine healer. Healing was a prominent part of her services and, according to the testimony of not only those who claim to have been healed at her gatherings but also of the more sceptical onlookers such as the press, hundreds of cures were realised. McPherson, herself, never made any claim to miraculous powers, all credit went directly to Jesus. If it was His will that you be cured then it happened. If not, then there must be a very sound reason for the failure. McPherson had the following to say about the apparent failures:

Not all are healed who come. A few there are who have not the least idea of what it means to exercise active believing faith in the Lord Jesus; but come to see if *we* can heal, or do them any good. Of course, *we* have no power within ourselves and try to get their eyes on Jesus. There are some who stand or sit coldly, like a piece of wood, while we pray for them. They are not healed, for coming to Jesus for healing is like coming to Him for salvation.<sup>65</sup>

McPherson's autobiography has a large section devoted to describing many of the cures obtained at her sermons. An example of paragraphs headings are:

Man Deaf, Dumb and Lame Since the Age of Two Years Healed.  
Cancer, Dropsy and Rheumatism Healed.  
Three Girls from Tubercular Hospital Healed.  
Deaf Ears Unstopped.  
Two Deaf Mute Young Ladies - Hear and Speak.

Wednesday and Saturday evenings were devoted to healing meetings. Comstock described one as follows:

Scores hastened (or limp, or creep, or are carried) to the altar. Discarded canes, crutches, and wheel-chairs are seen in the foyer. When Sister heals she lays hands upon the afflicted spot and prays.<sup>66</sup>

---

<sup>65</sup> McPherson, *This is That*, p.288.

<sup>66</sup> Comstock, "Prima Donna of Revivalism" in *Harper's Monthly Magazine*. December, 1927. p.14.

From many reports a great number of these afflicted people had enough faith to enable them to walk, and in some cases run, back to their seats. McPherson claimed she had numerous testimonials and affidavits from the cured, together with signed statements from members of the medical profession who had been treating them, attesting to their recoveries.

Divine healings were, of course, not an innovation of McPherson. Christianity has a long history associated with miraculous cures going right back to Jesus' ministry. Pentecostal revivalism has a strong tradition of faith healing and it has always been an integral part of its ministry. McPherson herself claims to have received "miraculous and instantaneous healing of a broken ankle". This, she recounted, took place during the early weeks of her marriage and was the result of falling down a flight of stairs which resulted in a cracked bone and four torn ligaments. Her foot was set in a plaster of paris cast which she was instructed to keep on for a period of four weeks. She was also advised that she would forever after probably have to endure a stiffened foot.

Shortly thereafter, while sitting in her room commiserating over her extremely painful foot she had the following experience:

.....a voice spoke to me and said: "If you will wrap the shoe for your broken foot, and take it with you to wear home, and go over to North Avenue mission to Brother Durham and ask him to lay hands on your foot, I will heal it."

The idea of wrapping up a shoe, which was tight-fitting even with my foot in a normal condition, struck me so humorously that I laughed the thought away; but again and yet again came the voice:

"Wrap up your shoe to wear home, take it with you as you go to be prayed for, and I will heal you." The Word says *"My sheep hear my voice,"* and, at

last I reached for my crutches, hobbled over to my other shoe, wrapped it up, and with it tucked under my arm, started clumsily down the winding staircase to go to the mission for prayers.

Upon McPherson's arrival at the mission she....

....told them just what the Lord had told me. There were twelve in the room besides myself, and all but one began to pray. The one who did not pray was an infidel, a brother of our Pastor.

As Brother Durham was walking up and down the room, calling on the Lord, he suddenly stopped, and laying his hands on my ankle, broke out praying in tongues, and then in English said: "In the name of Jesus, receive your healing." I suddenly felt as if a shock of electricity had struck my foot. It flowed through my whole body, causing me to shake and tremble under the power of God. Instantaneously my foot was perfectly healed, the blackness was gone, the parted ligaments were knitted together, the bone was made whole. Glory to Jesus! I was healed!<sup>67</sup>

With the help of those present McPherson removed the plaster cast, only to be admonished by the "infidel" present who chided her for being foolish and warned her she would have to pay another three dollars to have the cast replaced. Not to be deterred, McPherson donned her stocking and shoes "leaped to [her] feet and began to dance and jump on the healed foot."<sup>68</sup> The analogy to the twelve apostles with a doubter in their midst is quite obvious to any student of religion. Also, in the telling and re-telling of this story, which was a favourite one of McPherson's, she is verifying to her audiences, not only the reality of faith healing, but her direct contact with the divinity.

Initially, McPherson's services relied exclusively around her powers of oration coupled with her charismatic personality. Judging from her success it must be conceded that this combination was of sufficient magnetism to draw to her a following that would have been the envy of any itinerant preacher. The establishment of her resident ministry in

---

<sup>67</sup> McPherson. *This is That* p.59-60

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid*

the Angelus Temple in Los Angeles, whose physical dimensions rivalled that of any local theatre, afforded McPherson the opportunity to dramatise her sermons through the use of colour, lights, flamboyant costumes and arbitrary symbolism which she did to great effect and without restraint from any liturgical boundaries. During the many sermons she delivered, McPherson's dress varied considerably, from a long white flowing robe to a policeman's uniform. The costume, however, most often worn by McPherson on the platform was a long white dress with full sleeves (with arms extended outward, the sleeves nearly touched the floor). Over this garment was worn a surplice, symbolic of the appropriate season of the church. Occasionally, a corsage was pinned on it. The only other embellishment was the Christian cross on the dress, affixed unobtrusively between the neckline and the waist.<sup>69</sup>

McPherson's unique approach with the use of acrobatics, plays, dramatisations, impersonations, stunts, operettas, and countless other audience-participation techniques elicited mixed response from Los Angeles residents. The "intellectual" members of the community looked down with derision on the Temples' activities, the artistic community viewed them with grudging and sometimes outright admiration (it is said that Charlie Chaplin met several times with McPherson, giving her advice on set productions. It was also alleged that he advised the building of an orchestra pit and the proscenium arch at the outset of the Temple's construction<sup>70</sup>). Mainstream Protestant and Roman Catholic clergy condemned her from their pulpits, maintaining that her brand of sermons and their presentations had little to do with religion and a lot to do with money-making. Her fellow

---

<sup>69</sup> McWilliams, "Sunlight In My Soul" in *The Aspirin Age* p.77.

<sup>70</sup> Lothrop, G. "West of Eden" in *Journal of the West*. p.53.



evangelical preachers felt a mixture of awe, envy and frustration as week after week former members of their congregations chose to fulfil their spiritual needs at the Angelus Temple.

Sarah Comstock, a prominent writer in 1920's and a severe critic of McPherson, wrote an article for *Harper's Monthly Magazine* entitled "Prima Donna of Revivalism". In it she details a typical Sunday evening at the Temple as follows:

The spectators arrive to find the stage set with an ocean background, rolling green waves flanked by rocks. At one side rises a lofty lighthouse of the kind known technically as "practical". From time to time its windows flash, its door stands ready to open. An hour of orchestral music, then the singers file in, from fifty to a hundred of them, ranging themselves in a loft over the speaker's platform, facing the people and creating the illusion of a heavenly choir just above the inspired one's head. Their costumes, for this particular evening of nautical entertainment, are in the role of rear admiral, she is gallant in a swinging cape over a white uniform, her red-gold coils surmounted by an all-but-official cap.<sup>71</sup>

Comstock more fully described the entrance thus:

There is a blare of trumpets, and the murmur of more than five thousand people hushes sharply. A baton flickers--"The Stars and Stripes" flings itself in a long red and white streamers of sound. Glances swing abruptly toward a staircase which comes down to the flower-decked platform. A figure descends balancing an armload of roses. "There she is! That's her!" .....No. It is not a famous prima donna's opening night. It is she who outstrips all of them. It is "Sister".<sup>72</sup>

The above serves to illustrate the nature of the settings for the sermons.

McPherson employed hundreds of different costumes in adjusting to the theme and motif of the production being offered. She produced and directed a staggering number of different productions to illustrate a sermon. Skits, plays, operas, dramatised scenes,

---

<sup>71</sup> Comstock, "Prima Donna of Revivalism" in *Harper's Monthly Magazine* December 1927 p.12.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid*

vaudevillian gimmicks, theatrical acts of numerous sorts were devised to communicate Biblical stories and themes. She composed 175 songs and hymns, wrote full operas, her first entitled "The Crimson Road", and 13 dramatic oratorios. The illustrated sermon, designed to entertain as well as to instruct, drew the largest crowds of all the Temple activities. Lately Thomas wrote:

On Sunday more than 40,000 persons turned out, during the course of the day, in a scramble to witness these super-productions. Thousands of them were disappointed, the capacity of the Angelus Temple being inadequate to handle the crush.<sup>73</sup>

Even McPherson's arch-critic Comstock felt compelled to report:

Sunday after Sunday the same phenomenon is seen. Thousand travel to Angelus Temple, packing the street cars and mobbing the doors, standing with aching feet in the hope of gaining admittance. And this happens not for a brief period of hysteria, it is no nine days' wonder; for several years it has been going on, with ever growing enthusiasm, and bids fair to continue. Aimee Semple McPherson is staging, month and month and even year after year, the most perennially successful show in the United States.<sup>74</sup>

An important point to remember as one reads of the theatrical dramas and operas which were a part of the regular services of the Angelus Temple and which drew the crowds in record numbers - this was the era when movies were really starting to become the entertainment of choice for the masses. Talking pictures had not long been available and the populace loved them. This was the "Roaring Twenties", the time of the Flapper, the Age of Jazz. The location of the Angelus Temple was but a few blocks from Hollywood Boulevard and McPherson was very well aware of current trends and popular culture. Her presentations reflected the popular culture. Over the years McPherson herself adapted her physical image in an endeavour to meet the prevailing standards of

---

<sup>73</sup> Thomas L. *The Vanishing Evangelist*. p.2

<sup>74</sup> Comstock, "Prima Donna of Revivalism" in *McPherson's Monthly Magazine* (December 1927) p.12.

what was considered “glamorous”. An article in Time Magazine described her as “famed blonde and ardent evangelist [who] was attired in an evening frock and French heel shoes [with] very, very, golden hair, meticulously marcelled...”<sup>75</sup> It can be rightly said of McPherson that she attained all the status and popular appeal of even the most glamorous of movie stars. The arena from which she operated epitomised a blend of evangelism and entertainment. Her followers sought every detail about her activities, her weight-reduction diet, her Lake Tahoe campground, and her sale of cemetery plots.<sup>76</sup> Los Angeles was particularly appropriate as a permanent centre for this preacher with an innate sense of theatre.<sup>77</sup> All of the preceding is a sound explanation for the emphasis McPherson placed on giving to her audience entertainment which could easily compete with the best that Los Angeles and Hollywood had to offer.

Who were the people that thronged to McPherson's gatherings? That she had a steady and consistent following of adherents is stating the obvious. McPherson did not preach every Sunday in the Angelus Temple. Extensive travel, vacations, lecture tours, illness, and the necessary out-of-town speaking engagements punctuated her regular Sunday pulpit work. (See Appendix A). However, these interim's did not serve to relax any interest in her regular church programs, The Angelus Temple survived well even during her many absences.

To describe the faithful adherents of McPherson accurately on a statistical basis is impossible. No records were kept at the Angelus Temple at any time which would have indicated any audience research. There is no data available to indicate any breakdown of

---

<sup>75</sup> *Time*, September 17, 1928 p.48.

<sup>76</sup> Lothrop. “West of Eden” in *Journal of the West*, p.53.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid*

the audience by such items as political affiliations, types of employment, education, etc. Therefore, in order to get an overall general picture of McPherson's audience I have had to rely on audience analysts, the ever-watchful critics, both favourable and unfavourable. One point of general agreement was that the geographic location of the Angelus Temple situated as it was in Southern California was a pertinent factor in its success. Said

McWilliams:

She had come, of course, to the right place to launch an evangel of joyousness. In the decade 1920-1930, 1,270,000 new residents swept into the County of Los Angeles, with the peak of this movement being reached in 1923, the year the Temple was founded. In most instances, newcomers could not find the church of their childhood, or, if they did, there was something about the impishly impious sunlight of the region that undermined their interest in "the old-style religion." Migration severs allegiances and weakens old loyalties. It creates the social fluidity out of which new cults grow and flourish. Nine out of ten of Aimee's followers were converts from the orthodox Protestant creeds, migrants from small towns and farming areas in the Middle West. Full of nostalgia for the corn belt but mightily intrigued by sunny California, aching with loneliness and the feeling of "wanting to know someone," they found their heart's desire in Angelus Temple, Sister Aimee, and the Shared Happiness of Kindred Souls.<sup>78</sup>

Another columnist, writing in *The Christian Century* of his observations at a evening healing service in the Temple, described the participants in these terms:

They are good people with toil-worn hands and heavy faces, unlearned and unskilled in things of the mind, but great in the realm of feeling and deeply moved by what they see and hear. They are the kind who need no other testimony to the truth of a thing than that they have seen it with their own eyes. It does not occur to these simple people to ask if what they see may be something different from what takes place or if what they feel may always be trustworthy evidence of what is going on. Without such an audience as this Aimee Semple McPherson would be lost. Indeed, she is one of them herself, a child in thought, though not without guile, but gifted with certain powers by which mystery of how she does what she does.<sup>79</sup>

---

<sup>78</sup> McWilliams, "Sunlight In My Soul" in *The Aspirin Age*, p.59.

<sup>79</sup> Worthington, "Healing at the Angelus Temple." In *The Christian Century*, pp.549-550.

While, doubtless, the author of the above passage believed he was accurately portraying the Temple participants, his paternalistic and patronising words reflect a perceived superiority towards his fellow visitors to the Temple. His comparison of McPherson to that of a child demonstrates the inability, shared by many others who would be thought of as “intellectual”, to acknowledge a mature and obviously highly successful woman.

Comstock giving her description of the audience stated: “I was convinced that the majority are more or less ignorant, credulous, and susceptible to cheap emotionalism. Still, I have met a few intelligent and educated persons who believe thoroughly in Sister's inspired leadership.”<sup>80</sup>

Regardless of who came to the Angelus Temple, from any point of view, there was always enough of them to spell out success -- McPherson usually preached to a full house. Also, from what I have read I am convinced that the audiences were extremely attentive and on many occasions enthralled. Certainly there is nothing that indicates a disappointed audience ever existed. The control that McPherson exerted over her listeners plus the activity provided for them left little chance for people to exit during a performance, a sermon, or any other offering.

The writers who concerned themselves with the followers of McPherson left little doubt that the permanent enrolment of the church was consistent. McPherson's followers were loyal believers. There was, of course, a percentage of inquisitive people who came primarily to scoff. Certainly McPherson had some vitriolic critics who accused her of

---

<sup>80</sup> Comstock. “Prima Donna of Revivalism” in *Harper's Monthly Magazine* (December 1927) p.15.

virtually every sin. These critics were mainly other clerics and/or intellectuals who found the emotional overtones of her messages too predominant and/or who considered her dramatic presentations in poor taste.

From the data read, it is possible to make some generalisations about the audiences. A large percentage were from the midwestern states (not too surprising given the influx of migrants into Southern California from this geographical location at this time) Their previous religious backgrounds were products of the stern Protestant teachings of the established Methodist, Baptist, and Presbyterian churches of the middle part of the United States. The largest segment of them represented economically what is referred to as the "middle class", neither the rich nor the poor. The faithful supporters included a large percentage of elderly, retired people. However, contrary to the critics who claimed that McPherson's work was done with the aged, the dying and the ignorant, the larger portion of her work, through the medium of her Bible College, was actually carried on by young men and women.

While McPherson's Foursquare Church might not, on the surface, appear to impart a sense of community it was, nevertheless, a 'communal religion', the kind of religion characterized by the eminent sociologist Durkheim, i.e. "the religion of [wo]man in society."<sup>81</sup> Durkheim saw religion as society reacting to its own existence, a kind of rudimentary sociological awareness. Inevitably, it is located in the minds and actions of individuals.<sup>82</sup> The data seems to support this conclusion with respect to McPherson's followers. That is not to say that it was not also a soteriological religion as well, the

---

<sup>81</sup> Gombrich, p.26.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid*

millennium theme was a prominent part of the doctrine of the church also, being a fundamentalist Christian denomination, it couldn't be anything else.

Given the size of the Angelus Temple and its capacity to hold over 5,000 people at each sermon, it is difficult to conclude that McPherson's adherents felt any sense of community such as is felt by members of congregations who attended churches both smaller and in the immediate vicinity of their homes. Weber said "..... sects have a special case of voluntary association among persons who share a common style of life and who want to exclude non-believers from the social intercourse of their group."<sup>83</sup> The volume of attendance would make the former very problematic for the McPherson followers, and as already been stated, the data claims that there was always an element of curiosity seekers present at any given time. The region's rapid growth had shattered any semblance of neighbourhood cohesion and fragmented any sense of community continuity.

There must have been a large core of faithful of the Angelus Temple who did, however, feel very much a part of a shared community. The dramas and operas that took place regularly required a great number of people to perform a variety of tasks. Members of the choir, workers in the Commissary, students at the Bible College, together they formed a close community which was and continues to be the mainstay of the Temple. But the majority of the people, I assume, remained outside of any sense of community and must have been there for other reasons. Whether those reasons were religious or secular is not something which can be determined with any accuracy. Lothrop claims that due to the nature of the audiences, i.e. made up largely of dislocated Midwesterners, in order to

---

<sup>83</sup> Weber M. *Sociology of Religion* p.61.

overcome loneliness they would often travel some distance from their residence to attend church. I think that the audience attendance was motivated by the charisma of McPherson herself. Perhaps an explanation lies somewhere in between these two assertions.

Another element which must be taken into consideration when assessing McPherson's audiences is that of her radio following. When McPherson inaugurated her radio station KFSG (Kall Foursquare Gospel) there were only two other station in Los Angeles. It is not stretching the imagination to state that doubtless this medium conceivably increased her audience ten-fold, although actual demographics and figures remain unknown and unknowable.



## CHAPTER V

### THE ROLE OF "ZEITGEIST" AND GENDER AS POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE FACTORS IN MCPHERSON'S MINISTRY

To enable a clearer understanding of McPherson and the methods she chose to propagate her beliefs, it is necessary to be aware of the social and cultural constructs predominant at the time of her resident ministry in Los Angeles. In order to be as successful as she was, it must be acknowledged that the methods she employed served to meet the spiritual/emotional needs of a large segment of the populace residing in Southern California during the Twenties and Thirties.

It has already been noted that the state of California at this time was experiencing an influx of migrants, primarily from the Mid-Western states. Thousands were choosing to settle in California, drawn by a large advertising campaign designed by the state to attract new residents which vaunted a climate eternally spring-like, where anyone possessed of even moderate means could live in a bungalow shaded by palms, and where orange trees would provide their breakfast fruit. It is reported that the population of Los Angeles increased 25 times between 1890 and 1930.<sup>84</sup>

---

<sup>84</sup> Lothrop. "West of Eden" in *Journal of the West*. p.52.

There were other important factors which need to be taken into consideration if one is to get an understanding, however minimal, of the *zeitgeist* in which McPherson flourished. This was the period following the first World War. This was a time of change and, according to Sullivan, for many, confusion. "Whenever the foundations of living are shaken, people either seek cover in something that seems stable and secure, or else they run as hard as they can to escape the threatening situation."<sup>85</sup> Regardless of what they do, in a situation of this kind, people are bewildered and confused at best. As one group of historians put it: "Any sudden or decided change in economic and social conditions brings a period of confusion which is ended only when people have had time to work out new patterns of living to fit the changed conditions."<sup>86</sup> For a lot of people at this time their choice for change was to turn to spiritual things. In an effort to gain security, many turned to nostalgic "Fundamentalism" for their recourse; others tried the compromise of "Modernism;" and still more sought to escape the reality of their predicament by making a fast and hard break into a dream world of activity.<sup>87</sup> Historian Mark Sullivan describes this insecurity:

.....it was a discontent with the post-war commotion, it was a wish for settled ways, for conditions that remained the same long enough to become familiar and therefore dear, for routine that remained set, for a world that 'stayed put.' It was a yearning for 'the time of peace wherein we trusted' - not meaning merely for peace in the absence of war, but for peace in the sense of serenity, for a state of things in which it was possible to feel trust, to rely upon permanence. Of all the nostalgic longing for the past that man has experienced since theology first taught him to look back toward Eden, hardly any was greater than the homesickness with which much of the world of 1920 looked back toward the world of 1914, in vain.<sup>88</sup>

---

<sup>85</sup> Sullivan, M. *Our Times, The Twenties* p.2.

<sup>86</sup> McGuire, Edna & T.B. Portwood. *The Rise of our Free Nation*, p.534.

<sup>87</sup> Sullivan, M. *Our Times, The Twenties*, p.3.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid*

Oil played its role also, having been discovered at various parts in the State, it contributed to an atmosphere reminiscent of the gold rush. Then there was, what I feel was a major contributing factor to McPherson's success, the phenomenon of the movies that provided the escape from reality which, according to historians, so many people were seeking. With much of the basic foundation of the old way of living gone, and "the key bases for morality, moderation and prudishness undermined", life tended to become a merry-go-round of thrills. Sullivan calls the Twenties a decade of "frankness, daring, realism, earthiness."<sup>89</sup> While it is acknowledged that the spirit of any time is difficult to assess accurately, being somewhat of an ethereal and evasive nature, the foregoing illustrates, in part, the conditions which made up the times in which McPherson's mission blossomed.

Certainly the impression one is left with is that these times could rightly be described as ones of frenzied activity. I believe the above also offers a sound explanation as to why McPherson drew crowds, in their thousands, to her Angelus Temple. While she preached a religion of hope and relief from the stresses and strains of everyday living, hers was the "old time religion" presented in a decidedly *au courant* fashion. The dramatic orations, plays and operas she presented in her Temple, replete with the latest lighting innovations, orchestras, and resplendent costumes, were able to compete with any other theatrical productions this "City of Angels" had to offer and had a bigger advantage over the others, no charge for admission!<sup>90</sup> It is no exaggeration to state that McPherson out-

---

<sup>89</sup> Sullivan M. *Our Times, The Twenties*. pp.385-386

<sup>90</sup> The plate was passed around and all contributions greatlyfully received. The cnthusiam and response to

competed the competition. In spite of the scorn of her "intellectual" critics, I believe that she demonstrated a shrewd intelligence in the methods she employed to win converts for her beloved Master. It could rightly be said that she had placed her finger on the pulse of her time and about these times and her methods, she remarked: "religion to thrive in the present- day, must utilise present-day methods. The methods change with the years, but the religion remains always the same."<sup>91</sup> Undeniably, it could be argued that McPherson achieved notable success before the establishment of her Angelus Temple. She seemed, from the outset of her mission, to have a instinctive feeling of what the people needed to hear in order to draw them to her side. In all her writings, one sees the emphasis on an easy and joyous theology and her concern with conveying a positive message is very evident. Her great success can be attributed to this positive attitude together with her ability to simplify dogma and doctrine and substitute the Gospel of Love for the Gospel of Fear. "She threw out dirges and threats of hell replacing them with jazz hymns and promises of glory."<sup>92</sup>

McPherson's sermons were either built around some major interest of the day or the latest news was used for illustrative purposes. Some of the popular melodies of the day were borrowed, and religious words were set to them. She used the common vernacular of the day in all her sermons, and the people understood her. She had the common sense of the common people and spoke of life as it really was in all its rawness thus creating a bond

---

McPherson's innovative presentations probably garnered more in donations on an individual basis than the amount needed to get into a cinema or music hall.

<sup>91</sup> McPherson. *In The Service of the King*. p.211.

<sup>92</sup> Lothrop. *West of Eden* in *Journal of the West*, p..54.

between herself and her audience. With her establishment in the Angelus Temple, her innate talents, supplemented by the generosity of her supporters, were given full reign, resulting in the resounding success of her mission.

The question might well be raised (as it was by many of her critics at this time), how these seemingly vaudevillian displays she staged could possibly be considered religion or of a religious nature? When McPherson resorted to this type of theatrics to illustrate her sermons she was, in fact, emulating a religious practice whose roots extend as far back as history itself, when "primitive" wo/man paid homage to their totemic symbols. The Middle Ages have a strong history of religious pageantry. Religious drama was often used to inform the common populace of a religious point of view. These dramatic presentations combined teaching and entertainment. "They would include dialogues between such allegorical personages as Mercy, Truth, Righteousness and Justice, or would demonstrate a point by a piece of symbolic action."<sup>93</sup> By turning abstract ideas into concrete images they not only informed but brought a much needed diversion into routine lives. Writing about Passion and Saint plays, Bates reports the English critic Ward as discovering that:

.....in the mystical liturgy of the Mass, with its blending of symbolic action, scriptural narrative, and outbursts of song, an artistic conception, a dramatic progression, with pantomimic, epical, and lyrical elements.....embellished on high church festivals, as Easter and Christmas, by the addition of living tableaux to illustrate the gospel story.<sup>94</sup>

These religious dramas were not simply confined to serious re-enactment of Christian historical facts. They were also used as a platform to express the opinions of various groups regarding the social and cultural morês of the day. Thus, it can be

---

<sup>93</sup> Denny, N. Ed. *Medieval Drama*. p.42-43

<sup>94</sup> Bates, K. *The English Religious Drama*. p.6-7

recognised that McPherson was actually following a long line of traditional religious expression.

Another facet of McPherson's religious practice, and one which came in for a great deal of scorn and derision from her critics, was the faith healing services which played such a major role in drawing the crowds to her. I believe that this is one factor that must be seriously considered when a determination is trying to be made as to why McPherson can rightly be referred to as "the forgotten evangelist". On this basis alone, many scholars of both history and religion have chosen to ignore her, dismissing her claims with charges of charlatanism, at the same time unable to offer intellectual proof for their refutations.

Faith healing, when it occurs; why it occurs; if it occurs; is a subject which in itself has been a topic of much controversy over the years.<sup>95</sup> This is especially so since the time of the Enlightenment when scientific validation began to take precedence over philosophical or ideological reasoning. While mainstream Christianity shies away from the subject of faith healing, and would prefer to leave it to the realm of sectarianism, they have, at times in the past, been forced to acknowledge the existence of "miracles", albeit reluctantly. However, it is not my intention at this time to debate the pros and cons of the validity of faith healing.

In conversations with Temple personnel, I was told that the vaults of the Temple contain "thousands of testimonials and affidavits validating [McPherson's] healing

---

<sup>95</sup> Numerous books and articles attest to this controversy and it is not possible to list them all here. However,

for those readers who want a limited insight into the controversy I recommend David Alexander's "A Closer Look at Today's Faith Healer" in *The Humanist*, v. 48 p.8-12. Sept/Oct.88. And *All Things Are Possible - The Healing & Charismatic Revivals in Modern America*, David Harrell, Jr., author, for two differing views on this subject.

ministry. This documentation has yet to be compiled in a manner which would facilitate any academic research. Until someone with the time and skill for the task undertakes a case study, taking a sufficient number of them to establish an average, or draw a legitimate deduction (a process which, to be really valid would require following the patients from the onset of their illness or disability to their death), then an appraisal of the healing of McPherson can only be made from those recorded observations made at the time of their happening. Again, this was an area of great diversity of opinion. Those who claimed to have been cured (and they numbered in the hundreds, if not thousands) were content to accept what they perceived as a blessing and spread the word among friends and strangers. On the other hand, the sceptics sought to legitimise their positions, and when possible used the medium of the press to question not only individual cures but the whole McPherson healing ministry. Among the questions asked was why, if Jesus chose to heal some, did He not respond to the multitudinous cry of the millions of believing ones outside the realm of the Temple? The implication here is that God must be willing to give all or nothing at all. In *The Christian Century* (April, 1929) Worthington writes the following:

Grave questions arise as to whether Mrs. McPherson actually accomplishes much of anything in the way of cures outside of disorders which are dependent upon a mental attitude.<sup>96</sup>

While at the time of writing, and in keeping with the whole tone of the article, the above statement was designed to elicit a negative appraisal of McPherson's healing ministry, considered in a modern context it offers a sound rationale for the success McPherson enjoyed. Whether one is willing or not to embrace the concept of divine or faith healing,

---

<sup>96</sup> Worthington. *The Christian Century*, April, 1929. p.582.

spontaneous remissions, valid and medically documented, have been reported in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*. While most researchers attribute this phenomenon to physiological elements, a growing number are of the opinion that the emotional and mental state of the patient are contributing factors.<sup>97</sup> So it is that sixty years later when trying to evaluate the phenomenon of faith healing, unlike McPherson's critics, we have the advantage of the added dimension of the psychological component as a possible explanation for consideration.

One of the questions raised at the beginning of this thesis centred around gender and what role, if any, it played in the predominately negative perceptions of the historical record of McPherson. As previously stated, McPherson was a Fundamentalist, a philosophy which, if strictly adhered to, would have prevented any woman from occupying a pulpit. Undoubtedly she knew very well what St. Paul had preached to the Corinthians:

Let your women keep silent in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but *they are commanded* to be under obedience, as also saith the law. And if they will learn any thing, let them ask their husbands at home: for it is a shame for women to speak in the church. I Corinthians 14:34,35

Aimee battled with the Pauline dictum from the outset of her decision to serve the Lord. Directly as a result of her conversion through the ministrations of Robert Semple and before her marriage to him, Aimee recounts in her autobiography how she asked God what she could do in return for all He had done for her. As was her custom, she went to her Bible for the answer:

---

<sup>97</sup> Straus. "The Lazarus File - When the 'Spontaneous' Cure Comes from Within" in *American Health* May-89. p.68.



I found words like, "He that winneth souls is wise, and shall shine as the stars forever and ever." It was as though a great voice had spoken in trumpet tones, "Now that you, yourself, have been saved - go, help rescue others!"<sup>98</sup>

The above precipitated a conversation with her mother as to why women did not preach the gospel. Mrs. Kennedy repeated Paul's admonitions together with the time-worn dictum that Eve, the mother of all living things, was the first transgressor. Aimee's response was to enquire why, if woman was the first to bring sin into the world, why should she not be the first to take it out again? This led Aimee to ruminating over the whole situation:

"Women...women...women," I queried aloud. "Why are they prevented from Christianizing the whole world?" I found that Deborah, a woman, led forth her gleaming armies beneath flaming banners under the sunshine of God's smile. The woman at the well preached the first salvation sermon and led an entire city to Christ, having chosen as her text, "Come, see the man that told me all I ever did." Moreover, a woman had delivered the first Easter message and none other than the Master had so commissioned her.<sup>99</sup>

Shortly thereafter, Aimee had another conversation, this time with her father and one which would provide her with an explanation of the Pauline pronouncement which would enable her to take to the pulpit without any qualms. Mr. Kennedy's explanation stated that Paul was simply requesting that women refrain from asking for explanations of the rituals until they were home with their more learned husbands.....his (Paul's) admonition was simply to prevent interruptions in the procedures and maintain order. See (Appendix A)

---

<sup>98</sup> McPherson. *Aimee's Life Story*. p.25.

<sup>99</sup> *ibid* p.28.

Her father's explanation was good enough for Aimee and from then on she had no doubt that adhering to a fundamentalist doctrine did not in any way conflict with a woman taking over the pulpit in any church. The first of the three autobiographies she wrote, a prolific eight hundred pages long, she entitled *This Is That*, and a full first page puts the reader clearly into the picture from the start. It reads as follows: **THIS IS THAT**

Acts 2:16-18.

**THIS IS THAT** which was spoken by the Prophet Joel:

"And it shall come to pass in the last days saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and daughters shall prophesy .... and upon my servants and my handmaidens I will pour out, in those days, of My Spirit; and they shall prophesy."

What the above conveys is the need that McPherson felt to explain how it was possible that she, a female, could serve God. For this she relied on emphasising prophetic tradition. She also claimed that she was a legitimate member of the clergy because the authority of God had decreed it, coming, she believed, as a result of her mother's faith and vow to offer a female child to God's service.

McPherson's claims as stated above, fits into, what has been aptly described by Susan Sered, as a need by women religious leaders, often through the medium of autobiographies, to demonstrate their integrity both as women and as leaders. The telling of their life-stories "reflect, underscore, and sometimes resolve issues of gender and leadership". When McPherson described how she made her decision to leave her second husband based on a death-bed experience in which she was called to go and serve the Lord, she demonstrates a pattern shared by other female religious figures, listed by Sered

as: 1) a history of prolonged, severe illness. 2) Overcoming illness as part of the path to becoming a religious leader. 3) Initially refusing to become a leader.<sup>100</sup> Quoting from a study done of Pentecostal women preachers, Sered says “.....that because of the inherent danger of announcing this belief that God has called them, most of the women’s stories have embedded in them a ritual disclaimer of sorts - a message that states or implies. “Look, I didn’t ask for this. God called me. What could I do but obey?”<sup>101</sup> Certainly the latter position was often taken by McPherson. She also recognised that her strength lay precisely in her developmental past, judging from the premium she placed on processing personal experiences.

From all that I have read both about McPherson and written by her, the gender issue was one which, at least to outward appearances, was viewed by her as being nothing more than a minor obstacle. Her writings do not indicate a strong conflict between her role as preacher and wife. When she chose the former over the latter, she makes it quite clear to her readers that the choice was God's, not hers (in keeping with the pattern above). Motherhood didn't appear to present insurmountable obstacles for McPherson. While initially she left her daughter Roberta in the care of her own mother to pursue her ministry, when she decided to leave her husband, Harold, she took both children with her. This is not meant to suggest that theirs was a typical childhood. Travelling from town to city, living out of the "Gospel Car" or in a tent, crossing the United States and Canada, and always remaining on the sidelines, the children often expressed a desire for a "home, a

---

<sup>100</sup> Sered, Susan Starr. "Conversations with Rabbanit Zohara: An Exploration of Gender and Religious Autobiography in *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* . LXIII/2 p.252.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid* p.253.

garden and rose bushes". McPherson assured them that the Lord would "come through" with their requests and, sure enough, eventually He did in the form of faithful adherents who gifted her with a bungalow complete with the garden and roses soon after her arrival in Los Angeles.

A number of McPherson's critics resorted to attacking her from a gender bias and she was well aware that a great many men largely denigrated the activities of women outside their homes. Disapproving Orthodox ministers were joined by some of the leading male evangelists of the time in their condemnation of a woman in the pulpit. Mainstream churches vilified her from their pulpits. Doubtless their disapproval was motivated by what they saw as the invasion of their fields, also the fact that she was so successful at what she did conflicted with culturally accepted norms of female behaviour. However, having resolved the Pauline dictum to her own satisfaction, her critics were dismissed by her with the retort "...if the Lord chose a woman to attract to Himself those who otherwise might not have come, who shall question the wisdom of the Lord?"<sup>102</sup> Nevertheless, that hers was essentially a patriarchal understanding of the nature of God goes along with her fundamentalist interpretation of the Bible.

From the earliest stages of her ministry, and as soon as finances would allow it, McPherson wrote a weekly magazine for distribution to her followers. This she named *The Bridal Call*. By utilising the analogy of the body of the church and God as that of Bride and Bridegroom whose union would take place at the time of the Millennium, McPherson was emulating a metaphor that had its roots in the Old Testament. Her

---

<sup>102</sup> McPherson. *Aimee's Life Story*. p.25.

revelations and in particular her vision (see Appendix B) reveals an experience which has been shared by other female religionists whose zealousness and desire for unity with the Godhead precipitated, what was considered by them, an actual coming together with their Beloved Master.<sup>103</sup>

Could the above be an indication of a subconscious need on her part for the elevation of the feminine in this male-dominated culture? It has been suggested by one writer that "McPherson, in an attempt to include the feminine, saw the gospel as four sided and the godhead as fourfold", ergo, the reason she chose to name her church The International Church of the Foursquare Gospel.<sup>104</sup> However, McPherson never veered from her explanation as to why she chose to emphasise a gospel with four sides, this, she claimed, was revealed to her as the true meaning of Ezekiel's vision (Ezekiel 1:1-28).

Any attempt to analyse the thought processes of a given individual, and especially a historical figure, by those not trained in the field of psychology (and often by those who are "experts" in this field), can result in nothing more than conjecture on the part of the investigator. However, in the interest of an unbiased appraisal as to whether or not McPherson's emphasis on the number four was indicative of an unconscious struggle between her patriarchal milieu and her desire for the elevation of the feminine over a male symbol system, the following, taken from an article by Setta, is given:

In many of his writings, Carl Jung noted that the number four was a feminine number. In commenting on the conflict between quaternity and trinity, he noted that the Christian Trinity was of exclusively masculine character. He went on to point out that "the unconscious, however, transforms it into a quaternity, which is at the same time unity... Jung noted

---

<sup>103</sup> *The Book of Margery Kempe* gives a good example of this phenomenon.

<sup>104</sup> Setta, Susan. "Patriarchy and Feminism in Conflict: The Life and Thought of Aimee Semple McPherson" in *Anima*, Nin2/2 p.132.

that the fourth element was often symbolized by the Virgin Mary. Because of McPherson's Protestant milieu, she could not include [the Virgin] Mary in her idea of God, but neither could she exclude the feminine. Thus, in the case of Healing the Divine Handmaiden, McPherson restored the feminine.<sup>105</sup>

Jungian adherents will undoubtedly find the above very meaningful. Certainly it provides much room for thought if one ascribes to Jungian philosophy. Setta used it to validate her claim for what she described as McPherson's struggle with her gender in a male-dominated milieu.<sup>106</sup>

As to McPherson's state of mind, any pronouncement on my part can only be viewed as presumptuous. However, I do not hesitate to refute Setta's observation that:

.....she struggled both personally and publicly with the idea that woman was unacceptable [in the ministry] and that this struggle sometimes made it difficult for her to see herself as a spiritual leader.<sup>107</sup>

In all of my research and readings McPherson came across as a strong, confident woman and believed herself to be more than a match for any male. This should not be interpreted to reflect McPherson's views on the status of women in general vis-à-vis their male counterpart, it is applicable only on a personal level. While she did, on occasion, leave the pulpit of the Temple in the hands of male ministers while she travelled abroad to make new converts, there is no indication in her writings that she had, at any time, qualms that she would lose her popularity to even the most skilled of them.

In light of the above, would it be correct to conclude that McPherson could rightly be considered a feminist?<sup>108</sup> While it is acknowledged that her lifestyle called into question

---

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid* p. 134.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid* p. 136.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>108</sup> The question of who qualifies as a feminist is not one which lends itself to easy answers. Barbara Newman in her book "Sister of Wisdom" struggles with some of the same issues as she tries to

the prevailing status of women, and it is agreed that she was able to circumvent patriarchal role assignments, I am more inclined to agree with Zikmund's claim, i.e. "she was not a feminist, but her strong and visible leadership carried a message of female leadership that became an inspiration to many women".<sup>109</sup> Why I take this position is that, due to the fundamentalist nature of her ministry, she was constantly reiterating the patriarchal view of Bible and all that it entailed, including the belief that women brought sin into the world and the sins and shortcomings of the male could be traced to the female. Nothing I read in her writings or sermons gives any indication that she was interested in altering the status quo of women in general. However, as sixty-seven percent of the students in her Bible College were females I can only hypothesise that abdication of the accepted female role was permissible if it came as a result of God's calling. I am also of the opinion that religious fundamentalism and feminism as the latter term is generally understood today, i.e. equality of the sexes, is antithetical. As stated, McPherson was not interested in disturbing the status quo. Hers was not a social revolution it was a religious crusade. Her goal was to save souls and in that context the gender of the soul was not at issue, all being equal. By comparison, Mary Baker Eddy, also a strong woman whose ideas and opinions convinced her she should govern her church, also insisted that Christian Science offered no barriers to women as readers or practitioners. Because of this policy, one Augusta Stetson became the leader of a rival New York City faction of Christian Science which eventually challenged the authority of Mrs. Eddy.<sup>110</sup> While sixty-percent of the student body in the Bible College established by McPherson were women, nothing in the data

---

answer the same question about Hildegard of Bingen.

<sup>109</sup> Zikmund, Barbara Brown. "The Feminist Thrust of Sectarian Christianity" in *Women of Spirit* p.220.

<sup>110</sup> Zikmund. "The Feminist Thrust of Sectarian Christianity" in *Women of Spirit* p.220

indicates that she encouraged them to take over the podium in the Angelus Temple.

Whenever she was away on her missionary work, she designated male preachers to replace her. It is possible she was aware of the challenge to leadership made to Mrs. Eddy by one of her own gender, and, while only speculative, it is conceivable that McPherson took steps to ensure that she would not find herself in this position.



## CHAPTER VI

### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS.

All the above brings us back to the question as to why McPherson has rated so little attention in the area of religious studies. There were a number of events in her personal life which I feel were instrumental in projecting a negative characterisation of her and which, subsequently, spilled over to colour her ministry. Critics were quick to point to the fact that she had three husbands, and two divorces. Writing of this part of her life McPherson had this to say:

People sometimes speak of me as a "much married evangelist," but I have lived with my husbands only about four and one-half years in my life. I was married only a short time when Robert Semple died. I tried to settle down again without going into God's work, but I could not do it. After a short time ministering with me Harold McPherson went back to the business world, and after a time divorced me and married again, leaving me to preach alone. And then, after years and years alone, Mr. Hutton came along, and I thought I was through with loneliness, thought I was through with my name across the headlines. I thought it might be protection and home and love, but it did not work out that way.<sup>111</sup>

---

<sup>111</sup> McPherson. *Life Story of Aimee Semple McPherson*, p.232.

When McPherson met Hutton she was forty two years old and had, for the past twenty years, except for the brief period of her marriage to Harold McPherson, devoted all of her time and energy to her ministry. For years she drove herself relentlessly for the good of the cause. One observer noted:

Sister McPherson seems to have no regard for her bodily comforts. Some days she scarcely takes time to eat. Her mind is too intent upon ministering to the needy, and answering every cry for help, that often times her attendants must actually carry her through the crowds of pleading people who bar her way.<sup>112</sup>

Love and romance, neither looked for nor expected at this stage in her life, appeared in the guise of a young and, in her judgement, handsome man, one who "wanted to be at [her] side and work with [her] in the church [vowing that] his heart belonged to the Lord and he wanted to work in God's vineyard". Who could blame McPherson for feeling "this was not the girlish, elemental emotion of youthful love, but rather the reawakening of a mature tired heart."<sup>113</sup> In Hutton she saw someone who not only loved her, but was willing to share her frantic work pace. Unfortunately, Hutton turned out to be more interested in the church receipts than the church. After the divorce he took to the stage in an effort to pursue a singing career with somewhat ignominious results.

Yet, more than her three marriages, the incident which generated the greatest notoriety for McPherson revolved around her disappearance and claimed kidnapping. No other occurrence in 1926 rated the publicity accorded by the media to this event. Then, as now in any criminal case involving a well-known figure or celebrity, facts and reality were immersed in a sea of innuendo, fantasy and distortion. Anything that would embellish the

---

<sup>112</sup> McPherson. *This is That* p.374. quoting Mr. Frisbie, former president of the Theosophical Society, Fresno, California.

<sup>113</sup> McPherson. *Life Story of Aimee Semple McPherson*. p.234.

details to elevate them to sensational status was employed. Journalist Henry Fairlie one time syndicated columnist for the *Washington Post* wrote a column advising his readers, that:

News is not what has happened; it is not "the way it is". It is an account of what a few people, journalists like myself, think has happened. Out of what we think has happened we select and elaborate, and we provide each day what is called the news. This our job: to make the news up. That may sound like a shocking confession. It is, in fact, the only honourable description of journalism. We are engaged in "making up" stories about the little we know of what goes on in the world." (October 11, 1976)

The above, written fifty years after the McPherson affair, does offer an insight into how journalists and journalism go about the business of creating the news in an effort to garner the highest readership. The McPherson kidnapping was an event which had all the facets for creative journalism and not a day passed during this time when it was not a topic of discussion.

The reality of the McPherson kidnapping intrigue is it could not be proved in a court of law that it did not take place. McPherson never strayed or altered her story of this event (unlike the numerous witnesses called by the prosecution). The truth of whether it did or did not is something that only she and Kenneth Ormiston (the radio operator with whom it was alleged she was staying with during her absence), know with certainty. Like McPherson, Ormiston maintained his innocence until he died.

As pointed out by Sered, "in many cultures women religious leaders find themselves in the position of being loved by their constituents but suppressed, harassed, or persecuted by government or other institutional authorities"<sup>114</sup>. This could certainly be

---

<sup>114</sup> Sered, Susan Starr. "Conversations with Rabbanit Zohara: An Exploration of Gender and Religious Autobiography." p.251

said in McPherson's case. She was everything a "real" woman was not supposed to be; assertive, dominant, successful, confident. Seemingly able to function and run her "holy empire" without the presence or authority of a strong male figure. No wonder she incurred the wrath of institutional authorities and the social "elite". Mrs. Baker Eddy, as noted, was also a strong woman and one who ran her own church, and the question that this poses is, why was it that she was not subject to the attacks on her character and the scorn that McPherson elicited? Upon comparison a striking difference between the two women, and one which is the most obvious, is their demeanour. Each could be said to have capitalised on the implications of womanhood to promote their version of the Gospel. Mrs. Eddy chose the maternal approach while McPherson chose the sexual. By exploiting her femininity through costume and comportment McPherson never left anyone in doubt that she was very much a woman. Mrs. Eddy, on the other hand, by stressing the maternal, acted within society's expectations and while circumspect for her religious activities, she was not perceived to be pushing back all the boundaries as established by the male-dominated society. She also developed about her an aura of mystery, preferring the seclusion of her home to the pulpit<sup>115</sup>. While she was not immune to gender based criticisms, and was known to have lamented "If I were a man, they would not treat me so."<sup>116</sup> by comparison to McPherson, her treatment by her opponents was far less harsh. What McPherson did, that Mrs. Eddy did not, was to step outside the paradigm of respectability as perceived by many, though not all. The price she paid for not adhering to

---

<sup>115</sup> The actual Mrs. Eddy, as opposed to the ideal Mrs. Eddy whom she promulgated, never served as an appropriate advertisement for Christian Science or healthy womanhood: Throughout her life she was plagued with illness. Few Scientists, however, were permitted close enough to discern the actual Mrs. Eddy. (Dakin)

<sup>116</sup> Dakin, Edwin Franden. *Mrs. Eddy: The Biography of a Virginal Mind* p.253.

an "acceptable" stereotype of a woman's place, i.e. kitchen , home, hearth and motherhood, was the pillorying she took from the establishment through the medium of the press.

In spite of all the attacks upon her character and much adverse and sensational publicity, McPherson was able to maintain the love and loyalty of hundreds of her followers. It is possible that the negative publicity, caused by her many difficulties, made them feel as if McPherson was in closer contact with the world and its problems, thus creating an even greater bond between them. The scene which greeted her upon her appearance in the Angelus Temple after the decision was made by the judicial authorities that there was no evidence to go forth with a charge of public mischief and false accusation against her, resulting from her claims of kidnapping, is described as follows:

For the only time in her career she failed to control an audience. Her gestures for silence were completely ignored in the boisterous demonstration which shook the church. People hollered at the top of their voices. The thunderous applause was almost deafening. Some tooted horns, showered confetti from the balconies, and unleashed serpentine as on New Year's eves. The band members blew their horns. The jubilee was indescribable. Such a scene never took place in any church in the world as unfolded that night of the pastor's vindication.<sup>117</sup>

McPherson's death on September 27th, 1944 was another event which elicited sensational reporting by the press. There was speculation that she had taken her own life. Controversy over her death was fed by an unusually lengthy inquest. The jury did not enter their verdict until October 13. They ruled out suicide. "Death was caused by shock (contributed to by adrenal haemorrhage) and respiratory failure, from an accidental overdose of barbitol compound." "There was no evidence of recent depression". Said Dr.

---

<sup>117</sup> Cox, Raymond. *The Verdict is In*. p.247.

Mary Ruth Oldt of Western Laboratories, assistant county pathologist in charge of the autopsy: "Mrs. McPherson was a very sick woman, with a bad kidney condition, which seriously damaged the liver, thus increasing the effect of the drug she took."<sup>118</sup>

Many prophesied that McPherson's Foursquare organisation would quickly disintegrate without her charismatic leadership. It did not. Its leadership was taken over by her son Rolf, and as of this writing it is reported that there are 25,577 Foursquare churches world-wide in 74 countries, with a total of almost one million seven hundred thousand members.<sup>119</sup>

Was Aimee Semple McPherson motivated by religious fervour or was she simply a clever, manipulative woman motivated, as many of her severest critics claim by the glare of the spotlights and a “prima donna” mentality? Though not an intellectual, she was intelligent. That she was clever is quite evident. Manipulative? Certainly. She undeniably knew how to orchestrate her presentations to elicit the most favourable response from an audience, there is nothing sinister or negative about that. Manipulation has been and is practised by all religions, attaching dogma and liturgy to express their convictions. Truly holy? The depth of any given individual’s sanctification can only be speculative from the view of an outside . And certainly in the case of an historical figure, where time and its inherent distortions of memory and facts often blur the reality, an assessment of this nature is not possible nor academically valid. While it is not my intention to try and pass McPherson off as a saint..... nor do I feel that it is necessary that she be regarded as a religious icon, nevertheless my research on this remarkable woman has led me to believe

---

<sup>118</sup> Epstein, Mark D. *Sister Aimee: Life Story of Aimee Semple McPherson*. p.873

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid*

that religious conversion was the motivating factor of her mission. Whether or not one agrees with the methods she used to win converts for Jesus, I believe that this was her prime goal and all her efforts were directed to this end.

The purpose of this thesis was to examine and study Aimee Semple McPherson's ministry and religious expression in an effort to try and understand why she has been largely ignored by historians and students of religion alike. The data necessary to get a picture (if not a perfect one) of McPherson has also enabled the development of insight in to the socio-religious culture of the 1920s and 1930s. McPherson's marital status together with the kidnapping affair were two personal elements of her life which were blown out of proportion, to the point where they overshadowed all of her religious and humanitarian accomplishments. While gender was not viewed as a major obstacle by McPherson herself, because of the emphasis she placed on her femininity together with her ability to achieve a phenomenal success without the benefits of a male partner, she was viewed by many to be flouting convention. The attacks on her character and ministry by other leading male evangelists<sup>120</sup> at this time were extremely hostile.

The socio-religious culture of the time frame under examination was, as already noted, a time of great flux. Fervour and flamboyance engulfed the nation, which, released from the bonds of war, careened from seeking normalcy to embracing novelty.

---

<sup>120</sup> I have not delved into the subject of the male revivalists to try and ascertain how they were received or treated by the establishment or media for the following reasons: Given the common assumption that not only the First but the Second and Third Persons of the Holy Trinity are represented as male, should the Creator need a vessel to communicate with humanity, the expectation has been that He would choose a male agent. It therefore follows that any male claiming to be an agent of the Lord would most certainly be subject to less derision or criticism than a woman. Women, being generally thought of as the original transgressors of all mankind - they are even discouraged from speaking in the church! Therefore, a woman who would choose the mantle of leadership in the religious sphere requires a great deal more imagination and endurance than a male if she is to be successful.

McPherson's bravado suited the times and her "ferris--wheel" approach to religion captured the popular imagination.<sup>121</sup>

Los Angeles was particularly appropriate as a permanent centre for McPherson with her innate sense of theatre. In the 1920s and 1930s movie-making had become the city's major industry. "It was not uncommon to hear sermons on such topics as "What Would Jesus do if He Were A Great Movie Director Like Cecil B. DeMille?"<sup>122</sup> And motion pictures sometimes replaced sermons at least 263 times in Los Angeles churches in the 1920s.<sup>123</sup> The nation as a whole experienced an ecclesiastical building boom in the 1920s during which 184 new church buildings were constructed. Over \$60,000,000 was spent by Los Angeles Protestant congregations in creating appropriate settings for their congregational life.<sup>124</sup>

As to how women were perceived in these hectic decades - when pursuing my research for this thesis, I came upon a report describing the political conventions which took place two years after the Armistice of World War I and prior to the formal announcement of the 19th Amendment. "Perhaps the most unusual feature of the 1920s conventions was the presence of women" so stated Alice Donaldson.<sup>125</sup> She then went on to remark how "red, blonde, and brunette coiffeurs sprinkled every row."<sup>126</sup> As for the reaction of men to the presence of women in their formally male domain, one delegate declared "it is indeed a pitiable sight to observe a tenderly cultured gentlewoman trying to

---

<sup>121</sup> Lothrop. "West of Eden" in *Journal of the West*, p.53.

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>125</sup> Donaldson, Alice. "Women Emerge as Political Speakers" in *Speech Monographs* March 1921, p.54.

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid*



accustom herself to wearing her hat on one side and talking in a confidential shrill out of one corner of her mouth..."<sup>127</sup> The editor of the St. Louis *Republic* also made fun of the women delegates. He said they ".....discussed the newest development in tatwork, hemstitching and whether or not a 2-year old child ought to be allowed eat meat in the evenings."<sup>128</sup> At the conventions the band serenaded the women with the hit tune "You Great Big Beautiful Doll."<sup>129</sup> Williams Jennings Bryan commented that the ".....inclination of women politicians to orate from chairs and soap boxes came from their fear of mice."<sup>130</sup>

The above is included in order to explain by example the prevailing attitude toward women. It illustrates the angst felt by men when they encounter women outside their ordained domain. The dichotomy of the "good" and "bad" woman was still very much in evidence and exemplified in the 1920s and 1930s by movie goddesses or the *femme fatale*. While desired and admired by the males, and emulated by a certain segment of the female population, they were marginalized by the establishment and viewed as something of a curiosity. This was the time in which McPherson flourished against seemingly insurmountable odds.

McPherson acquired all the glamour and popularity of a movie star but she had something else going for her and that was charisma. Her followers initial response and ongoing faithfulness reveal that what she said provided a new context for them in which to evaluate their social circumstances and a new way in which to live in what was, for most of them, a strange, frantic city far removed from their Mid-Western roots. An important

---

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid*

component of her message was its personalism, which emphasised her special character . The result was McPherson obtained the devotion of a large number of followers, while at the same time she had to endure the ridicule and scorn of a large segment of the establishment who used the medium of the press to express their disapproval of her.

In spite of all the negativity which surrounded McPherson and resulted, I believe, in her ignominious place in both religious and feminist history, in retrospect, perhaps “forgotten evangelist” is a misnomer. While academia may have chosen to forget McPherson, from the statistics on the number of Foursquare Churches she founded, and which are still active, there are still many “ordinary” people who revere her memory.

The role of an individual in religious history is a difficult task to establish. One has to rely on sources which can only be viewed as questionable given what Popper calls ‘the conspiracy theory of society.’<sup>131</sup> Words are no less liable than actions to entail unintended consequences and there is always the additional hazard of the problem of communication. Human messages are often at risk of distortion and the motivations of any given individual’s message is not one which can be empirically established. Given this reality any assessment of McPherson’s character, as well as her method and motivation of propagating Christianity must be accompanied by an acknowledgment of the biases arising from the gender and socio-religious background of myself. I believe that religion is a phenomenon which is not amenable to being explained itself. While as a concern it leans toward the concrete, as ultimate, or unconditioned, its foundational premise, it tends toward the abstract, with all the difficulties that entails. It is hoped that I have achieved a

---

<sup>131</sup> Popper claims that popular perceptions of society are very often conspiracy theories and cites as one example the Indian caste system as being ascribed to those who most benefit from it.

measure of success in achieving what was intended in this paper, that is an analysis of McPherson in an attempt to establish her legitimacy in religious and feminist records.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

### Books:

- Anderson, Robert Mapes. *Vision of the Disinherited - The Making of American Pentecostalism*. New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979.
- Bates, Katharine Lee. *The English Religious Drama*. New York: The MacMillan Company, 1926.
- Cox, Raymond L. *The Verdict Is In*. Published by the writer in co-operation with the Heritage Committee, California, 1983.
- Denny, Neville. Assoc. Ed. *Medieval Drama*. London: Edward Arnold (Pub.) Ltd., 1973.
- Epstein, Daniel Mark. *Sister Aimee: The Life of Aimee Semple McPherson*. New York/San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1993.
- Faulkner, Harold Underwood. *American Political and Social History*. New York: F. S. Crofts and Co. 1946.
- Ferguson, Charles W. *The Confusion of Tongues - A Review of Modern Isms*. New York: Doubleday, Doran & Company, Inc., 1933.
- Gombrich, Richard. *Theravada Buddhism: A Social History from Ancient Benares to Modern Colombo*. London & New York: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1988.
- Harrison, Beverly Wildung, "Sexism and the Contemporary Church: When Evasion Becomes Complicity", *Sexist Religion and Women in the Church*, ed. Alice L. Hageman, p.195-216. New York: Association Press, 1974.
- Hexam, Irving. *Concise Dictionary of Religion*. Illinois: InterVarsity Press. 1993
- Mavity, Nancy Barr. *Sister Aimee*. New York: Doubleday, Doran and Company, 1931.
- McGuire, Edna, Thomas B. Portwood. *The Rise of Our Free Nation*. New York: The MacMillan Company, 1943.

- McPherson, Aimee Semple. *In the Service of the King*. New York: Boni and Liverright, 1927.
- , *The Foursquare Gospel*, comp. Dr. Raymond L. Cox, California Heritage Committee, 1969.
- , *Lost and Restored*. Los Angeles: Foursquare Publications, n.d.
- , *The Story of my Life*. Hollywood: International Correspondents' Pub., 1951. Retitled *Aimee: Life Story*. Los Angeles: Foursquare Publications, 1979.
- , *This is That*. Los Angeles: Bridal Call Publishing Co., 1919. 2nd Edition: Los Angeles: Echo Park Evangelistic Association, Inc. 1923.
- , *The Personal Testimony of Aimee Semple McPherson*. Org. Pub. 1928. Reprinted Los Angeles: The Starling Press, 1984.
- , *Declaration of Faith*. Los Angeles: International Church of the Foursquare Gospel. n.d.
- McWilliams, Carey. "Sunlight in my Soul," *The Aspirin Age*, ed. Isabel Leighton. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1949.
- Reuther, Rosemary & Eleanor McLaughlin ed. *Women of Spirit*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1979.
- Reuther, Rosemary Radford. Ed. *Religion and Sexism*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1974.
- Steele, Robert V.P. (pseud. Lately Thomas). *The Vanishing Evangelist*. New York: The Viking Press, 1959.
- Sullivan, Mark. *Our Times, The Twenties*, New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1935.
- Worrall, Ambrose. *The Gift of Healing*. New York: Harper & Row, 1965.
- Zikmund, Barbara Brown. "The Struggle for the Right to Preach." *Women and Religion in America - Vol. 1: The Nineteenth Century*. Rosemary Radford Reuther & Rosemary Skinner Keller Ed. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1983.

**Periodicals:**

"Aimee Semple McPherson" *Time*. September 17, 1928, p.48

-----, *Time*. March 3rd, 1930.

-----, *Time*. February 16th, 1948, p.71

-----, *Time*. April 7, 1930 p.40

-----, *Time*. April 21, 1930 p.54

-----, *Time*. June 23, 1930 p.34

"Aimee of the Angels." *Newsweek*. October 9, 1944. p.82

"Aimee Semple McPherson." *Life*. October 30, 1944. pp.85-89

"Aimee's Foursquare Behind the War." *Newsweek*. July 19, 1943. p.64

"California Evangelist." *New Statesman and Nation*. November 13, 1926,  
pp.134-36.

"Christ in Vaudeville." *New Statesman and Nation*. October 6, 1928, pp. 785-86.

Comstock, Sarah. "Aimee Semple McPherson: Prima Donna of Revivalism."  
*Harper's Magazine*. December, 1927.

Dacre, Douglas. "Aimee Semple McPherson: High Priestess of the Jazz Age."  
*MacLeans*. November, 1952. pp. 12-82

"Deep in our Tradition - The Roots of Revival." *Newsweek*, May 20, 1957. p.68

"Has 'Sister Aimie' (sic) been Deposed?" *The Christian Century* February 15,  
1933. p.232

"If Gilt-Haired Sister Aimee..." *Time*. February 16, 1948 p.71

Lacour, Lawrence L. "A Study of the Revival Method in America: 1920-1955,  
with Special Reference to Billy Sunday, Aimee Semple McPherson, and  
Billy Graham." *Speech Monographs*, XXIV (June, 1957), pp. 106-107.

- Lothrop, Gloria. "West of Eden: Pioneer Evangelist Aimee Semple McPherson in Los Angeles." *Journal of the West*, 27 (April 1988), 50-59
- McLoughlin, William. "Aimee Semple McPherson: Your Sister in the King's Glad Service." *Journal of Popular Culture*, 1 (Winter 1968), 193-217
- McPherson, Aimee Semple. "Foursquare." *Sunset* February, 1927 pp. 15-16, 80-82.
- "New York for Jesus." *Time*. February 28, 1927 p.20
- Ryder, David Warren. "Aimee Semple McPherson." *The Nation*, July 28, 1926. pp.81-82
- Sered, Susan Starr. "Conversations with Rabbanit Zohara: An Exploration of Gender and Religious Autobiography" in the *Journal of American Academy of Religion* LXIII/2
- Setta, Susan. "Patriarchy and Feminism in Conflict: The Life and Thought of Aimee Semple McPherson." *Anima*, 9 (Spring 1983), 128-37
- "Sister Aimee." *The Christian Century*, 61 (October 11, 1944) pp 1959-1960
- Straus, Hal. "The Lazarus File: When the 'Spontaneous' Cures Comes from Within Spontaneous Remission of Illnesses)." *American Health*, May 1989, pp.67-74
- "Transition- Arrived: Aimee Semple McPherson." *Newsweek*, 6 August 24, 1935, p.30
- "Transition-Arrived: Aimee Semple McPherson." *Newsweek*, 5 June 22, 1935, p.24
- "Transition-Arrived: Aimee Semple McPherson." *Newsweek*, 5 February 23, 1935. p.27

### **Newspapers:**

- "Aimee M'Pherson in Rumor Tangle." *New York Times*, August 20 1930.
- "Aimee M'Pherson Invades Broadway." *New York Times*, September 19, 1933.
- "Aimee McPherson Files Divorce Suit." *New York Times*, December 21, 1933
- "Aimee M'Pherson, Evangelist, Dead." *New York Times*, September 28, 1944.

"Aimee M'Pherson Rites - Body Placed in Marble Vault - 1,500 Ministers Mourn." *New York Times*, October 10, 1944.

Asks Aimee to Return." *New York Times*, July 17, 1933.

"British Consider Barring Mrs. McPherson; Protest Term Her an Undesirable Alien." *New York Times*, September 29, 1928.

"Evangelist Celebrates Dismissal as Victory." *Los Angeles Times*, January 11, 1927.

"Evangelist's Kidnaping (sic) Case History Replete with Sensations." *Los Angeles Times*, June 13, 1926.

"'Hoax Woman' On 'Pike'" *Los Angeles Times*, January 28, 1927.

"M'Pherson Case Cost Up." *Los Angeles Times*, January 30, 1927.

"M'Pherson Death To Bring Inquest." *New York Times*, September 29, 1944.

Mrs. M'Pherson Creates Furor." *Los Angeles Times*, February 21, 1927.

"Mrs. M'Pherson's Fate Up Monday." *Los Angeles Times*, January 7, 1927.

"Mrs. Ormiston Now At Sea" *Los Angeles Daily Times*, January 17, 1927.

"Mrs. Ormiston Arrives in City." *Los Angeles Times*, February 6, 1927.

"Mrs. Ormiston Ready for Suit." *Los Angeles Times*, February 8, 1927.

"Ormiston Suit Assured." *Los Angeles Times*, February 7, 1927.

"Press Bias Charged by Pastor's Kin." *New York Times*, January 31, 1927.

"Sister Aimee Wins Boston's Interest." *New York Times* October 16, 1933.

### **Recordings:**

McPherson, Aimee Semple. "Story of My Life," Foursquare Religious Recordings.

McPherson, Rolf. "There She Built An Altar," Foursquare Religious Recordings.



**APPENDIX A**

**"STORY OF MY LIFE"**  
**FROM MILKPAIL TO PULPIT**

Tonight I rejoice in the privilege of another birthday giving the story of that which Jesus has done for me. He has done great things for you, of course, and yet to each one of us it seems as though God has done something more personal and real perhaps than to another. We remember Paul, the great apostle, never lost an opportunity to repeat and reaffirm his testimony--how once riding down the road (uh) with a hatred in his heart toward the things concerning Christ, the glory of God had shone round about him until he fell to the earth and cried, "Lord, what shall I do?" And was gloriously converted.

Tonight I choose as my test--Isaiah, the sixth Chapter, and the familiar passage of Scripture, the eight verse: "I heard the voice of the Lord saying, Whom shall I send and who will go for us? Then said I: Here am I, send me".

It was some distance away on a Canadian farm in Ontario, five miles from our nearest town of Ingersoll that I was born and brought up as a farmer's daughter. I was the only boy on the farm; the only girl on the farm. And therefore, many of the little homey tasks fell to my doing. I wouldn't have missed that training and opportunity for anything in the world, for I always find my mind and my idioms of speech harping back to the farm as I presume you do also. (Uh) Days of skiing, days of snowshoeing, days of flying ice-skates over the ponds and the rivers, days of school ...walking five miles or riding horseback five miles or riding in the cutter the five miles to and from the distant town or two miles or a mile and a half to our local school. This whipped up good roses in youthful Canadian cheeks, and I've always been very thankful to my precious bringing up at home

for good sound body. I was brought up on oatmeal porridge with good brown sugar and thick frozen cream. That's the way to bring any child up: to give him something to work on in after life, I verily believe it. And then my life was filled with all the little (uh) pastimes and amusements that come to other children. And yet my life was steeped with church training. There was a family altar in our home. I was brought up with one foot in the Methodist church and I fear the other foot in the Salvation Army, which was brand new in our part of the country then. Often-times someone would visit the temple and say, "I don't know if we should have music in the church". Because I was brought up with the Salvation Army band marching, and I couldn't dream of anything but having all the instruments praising the Lord as the Psalmist said. And yet I had never been born again.

Strangely enough, it was in my own Methodist Church while preparing for choir service that I did my first little step or two in dancing. As they were talking about this coming dance, and I said I didn't feel that my parents would approve of it, being rather strict on the subject ... but they said, "Oh, come on, just try it, " and I remember we were waltzing .... It made a beautiful waltz.... "Nearer My God to Thee" .... in the aisles of the basement as we were preparing for the coming Sunday. And the rhythm was perfect. I went away to the dance with some qualms and misgivings, feeling that I would leave tears behind me at home. But I had on my new slippers and I was very excited; yet I thought I might be doing wrong..until I had my first dance. From then on I knew dancing was all right. My people were old fashioned. Why, the first dance I had, my partner was a young Presbyterian minister. Must be all right. (Laughter)

And then the day that our little small town moving pictures, and of our novels, and of the interesting things .... I, at school one day, however, struck a snag in my rather smooth flowing life. Our teacher, as the little children have testified in their song tonight, had introduced as he had so many classes before me--evolution. I believe to the best of my knowledge that this went over the heads of many other students but it stuck in mine, Until one day I came with my Bible in one hand, and my school book in the other to my teacher and said, "Tell me please Which is right--the Bible or the school book? They're certainly diametrically opposed. The school book says that we undoubtedly sprang from the animal origin ..... and came from the depths of the ocean, from the growth of the

fungus, etc., and amoeba; whereas the Bible declares that we were formed of God, the great Creator who breathed into us the breath of life. And which, Sir, is right?"

My teacher looked down at me and said, "Little girl, your Bible is a classic. It's a gem of English literature, and as such should also be read and kept. But as for its authenticity and as for its accuracy--no, no--that's mythology written by men of long ago. Take your school books and you'll find that is correct."

And I said, "But sir, it just seems as the bottom is dropping out from under my feet. I've always been taught there was a God; that God created mankind. If there is no Creator and we just sprang from a little amoeba, the amoeba became a fish and the fish became a whale--a mammal, and that by turn put on wings and became a bird or put on legs and became a beast of the field, and if my great-great-great-great-great-grandfather was (uh) an offspring from the same line as the monkey, it changes the whole complexion of things. Then we didn't come from God. The Bible is filled with lies from one end to the other, speculation, and fairy tales. Well, then there's no eternity, Sir. And there's no reward for good or punishment for evil." "Now," he said, "little girl, I haven't time to pursue the subject any further now." I said, "Sir, I wish you would because, my, it's just gonna rock my little world. While I haven't professed anything myself, I've always been taught there was a God. Here I am in a good Canadian school. And its teaching me opposite. Tell me if your in a hurry, how can I be sure if the school book is right and the Bible wrong?" He quickly wrote off the names of several other books which I might peruse.

I found myself in the library reading Huxley, Darwin, Paine, Ingersoll, others. And then with my head all abuzz like a beehive that somebody turned over, I went home to my Dad. And he was coming up from the cellar. Up through the trap door with a big pan of milk to skim for the churning. And I met him at the top, and I said, "Dad, how do you know there is a God?" He said--he was so surprised he pritnear fell back for the moment--and then he came up and sat down and said, "What do you mean?" I said, "Just what you say--all my life, you've said there is a God, and my parents believe in a God. Now, how do you know? Have you ever seen Him? Has anybody else ever seen Him? Has he ever done anything to prove that He is existing?"

"Why," he said, "darling, who do you think made the sun, and the moon, and the stars, and the earth?"

"Oh, I said, "Dad, that school book explains all those. You see it says, right here, that the sun, moon, and stars were all one mass of hot molten lava, and they began because of the heat (uh) whirling motion. And as they whirled in their liquid form, the sun flew off, and the stars flew off, and the earth flew off, and here we are." (Laughter)

He said, "Whoa! How did man come on to the scene, my dear?"

"Well, I said, "Dad, when the earth grew cool, it caved in here and there like (uh) an apple when you're baking, it went in the oven, and the ocean filled spaces, and from that came a little amoeba. The amoeba--"

He said, "What's that?"

"Well," I said, "they're so small that fifty thousands of them would go through the eye of a needle without crowding--so we're told. But that's our great-great-great-great-great-great-great-grandmother. The grandmother to the elephant, and the monkey, and the kangaroo, and the giraffe, and the whale, and the porpoise, and the birds."

He said, "they all came from the . . ."

"Yes, Daddy. Though, course, you wouldn't understand this, Daddy. This is something new they've had since your age. They've just discovered these things. But age upon age--another million years, another five million years--oh, Father, these evolutionists are certainly the most generous people you ever saw. They will give you twenty million more years without batting and eyelash, any time you want it. And if a million years went by, the reptiles came up on the shore and set up a feather factory and turned into birds. And the beasts of the field set up a hair factory, and they all turned into different stripes or kind."

"Well," he said, "that's a wonderful thing to think of that because (uh) there's no such thing as (uh) transmutation of the species now. It's impossible. You cannot cross any animals and have them live."

I said, "Well, Daddy, how about our mule?"

"Well," he said, "They . . . there it ends! You may cross the horse, the little old lowly donkey and produce the mule, but the mule cannot produce its kind. You're in a stone wall."

"Darling," he said, "no matter what you do-- if you bring up Holsteins Jerseys, and for twenty years you've kept a fence and kept them apart, and by breeding 'em made a distinct and separate type. Take down your fence and in two years they'll go right back with three or four of the whole. Blending will be lost."

"No," he said. "I don't believe that school book at all; I believe the Bible."

My heart was confused. About this time there were so many other happy things to do, and I thought I'll brush the whole thing aside. But my father--my parents-- were anxious about me. And said, "Now you should go to different churches."

They took me to the Presbyterian Church, the Methodist Church, the Baptist Church, Salvation Army. And I remember one night a revival was in progress and I'd had an appointment to be at a fancy dress skating carnival that night. But they insisted that I be at the revival meeting at a certain hour to go home. So I was rather stubborn. I stood with my back against the wall. The place was packed. Didn't phase me any. I only wished that the people would hurry up and come out. Somebody said, "Won't you be a Christian?"

And I said, "I'm just as good a Christian as if my name were on the Church book. I go to the same shows, and I read the same novels, and I sit in the same pews.

And he said, "Don't talk like that, dear."

And the daughter of the evangelist came up to me and said, "Darling, are you a Christian?"

And I said, "No, I go to high school." (Laughter)

And she said, "What's that to do with it?"

"Well," I said, "Don't you read evolution? How can you believe that our same country could teach the Bible and teach the evolutionary theory? That's undermining our faith in God."

"Why," she said, "you poor girl. You stay here until I get my mother to talk to you."

She brought her mother. (uh) She was a sweet-faced lady, the preacher's wife. And she talked to me for about a minute. (uh) And she said, "you poor girl, you wait here until I get my husband." (Laughter)

And she brought the preacher. And he was very lovely, too. And very logical, and very cool in his deliberations and measurngs-up and summarizings. And finally he had me backed right off into one trench. And all I could say was, "Well, Reverend, that may be true. But if, uh, the Bible, is true, why do taxpayers pay good money to have our children taught every day in school that God did not create the earth and all that therein is? Why do we taxpayers pay money to teach our children Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday, Friday, one thing, and then bring us to church and teach us an opposite thing on Sunday?"

He said, "I don't know."

I went home that night. I knew that I'd deeply wounded and offended the Faith that had been put within me. I didn't like to hurt people. I went upstairs to my own bedroom. I got down on my knees. It was snowy, cold, wintery night. The blanker of snow was everywhere on the Canadian hills. And I threw up my window. And looked out and could almost touch the apple trees and were encases in ice. It was fairly singing with the cold. The stars were so clear; the moon sailing down the milky way.

And I put my hands up and I began to be saying without knowing I was going to say it. "Oh, God, if there be a God, reveal yourself to me." Oh, how often that prayer has been prayed. And I believe God always answers it. He answered it for me within a few hours.

I was on my way home from school and I heard some of the young people of the high school talking about a revival meeting being put on by a Reverend Robert Semple who had the Holy Spirit and the people down there were clapping their hands and shouting "Amen" and "Hallelujah." They said, "Really, you should go. It's lots of fun."

So I had a little time to go and I said to my father, "Let's step into the mission."

And as I stepped inside, Robert Semple was preaching. Ooooh, how that man could preach! Acts 2:38. Looked as if he was boring me right through with a sword. "Repent, and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of your

sin, and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. The promise is unto you and your children. Unto them that are far off. Even as many as the Lord, our God, shall call."

And as he preached - why, say, to hear that man you'd believe there was a difference between a Christian and a sinner. I'd never known as much. He's to give you a straight line through the world. And you must be born again. He's to be saved. You're to turn you back upon sin. All things passed away; all things became new. Too much to give up? (Uh, haw) He didn't know there was a joy a thousand times magnified since Jesus the Lord came in. Can you say Amen, too? (Amen from the audience.)

Thank God, 'tis true. The suddenly, this man began to speak in another tongue as the Spirit gave him utterance. And I'd never heard anything like that. And my eyes flew open and I just sat and looked at him, and to me it was as though God said "you are a poor lost miserable sinner!"

"Ooo," I said, "Daddy, let's get out of here."

He said, "I thought you wanted to come here."

I said, "I do, but I wanna leave now."

How I ever got through the rehearsal at the Town Hall that night for a Christmas performance, I don't know, but I do know that for three days, God followed me.

And there on the farm I was just a little girl, who'd been going to and fro with my milk pail and with my little things of this earth. I'd suddenly grown up. And I was suddenly now convicted and condemned of sin to the bottom of my soul. The third day doing home from school, I said, "Lord, Lord, be merciful me - a sinner." Did you ever pray? And I'll tell you I thought as though Heaven was gonna fall on me and crush me to death, and that I was gonna lose my soul in Hell. But when I cried out, "Lord, be merciful to me a sinner," the Glory of God flooded over my soul.

I was there alone in the country road in the cutter, the horse jogging along. I could feel the warm cleansing blood of Jesus flowing over me. I could feel his glorious saving Grace, and I began to sing. Can you fancy that? Not the songs I'd been singing. Up to that time I'd been singing: (starts to sing) "Rufus Rastus Johnson Brown, whatcha gonna do when the rest comes round..." or I'd been singing: "Come on and hear, come on and hear, Alexander's Ragtime Band." I hear them playing now on the radio. We had it just in that

year, a real epidemic of it. And (uh) we were singing then: "In the shade of the old apple tree." You've forgotten that. And the worldly songs were always in my heart. But now as the blood of Jesus rolled over my soul I began to sing a different song: "Take (uh) my life and let it be consecrated, Lord, to Thee." And, of, glory be to God, I was saved.

Big tears rolled down my face and dripped upon my gauntlet as I held the reins. When I went home, I had a regular bonfire. I got a hold of my novels, and I got a hold of some of my sheet music of the worldly old songs. Alexander's Ragtime Band. And I (uh) and I tell you the (uh) rest of them all had to go by the board, and I began putting them in the stove. And I got hold of my dancing dress and I put that in the stove. And I got hold of my dancing slippers, when I came to that part of the song, "Take my feet and let them be. Swift and beautiful to Thee." I said that doesn't belong to this life. Good-bye.

My father came in and said, "What in the world are you doing?"

I said, "I'm having a fire. Daddy, I've been converted."

"Oh-hah," he said, "bless your heart. I'd give you two weeks for that kind of conversion to last. You couldn't do that, dear. You'd have to be more liberal -- broad-minded."

"No," I said. "Daddy, if I'm going to be a Christian, I'm going to be one. I'm afraid I couldn't get along very good with one foot in the world, one foot in the church. I...I (uh) really have been born again."

And I began to read my Bible how to be a soul-winner. And I found that everyone in the Bible that became real soul winners of the New Testament were first of all filled with the Holy Ghost. They needed the baptism of power from on high. So, I began to pray. And did I pray! "Oh," I said. "Lord, here's a promise." And they were all assembled. And there came a sound of a rushing mighty wind and filled the whole house with the refitting. "Lord--fill me now." And I prayed for a whole week. And then, Glory be to God, the Baptism of the Holy Ghost struck my soul!

And again I was all alone in a home, five o'clock in the morning, when the Lord baptized me--and I never shall forget how the fire fell.

And I could see my wonderful Saviour hanging on the cross for me. And I remember there was just a puddle of tears where I fell under the power of God. There was



no excitement; there was no hypnotism about it. I was alone. And the Lord filled me with a desire to win souls--that to this very night there's a burning flame within my soul. I feel absolutely responsible for India and China and Ceylon and South America and the ends of the earth. "Go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature." Amen.

(Audience responds with "Amen.")

You know, Mrs. McPherson, you've had lots of skirmishes with the old Devil. Didn't that discourage you? Not a bit. The Lord has brought me through.

One day, after I'd been filled with the Spirit, I didn't know just how to go or how to be a preacher. I only said, "Lord, I never heard of a woman preacher. They're all men, I don't know why. Why wasn't I a man? I'd like to be a young man so I could go out and preach."

The Lord said: "Hold you peace now."

The evangelist, Robert Semple, under whom I had been converted, who'd been in Stratford, came back to Ingersoll. And while I was sitting up with some sick children who were convalescing from typhoid fever, he opened the door and walked in. I said, "How do you do, Reverend Semple?"

He said, "How do you do?"

I said (uh): "I'm here to sit up with the sick children; I thought you were in Stratford."

He said, "I was, but I'm here for a day or two. I'm here to sit up with the children."

"Well," I said, "I'm glad your back in town, but I'm here to sit up with the children."

He said, "Well, we'll both sit up with the children." (Laughter)

So, he sat down for a while, and prayed for the children who were tossing feverishly. And then he looked at me--those wide Irish blue eyes-- and he said (uh): "How is it with your soul?"

I said, "Oh, I'd been receiving those letters you've sent to all the converts; I've been reading all those scriptures you've sent; and I have been baptized by the Holy Ghost; and of, Brother, I can see the sea of sinners going by like a great black river without God. Now that I have been saved, I want to reach out and help bring others in."

He said, "God Bless you."

Well, he picked up my school geography lying there, and said, "I see here's a map of China. You know I'm--I'm going as a missionary to China."

Oh," I said, "you are?" (umm) Isn't that wonderful? I wish I were going too as a missionary to China or some place for the Lord. (Audience laughter.) I've such a burning in my soul to be a soul-winner and I don't know where to start."

He said, "Would you really like to?"

And I said, "Oh, how I'd love it. Anywhere for Jesus."

He reached out and he covered my hand with his big competent hand, and he said, "Aimee, I love you. That's what I've come back to tell you. Will you marry me, and go with me to China?"

He said, "And just a moment, before you answer, let's both kneel down by the settee here and ask the Lord about it."

I never heard such a proposal like that before nor after in all my life. (Laughter) And we both kneeled down. Robert prayed. I couldn't--with a lump in my throat--to save me. But he prayed, and I shut my eyes really tight. And when I opened them, I could see a long road leading up to glory. And Robert and I were going up the road together. I opened my eyes. There wasn't a thing there. Must be imagination. It was just--just a wall paper--little bit faded. I closed my eyes again and there was the road. Only this time I was going up the road alone. Robert didn't seem to be there. I didn't understand it all, but I opened my eyes and I said yes to God and yes to Robert.

There was a wedding on the Canadian Farm shortly thereafter under the golden bough arbor and under the apple trees. And happily I went away behind the white ribbons that fluttered at the whip of the old buggy and Flossie trotted her best to town. Or was it Fritzy? Fritzy, I think it was.

And Robert Semple was out to do the preaching--of the word of the living God--Hallelujah!

Oh, I was just a preacher's wife. But I was learning. He was my Bible School. You know, at night when the day was over, he'd just sit down and teach me the word of God.

I'd read it before but now with the Holy Spirit it was new. He preached in Chicago; he preached in Canada; he preached on the Indian Reservations; back in Chicago.

And then he said: "Now dear, I feel we have to leave for China." And he began farewelling in the different churches. "Good-bye, everybody, good-bye, good-bye. We're leaving for China landing, first at Hong Kong and then going on inland.

It is while we were in the island of Macao preaching the Gospel that Robert took so violently ill. Then finally taken back to Hong Kong. I was taken back ravaged with malaria. And up to the top of the hill to Matilda Hospital where missionaries are not allowed to pay a penny, I think, ever for their care. God Bless whoever Matilda was who inspired that haven of rest--cleanliness, good food, no worry for a moment.

Nor to the rising nor the falling of that (oooo) that malaria fever. Have you ever seen the real article--the tropical kind that makes everything jingle in the whole building, it seems?

And then one day they came to me and said, "Sister, you may take dinner, or tea rather, with your husband tonight. "Oh," I said, "You're so good to me." "Well," they said, "it was visiting day. I didn't know why they were so good. Until Robert looking up, his eyes seemed a lot larger than they'd been--very much bluer, and his Bible open. And he said: "Darling, what you do if anything should happen to me, and you out here and ill?"

"Oh," I said, "Robert, don't talk like that. Why, nothing could happen to you, dear. We're called into the work!"

His face looked convulsed for a moment, and the nurse said, "You have to go back. You're tiring him."

"Oh," I said, "I'm so sorry. I didn't mean to." Then sit at the foot of his bed. And I said, "Ah, good night, dear."

Suddenly Robert's face looked calm as a lake after a storm. He smiled up and said, "Good night, dear. I'll see you in the morning."

Those are the last words he ever spoke to me.

But there will be a morning, won't there? There's been many a lonely year, and many a lonely night, and many a lonely day; but in the morning, Good night. Good morning.

In the middle of the night about two, they came and called me. Somehow my knees just wouldn't hold me up. They seemed to turn to rubber all of a sudden. When I reached his ward, reminded I didn't have the money for a private room, I stood by his bed and saw that he was unconscious and yet he was smiling. And, somehow I--I fell, but I caught his hand and as I went and I said to him, "Robert, you--you couldn't leave me here not, not now." And suddenly they said, "He's gone." I knew I was going to scream, and yet before I could, somehow the Lord swept over my soul and put His arms of comfort about me, and I found my stiff lip saying, "The Lord gave and the Lord taketh away. Blesses be the name of the Lord."

And as the curtains opened up on the next few days. A month later my little baby was born after he died. And I gathered it up in my arms, and I went when she was six weeks of age to Happy Valley to visit the grave where the body of Robert was lying (end of side #1) And I-- I'd never really seen anybody die and I just didn't know what to do. I hadn't had any money. But I'd been praying for it. And the very next day after Robert had died, a letter had come from Chicago. A woman had said: "Darling, what on earth is the matter with you? The Lord wakened me up in the middle of the night and I have to get up and send this between sixty and seventy dollars to you. Uh, I can't even wait for a post office order in the morning. The Lord will take it safe." Oh, they'd been enough to buy a coffin. I kneeled to that little grave.

And I said, "Robert, Robert, can you hear me? Of course you can't. You're, you're up there somewhere. Robert, I haven't anybody else to ask, do you want me to stay in China and try to be a missionary with the baby, or do you want me to go back to America?"

Course, he couldn't answer.

It was nothing but the flutter of the wind through the magnolias and the whirl of the bright wings of a bird of paradise and the cry of a little baby. And I said: "Well, that's my answer," and so I picked her up and I started back to the gate. And I got on board the ship and headed back to America.

And the first night out (whoo) what a storm blew up and I felt the ocean was so big and wide, and I was so little and alone, and as the waves piled up against the window,

or the port hole, and I felt, Oh, God, my life is like--this--- it's a great ocean. "You've saved me and you've called me to the work, but now it's all such a muddle and I don't know where to go or what to do." And then I heard the bell up in the captain's deck sing: ding dong! ding dong! And then the watchman's voice saying: "All's well."

And then away up top side in the crow's nest, called away by the peace of the black: "All's well!" and away on the stern: "All's well!"

And I said, "Yes, Lord, Jesus Saviour pilot me." And I took what I had learned from my Bible School with Robert and I gathered the children of the boat around me. And every day we had Sunday School. And I became astounded to see the big folks of the boat were there too. And pretty soon almost every day I had the almost entire passenger list. When I got off the boat at last, someone stepped up and handed me an envelope and it had quite a bit of money in it. And the purser ran down with it and said, "Sister, some of the passengers asked me to give you this. It'll help as you go along your way."

Oh, thank God! Friends, don't you tell me there's no God. And then, as months followed months and as I tried for a while finally to get out of the work, I said: "Dear Lord, it is impossible. I'll be unable to go on with the Christian work. It seems that I could just not possibly do it." I said: I'll marry and I'll settle down; I'll have a home for my little ones." And then the glory and joy of my precious son came into my heart and I said, "Well, now I certainly know I can never preach." But every day and every night Jesus spoke to my soul: "Now will you go? Preach! Preach the Word of God."

I said: "Lord, I can't go."

And then I became ill and almost broken and that settled it. Finally I said "yes" to God, but not till I'd been taken off the operating table to die. Ministers had prayed for me to be healed. And the Lord would say, "Certainly I'll heal you if you'll go and preach. If you'll go and preach, I'll give you the strength of several women. I'll pour it into you that you may preach the Word of God."

I said, "Lord I can't."

Well, then," He said, "don't ask me to heal you. I'll take you home to Glory."

Finally, as I lay dying, I said, "Yes, Lord, I'll go." And so I took--praise God!--my suitcase and my babies and I started out about and at night and I got a taxicab and went to the depot and started out to preach the Word of God.

You say, "Well, what on earth did you do?" You'd be surprised how God helped me. Every door fell open. I came to a camp meeting where a preacher was preaching and I said: "Brother, what can I do for Jesus?" And he said: "I don't know." And I asked everybody I'd meet. It was just like a person bumping into everybody at Angelus Temple - how funny a person would look, saying, "Brother, can you tell me what can I do for Jesus? Sister, can you tell me anything I can do for Jesus?"

Finally I came to a cook by a big tent where they served over 150 preachers and delegates. He wasn't much of looking cook, but he--his name was Daddy Freemore, and he had a white apron around him.

I said (uh): "Could you tell me anything I could do for Jesus?"

He said: Sure, you can wash dishes."

I said, "Yessir."

"All right," he said, "here's your job."

And I was soon elbow deep in dishes. And then: "What can I do more for Jesus?"

He said, "You can wait on the tables. We're serving all these preachers chicken dinner."

I said, "That is a job--to feed that many preachers chicken." And so in and out I went with my tray. Did you ever try to fill up even one preacher on chicken?" Imagine that many! (laughter)

And now I was right in where I could speak to them. And I said, "Brethren, what can I do for Jesus?"

They looked at me as if I was a strange bird of some foreign country. And somebody said: "Can you play the piano?"

I said, "Yes, sir. I can play ragtime music; I know I can play hymns."

"All right," they said, "take the piano."

The next day I said: "What can I do for Jesus?"

They said, "Well, can you make beds? And sweep out about a couple dozen of these tents?"

I said, I'd love it, and play the piano, too, and wash the dishes and wait on the table."

Then I said: I'm not busy enough. What can I do for Jesus?"

They said to me: "Can you lead a choir? Our camp meeting is over and just the preachers are going to carry on now."

I said: "Yes sir, I can lead a choir."

He said: "Where was your last choir?" (pause--laughter)

"Well," I said, "I-I-I--never did lead a choir. But you asked me if I could."

"All right," he said, "you take it,"

Well, I had a grand choir.

And then one day the preacher lost his voice. Praise the Lord! And he--(hearty laughter) he, well, you know what I mean--praise the Lord--He gave me my opportunity. (laughter) He--They asked me if I'd preach. Shake? I-I fairly shook all over and I-I stood there and I couldn't say anything, but somehow or other I preached.

Ah, the love of God streamed in my soul! Halle'ujah!

And a group of people came kneeling all down the front, sweeping their way to Christ.

Have you ever won a soul? Isn't it the most thrilling thing on earth? Woooo! I wanted to holler and sing and shout, but I didn't do any of those things. I just stood there and kept saying: (chants) "Come to Jesus;" (sings) "Come to Jesus."

And, oh say, they came, Christ.

And then I was invited to this town, that town, to preach the word of God. Preached outdoors under the trees, preached in the piazza, preached down the street corner. Wish you could see one of our street meetings as we preached the Word of God. And I preached from Canada clear to Key West, Florida. By winter and by summer, in tents or in open air, or in buildings as the Lord opened up the ways. And the Word of God began to go forth. And the crowds came and the multitudes gave their hearts to Jesus Christ and the sick were healed and oh! I was happy! Bless the Lord!

And then came word from God to launch out into the deep. I began preaching in the big theatres, in the big auditoriums such as the auditorium at St. Louis. I think many of you are familiar with it--seating some 18,000 people.

God filled that from early morning until late at night. Such buildings as the Denver Municipal Auditorium where the firemen would have to stay at night after my meeting was over, uh, hunt, uh way up in the attic, up where the electric wires are--drag the men down out of there, and get the women from out of the rest rooms downstairs who had barricaded themselves in the basement to be there for the next day's meeting for fear they couldn't get in. God brought people to the altar as many as we counted--absolute count, altar cards--the thousand people converted at one service. We would have the men first and then the women, or vice-versa.

I remember one officer--police officer--in Denver-- Officer White was his name - whose mother had rather pestered him to bring her to the healing meeting. He said: "Ah, Mama, there's really nothing in it. You just imagine it." She said, "But let me go. I've been paralysed so long." He said, "Well, I'll call for you when I get off my beat." But, praise God. In the meantime, she'd been healed. And (uh) from her (unintelligible) from her sickness, and she was running home and was cooking the supper for her policeman son.

When he went home, he said, "Mother, it isn't true what they say--" And he picked her up and sit her on the table. He was a strong man; she was a little bitty woman. He said, "Are you really healed?"

She said: "Watch me!" And she jumped off the table. And he caught her in his arms. I've never seen anything quite like it for happiness. He picked her up in his arms and ran all the way back to the city auditorium, and sit in front of some fourteen thousand people packed in there, and said: "I'm a policeman of such-and-such a beat and I want to say this is my mother; she was paralysed for so long and behold, she stands before you healed."

Friends, I'll tell you, it's a, oooooooo, it's a thriller to be a preacher. Why don't every one of you folks get converted and give your heart to God and come on and help me get the world born into the kingdom of Jesus Christ?



I feel I've done so little. I've preached in China, back again, of course, later. I've preached in Egypt, I've preached in Greece, I've preached in Japan, I've preached throughout Canada and home and the British Isles, but I feel I've done nothing. I've seen hundred of thousands of people saved. I see here tonight a multitude. Everyone here that's been converted through this humble hand-maiden or through someone who's been converted through these meetings, say: Amen." (Audience replies with "Amen,")

Why they're--they're marching! It's a great Army-- praise God! God let me come to California out of the midst of New York, Baltimore, Philadelphia, Washington, D.C., Rochester, New York, up and down the coast and to buy this piece of land. I wish I had time to tell the story of it.

It was just an old (uh) some vacant lots here-- But there was a sign on that said: "Snap this corner." And it had a picture that looked like a piece of pie--notice the way this Temple is laid out. And I got out and took my pencil and on that piece of pie I sketched out seven sections: one, two, three, four, five, six, seven. Sketched out the balcony, sketched out the ramparts, sketched out the platform, sketched out the baptistry and then by the Grace of God bought the land. Was able to come and sit here night after night and dream and pray 'till finally as the result of my meetings and of answered prayer and much hard work by earnest labourers, outside of Los Angeles entirely, Angelus Temple went up--concrete and steel, tier upon tier with a radio towers above it and then the glory of God began to sweep through Angelus Temple. Praise the Lord!

And so as the curtains opened, I found myself with a Bible College on my hands-- this wonderful Bible School was built next door. And I made the Foursquare flag. Have you ever made a flag? Wish you fully understood our flag? It's the Foursquare banner floating high (applause starts). It was a lovely thing to make that flag. "On the red gleams the gold, blue and purple fold on fold, as she rides the cleansed air." (sings these words) There's a four on a square; and a square on the word meaning the blood of Jesus is the red; the gold is the fire of the Pentecostal Holy Ghost; the blue is the divine life of the Healer; the purple is the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the four is: Saviour, Baptizer, Healer, and Coming King. On the square that we never cut a corner, and this on the Word of God. And so tonight, Praise God. Oh, I see the workers coming. Hallelujah!

Down Angelus Temple's corridors. Angelus Temple's Bible School is a-throb! Thousands have already graduated and gone out to preach the word of God. Hundred are now in Bible schools saving for the ministry. The elders! The Communion Board! The business administration, the dean of the Bible School; the altar workers, the crusaders (brief applause); eleven telephone trunk lines running into this place; the radio department--the third oldest station in the City of Los Angeles--the salvage department, the janitors - bless their heart! I wouldn't have a janitor on the force who couldn't pray for somebody through to salvation at two o'clock in the morning, if they needed it.

The Sunday School - a throb with many a foot. The ushers - how many miles they've walked and how many people they've shown through. The precious orderlies - who do the kindly things to help. The children's church every Saturday afternoon in addition to Sunday School where children are turned into real preachers. The City Sisters Department - that have fifty-nine departments under their direct supervision. Right now, they're making quilts for the poor, baby layettes. And they're making (uh) clothes for the children - The Layette Committee. The Commissary - who fed three-quarters of a million people (applause) from Angelus Temple Commissary and clothing the naked. Oh, my God, let thy light and thy truth lead us and let them bring us at last to thy Holy Hill. And as Miss America - the land of the free and the land of the brave, the grandest country in the whole wide world. (audience applause) With an open Bible, praise God (applause) Beautiful Los Angeles - the city of the Angels, whiter come our students to study the Word of God.

In the meantime, you say, "Well, you've suffered a little bit of persecution." Oh, well, if you have time to think about it, I suppose I have. People say this about me and say that about me. I haven't time to either deny it or affirm it. All I can do is keep on preaching Jesus. Some people say, "Well, why don't you ever get up and defend yourself?" Well, maybe I'll get a chance sometime. But right now, I'm busy preaching the torch of the fiery baptism of the Holy Ghost. I'm busy preaching the cup of divine healing and the crown of the second coming. Look you! Here's the temple. Here's the branch churches. (brief applause) Here's the Bible School. Here's the work. See the radio towers over there in the Angelus Temple. Oh, I haven't done much. If I was a man I could a whole lot more, but you can take....? member, I'm only a woman, you know. Over here in our foreign mission

stations there's been no church federation in back of us - but just by the grace and power of God we've rolled the old chariot along. And we haven't got started yet. Glory to God! Isn't that right, students? (audience responds with "yes," and applause) We're just getting started!

You say: "Well, Sister McPherson, isn't your heart broken by persecution?" Oh, rubbish, no! That's good for what ails you. Depends on what your made of, you know. (applause)

Eh, Joe Gibson, if there's anybody from Ingersoll here, you'll sure remember Joe Gibson - he was quite a politician and character, as well as our postmaster in Ingersoll. Remember of him telling the story one night of one of our farmers who was rather a naughty man. Every evening he used to go down to the creek and fill a bucket full of water to put in the milk. And nobody ever was the wiser. One night by accident (it got a little dark I guess, early) he caught two frogs and put them in the milk can. And the one frog said, "Well, here's where I give up. Ooooo, it's dark and sticky and it's gooey, and I can't keep afloat here. There's no place to rest the sole of my little green foot." And so he just went down to the bottom. (makes sinking frog noises) And gave up the ghost. And the bubbles came up. Then they just quit. But the other frog was made of better Canadian stuff - or Christian stuff - or something.

He said, "I'm not going to give up - no matter what happens to me. I'm going to keep on kicking, and I'm going to keep on working, and I'm going to keep on praising God, and so he pweep, pweep, pweep - and he began to sing the praise of the Lord. Hallelujah! And in the morning when the farmer came out, not only did he find the frog alive, but absolutely, so Joe Gibson said, sitting on top of a pound of butter singing at the top of his voice! (laughter)

So, praise the Lord, I would say. Let people (uh) affirm or disaffirm. Let them say this, that, or the other, if they have the time. As for me, let my "yea" be "nay" and my "nay" be "nay". Let me never gossip. Let me never run down other preachers. Let me never hinder God's children. Oh, God, keep me preaching Jesus. Hallelujah! Until millions have heard the story. Well, Amen, let's say praise God for the dear old Bible. (applause) Amen. Shall we bow our heads in prayer.

My Lord, God of the nations, God in the Bible, God who is the Father of our Saviour, Jesus Christ, God in whom we of the Americas have come to trust, as these are upon their knees praying with me now representing the nations. Dear Lord my testimony was meant tonight to accomplish just two things: first of all to inspire people to accept the Saviour; secondly, that men and women should volunteer their lives for service that they could win others for the Cross of Jesus Christ.<sup>132</sup>

---

<sup>132</sup> Transcription of a tape recording made by Aimme Semple McPherson.

## **APPENDIX B**

### **"MY WONDERFUL VISION"**

It had been a hot and wearisome day at camp meeting. My duties had been long and strenuous. Now the last sermon had been preached, the last seeking soul faithfully prayed for, but still I knelt on the altar. The hour was so late, and I was so tired and empty. I felt I must ask the Lord to touch and bless me before I retired.

"O, Jesus dear, precious Saviour, will you please lay your hand upon my head and bless even me? Let me see Thy beautiful face, and hear Thy tender voice; strengthen, encourage and comfort me before I go."

Almost immediately my prayer was answered. A sweet tranquillity descended upon my spirit like a mantle from the skies, wrapping me in its holy stillness. How calm, rested and detached from my surroundings I felt. My body slipped to the floor before the altar, but I made no move to prevent it lest I disturb this "shut-in-ness" in the presence of the Lord. Then I saw a vision-- The whole world was wrapped in darkness. One could not see an arm's length through the blackness of the night. But, hark! out of the gloom there came a sound of voices sweetly singing:

"O Lord Jesus, how long, how long Ere we shout the glad song?  
Christ returneth, Hallelujah! Hallelujah! A-M-E-N."

At the sound of the great "Amen" a streak of lightning tore its way through the heavens, from the east unto the west, rending them in twain. As I looked, the skies began

to roll apart as smoothly as folding doors upon their hinges. Shafts of heavenly light came streaming down through the opening, piercing the gloom of earth and illuminating it with wondrous radiance. Through the aperture I saw descending, first the pierced feet, then the garments white as snow, then the extended hands, then the beautiful face and head of Jesus Christ, My Lord. He was surrounded by an innumerable company of angels. In fact, quickly as a flash of lightning the entire heavens were filled with seraphic heavenly hosts, cherubim and seraphim, angels and archangels - surrounding the Christ of God - they were coming down, down, down in a beauty that beggars description. I thought of those great sky-rockets bursting in the air in multi-colored glories and coming down in silent grandeur through the night. I know of nothing else with which to compare their wonderful descent.

Every angel carried a musical instrument. Many there were having harps of various shapes and sizes. They were different from any that I have ever seen upon earth, and of marvellous workmanship. There were those who carried long silver trumpets and other musical instruments, the like of which I had never seen before. The first part of their glorious descent was made in silence. Then, suddenly, the Lord put His hand to His mouth and gave a shout, calling and awakening His people. At the sound of His voice, every angel struck his harp of gold and sounded upon the silver trumpets. (For years people have talked about the lost chord, but oh, surely there had never been a chord of such melodious, wondrous beauty as this.) As they struck their harps, it seemed that the very stars of the morning broke forth into singing, and trembled beneath its majesty. The earth began to vibrate, and the dead arose from their graves. They came from the East, from the West, from the North, and from the South, and ascended through the air in beautiful

white garments that seemed to float about them; their faces were turned upward and their hands extended to the resplendent heavens.

They were rising higher and higher into the air to meet the central figure of the Lord as He came down with His host of angels. As the resurrected dead rose through the air, they seemed to gather in toward the centre of the heavens, taking their places as though by prearrangement in a shape that began to resemble a body.

Then the Lord gave a second shout, and, at the sound of His voice, the angels again swept their golden harps and sounded upon their instruments - holding the chord until the very stars shook, the earth rocked and the mountains trembled. At that second shout, those who were living and remained upon the earth - whose garments were washed white, and whose hearts were looking for the coming of the Lord - were caught up together with those resurrected from the graves to meet Him in the air. They came from every direction - from mountains, valleys, plains, and from the islands of the sea, to take their place in the Body. Some were in the head, some in the shoulders, some in the arms of the Body, some in the feet; for though there are many members, there is but one Body. (See I Cor. 12.) What a picture! They were going up, and the Lord was coming down. Soon they would meet in the air, and what a meeting that would be! As I gazed upon this scene, I was overwhelmed, and my heart burst forth into the cry:

"Oh, dear Jesus, aren't you going to take me? Jesus, you know I love you; I have been waiting and looking for you so long. O Jesus, surely you are not going to forget me. O Lord, take me!"

Suddenly, I found myself running up a steep and rugged hill as fast as my feet could take me. Once I stumbled and fell (that must have been the time I almost backslid, and got out of the Lord's work, running from Ninevah to Tarshish), but I arose and started to run again. Up and up I ran, and this time, praise the Lord, I did not stumble - up and up I went, until at last I had reached the top of the hill, but instead of going down the other side I went right on up, hallelujah!

The Bride was still rising to meet the Bridegroom, and I was rising too. What a wonderful sensation - sweeping through the air! All weights and fetters laid aside - rising to meet the Lord. As I went up, however, I began to weep again, crying:

"O Lord, is there no place for me in the Body? It looks as though 'twere completed without me?"

But as I drew near, I saw that there was a little place unfilled in the foot. I slipped in and just fitted there. Glory to Jesus! When the Lord gives us a vision, He does not tell us how high and important we will be, but shows us our place at His precious feet. It may be that the Lord will permit me to be a part of the foot of the glorious running, soul-winning Bride, until He shall appear to take us to Himself forevermore.

With the Body completed, I seemed to be standing at a distance again. I saw the Bride and Bridegroom meet. Her arms were extended up to Him; His arms reached out and clasped her to His bosom. Oh, that embrace! Oh, that meeting in the air! How can I describe it? The angels were playing softly now upon their harps. How wonderful the music was! They talk about Mendelssohn's "Wedding March," but ah, you wait until you hear our wedding march at the meeting in the air. The Bride, however, seemed to be



listening to nothing but the voice of the Bridegroom. I saw Him wiping the tears from her eyes, and saying:

"There shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain; for the former things are passed away."

Now they were going up together - higher and higher they rose, melting through the starry floor of heaven, disappearing in the distance as the heavens rolled together again. Upon the earth there descended a deep, thick darkness - a hundred times blacker than it had been before. 'Twas a famine for the Word of God. But up in heaven a light was shining brighter than the noon-day sun. Oh, how bright and glorious it was - the mellow, golden light of a new-born sunrise seemed to rest upon everything, tinting each spire and dome with a border of gold and crimson. Here all was life, music and movement. The greatest day ever known in heaven or upon earth had dawned. The wedding day had come!

The angels had formed a great, long aisle leading from the heavenly gates to the Throne of pearl, upon which sat One so wonderful, so dazzlingly glorious, that my eyes could not gaze upon Him. Line upon line, row upon row, tier upon tier - the angels stood or were suspended in midair at either side of the aisle thus formed. Above this aisle the little cherubim formed an arch singing sweetly and playing upon tiny harps.

As they played the wedding march, down the aisle came the Bride and Bridegroom. She was leaning upon His arm and looking up into His face. Oh, the love, the joy, the hopes fulfilled that were written upon her fair and lovely countenance. 'Twas as though she were saying:

"Thou beautiful Bridegroom, Thou Prince of Peace, Thou Pearl of Great Price, Thou Rose of Sharon and Lily of the Valley - I love Thee, of, I love Thee! How long I have been looking forward to this day, how I have yearned to see Thy face to hear Thy voice. True, I have seen Thee through a glass darkly, but now, oh now, my Saviour, slain Lamb of Calvary, I see Thee face to face! Oh, Jesus, to think that I shall live with Thee forever and forever! I will never leave Thee more, but I shall lean upon Thine arm, rest upon Thy bosom, sit upon Thy Throne, and praise Thee while the endless ages roll."

As the Bride looked into His face, Jesus, the Bridegroom, was looking down and smiling upon her clad in her white robes with her misty veil floating about her. Oh, that look in His eyes, that tender expression upon His face. 'Twas as though He were saying: "Oh, my love, my dove my undefiled, thou art fair; there is not spot in thee. Before you loved Me I loved you. Yea, I have loved you with an everlasting love. I loved you when you were deep in sin; I loved you when you were far away. Yea, I have loved you with an everlasting love. I loved you when you were deep in sin; I loved you when you were far away. I loved you enough to leave my Father's home to go forth to seek to save, to rescue, to draw you to Myself. I loved you so much that I died for you - I died to redeem you, and to fill you with My Spirit. Oh, my Bride you have been faithful. Coming out of great tribulation you have washed your robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. You have endured hardness as a good soldier, and now through Me you are more than conqueror. How long, how long, I have waited for this day when you should be caught up unto my side.

"Oft have your feet been pierced with thorns, but here the streets are paved with gold. Oft the way was rugged and steep and your tears have flowed unbidden and now behold, the last enemy, even death, is conquered. Nevermore shall a shadow fall across your pathway nor a tear-drop dim your eye. Forever and forever you shall dwell with Me in the presence of My Father and the holy angels - My Bride, My Wife forevermore."

As they made their way up the aisle and neared the Throne, the angels broke forth into soft, sweet singing:

*"Let us be glad and rejoice, and give Honor to Him; for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and His wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white; for the linen is the righteousness of the saints."*

As they walked into the brilliant light that sat upon the Throne, my eyes were blinded with the glory, and the vision faded from my sight, but it is indelibly stamped upon my mind.<sup>133</sup>

---

<sup>133</sup> McPherson, *This Is That* p664-671

### CHRONOLOGY OF AIMEE SEMPLE MCPHERSON

October 9, 1890	Born in Salford, Ontario, Canada.
September, 1896	Enroled at No.3 Dereham Public School
1902	Wins gold medal in public speaking contest sponsored by Women's Christian Temperance Union.
September, 1905	Enters Ingersoll Collegiate Institute (high school)
December, 1907	Meets evangelist Robert Semple
February, 1908	Is converted, receives baptism in the Spirit and speaks in tongues
August 12, 1908	Marries Robert Semple in Salford
March, 1910	Gives first sermon in London, Eng.
June, 1910	Arrives in Hong Kong
August 17, 1910	Robert Semple dies in Hong Kong
September 17, 1910	Roberta Star born in Hong Kong
November, 1910	Returns to New York
February 28, 1912	Marries Harold McPherson in Chicago
March 23, 1913	Rolf McPherson born in Providence, R.I.
August, 1915	Hold first independent revival meeting in Mount Forest, Ontario

Winter, 1916-1917	First preaching tour of Florida
June 1, 1917	Begins publication of <i>The Bridal Call</i>
Summer of 1917	Preaches in Long Branch, Long Island and Boston
Winter, 1917-1918	Second Florida tour: Miami, Key West
July 21, 1918	Nationwide camp meeting, Philadelphia
October 23, 1918	Begins first transcontinental tour
December 23, 1918	Arrives in Los Angeles
October 1919	Publishes <i>This is That</i>
December 8-21, 1919	The Baltimore revival
Spring of 1920	Washington, D.C. and Dayton, Ohio revivals.
January, 1921	The San Diego revival.
February, 1921	Ground-breaking for Angelus Temple
New Year's, 1923	Angelus Temple dedicated
February, 1924	Radio KFSG started
December 7, 1925	Opening of Bible College
May 18, 1926	Reported missing after swim at Ocean Park
June 23, 1926	Walks in from the desert at Agua Prieta and tells story of kidnapping
September 16, 1926	With Minnie Kennedy, Lorraine Wiseman, and Kenneth Ormiston, charged with corruption of morals and obstruction of justice
January 10, 1927	All charges dismissed
January-March, 1927	Her "Vindication Tour"
August, 1927	James Kennedy dies
October, 1927	Publishes <i>In the Service of the King</i>

October 7-18, 1928	English tour
Spring, 1930	Tour of the Holy Land
September 13, 1931	Marries David Hutton
November, 1931	Opens first soup kitchen
Summer, 1932	Contracts tropical fever
April, 1933	Produces her first opera, <i>The Crimson Road</i>
September 1933 - December 1934	Last national tour
January, 1934	Divorces David Hutton
1936	Published <i>Give Me My Own God</i>
December, 1936	Production of her opera <i>Regem Adorate</i>
Summer of 1941	Tours Tennessee, Missouri, & Ohio
September 27, 1944	Dies in Oakland
October 9, 1944	Buried in Los Angeles