

PENTECOSTAL ISSUES: An Eschatology To Live And Preach

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Preaching/Teaching Eschatology:

“DANCING IN THE RAIN”

**Refreshing the Bride’s Expectation: The Story of Two Canadian Women of
Early Pentecost**

(A 3-Part Teaching Series on the Eschatological Perspectives of Early
Pentecostalism, and as demonstrated in the lives of Ellen Hebden and Aimee
Semple McPherson)

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Jesus answered, "Can you make the friends of the bridegroom fast while he is with them? But the time will come when the bridegroom will be taken from them; in those days they will fast" (Lk 5:34-35). Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory! For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready (Rev 19:11). The Spirit and the bride say, "Come!" And let the one who hears say, "Come!" (Rev 22:17).

PART I

The Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada's mission statement reads: "To glorify God by making disciples everywhere by proclaiming and practising the gospel of Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit" (<https://paoc.org/>). This year, the PAOC family will celebrate its 100th anniversary, with the theme of "Reflecting Back; Moving Forward". In reflecting on the spiritual experiences of early Canadian Pentecostals, one reads of a defining eschatological readiness that both prepared individuals to be receptive to the baptism of the Holy Spirit and also shaped their subsequent missional theology, attitudes and actions as this Walter McAlister quote¹, one of PAOC's founding father's, demonstrates:

Coming! Coming!! Coming!!! Listen to these words. Think what they mean to you. 'JESUS IS COMING SOON!' Thank God, the latter rain is falling today, and we can say as Peter did in the days of the former rain, 'This is That' ... The Rain is descending... 'The promise is unto YOU'... Help sound the warning! Let us spread the news to every creature... JESUS IS COMING SOON! Don't waste another day. 'He that winneth souls is wise.'²

Contrasting a prior postmillennial view of the church gradually bringing about a Christian millennium, the late 19th and early 20th century holiness-revivalist movements in North America were influenced by the (UK) Plymouth Brethren and the premillennial futurist teachings of John Nelson Darby (1800-1882). As the above quote demonstrates, early Pentecostals viewed the outpouring of the Spirit as a fulfillment of end-time prophecy. As futurists, "Pentecostals generally expect the major fulfillment of biblical prophecies to lie in the future, and nearly all expect those... to be imminent... following the prevailing view of the late-19th-century prophetic conference movement, in expecting the rapture, or removal of the church prior to a time of tribulation."³ Keith Warrington, describes "Pentecostalism as 'an

¹ NOTE: Unless otherwise footnoted, original Papers and Journals had been either posted on the Pentecostal Issues class pages or sourced through the Consortium of Pentecostal Archives: <https://pentecostalarchives.org/>

² Walter E. McAlister, "Coming! Coming!! Coming!!!" *Canadian Pentecostal Testimony*, No. 6 (May, 1921): 1-3.

³ Stanley M. Burgess, Ed., and Eduard M. van der Mass, Ass. Ed., *The New International Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements, Rev. and expanded* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002), s.v. "Pentecostal Perspectives on Eschatology", 601.

apocalyptic movement, in its self-understanding and its theology'... certainly, belief in the second coming of Jesus ranks as one of their most important tenets of faith... they imbibed its emphasis on pre-millennialism and a pre-tribulation rapture."⁴ In his book *Heaven Below*, Grant Wacker comments that "dispensational premillennialists ...taught that the Lord was about to return for His saints, unheralded, as a thief in the night...Christ would literally take His saints from the earth so they would not have to endure the seven years of Tribulation preceding the Battle of Armageddon. They called this event the Rapture or the Blessed Hope."⁵ As Wonsuk Ma explains (Chapter 13, *The Theological Motivations for Pentecostal Mission*), it was "a premillennial orientation... the expectation of the imminent return of the Lord... for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit was taken as a sure sign of the end of the end time, the last opportunity for the greatest harvest of souls."⁶ Van Johnson's *Pentecostal Wheel* (© 2012) describes early Pentecostals as embodying a Christo-centric pneumatological eschatology – a transformational experience of God through the Spirit, and one of intimacy with Jesus, who as soon coming King enables believers through Spirit Baptism to proclaim the full Gospel⁷ with power to all people. These eschatological perspectives were some of the predominant motivational factors that fueled their fervent times of prayer, passionate evangelism and church planting in Canada, including the intentional, sacrificial support for foreign mission work, by those who were part of the early Canadian Pentecostal movement. These practical aspects flowed from an 'eschatology of imminence' – the soon return of the Bridegroom, Jesus, for his Bride, the church.

One hundred years later, with a growing loss of the language of the immediacy of Jesus' return, the critique in moving forward may be as both Ma and Johnson point out, that since "eschatological messages from Pentecostal pulpits have gradually disappeared... (along with) a waning of an imminent

⁴ Keith Warrington, *Pentecostal Theology: A Theology of Encounter* (New York: T&T Clark, 2008), 309-310.

⁵ Grant Wacker, *Heaven Below: Early Pentecostals and American Culture* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), ProQuest ebrary. Accessed, March 24, 2019. <http://hdl.handle.net/2027/heb.30682>.

⁶ Corneliu Constantineanu, ed., *Pentecostals in the 21st Century: Identity, Beliefs, Praxis*. (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2018): 128., <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&scope=site&db=nlebk&db=nlabk&AN=1696744> Accessed February 2, 2019.

⁷ "Full gospel": For early Pentecostals, many who came out of a Holiness church background, the "full gospel" entailed four teachings – that of salvation, healing, the baptism in the Holy Spirit, and the second coming of Christ. See, Donald W. Dayton, *Theological Roots of Pentecostalism* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1987), 21.

eschatology,⁸ ... any de-emphasis of it will alter the nature of Pentecostalism significantly... (since) this movement was built on the imminent return of Jesus.⁹ How can one recapture missional enthusiasm and the language of imminence, without referencing an unfamiliar dispensational structure that is unwieldy theologically to 21st century Pentecostals? Perhaps the hope and spiritual reality of Jesus' second return, can be encouraged if 3rd and 4th generation Classical Pentecostals intentionally preach, write, teach and testify with a purpose to refresh the Bride's expectation and hope of her Bridegroom's return. Engaging with early Pentecostal's first-person testimonies about their spiritual experiences (Spirit Baptism), vibrant first-love for Jesus and missional urgency because of Christ's soon return has served to refresh my own spiritual passion and re-ignite my anticipation for his second coming. As a result, this teaching will focus on the influential lives of two early Pentecostal Canadian women, Ellen Hebden and Aimee Semple-McPherson, who with passionate abandon were unafraid to "dance in the rain" of the Spirit's outpouring over a century ago. It is my hope that their testimonies will inspire and model a fruitful way forward for the Bride of Christ in 2019.

Introduction: Why these 2 particular women?

- Both are Canadian women whose ministries shaped early Pentecostalism and its future.
- They were contemporaries of each other – Hebden's ministry was critical for both Robert and Aimee Semple's spiritual formation, and then the young couple helped to establish several early Pentecostal churches in Ontario; as well, after her return from Hong Kong, (where Robert had died), and following her marriage to Harold McPherson, Aimee held evangelistic services for newly planted PAOC churches in cities across Canada and the States.
- They were excellent writers:
 - o Ellen and James Hebden founded *The Promise* newsletter in May 1907
 - o Aimee Semple McPherson, launched *The Bridal Call* newsletters in June 1917
- They also had experienced their own personal Pentecost and were anointed preachers, evangelists, and leaders who operated in the gifts of the Spirit.
- As women, their voices were unique to the movement as were their entrepreneurial skills and innovative evangelistic methods yet respected for their spiritual impact which is felt even today.
- Each woman reflects an eschatological emphasis that differs slightly from one another:
 - o Hebden: Promise-Fulfillment Theology (UK emphasis) – tongues in Spirit Baptism indicated the fulfilment of the "Promise of the Father"
 - o Semple McPherson: Dispensational, Four-fold Gospel, (founder of the International Church of the Foursquare Gospel) – Bridegroom was coming soon (rapture), get ready to meet Jesus!

⁸ Constantineanu, *Pentecostals in the 21st Century*, 128.

⁹ Ibid., *Fulfillment of God's Promise in the Soon-to-Return King*, pp. 104-105.

- They wrote/spoke about Christ's soon coming – an urgency to share the gospel, win souls, send out (or like the Semples, to be) missionaries... Bride motif is used by both of them. They wrote of a passionate first-love for Jesus – experiential infusion/profusion of intimacy with Him.
- At age 12 my personal Pentecost was similar – I experienced an overwhelming sense of God's unconditional love for me that has never diminished but increased in depth of intimacy with him.

Steven Land, quoting Leslie Newbigin, explains that for Pentecostals:

'the Christian life (is) experienced power and presence of the Holy Spirit'... but it took the power of the new age, the last days' outpouring of the Spirit, to constitute the church a missionary fellowship which would witness in words, power, and demonstration of the Holy Spirit.¹⁰

Early Pentecostals looked for a restoration of apostolic power, so when they experienced the presence of God being poured out, understood it as a Latter Rain "restoration of Pentecost", (which) gave coherence to their testimony, practice and affections... (it) was for last-days evangelization. Their mission was to warn... (all) to repent, put on robes of white, and get oil in their lamp(s) before the Bridegroom appeared."¹¹ The "last days" had begun with the coming of Jesus, his birth, death, and resurrection, but as time was telescoped ("fused and transcended in the Spirit"¹²), early Pentecostals lived in the keen awareness of the spiritual tension of the 'already, but not yet' of God's Kingdom. Robert Menzies explains that "for Luke, 'these last days' – the period inaugurated with Jesus' birth and consummated with his second coming – represents an era marked by 'signs and wonders... (so) we should expect 'signs and wonders to mark the life of the church until the consummation of God's great plan of salvation."¹³ Acts 1:8 was their commission to "go into all the world" as "last days" witnesses to the in-breaking reality of God's Kingdom now at work through the power of the Holy Spirit's enduement in Baptism. To them, such an 'eschatology of imminence' was evident throughout the Acts of the Apostles and was the lived experience of the 'primitive' early church. Van Johnson writes that "there was no perceived historical distance between the reader and the text. (They) had the sense that they were living in the book of Acts; the Acts narrative was their story too."¹⁴

Early Pentecostalism was also inclusive and egalitarian, as Cecil Robeck points out in his seminal book on the Azusa Street outpouring, which was one of the defining distinctives of that movement:

The (Azusa) mission resulted in a movement that, in keeping with God's promise to pour out his Spirit on all flesh, male or female, recognize(d) the ministry of women as legitimate and equal with that of men. Pentecostals justified their position based... on their understanding of Joel's promise (Joel 2:28-32).¹⁵

As the premier example of this, Ellen Hebden's life and ministry will be highlighted extensively since her role in Canada was unique, being the first person to experience the "last days" outpouring of Holy Baptism with "the bible evidence of speaking in unknown tongues."¹⁶

¹⁰ Steven Land, *Pentecostal Spirituality: A Passion For The Kingdom* (Cleveland: CPT Press, 2010), 21-22. Quote taken from: L. Newbigin, *The Household of God* (London: SCM Press, 1953), 87.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 44.

¹² *Ibid.*, 46.

¹³ Robert P. Menzies, *Pentecost: This Story is OUR Story* (Springfield: Gospel Publishing House, 2013), 110.

¹⁴ David Wells and Van Johnson, *et al.*, "How Do We Hear The Word of God?" Part I: The Options, in *Nexus* (Mississauga: The Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada, 2015), 13.

¹⁵ Cecil M. Robeck Jr., *The Azusa Street Mission and Revival: The Birth of the Global Pentecostal Movement* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, Inc., 2006), 15.

¹⁶ Mr. & Mrs. Hebden, Ed, *The Promise, How Pentecost Came to Toronto*, (Number 1, May 1907): 2, 4.

PART II – ELLEN HEBDEN:

Ellen Hebden: An Eschatology of Promise-Fulfillment

Often eclipsed by Azusa Street's pervasive historical narrative, as co-founder of Toronto's East End Mission, Ellen Hebden's story is unique since she was the first-known Canadian to be baptized in the Holy Spirit, speaking in tongues (November 17, 1906) while praying for "more power to heal the sick".¹⁷

a) Background and theological influences:

- i) Ellen Hebden (1865–1923) Gayton, England. Influenced by Keswick convention teaching as a teen to seek a subsequent crisis experience called "fullness of the Spirit" or 'Spirit-filled life' and received the Holy Spirit as Sanctifier... assumed this experience was the baptism in the Holy Spirit, and believed she was empowered to live a holy, committed life unto Christ."¹⁸ Rejected by her father (high Anglican church), which led to her leaving home, and shaped her dislike of organized religion's cold formality and deadness. Moved to London to live with Elizabeth Baxter and husband who had opened 'Bethshan' home for the sick; she was influenced by Baxter's conviction that divine healing and foreign missions were inseparably linked, and that wherever the gospel is proclaimed, healings and miracles should follow as evidence of God's power.¹⁹
- ii) Married James Hebden (1893) and lived in Swinton before moving to Toronto in late 1904. They hosted prayer meetings in their Yorkshire home in the 1890's as part of *The Pentecostal League of Prayer*, a trans-denominational revivalist prayer movement led by Reader Harris and his wife that had roots in the Holiness (Methodist) tradition; to unite godly men and women in prayer for Holy Spirit baptism for power... a promise of God that one must pray for, but not associating that with "tongues"; Reader's newsletter was called "Tongues of Fire". It was an inclusive movement that was open to women in ministry and desired to unify those who were seeking both personal revival and that for the church at large in their nation.²⁰ This would have a great impact upon their future ministry in Canada.

b) The Hebden's 651 Queen Street East Mission:

- i) Modelled after the Baxter's home, they founded their Toronto mission at 651 Queen Street East, May 20th 1906 to care and pray for the sick; night of Nov 17th while Ellen was praying for more power to heal the sick, the Holy Spirit fell upon her; she heard the word "Tongues" and resisted saying "No, Lord, not Tongues" ... but sensing she was grieving the Lord, finally responded, "Tongues or anything that will please Thee and bring glory to Thy name", repeating one unknown word several times before retiring, and awoke "in the morning full of joy and gladness, knowing I had received the Baptism of the Holy Ghost... according to the Bible... the Lord has given me twenty-two languages.. hundreds of verses of poetry and also the interpretation of what others are saying... I shall never cease to praise him for the flood of love which filled my whole being and melted me into tenderness and gave me such a yearning for souls that I never knew before."²¹ Ellen's testimony afforded her the platform of being the lead preacher/teacher of this 'hub' for the fledgling movement in the nation of Canada.
- ii) Within five months her husband and about 80 others had similar experiences, and Hebden Mission became known as "The Canadian Azusa"²²... a focal point of the Pentecostal revival, drawing leaders such as – Frank Bartleman, William Durham, Aimee Semple (McPherson) and her husband, who were mentored by Ellen before they left for Hong Kong.²³ People were arriving from all over North America to seek their own Pentecostal experience, with three services on Sundays, Bible

¹⁷ Ibid., 2.

¹⁸ William Sloos, "The Story of James and Ellen Hebden: The First Family of Pentecost in Canada," *Pneuma: The Journal of the Society for Pentecostal Studies* Vol. 32 Issue 2, (2010): 181-202. Accessed March 28, 2019, doi:10.1163/157007410X509100.

¹⁹ Ibid., 185.

²⁰ Ian M. Randall, *The Pentecostal League of Prayer: a Transdenominational British Wesleyan-Holiness-Movement*, in *The Gospel Trumpet*: https://www.lcoggt.org/Articles/pentecostal_league_of_prayer.htm accessed March 2, 2019.

²¹ Hebden, Ed, *The Promise*, (Number 1, May 1907): 2.

²² Thomas William Miller, *Canadian Pentecostals: A History of the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada* (Mississauga: Full Gospel Publishing House, 1994), 39.

²³ Ibid., 43.

reading on Monday nights, all-day prayer on Wednesdays, and “divine healing” on Friday nights, the sanctuary was continually spilling over with people.²⁴ In addition to being a hub for seekers, and teaching about the baptism with the Holy Ghost, their newsletter, *The Promise* gave voice to readers’ testimonies, many of them women, and made the connection of the enduement of power as being related to mission and the work of “extending God’s Kingdom” since Jesus had said “ye shall be witnesses.” In the October 1909 issue, Ellen writes “...during the past two years...16 missionaries have been sent out... everyone baptized with the Holy Ghost speaking in tongues, as at Pentecost.”²⁵

- iii) They began to publish *The Promise* newsletter in May 1907, reflecting their unique “Promise/fulfilment theology” from their holiness background/Pentecostal League of Prayer days in the UK... as the banner quotes: “The Promise is unto you and to your children, and to all.” Acts 2:39. Thus Spirit Baptism is “the promise of the Father” (Lk 24:49), and they encouraged readers to “wait for this promise of the Father (Acts 1:4), that “we may receive the promise of the Spirit through faith (Gal. 3:14), as Gentiles should be fellow heirs, of the same body and partakers of this promise in Christ by the gospel” (Eph. 3:6).
- iv) Van Johnson believes this “conveys the conviction that Joel 2 has had a double fulfillment spread over two millennia: the first with the Jews in Jerusalem and the second among the Gentiles, i.e., the seekers at 651 Queen Street East... their use of the biblical motif of ‘the promise’ to express their restorationist *raison d’être* differentiates them from the Azusa-influenced centres of Winnipeg and Ottawa, where the motif of ‘former and latter rain’ is employed to link their communities with the one described in Acts 2.”²⁶
- v) Each testimony included in the first edition of *The Promise*, was to encourage the readers towards an understanding of and openness to receive the same promise of the Father, for it was “to all” – “all classes” and “all people”, (Ac 2:39)²⁷ as the headline states, no doubt influenced by the inclusiveness of the Pentecostal League of Prayer background. In the second edition, the point is made that not only were they to be witnesses, “for by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether they be Jews or Gentile, bond or free, and have been all made to drink into one spirit [sic] (1 Cor. 12:13)”²⁸ – another possible influence of the PLP, which was a trans-denominational movement, and may also have played a part in Hebden’s resistance to the formation of a denomination.
- vi) A growing number of Canadian Pentecostal leaders were interested in partnering together better to coordinate their overseas missionary efforts... (so) to further this cause, A. G. Ward organized a Pentecostal camp meeting in Markham, Ontario in June 1909. He assembled the recognized leaders of the movement to discuss forming a simple cooperative organization but James and Ellen Hebden strongly opposed the initiative to organize. She wrote in October’s edition of *The Promise* that “we have no connection whatever with any general organization of the Pentecostal people in Canada. As a ‘missionary church’ we stand alone in God’s divine order....and we decline absolutely all responsibility for any so-called representatives of the Pentecostal work in Canada.”²⁹

C) Conclusion:

Despite the Hebden’s resistance to other Pentecostal leaders’ desires for some type of (denominational) organization, Ellen’s pioneering, evangelistic spirit (14 churches planted in across Ontario) and spiritual influence was far reaching as Canada’s first Pentecostal leader who had experienced the Baptism of the Holy Spirit. She understood Spirit Baptism as evidence of “God’s way of dealing with His children in these last days”³⁰ so were “willing to send workers as God equips them”³¹ which was an outworking of their eschatological “last days” theology. As Sloos concludes, “With a global apostolic emphasis, the Hebden mission sent out twenty-five Spirit-empowered missionaries to foreign posts, including Charles and Emma

²⁴ Sloos, “The Story of James and Ellen Hebden”, 194.

²⁵ Ellen Hebden, Ed., *The Promise*, (Number 14, October 1909): 1.

²⁶ Lecture Notes from March 8, 2019, *Pentecostal Issues: An Eschatology to Live and Preach*, Lecture 3: Modern Adaptations of Biblical Eschatologies, page 7.

²⁷ Hebden, Ed., *The Promise*, (Number 1): 1.

²⁸ Hebden, Ed., *The Promise*, (Number 2): 1.

²⁹ Hebden, Ed., *The Promise*, (Number 14): 1.

³⁰ Hebden, Ed., *The Promise*, (Number 14): 2.

³¹ Hebden, Ed., *The Promise*, (Number 2): 1.

Chawner, Canada's first Pentecostal missionary family."³² I would also add to that the very important influence that Helen's mentoring had upon the Semples, Aimee (Semple McPherson) in particular, who would go on to become the founder of the Angelus Temple, and the International Church of The Foursquare Gospel in Los Angeles.

The following poem highlights the intertwining of Ellen's eschatological promise-fulfilment understanding – one whose life was transformed by her Holy Spirit Baptism experience of God's overwhelming love – and the expectation of the Bridegroom's imminent return for his beloved Bride. It was received "in the (unknown) language... and interpreted, Sunday Feb 2nd, 1907"³³. Since God's promise of Spirit Baptism was fulfilled in their day, Jesus' imminent return was also expected:

I went to dark Gethsamane,
The Father heard me pray;
And when I shed my precious blood
The sun was hid away.
I soon shall be returning
To fetch my precious bride,
And then amid great glory
I'll place her by my side.³⁴

PART III

Aimee Semple McPherson and the Full Gospel of the Bride:

In *Fire From Heaven*, Cox sees a "clear basis, both in the Bible and in pentecostal belief, for... feminine leadership... both 'your sons *and your daughters* shall prophecy'... in a pentecostal... service literally anyone can suddenly be filled with the Spirit, pray in an unknown tongue, testify, or prophesy, there is a strong egalitarian momentum."³⁵ Warrington points out that early Pentecostals welcomed the co-equal participation of women in ministry, noting that women were also involved with establishing:

Pentecostal churches and denominations... (like) the International Church of the Foursquare Gospel... by Aimee Semple McPherson... (with) a strong emphasis on the imminent return of Jesus... facilitated a... readiness to accommodate women in leadership. In 1914, a third of AoG ministers were women as were two-thirds of its missionaries... Pentecostalism should look to its history for guidance. Not only did women function in significant ways... with the blessing of male colleagues... who recognized that they were gifted by God... confirmed through the success of their ministries... (but) were testimonies of the fulfilment of Joel 2.28.³⁶

³² William Sloos, "The Story of James and Ellen Hebden: The First Family of Pentecost in Canada," *Pneuma: The Journal of the Society for Pentecostal Studies* Vol. 32 Issue 2, (2010): 181-202. Accessed March 31, 2019, doi:10.1163/157007410X509100.

³³ Hebden, Ed., *The Promise*, (Number 1): 4.

³⁴ Hebden, Ed., *The Promise*, (Number 1): 1.

³⁵ Harvey Cox, *FIRE from HEAVEN: The Rise of Pentecostal Spirituality and the Reshaping of Religion in the Twenty-first Century* (Boston MA: Da Capo Press, 2001), 124-125.

³⁶ Warrington, *Pentecostal Theology*, 144, 152.

a) Background and Theological Influences:

- i) Aimee Semple McPherson (1890-1944), nee, Aimee Elizabeth Kennedy: Born in a Christian family in Salford near Ingersoll, she had been taught to play the organ and piano by her father, a Methodist organist/choir director, but attended her mother's Salvation Army church. At age 17 she attended services in Ingersoll, where Robert Semple, an evangelist who had been healed of tuberculosis in William Durham's Chicago mission and had been Spirit-filled at Toronto's Hebden Mission, was holding Pentecostal services there and in Stratford in 1907. Aimee was baptized in the Spirit before the end of the year, and when Semple returned to Ingersoll for meetings throughout the winter of 1908, a courtship began. Robert and Aimee were married by Lt. Col. John Sharp of the Salvation Army (Aug. 12, 1908)³⁷, settling first in Stratford to strengthen the Pentecostal work there, and then pioneered the church in London. According to Miller, within a year, over 100 had received the Baptism of the Holy Spirit during their ministry, in which Aimee chiefly played the piano and prayed with converts.³⁸ The Semples went back to assist William H. Durham at the Full Gospel Assembly in Chicago and were ordained together on Jan 2, 1909.³⁹ Durham accompanied them for several months when they returned to London for meetings during the winter of 1909-1910, establishing a strong Pentecostal work in the city.
- ii) The Semples felt a call to China and returned to Toronto's 651 Queen Street East Mission for meetings before leaving for Hong Kong. Miller quotes Ellen as saying that "Aimee's gift of interpretation was such a blessing in giving to us the very words in given tongues that it made the presence of God very manifest to all."⁴⁰ The Semples were also in attendance at the Hebden's 3rd worker's convention in 1910 along with "brother McAlister" from Winnipeg and other leaders of the Pentecostal movement, before sailing to Belfast to hold a 3-week evangelistic crusade where 40 were Spirit-baptized. After a visit with Cecil Polhill in London, they sailed through the Suez to Hong Kong, immersing themselves in language study. However, Robert contracted malaria and died on Aug.19, 1910, leaving Aimee a widow before her 20th birthday. She gave birth to their daughter, Roberta Star Semple on Sept. 17, 1910.⁴¹

b) The Launch into Evangelism:

- i) Aimee returned to New York city where her mother 'Minnie' joined her and worked in a Salvation Army rescue mission for a year. After meeting Harold McPherson, a businessman, Aimee remarried on Oct 24, 1911 and after their son Rolf Potter Kennedy McPherson was born (Mar. 23 1913) in Rhode Island, Aimee returned to Canada and became actively involved in ministry again. McPherson ministered alongside, making all arrangements for Aimee's evangelistic tent services.⁴²
- ii) She launched her newsletter *The Bridal Call* in 1917 – ten years after *The Promise*, and 3 years before *The Canadian Pentecostal Testimony* began – and was the means of her support base. In the Jan. 1918 edition (No. 8), the Motto under the Masthead is: "Rise up my love, my fair one and come away." Songs of Sol 2.10. The Editors are listed as "Bro and sister H. S. McPherson", under which it reads, "The Bridal Call is a Pentecostal Paper... believing as we do that Jesus Christ the Son of God is soon to come back to this earth for His waiting people, we feel led to send this Bridal Call far and wide to extend to all [sic] mankind [sic] the invitation to the marriage of the Lamb. We endeavour to set forth... the plain message of Salvation, the Baptism of the Holy Ghost, Divine healing and the Soon coming of Jesus."⁴³ One can see the beginnings of Aimee's emphasis on the Foursquare gospel themes already in this first issue. Then a weekly magazine, *Word and Work* is advertised just below, as a "Pentecostal Magazine on Apostolic Faith Lines, for the spread of the Good News of the very soon coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and the good news of what God is doing... today in fulfillment of the promise made by Jesus who said, 'these signs shall follow them that believe...'" There are then listings of other letters (tracts), songs, letters available for listed prices – a means of on-going support for her evangelistic work. Her up-coming crusade in Key West is advertised "to see souls saved, and believers baptized in the Holy Ghost, and

³⁷ Burgess and Mass, *New International Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements*, s.v. "Semple, Robert James", 1050.

³⁸ Miller, *Canadian Pentecostals*, 52.

³⁹ Burgess and Mass, *NIDPCM*, s.v. "International Church of the Foursquare Gospel", 793.

⁴⁰ Miller, 53, quoting *The Promise*, 15 (March 1910), 1.

⁴¹ Burgess and Mass, *NIDPCM*, s.v. "Semple, Robert James", 1051.

⁴² Burgess and Mass, *NITPCM*, s.v. "McPherson, Aimee Semple", 856 – 859.

⁴³ Bro. and Sister H. S. McPherson, Ed., *The Bridal Call* (Volume 1, Number 8, January, 1918), 2.

prepared to meet the Lord Jesus in the clouds.” As well, an original song “*The Former and Latter Rain*” is printed on the next page, which was “given in tongues and interpretation while playing the piano to Sister H. S. McPherson” – In all, Aimee was the author of over 150 songs and hymns.

- iii) Aimee was ordained with the Assemblies of God USA in 1919 as an evangelist holding powerful healing services in Canada and huge tent crusades in the States, but the stress of ministry and evangelistic travel took its toll, and Harold went back to Rhode Island, leading to their divorce in 1921. Despite the devastating hardships that Aimee encountered in the first 30 years of her life, the pain was not wasted as the Lord used her mightily wherever she ministered.⁴⁴
- iv) Aimee’s ministry in Canada impacted the early years of the PAOC. In the first issue of *The Canadian Pentecostal Testimony*, the very first article by R. E. McAlister opened with his teaching that “The Baptism of the Holy Ghost...is pre-eminently scriptural... (and) was originally accompanied by the speaking in other tongues as the Spirit gives utterance. God had only one baptism for His people...the same Baptism that MORE THAN A HUNDRED THOUSAND PEOPLE HAVE RECEIVED IN THE LAST FEW YEARS... with the same evidence...no one can ...say they have received the Baptism...without speaking in tongues.”⁴⁵ On that same page, under “Current News” there is mention of “the greatest campaign in the history of the Pentecostal work in Canada...(in) Montreal. Aimee Semple McPherson was in charge. Hundreds sought the Lord, hundreds were prayed for, for healing...so great was the interest that thousands were unable to get in (the large church).”⁴⁶ Miller adds that Pastor Charles Baker who hosted Aimee in Montreal for these meetings, wrote that “blind were made to see, lame to walk straight, sick raising up and leaping and praising God... The crowds were intense, policemen unable to cope with them... hundreds thronged the altar... some lying prostrate under the power of God... the air being charged with His spirit... scores of young men and women praying to God for salvation.”⁴⁷ Similar reports followed her ministry in Winnipeg with A. H. Argue reporting that “nearly 1,700 were crowded into the main Auditorium of the church...the altar filling up night after night with sinners seeking God...in one week... between 40-50 who received the Holy Ghost.”⁴⁸ However, her successful interdenominational meetings had made it difficult to find venues large enough for the crowds, and it was time for a change.

c) Angelus Temple:

- i) By the early 1920’s “Sister Aimee” was one of the most well-known preachers in North America after crisscrossing both Canada and the USA, so when she reached California in 1922, she decided to buy property to build her own facility. A reticence by the AG over her private ownership of the property led to her rescinding her papers with them, though they parted on good terms but by 1923, the 5,300 seat Angelus Temple was completed, and the ICFG was born. At its dedication Jan. 1, 1923, the cornerstone read: “to the cause of interdenominational and world-wide evangelism.”⁴⁹
- ii) Her theology was simple and clearly defined and was based on the “full gospel” concept of early pentecostalism, even as revivalist and Missionary Alliance founder, A. B. Simpson articulated, that Jesus is Saviour, Sanctifier, Healer and Coming King. Dayton summarizes Aimee’s and the ICFG’s core message as:

Jesus saves us according to John 3:16. He baptizes us with the Holy Spirit according to Acts 2:4. He heals our bodies according to James 5:14-15. And Jesus is coming again to receive us unto Himself according to 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17.⁵⁰
- iii) A gifted communicator, her sometimes controversial and innovative style of dramatized sermons, orchestra and choirs, the KFSG radio station and program, her books and writings including those of The Foursquare Gospel, the commissary that met the needs of over 1.5 million people during the Depression, as well as a vision to provide opportunities for an expanded role for pentecostal women in ministry (via the Foursquare Gospel Lighthouses) and the establishing of the Lighthouse for International foursquare Evangelism Bible College – all continue to stand as a testament to her faith, perseverance, tenacity and

⁴⁴ Burgess and Mass., *NIDPCM*, s.v. “McPherson, Aimee Semple”, 856.

⁴⁵ R. E. McAlister, Ed., “The Baptism of the Holy Ghost”, *Canadian Pentecostal Testimony*, No. 1, (December, 1920): 1.

⁴⁶ R. E. McAlister, Ed., “Current News”, 1.

⁴⁷ Miller, *Canadian Pentecostals*, 160.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 128.

⁴⁹ Burgess and Mass., *NIDPCM*, s.v. “McPherson, Aimee Semple”, 857.

⁵⁰ Donald W. Dayton, *Theological Roots of Pentecostalism* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1987), 21.

innovation, despite difficult life circumstances and at a time when women were not encouraged to lead – never mind found – denominations!

d) Conclusion:

Aimee Semple McPherson was a unique Pentecostal leader who rose from humble beginnings in Ontario's Salford farmland to found the Church of the Foursquare Gospel – one of the fastest growing Pentecostal denominations with a global reach through established churches, missions and Bible schools. Cox writes that “she was one of the best-known women in America, and ... put pentecostalism on the map... her convictions about the radical core of the pentecostal message especially its racial and gender inclusiveness...”⁵¹ is a model for 21st Century Pentecostals to take note of. Eschatologically, he sees the term “foursquare” as having a double reference. “It recalls the description of the New Jerusalem in Revelation 21:16... recall(ing) the persistent hope for a new city, another and more just society, which has always animated pentecostal faith. But ‘foursquare’ also symbolizes the basic teaching... that Jesus is Savior [sic], Sanctifier, Healer, and Coming King... which has continued to serve as the core doctrine for... pentecostals in several different denominations.”⁵²

Both Ellen Hebden and Aimee Semple McPherson's lives were used significantly by the Lord in the last century to help shape the foundations of two major denominations, this in spite of their personal short-comings. They both were moved by the Holy Spirit to lead the way forward with conviction, deep passion, a love for the Lord Jesus, and a sense of urgency to share the full-Gospel message because the Bridegroom was soon coming for his Bride – the Bride must be ready as it was the “last days”. Spirit Baptism was the sign of the promised “latter rain” with signs and wonders, healing and the gifts of the Spirit all needed to equip believers who were now endued with power to preach, teach and go in the anointing of the Holy Spirit to the nations. Carl Braaten writes that today's “church is dying of its own success... we are living in apocalyptic times without an apocalyptic faith and theology.”⁵³ Neither “sister Aimee” nor Ellen Hebden were afflicted with a myopic this-worldly vision! They had both seen a vision

⁵¹ Cox, *Fire From Heaven*, 126.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 128.

⁵³ Carl E. Braaten and Robert W. Jenson, *The Last Things: Biblical and Theological Perspectives on Eschatology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 26.

of the Bridegroom's nearness and tasted of the world to come which gave them the perseverance to swim upstream against the tide of a lethargic and stale religiosity. Jesus was coming soon, for them, his Bride! The world might mock them, (and did) but their lamps were full of oil and they were fanning the fires of their "first-love" passion for the Bridegroom... and for a world that was lost and who needed to hear the "good news" of the "Full Gospel"!

It may be that by refreshing the relational motif of the Bridegroom who declares in Rev 22: "I am coming soon", twenty-first century Classical Pentecostals, and the PAOC denomination in particular, would be encouraged to revive the language of imminence, as they reflect back on early Pentecostal's fervent first-love for the Lord and the "blessed hope" of Jesus second coming. As they then "move forward" in mission as a denomination whose roots are grounded in "apocalyptic eschatology" there can be a new fresh sense of expectation engendered, because "the Spirit and the Bride say, Come!" This invitation to "long for his appearing" (2 Tim 4:8) is both our "blessed hope" and our missional impetus because as Macchia points out "the bride in Revelation is adorned in good works (Rev 19:8)."⁵⁴ This readiness for missional engagement and Christ's second return will echo the cry of the Bride through-out the church age, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus", Amen!

⁵⁴ Frank D. Macchia, *Baptized in the Spirit: A Global Pentecostal Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006), 278.

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