

THE BIRTH OF THE FOURSQUARE GOSPEL IN CANADA:  
TRACING THE ROOTS OF THE FIRST FOURSQUARE CHURCH  
IN VANCOUVER, CANADA

DEREK M. GEERLOF

*“Wanted: A thousand young men and women to enlist for the Master’s service.*

*Good pay, steady advancement, final rewards.*

*Sail on the Gospel Ship of Zion! Recruiting Station,*

*Woodland Drive Fourteenth Avenue East.*

*Meet the Field Commander Anna D. Britton of Angelus Temple.”*

Advertisement in *The Vancouver Daily Province*,  
September 17, 1927

A history of the Foursquare Gospel Church in Canada (FGCC) has yet to be written.<sup>1</sup> In this essay, I begin to fill that void by exploring the various movements and personalities that led to the eventual formation of the first Foursquare Gospel Church in Canada in September 1927. Known initially as the Foursquare Gospel Lighthouse in Vancouver, this congregation was brought into Aimee Semple McPherson’s International Church of the Foursquare Gospel by McPherson’s close confidante, Sister Anna D. Britton. Britton pastored both the Lighthouse and served as the district supervisor for the Foursquare work in Canada from 1927 until 1941.<sup>2</sup> In what follows, I trace the pre-history of the Foursquare Gospel Lighthouse by exploring the emerging Pentecostal movement in Vancouver. While several streams

---

<sup>1</sup> Adam Stewart identifies the Foursquare Gospel Church of Canada as one of many smaller Pentecostal denominations requiring further study, *The New Canadian Pentecostals* (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2015), 169. Peter Althouse and Michael Wilkinson also note the lack of study on Canadian Pentecostalism, *Canadian Journal of Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity* 5 (2014), i. I state my immense appreciation to B. Joanne Wolf of Pacific Life Bible College, Surrey, BC, Canada for her valuable and foresighted work, “Canadian Foursquare History,” an unpublished ministry project (Surrey: Pacific Life Bible College, 1996). As part of this work, Wolf conducted interviews and gathered the stories of several Foursquare pioneers active in British Columbia. These interviews provided clues at crucial junctions as to relationships and networks existing during the formative years of Pentecostalism in Vancouver.

<sup>2</sup> The Foursquare Gospel Lighthouse continues today as the Kingsway Foursquare Church in Burnaby, British Columbia.

of Pentecostalism existed in Vancouver, I pay particular attention to the streams that fed into the formation of the Foursquare Gospel Lighthouse. In doing so, I suggest Los Angeles based evangelist Aimee Semple McPherson's Angelus Temple had a significant impact on Vancouver Pentecostalism.<sup>3</sup> Although a Foursquare congregation was not birthed in Canada until 1927, the name "McPherson," "The Foursquare Gospel," and McPherson's "Angelus Temple" occupied a prominent place in the Pentecostal landscape of Vancouver to such an extent we can recognize an Angelus Temple network functioning within Vancouver between 1923 and 1928. For example, when A. Watson Argue, a significant Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada (PAOC) personality, spoke at Trinity Tabernacle in Burnaby, British Columbia in November 1926 he is advertised in the Vancouver newspaper, the *Province*, as a recent pastor at McPherson's Angelus Temple in Los Angeles.<sup>4</sup> Having served a previous stint at Angelus Temple, in May 1926 the "twenty-two year old trombone-playing" Argue had rushed from Winnipeg where he had assumed the pastorate of Calvary Temple in 1925 to Angelus Temple in order to assist McPherson's mother Minnie Kennedy with preaching duties at the Temple in the days following the disappearance of McPherson.<sup>5</sup> That in November 1926 Argue is advertised as coming from Angelus Temple rather than from Calvary Temple might point to the influence of Angelus Temple in Vancouver during this period, at least in a marketing sense. As such, early Vancouver Pentecostalism was

---

<sup>3</sup> This focus on the emergence of the Foursquare Gospel in Canada differentiates this work from Donald Klan's helpful work, "Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada Church Growth in British Columbia from Origins until 1953," unpublished thesis (Vancouver: Regent College, 1979). Michael Wilkinson has written on the global diversity within Canadian Pentecostalism, see "Canadian Pentecostal Diversity: Incorporating the Many Voices," in *Canadian Journal of Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity* 2 (2011): 41-82.

<sup>4</sup> The *Vancouver Daily Province*, November 6, 1926, 8. Hereafter, *Province*. Linda M. Ambrose speaks to the close relationship between the Argue family and McPherson in "Zelma and Beulah Argue: Sisters in the Canadian Pentecostal Movement," in *Winds from the North: Canadian Contributions to the Pentecostal Movement*, eds. Michael Wilkinson and Peter Althouse (Leiden: Brill, 2010): 93-127.

<sup>5</sup> Nathaniel M. Van Cleave, *The Vine and the Branches: A History of the International Church of the Foursquare Gospel* (Los Angeles: International Church of the Foursquare Gospel, 1992), 8, 226. On Argue's return to Angelus Temple, see Edith L. Blumhofer, *Aimee Semple McPherson: Everybody's Sister* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 283-4.

impacted, not only by networks that ran east-west across Canada most notably from Calvary Temple in Winnipeg and the Hebden Mission in Toronto, but also from networks that ran north-south between Canada and the United States.<sup>6</sup>

In a denominational sense, the Foursquare Gospel was a latecomer to Canadian Pentecostalism. By the time the Foursquare Gospel Lighthouse was established in Vancouver in late 1927 PAOC had already been functioning as a denomination with Canada since 1919.<sup>7</sup> At the same, however, the influence of Aimee Semple McPherson and her Angelus Temple was considerable both in Canada and in Vancouver long before Foursquare came into Canada as a denomination. Why was Foursquare so slow to form a denomination? The answer seems to lie in the fact that until 1927 McPherson, herself, was opposed to the idea turning Foursquare into a denomination. While McPherson would eventually found the International Church of the Foursquare Gospel (ICFG) in 1927, her early ministry was characterized by a strong inter-denominational stance and resistance to beginning a denomination. In 1919, for example, McPherson obtained a ministerial license from the Assemblies of God but soon gave it up over concerns that the development of Pentecostal denominations kept Pentecostalism from reviving other denominations by “driving a wedge between Pentecostals and other Protestants.”<sup>8</sup> After the dedication of Angelus Temple in 1923, repeated articles in McPherson’s *Bridal Call* magazine between 1923 and 1928 disavowed

---

<sup>6</sup> Perhaps the most well-known north-south network operated out of Florence Crawford’s Portland Ministry, see Thomas William Miller, *Canadian Pentecostals: A History of the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada* (Mississauga: Full Gospel Publishing House, 1994), 92-6.

<sup>7</sup> PAOC came about as a merger in 1920 between both the eastern Canadian PAOC and the Western Canadian District of the Assemblies of God (AG), both of which formed in 1919. As the west was affiliated with the Assemblies of God, both groups became affiliated with the AG in 1920. However, they severed ties with the AG in 1925 due to “national considerations and policy differences.” See Peter Althouse, “The Influence of Dr. J.E. Purdie’s Reformed Anglican Theology on the Formation and Development of the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada,” in *Pneuma* 19:1 (1996), 3n; Ronald Kydd, “Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada,” in *The New International Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements*, ed. Stanley M. Burgess, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003), 961-64.

<sup>8</sup> Matthew Avery Sutton, *Aimee Semple McPherson and the Resurrection of Christian America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007), 42.

“any intention of starting a new denomination.”<sup>9</sup> Instead, McPherson sought to use her evangelistic fervor to strengthen churches and denominations already in existence. David Michel insightfully notes McPherson’s ability to operate as a Pentecostal within mainline denominations such as the Methodist Episcopal Church (MEC) in the United States arguing “McPherson made significant contributions to early twentieth-century Methodism by incarnating a practice of camp meeting spirituality that strengthen the MEC evangelistic push, offering individuals an alternative way of being Methodist through faith healing and Spirit baptism, and reforming congregational liturgy.”<sup>10</sup> In Canada, strong ties existed between McPherson and the PAOC and many of McPherson’s evangelistic efforts sought to benefit the PAOC. For example, Michael Di Giacomo contends that McPherson’s meeting in Montreal in December 1920 at the invitation of PAOC Pastor, Rev. Charles Baker, reversed the trend of a declining Protestantism and should be seen as a turning point in the expansion of Pentecostalism into the province.<sup>11</sup> As such, while McPherson’s influence was strongly felt in Canada, her initial evangelistic fervor was not directed towards the establishment of a denomination, but towards the spread of Pentecostalism within the church at large. After Aimee Semple McPherson dedicated Angelus Temple in Los Angeles along with the Echo Park Evangelistic and Missionary Training Institute in 1923, the number of branch churches birthed from relationship with Angelus Temple necessitated some type of oversight, even as McPherson resisted the movement towards organization. As a result, the International Foursquare Gospel Lighthouses—soon renamed ICFG—was incorporated in 1927 and a new Pentecostal denomination was born. It was during this time of institutionalization that the first branch Church of ICFG was birthed in Canada.

*The Columbia Mission and the Birth of the Sixth Street Pentecostal Tabernacle*

---

<sup>9</sup> Van Cleave, *The Vine and the Branches*, 34.

<sup>10</sup> David Michel, “Aimee Semple McPherson and the Reconfiguration of Methodism in America, 1916-1922,” in *Winds from the North*: 169-88.

<sup>11</sup> Michael Di Giacomo, “Aimee Semple McPherson: ‘Shot in the Arm’ for French-Canadian Protestantism” in *Winds from the North*: 151-168. See *Pentecostal Testimony*, December 1920, A.

The Pentecostal movement made little impact on the city of Vancouver before 1923. Four Pentecostal churches existed in the province of British Columbia before 1923, two of which were in Vancouver, with the other two existing in Victoria and Prince Rupert.<sup>12</sup> Newspaper advertisements indicate a small fluctuating number of missions operating in the city between 1908 and 1923 with only two having any sense of permanence: the Apostolic Faith Mission tracing its roots to 1908, and what became known as the Columbia Mission tracing its roots to 1911 or 1912.<sup>13</sup> It is from the Columbia Mission that we can begin to trace the pre-history of the Foursquare Gospel Lighthouse. The Columbia Mission emerged when a small group of Pentecostals began to gather at 40 E. Cordova Street in downtown Vancouver. In 1914 they moved into a storefront at 217 Dunlevy Avenue, and in 1916 moved to 412 Columbia Street at the corner of Hastings where they became known as the Columbia Mission.<sup>14</sup> While the Columbia Mission seems to have been supported by a small membership, this began to change under the leadership of Orville Benham, a credentialed minister with the Western Canada District of the Assemblies of God, who took charge of the work in the summer of 1920. By December 1920, the Columbia Mission was listed as a co-operative Fellowship with the PAOC.<sup>15</sup> In January 1921, due to crowds attending evangelistic revival meetings by Jack Saunders, services were moved to the Royal Theatre and later to the Central City Mission at 233 Abbott Street on February 22, 1921.<sup>16</sup>

In May 1921 Benham's group constructed a 1000 seat tent on the corner of Granville and Pacific Street to house an evangelistic campaign led by Dr. Burton Hall, a Baptist preacher from San Diego who had received the Baptism of the Holy Spirit at a McPherson meeting.<sup>17</sup> This eight-week revival appears to be the first highly visible presence of Pentecostalism in Vancouver. Benham commented that

---

<sup>12</sup> Robert K. Burkinshaw, *Pilgrims in Lotus Land: Conservative Protestantism in British Columbia 1917-1981* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1995), 101.

<sup>13</sup> Klan, *Pentecostal Assemblies*, 64-66. See also Miller, *Canadian Pentecostals*, 92-6.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>15</sup> *Pentecostal Testimony*, December 1920, D.

<sup>16</sup> Klan, *Pentecostal Assemblies*, 70-71.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 74.

“[Hall’s] refined manner of delivery lifted our standard of respectability before the eyes of the city. In view of this fact, we consider his work of great importance in Pentecostal ranks.”<sup>18</sup> Dr. Hall was assisted at the Vancouver revival services by Billy and Lola Black as featured soloists and song leaders. Billy Black was a close associate of McPherson, travelling extensively with her prior to this meeting. In 1923, Black became the Acting Dean and Assistant to the President (McPherson) at the Echo Park Evangelistic and Missionary Training Institute in Los Angeles and would become the third general supervisor of ICFG from 1933-1938. In May 1922, Benham’s group was expelled from the Central City Mission and re-erected the tent used for the Hall meetings. By October 1922, the group returned to 412 Columbia Street and Benham resigned from the work in late 1922. In February 1923, the majority of people meeting at 412 Columbia Street acquired the vacated Sixth Avenue Methodist Church in the community of Kitsilano in Vancouver at which time they associated with the Assemblies of God, and began calling themselves the Sixth Avenue Pentecostal Tabernacle.<sup>19</sup> The Blacks later returned to Vancouver in September 1927 to hold a revival at the Sixth Avenue Pentecostal Church.

### *The Birth of the Foursquare Gospel Temple*

A small group of people, however, elected to remain at 412 Columbia Street.<sup>20</sup> On January 13, 1924 they moved from Columbia Street to 1166 Georgia Street and advertised themselves as the Foursquare Gospel Temple under the leadership of “Mr. T. Spencer Baynes.”<sup>21</sup> Further, sometime prior to the summer of 1924, a group left the Sixth Avenue congregation and joined the Foursquare Gospel Temple. Roy Gray speaks to the fluidity and interconnectedness between the PAOC and McPherson’s influenced Foursquare work in Vancouver. Gray was

---

<sup>18</sup> *Pentecostal Testimony*, September 1921, 2; also quoted in Klan, 73.

<sup>19</sup> This Church eventually became Broadway Pentecostal Tabernacle of the PAOC.

<sup>20</sup> “These members had opted not to relocate to Kitsilano with the majority because they equated the oak pews, stained glass, and pipe organ of the former Methodist building with the formalism of the religious past they had abandoned,” Burkinshaw, *Pilgrims in Lotus Land*, 118.

<sup>21</sup> *Province*, January 19, 1924. The newspaper advert states: “Church of the Foursquare Gospel—Jesus—Saviour, healer, baptizer with Holy Spirit and coming king.”

converted at the Price campaign in 1923. He then attended Sixth Avenue Pentecostal Tabernacle before studying at Glad Tidings Bible Institute in San Francisco from 1923-1924. Gray returned to Vancouver in the summer of 1924 to find his mother had joined the Foursquare Gospel Temple. As a result, he began to preach at the Foursquare Gospel Temple under Hardy Mitchell. During this time, the Assemblies of God District Superintendent, Frank Gray, suggested Roy Gray attend Angelus Temple at which time he moved to Los Angeles.<sup>22</sup> It seems likely that a merger took place between the remaining Columbia congregants and some people from Sixth Avenue who then formed the Foursquare Gospel Temple on Georgia Street. On Friday, April 25, 1924 Hardy W. Mitchell, described in the *Province* as “a wide-awake preacher of the ‘Old Time Gospel,’” took charge of the Foursquare Gospel Temple.<sup>23</sup> Mitchell was both a former pastor of Stone Church in Chicago, as well a frequent visiting evangelist to Angelus Temple and frequent contributor to McPherson’s *Bridal Call*.<sup>24</sup> During the summer of 1924 evangelist May Turner from the Angelus Temple came to the Foursquare Gospel Temple for a brief revival.<sup>25</sup> The Church still advertised itself as interdenominational but it seems to have had ties to Angelus Temple. An unsuccessful effort to affiliate the Church with Angelus Temple was made at this time, leaving the congregation disappointed when the “authorities at Angelus Temple did not respond to the overtures.”<sup>26</sup> Oscar Lewis became the leader of the Church in October 1924.<sup>27</sup> While the call for affiliation with Foursquare by the Foursquare Gospel Temple went unheeded, two city-wide revival meetings by Charles Price and the formation of a new congregation would impact the Foursquare Gospel Temple.

#### *Henry B. “Boardy” Taylor and the Birth of Pyramid Temple*

Charles Price proved to be a catalyst to significant Pentecostal growth in Vancouver. A Congregationalist minister from San Jose, Price converted to Pentecostalism at a McPherson service in San Jose in

---

<sup>22</sup> Interview with Roy Gray in Wolf, “Canadian Foursquare History, 30.

<sup>23</sup> *Province*, April 19, 1924, 24.

<sup>24</sup> Van Cleave, *Vine and Branches*, 226.

<sup>25</sup> *Province*, August 24 and September 13, 1924.

<sup>26</sup> Interview with Roy Gray in Wolf, “Canadian Foursquare History,” 30.

<sup>27</sup> *Province*, October 25, 1924, 14.

1921. As Robert Burkinshaw comments, “Price had been attending her meetings in an attempt to gather evidence to use against the ‘mob psychologist’ for a prominently advertised sermon in his large Congregationalist church in Lodi, California.” Instead, Price was baptized in the Spirit, left his church and began a healing and evangelistic ministry.<sup>28</sup> In 1923, and following large crowds in Victoria, the Greater Vancouver Ministerial Association invited Price to come to Vancouver for a campaign, essentially at the request of the mainline denominations.<sup>29</sup> But the Price meetings left a profound print on Pentecostalism in Vancouver. Sixth Avenue Pentecostal Tabernacle reported crowds of up to 700 people in their church following the campaign; not surprisingly, it was Sixth Avenue and not the ministerial association, who sponsored Price to return to Vancouver in May 1924.<sup>30</sup> Whereas Price had focused on healing in 1923, in 1924 he was much more outspoken about the baptism of the Holy Spirit and Pentecostal experience.

Henry B. Taylor, pastor of the seventy-strong Marion Free Methodist Church, was impacted by the Price revival meetings of 1924. Taylor received the baptism of the Holy Spirit on March 21, 1924 just prior to these meetings.<sup>31</sup> Following the Price campaign, several hundred people from mainline churches began to attend Taylor’s Sunday evening interdenominational meetings. Taylor writes:

People came to the meetings from all over Vancouver. Two hundred chairs were purchased to seat the people. Sinners came to laugh and were laid low at the feet of Jesus and came up converted with the smile of heaven on their faces. God was on the scene and the devil was on the run. Hallelujah! Persecution came and preachers said that it had to be stopped but who can stop Niagara? People were healed, scores were

---

<sup>28</sup> Burkinshaw, *Pilgrims in Lotus Land*, 102.

<sup>29</sup> Minutes of the Greater Vancouver Ministerial Association, April 27, 1923; *cp.* Burkinshaw, *Pilgrims in Lotus Land*, 107-8. Burkinshaw notes an estimated 5,000 people were barred by police and fire from entering the overcrowded building.

<sup>30</sup> *The Canadian Pentecostal*, June 1923, 5.

<sup>31</sup> Klan, *Pentecostal Assemblies*, 103,

saved and filled with the Holy Spirit. The entire church was the altar and people were saved and filled where they sat.<sup>32</sup>

Sadie Harper, who attended the Marion Church, said of Taylor's baptism of the Holy Spirit:

“His face was radiant and I don't remember what he said that morning because it was such a tremendous experience. It was the beginning of 'life' in that church. Young people came from other churches in the area, and from who knows where, to watch people as they walked up the aisles and fell under the power of God . . . it was a tremendous thing! The church was filled until there wasn't room for the people anymore.”<sup>33</sup>

In November 1924, Taylor was forced to resign from the Marion congregation and, followed by the majority of congregants, continued services at the Broadway Theatre on November 23, 1924 under the heading “Interdenominational Services.”<sup>34</sup> Two weeks later, Taylor and his followers held joint services with the Foursquare Gospel Temple at 1166 Georgia Street. Oscar Lewis preached the 3 pm service and H.B. Taylor conducted the evangelistic service in the evening.<sup>35</sup> On Sunday, December 14, 1924, Taylor was named the pastor of the Foursquare Gospel Temple. According to the *Province*, approximately 900 people were in attendance.<sup>36</sup> Of particular interest, Taylor immediately preached a sermon on the topic of the Pyramid and on December 20, 1924 the Foursquare Gospel Temple was renamed Pyramid Temple.<sup>37</sup>

---

<sup>32</sup> H.B. Taylor, “The History of Evangelistic Tabernacle,” *Kingsway Historical Papers*. Also, Burkinshaw, *Pilgrims in Lotus Land*, 116-17.

<sup>33</sup> Sadie Harper interview in Wolf, “Canadian Foursquare History,” 32.

<sup>34</sup> *Province*, November 22, 1924, 16.

<sup>35</sup> Services were held at 11 am, 3 pm, and 7:30 pm on Sunday with evangelistic services held on the Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday evenings, and a prayer meeting on Thursday from 2-4:30 pm, *Province*, November 29, 1924.

<sup>36</sup> *Province*, November 29, 1924.

<sup>37</sup> *Province*, December 20, 1924. Phylip Davies, who attended the church as a young person, remembers Taylor's brother-in-law, “Rev. Roberts,” previously conducted a campaign at Taylor's Marion Church, preaching on British Israelism, noting that the lost tribes of Israel were British and that the Pyramids in Egypt held the keys to Scriptural themes and events, Phylip Davis interview in Wolf, “Canadian Foursquare History,” 30.

It appears that the move to 1166 Georgia Street was a temporary stop for Taylor and his followers. In announcing the first joint service between the Foursquare Gospel Temple and the Marion congregation on November 1924 the newspaper ad stated: "Definite announcement regarding the new building will be made on Sunday. The site has already been purchased."<sup>38</sup> On March 8, 1925 Pyramid Temple moved to its new location at 450 Kingsway at the corner of Kingsway and Guelph. The Pyramid facilities consisted of a large four post white tent seating approximately 1800 people. Pyramid Temple grew averaging 1000-1300 people at the weeknight services along with an estimated 3500 people attending the Easter Services.<sup>39</sup> The number of people traveling to the tent resulted in B.C. Electric constructing a street car stop in front of the tent, in addition to adding more streetcars to facilitate the crowds.<sup>40</sup>

In the summer of 1925, William Booth-Clibborn, the grandson of William Booth, conducted an eight-week campaign at Pyramid. To advertise the children's campaign held in conjunction with the meetings, a church member who was also a pilot with the Royal Canadian Air Force flew a World War I bi-plane over Vancouver to drop leaflets on the city below.<sup>41</sup> The Booth-Clibborn campaign, however, proved to be a turning point in the life of Pyramid Temple, leading to a rapid loss of people in the latter months of 1925 and coming to a head in early 1926. After Booth-Clibborn preached on "Jesus only," Taylor began to teach that baptism occurred in the name of Jesus only. This teaching did not go unnoticed by the other Pentecostal congregations. Donald Klan writes,

On Sunday 7 February 1926, for example, lay evangelist J.R. Elsom spoke on "Has the Trinity of the Godhead Gone Out of Business?" at the Foursquare Gospel Temple, pastor Calvary Jeays addressed the question 'How Many Persons in the

---

<sup>38</sup> *Province*, November 29, 1924.

<sup>39</sup> *Province*, April 18, 1925, 14.

<sup>40</sup> Philip Davis interview in Wolf, "Canadian Foursquare History," 30.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.* Davis estimates 1000 children showed up for the opening Saturday of the campaign with 300-500 attending the children's meeting throughout the remaining weeks.

Godhead?”, and evangelist Mary T. Miller preached on the “Eternal Triangle” at the Revival Mission.<sup>42</sup>

Around May 1926, Taylor was expelled from the Church and moved his services to a nearby orange orchard where those who left the Church with him, estimated to be a few hundred people, sat on benches outside.<sup>43</sup>

Following Taylor’s departure, the group remaining at 450 Kingsway renamed themselves Trinity Tabernacle. It appears only about twenty members remained on the role when J.R. Elsom, who had continued with the Foursquare Gospel Temple, assumed the pastorate of Trinity in March 1926.<sup>44</sup> On October 10, 1926, a new facility was built in the parking lot of 450 Kingsway with seating for approximately twelve hundred and financed partially by the life insurance policies of several men in the congregation.<sup>45</sup> In November 1926, A. Watson Argue, “a 22 year old athletic, musical evangelist, recently assistant pastor at Angelus Temple,” held a campaign at Trinity.<sup>46</sup> When Elsom resigned on February 20, 1927 to become an evangelist with the PAOC, Trinity had approximately 200 members and 400 people attending services on Sunday mornings.<sup>47</sup>

### *The Foursquare Gospel Temple*

When Taylor moved his congregation to 450 Kingsway in March 1925, a group remained at 1166 Georgia Street and, led by lay leader James Purse, reclaimed the name Foursquare Gospel Temple.<sup>48</sup> Above the newspaper advertisement announcing the new Pyramid Temple on March 7, 1925 the Foursquare Gospel Temple promoted itself with the banner, “The work will continue.”<sup>49</sup> Lay evangelist J.R. Elsom became involved in the Foursquare work on February 6, 1926 and Purse was

---

<sup>42</sup> Klan, *Pentecostal Assemblies*, 110; also, Burkinshaw, *Pilgrims in Later Lands*, 117.

<sup>43</sup> Davis interview in Wolf, “Canadian Foursquare History,” 30.

<sup>44</sup> *Pentecostal Testimony*, March 1927, 5.

<sup>45</sup> Benjamin Fletcher interview in Wolf, “Canadian Foursquare History,” 33.

<sup>46</sup> *Province*, November 6, 1926.

<sup>47</sup> *Pentecostal Testimony*, March 1927, 5.

<sup>48</sup> Audrey Duffield interview in Wolf, “Canadian Foursquare History,” 31.

<sup>49</sup> *Province*, March 7, 1925, 12.

officially installed as pastor on May 17, 1925.<sup>50</sup> From this point a direct relationship with Angelus Temple in Los Angeles was pursued. On July 18, 1925, the Foursquare Gospel Temple was advertised as Church of the Four-square Gospel with the word “incorporated” added. Further, the Foursquare symbol used by Angelus Temple was included and the 11:00 am service was announced as a “special dedicatory service.”<sup>51</sup> A newspaper article on January 23, 1926 reports the church showed a large increase of membership during the year, that finances were in good condition and free from debt, and that Purse had been unanimously re-elected as pastor.<sup>52</sup>

On November 7, 1926, the church changed locations and moved to the upper floor of 570 Granville Street. Evangelists Samuel Clarke and A.E. Burnett performed the dedication service and a musical including soloists and orchestra were advertised for the evening. For the first time, the newspaper advertisement indicated that the Church of the Four-square Gospel was now under the “Auspices of Aimee Semple McPherson—Echo Park evang. Ass’n.”<sup>53</sup> In the fall, Roy Gray and Luther Plankenhorn, graduates of the Evangelistic and Missionary Training Institute at Angelus Temple, were commissioned to conduct a series of meetings.<sup>54</sup> The Church remained at 570 Granville until May 8, 1927 when services were moved to the corner of Woodland Drive and Fourteenth Avenue East.<sup>55</sup> In June 1927 Purse resigned to become an evangelist with the PAOC.<sup>56</sup> Subsequently, the church communicated with Angelus Temple and sought a student worker from Los Angeles to come and lead a campaign.<sup>57</sup> A worker was sent to Vancouver in response to the request, but rather than a student, Vancouver received from Angelus Temple, a most dynamic and active minister and evangelist, Anna D. Britton.

*Anna D. Britton*

---

<sup>50</sup> *Province*, May 16, 1925, 13.

<sup>51</sup> *Province*, July 18, 1925, 4.

<sup>52</sup> *Province*, January 23, 1926, 5.

<sup>53</sup> *Province*, November 6, 1926, 8.

<sup>54</sup> Guy P. Duffield interview in Wolf, “Canadian Foursquare History,” 31.

<sup>55</sup> *Province*, May 8, 1927, 4.

<sup>56</sup> Klan, *Pentecostal Assemblies*, 111.

<sup>57</sup> Walter Mussein interview in Wolf, “Canadian Foursquare History,” 35.

A chapter on the life of Anna Britton still needs to be written. Born in Dayton, Ohio on October 12, 1871 Britton met McPherson in San Jose in the days leading up to McPherson's famous campaign in Oakland, California in July 1921 where they become friends and close-confidants. In his eulogy for Britton, Rolf McPherson writes that not only did Britton drive McPherson around Oakland and San Francisco looking for church window ideas for Angelus Temple, but that "it was through Sister Britton's efforts that mother went to Oakland for her history-making revival."<sup>58</sup> After moving with her husband, Claire, and son to Los Angeles, Britton was ordained at Angelus Temple on May 13, 1924 and became the deaconess in charge of the 500 room, the prayer room at Angelus Temple so named due to its seating capacity. Britton notes in the January 1925 *Bridal Call* that 96,259 people had already been involved in the prayer room ministry at Angelus Temple.<sup>59</sup> In 1925 Britton was one of McPherson's three ministerial assistants sharing preaching responsibilities when McPherson was away, in addition to teaching weekly Bible classes.<sup>60</sup> In 1926 pastor-evangelist Britton took charge of the Foursquare Church in Santa Ana, California, while starting churches in Burbank, Santa Monica, Brea, Fullerton, and Alhambra. Her son, C.E. Britton enjoyed a lengthy ministry at the church in Alhambra, the church to which Anna Britton would return after finishing her Canadian ministry in 1941.<sup>61</sup>

On September 3, 1927 Anna D. Britton came to the Woodland church for what was initially planned as a two week evangelistic campaign.<sup>62</sup> The *Bridal Call* notes only six to eight people were meeting at the Foursquare Church upon her arrival.<sup>63</sup> The following week, Britton established the church as a Foursquare Lighthouse and began accepting people into official church membership with thirty-five people included in the membership book on September 11,

---

<sup>58</sup> Memorial Brochure for Anna D. Britton, *Kingsway Historical Papers*.

<sup>59</sup> *Bridal Call*, January 1915, 23.

<sup>60</sup> Blumhofer, *Aimee Semple McPherson*, 270.

<sup>61</sup> Memorial Brochure for Anna D. Britton (1961), *Kingsway Historical Papers*.

<sup>62</sup> Walter Mussein interview in Wolf, "Canadian Foursquare History," 35; also, Memorial Brochure of Anna D. Britton (1961), *Kingsway Historical Papers*. The August 31, 1927 edition of Angelus Temple's weekly publication, *The Crusader*, mentions this as a ten-day campaign set to begin on September 4, 1927.

<sup>63</sup> *Bridal Call*, January 1929, 32.

1927.<sup>64</sup> By December, the congregation had grown to the point that it no longer fit in the Woodland Drive facility with official membership having grown to ninety people.<sup>65</sup> Following McPherson's navy theme, the Woodland Church built a nine foot tall lighthouse on top of the church.<sup>66</sup> In addition, during this campaign, Britton established a second lighthouse in North Vancouver, preaching there on Monday nights, following the pattern of her California ministry.<sup>67</sup> It seems likely, however, that this was a short-lived work as no further mention is made in newspapers or the archives.

*The Merging of Foursquare Lighthouse with Trinity Tabernacle and the Formation of the Foursquare Gospel Lighthouse*

Following the resignation of J.R. Elsom in February 1927, George Stieglitz assumed the pastorate of Trinity Tabernacle by April 3, 1927.<sup>68</sup> Declining attendance caused difficulty for Trinity as they were still making payments on the new building and they sent a request to Angelus Temple asking to give their property to Foursquare in exchange for financial assistance.<sup>69</sup> In response, John Goben, the first Superintendent of Branch Churches of the newly organized ICFG, travelled to Vancouver and spoke at the Foursquare Lighthouse on December 4, 1927.<sup>70</sup> On December 18, 1927 Trinity Tabernacle and the Foursquare Gospel Lighthouse held a joint service at 450 Kingsway advertised as "Special United Services, Auspices Aimee Semple McPherson." Stieglitz preached in the morning service, while Britton conducted a "great song service" in the evening.<sup>71</sup> The two

<sup>64</sup> A record of members of the Kingsway Foursquare Church, *Kingsway Historical Papers*.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> This is accompanied in the *The Crusader* with a photo of the lighthouse on top of the Church.

<sup>67</sup> "A branch of the work has been established in North Vancouver where Sister Britton goes each Monday night with a real on-fire message from the Word of God. While still in its infancy, much good work has been accomplished in that vicinity." *The Crusader*, October 26, 1927, 8.

<sup>68</sup> *Province*, April 2, 1927, 4.

<sup>69</sup> Benjamin Fletcher and Eleanor Hopper interviews in Wolf, "Canadian Foursquare History," 36.

<sup>70</sup> *Province*, December 3, 1927, 4. On a curious note, Minnie Kennedy, the mother of McPherson, spoke on this same Sunday at the Sixth Avenue Pentecostal Tabernacle, *Province*, December 3, 1927, 4.

<sup>71</sup> *Province*, December 17, 1927, 5.

churches amalgamated on January 1, 1928 at 450 Kingsway as the Foursquare Gospel Lighthouse with Anna Britton in charge.<sup>72</sup> On January 18 and 19, 1928 McPherson, along with Harriet Jordan, the Dean of L.I.F.E. Bible Institute in Los Angeles from 1924-1937, conducted two days of services at the new Vancouver Church, speaking to crowds of approximately 5,000 by preaching ten sermons to rotating crowds every few hours over two days due to limited seating capacity.<sup>73</sup> By July 1928, the *Bridal Call* reports the attendance of the church was between 1000-1200 people on Sunday evenings.<sup>74</sup>

Britton modeled the Foursquare work in Vancouver on Angelus Temple. A “200 prayer room” ministry began at the Church. On Sundays, Sister Britton would teach an adult Sunday school class, preach the Sunday morning service, and for the first few years, broadcast a live afternoon service on CJOR, a local Vancouver radio station. Sunday night services were celebratory and included the newly formed Silver Band choir and orchestra. Wednesday night services focused on the Holy Spirit; Friday nights emphasized prayer for healing.<sup>75</sup> As a result of prayer requests received through her radio presence, it was not unusually for friends to drive Sister Britton around the Vancouver area in order to pray for people in person.<sup>76</sup> In June 1928, Britton started L.I.F.E. Bible College of Canada in the church building, and which continues to operate today as Pacific Life College in Surrey, B.C.<sup>77</sup> The first class graduated in 1930 with five students who left to pioneer churches, and by 1935 sixty-nine women and men had received diplomas from the College.<sup>78</sup> Britton was named as the divisional superintendent of the Western Canadian District of ICFG, a position she held from 1928 until 1941. For Britton’s eulogy,

---

<sup>72</sup> *Province*, January 1, 1928.

<sup>73</sup> *The Crusader*, January 25, 1928, 1,3.

<sup>74</sup> *Bridal Call*, July 29, 1928, 32.

<sup>75</sup> Wolf, “Canadian Foursquare History,” 38. On Jordan see, Van Cleave, *Vine and the Branches*, 51. Van Cleave writes, “Under [Jordan’s] leadership, the enrollment of L.I.F.E. climbed from fewer than 200 to one thousand students. The number of churches started by students who graduated during her tenure was over three hundred.”

<sup>76</sup> Madge Rines interview in Wolf, “Canadian Foursquare History,” 40.

<sup>77</sup> “L.I.F.E.” stands for Lighthouse of International Foursquare Evangelism.

<sup>78</sup> Van Cleave, *Vine and Branches*, 52-3.

Rolf McPherson commented that she was the “first lady to be granted the right to perform marriages by the Canadian government.”<sup>79</sup>

### *Conclusion*

In this brief sketch, I suggest the influence of Aimee Semple McPherson on Vancouver Pentecostalism is significant enough to justify speaking of an Angelus Temple network in Vancouver from 1923-1928.<sup>80</sup> Evangelists such as Charles Price and Burton Hall, who received the baptism in the Holy Spirit under McPherson, played a pivotal role in the growth of Pentecostalism in Vancouver. Further, associating with Angelus Temple in newspaper advertisements provided public credence for Pentecostal evangelists of various affiliations. With the dedication of Angelus Temple in 1923 there grew a desire in a small number of Vancouver Pentecostals to affiliate with Angelus Temple and by 1927, after years of resisting the formation of a denomination, Angelus Temple was ready to establish an official Foursquare work in Canada. For her role in taking up the pastorate of the Foursquare Gospel Temple in Vancouver as well as becoming the supervisor of the Western Canadian District of ICFG, Sister Anna D. Britton should be recognized as a significant personality and pioneer not only for Foursquare history specifically, but also because of her place within the history of Canadian Pentecostalism.

---

<sup>79</sup> Memorial Brochure for Anna D. Britton (1961), *Kingsway Historical Papers*. I have not yet been able to confirm this claim, but if it stands, this fact would be of great significance to the history of the Church in Canada.

<sup>80</sup> It remains to be studied the extent to which McPherson’s Angelus Temple exerted influence on Canadian Pentecostalism following the process of establishing ICFG in 1927 and whether or not this led to a decline in general influence as more focus was given to ICFG.