

EVOLVING THEOLOGIES, CANADIAN ROOTS,
AND AIMEE SEMPLE McPHERSON

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Pentecostalism is hard to pin down. Given the diversity of expression and the continual evolution of the movement, this is particularly true of Canadian Pentecostalism. In this issue, we pay attention to some of that diversity and turn our gaze to some aspects of that evolution. And because the 2016 meeting of the Society for Pentecostal Studies (SPS) was hosted at Life Pacific College in San Dimas, California, the denominational school of the Foursquare Church, several scholars among us have once again turned their attention to Sister Aimee McPherson and her Canadian connections. In this issue, we include several items of interest to scholars of McPherson.

On the theme of diversity and evolution of ideas, a central feature of the Canadian Pentecostal Research Network at SPS 2016 was a paper by Andrew Gabriel, Adam Stewart, and Kevin Shanahan tracking the changing views among Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada (PAOC) credential holders on one key Pentecostal doctrinal question: tongues as the initial evidence of Spirit baptism. From its very early days the PAOC “Statement of Fundamental and Essential Truths” made clear that speaking in tongues is “the initial evidence” of Spirit baptism. That view however, is not as firmly held among all PAOC clergy as it used to be. In their survey of PAOC ministers, Gabriel, Stewart, and Shanahan discovered that a significant number of clergy have shifted how they interpret the “initial evidence” doctrine. Using social scientific methodology of polling, they developed a questionnaire which they circulated to almost three thousand individual leaders who hold PAOC credentials. Their findings are of interest to readers both within PAOC itself, but also to Pentecostals of other traditions, and indeed, to those interested in the evolution of Canadian evangelicalism in general and Pentecostalism’s place in that wider movement. The authors propose explanations for the trends they observe, both demographic and sociological. When the paper was presented at the 2016 meeting of the SPS as part of the Canadian Symposium three responses to the paper generated lively debate

among the conference attendees. The commentators on that occasion were David Wells, General Superintendent of the PAOC, Randall Holm, Associate Professor of Biblical Studies and Associate Dean of Student Affairs at Providence University College in Winnipeg, and Van Johnson, Dean of Masters Pentecostal Seminary in Toronto. All three offered their remarks for publication here and we think readers will find this conversation both insightful and provocative. Gabriel and Stewart's rejoinder appears after the respondents' remarks, but we are quite convinced that on the question of initial evidence, this may not be the last word.

Another expression of Pentecostalism is found in the Foursquare Church, which of course, has a direct tie to Canada because of Aimee Semple McPherson's Canadian roots. But as Derek M. Geerlof of Ambrose University points out in his paper "The Birth of the Foursquare Gospel in Canada: Tracing the Roots of the First Foursquare Church in Vancouver," Canada was also the site of a reverse mission project. Some of Sister Aimee's associates looked north to establish Foursquare churches in Canada, logically beginning on the west coast. While the work accomplished by Sister Anna D. Britton, one of Sister Aimee's close associates in ministry, is less well-known than some of the standard names associated with Canadian Pentecostal women (Ellen Hebden, Zelma Argue, and Alice Belle Garrigus come to mind), her story is no less important. The tale of Sister Aimee's "sisters" in ministry is an important project to remind us about the diversity of Canadian Pentecostal denominations and the many facets of Canadian Pentecostalism that deserve our scholarly attention.

And in the spirit of diversity, who can resist the temptation to look at the controversy that attended Aimee Semple McPherson throughout her life, namely her mysterious disappearance and re-entry to ministry in 1926? Revisiting that puzzling series of events, Margaret English de Alminana proposes that looking through a gendered lens, there may be new ways to think about McPherson's version of events. Proposing several reasons to reconsider the events that led many to assume scandal and moral failure on Sister Aimee's part, de Alminana works to introduce doubt into the received version of events.

We feature an extended review of the award-winning work by Leah Payne of George Fox University, *Gender and Pentecostal Revivalism Making a Female Ministry in the Early Twentieth Century*.¹ Using the case studies of two infamous female evangelists and pastors, Aimee Semple McPherson and Maria Woodworth-Etter, Payne provides a sophisticated gender analysis exploring the strategies and tactics these women adopted as they established cultural credibility and highly successful ministries. Based on the remarks delivered in an “Author Meets Critics” session at the 2016 SPS meeting, we include three scholars’ responses to that work. Linda Ambrose, a historian of gender, calls for extending a gender analysis to Pentecostal masculinities. Camilla Belfon, a doctoral student at University of Denver /Iliff School of Theology, uses Payne’s work to explain why many female healing evangelists, such as Louise Nankivell (1896-1972), did not enjoy levels of popularity that compared to either McPherson or Woodworth-Etter. Erica M. Ramirez, a doctoral candidate at Drew University, focuses on the promise that attention to theories of embodiment and ritual practice hold as important ways to think about women in Pentecostalism. The commentators all agreed that because of the ways in which Payne’s *Making a Female Ministry* contributes to Pentecostal feminist discourse, it is indeed a good book “with which to think.” To conclude this feature, Payne responds to her critics.

Still on the topic of “Sister Aimee,” we are pleased to include a second installment of the feature, “Notes from the Archives,” introduced in the previous issue of this journal. Steve Zeleny, Archivist at the Heritage Archives of the Foursquare Church in Los Angeles, introduces us to some of that facility’s accomplishments as the denomination that McPherson founded has coordinated its historical resources into a particularly significant site: McPherson’s parsonage. A site visit to that venue reminds scholars of Pentecostalism that beyond documents, there are important pieces of material culture, sound recordings, and photographs that all provide important perspectives to enrich our understandings of the past.

¹ Leah Payne’s book, *Gender and Pentecostal Revivalism Making a Female Ministry in the Early Twentieth Century*, was the winner of the Society for Pentecostal Studies’ 2016 Pneuma Book Prize: <http://www.sps-usa.org/#/pneuma/book-awards-and-indexes>

Partnering with other Pentecostal denominations, the Heritage Archives promotes the use of the website (www.pentecostalarchives.org) but they also have a helpful staff who are eager to assist scholars with their research concerning the history and legacy of the Foursquare Church.

Readers will also enjoy the collection of book reviews in this issue. Like a sampler of the diversity that characterizes Pentecostal scholarship, the books featured here will be of interest to established and emerging scholars, and also to general readers. Thank you to all the reviewers who contributed to these conversations that introduce us to some of the latest publications in our field.

This is the second issue of the journal co-edited by Linda Ambrose and Pam Holmes and it is with mixed feelings we announce that Pam is stepping away from her editorial role with the *Canadian Journal of Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity*. In July 2016, the Rev. Dr. Pamela M.S. Holmes accepted a full-time pastoral role with the United Church of Canada. From her very first reports about returning to the pastorate, it has been made clear that this is a great fit for Pam and her congregation. Even while we celebrate this development with Pam, we admit that we will miss her spirited engagement with Canadian Pentecostal scholarship. News about Pam's departure is softened by the fact that Dr. Martin W. Mittelstadt, of Evangel University in Springfield, Missouri, is stepping into the role of co-editor. Marty, who has served as the journal's book editor for a number of years, is a Canadian scholar originally from Manitoba, whose interest in all things Pentecostal (and all things Canadian!) is enduring. Marty worked diligently on this issue during the transition, and I (Linda) look forward to continuing our relationship. Welcome aboard Marty! And there is more good news: Dr. Adam Stewart, who completed his Ph.D. at the University of Waterloo and recently accepted a position as Assistant Professor of Sociology at Crandall University in Moncton, New Brunswick, has agreed to take up the role of book review editor beginning in 2017. Adam brings a wealth of experience to this task as a scholar of Canadian Pentecostalism and a professional librarian. Welcome to the team, Adam!