

“THE ROAR OF THUNDER AND THE SWEETNESS OF A WOMAN”
GENDER AND TWENTIETH-CENTURY AMERICAN REVIVALISM

By

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For Thomas

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INTRODUCTION

“Women should eschew such employments as involve (1) much public association or juxtaposition with men on common terms, (2) the addressing of large mixed public audiences, (3) an attitude of effrontery or undue self-assertiveness, (4) a *métier* ignoring in any way the essential distinctions of sex, (5) the exercise of much muscular strength or nerve.”¹

- *The Malcontent Woman*, by A Discontented Man, 1895

“There is in most of us,” wrote the Discontented Man of 1895 in the popular periodical *The Review of Reviews*, “an inwardness of instinct against setting up a female in the prominence of the pulpit to lecture on their sins to a mixed congregation of men and women.”² Maria Woodworth-Etter (1844-1924) and Aimee Semple McPherson (1890-1944) thoroughly and cheerfully disregarded the Discontented Man’s advice. They had regular public association with men (and told them what to do), spoke to large, mixed-gender audiences, were often assertive, displayed a good deal of nerve, and most of all, their *métier* of choice was a vocation that threatened to blur the seemingly “essential distinctions of sex” in the 1890s–1920s.³

The Discontented Man’s turn-of-the-century editorial raises the central question of this project. How did women become powerful female revivalist

¹ “The Malcontent Woman by a Discontent Man,” *The Review of Reviews* 11(1895). The *Review of Reviews* was a collection of journalistic offerings from top magazines in the United Kingdom, Australia, and the United States. The American version was a forerunner to the *Literary Digest* and enjoyed a large circulation in the 1890s-1920s.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

ministers during the 1890s-1920s – an era in which female public leadership was seen as naturally, “instinctively” male? More specifically, this project asks how two women –Woodworth-Etter and McPherson – overcame their gender, the taints of divorce, single motherhood, and public scandal to become authoritative revivalist pastors.

I will argue that Woodworth-Etter and McPherson accomplished this by co-opting versions of ideal womanhood in service to their ministerial identities, and by displaying those identities through classic revivalist methods. In other words, the women utilized biblical narrative, a carefully cultivated public image, revivalist worship space, and distinctive preaching styles to perform versions of themselves that were womanly (according to the standards of their day) and authoritative for their revivalist followers. The women’s biographies show their remarkable rise to powerful revivalist ministry.

Maria Woodworth-Etter

Maria Woodworth-Etter was born on July 22, 1844 to indigent farmers Samuel and Matilda Underwood in New Lisbon, Ohio. Her father, an abusive alcoholic, was unable to provide for his family.⁴ When he died from sunstroke in 1855, Matilda Underwood struggled to feed and clothe her children.⁵ Woodworth-

⁴ Maria B. Woodworth Etter, *Signs and Wonders God Wrought in the Ministry for Forty Years* (Indianapolis, IN: Mrs. M. B. W. Etter, 1916), 20.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 19.

Etter and her older sisters dropped out of school and worked in order to support the their mother and younger siblings.⁶

At age thirteen, Woodworth-Etter attended a Disciples of Christ church service. When the minister gave the altar call, Woodworth-Etter was the first down the aisle, and the next day she was baptized. “While I was going into the water,” she wrote, “a light came over me, and I was converted.”⁷ From that moment, she dreamed of working as a revivalist pastor’s wife or missionary.⁸

In 1863, nineteen-year-old Woodworth-Etter met and married injured Civil War veteran Philo Harris (P.H.) Woodworth. P.H. Woodworth had no interest in his wife’s revivalist passion. Rather, he wanted to make a living in agriculture, and he and his new wife moved to the country where they set out to become farmers and have children. In both enterprises, they had little success. Woodworth’s war injuries brought the man mental and physical frailties that made him a poor candidate for the manual labor of farming.⁹ Woodworth-Etter had difficult pregnancies, and all but her eldest daughter Lizzie died in childhood.

She fell ill from grief after each child’s death. “From the time of the sad occurrences,” she wrote, “my health was very poor, and in many times I was brought near the brink of the grave. I seemed to be hovering between life and death.”¹⁰

⁶ Ibid., 20.

⁷Ibid., 21.

⁸Ibid.

⁹ M. B. Woodworth-Etter, *Spirit-Filled Sermons* (Indianapolis, IN: Mrs. M. B. Woodworth-Etter, 1921), 8.

¹⁰ Maria Beulah Woodworth-Etter, *Marvels and Miracles God Wrought in the Ministry for Forty-Five Years* (Indianapolis, IN: Mrs. M. B. W. Etter, 1922), 6-7.

Adding to her distress, in the country she could not attend regular church meetings. "I was away from all Christian influence," Woodworth-Etter wrote, "Often when hearing the church bells ringing, which had been the signal for me to repair to the house of worship, and knowing that I could not go, I would cry myself to sleep."¹¹

When her son Willie died in 1878 and only her daughter Lizzie and P.H. remained, thirty-five-year-old Woodworth-Etter began her career as an itinerant holiness minister and church planter. Since P. H. Woodworth insisted that she stay home, she remained within a seven mile radius, riding to a town, preaching a few times, and then riding back to her family. After a few spectacular revival successes, she became a sought-after preacher in her region. The resulting financial resources enabled Woodworth-Etter, Lizzie, and a reluctant P. H. to travel on the Midwest revival circuit.

Together, the Woodworths ran a traveling holiness revival that featured preaching, altar calls, and praying for healing. Woodworth-Etter and Lizzie thrived, but P. H. Woodworth was not well suited for life as a minister's spouse. He was accused of profiteering (because he sold refreshments at his wife's meetings), using crass language, and making inappropriate remarks to reporters; rumors were rampant that he had propositioned Woodworth-Etter's female disciples.¹² Reporters noticed that the Woodworths often spent their evenings in different

¹¹ ———, *Signs and Wonders* (New Kensington, PA: Whitaker House, 1997), 23.

¹² "She Will Be Tried," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, September 2 1890.

sleeping quarters.¹³ Eventually, P. H. Woodworth left his wife and returned to Ohio. Woodworth-Etter filed for divorce. It was finalized in 1891.

Without P. H. Woodworth's embarrassing behavior, Woodworth-Etter's career relaunched in the 1890s. She toured with a small entourage that included her daughter, a few women assistants, and their husbands whom Woodworth-Etter referred to as her "praying lieutenants."¹⁴ Within the next few years she had appeared in Oakland, California and South Framingham, Massachusetts and nearly every major city (and hundreds of small towns) in between. She planted churches and appointed (mostly male) ministers along the way.¹⁵ She published and sold thousands of autobiographies detailing her calling to the ministry. She also included in these books snippets from the hundreds of pieces of fan mail she received. She developed a national reputation as a healer who put on a spectacular one-woman preaching show.

At the turn of the twentieth century, the middle-aged Woodworth-Etter was well-established celebrity holiness pastor. In many ways her career was just beginning. In 1902, at the age of fifty-eight, Woodworth-Etter met and married Samuel Etter. Etter was a much more suitable partner who supported his new wife financially and emotionally.

¹³ Wayne E. Warner, *The Woman Evangelist: The Life and Times of Charismatic Evangelist Maria B. Woodworth-Etter*, 8 vols., vol. 8, Studies in Evangelicalism (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1986), 136.

¹⁴ "An Insane Female Evangelist Declares Herself in Communion with the Blessed Trinity and the Devil," *The Quebec Saturday Budget*, September 1 1890.

¹⁵ The female ministers she did appoint usually shared the pulpit with their husbands as in the case of Thomas and Lyda Paino or Herbert W. Thomas "and Wife." Woodworth-Etter, *Marvels and Miracles God Wrought in the Ministry for Forty-Five Years*, 402.

Woodworth-Etter also joined the Pentecostal revivalist movement. She initially resisted becoming a Pentecostal because she was skeptical of the movement's more flamboyant characters. Early in her career she wrote that holy rollers had a tendency toward excess such that the "Holy Ghost was driven away,"¹⁶ but the Pentecostals were sure she belonged with them. They imitated her preaching style and liked her teachings. Many came to her revivals before she joined their movement. Woodworth-Etter did not record when she officially considered herself Pentecostal, but at some point after 1904 (when she was dismissed from the Church of God [Anderson, Indiana]), she began to identify as a member of the movement. By 1912 she was considered one of its most powerful leaders.¹⁷

By 1918, Woodworth-Etter had been an itinerant revivalist and ad hoc bishop for over three decades. Firmly ensconced as a living legend in the Pentecostal revivalist movement, she built a large permanent church in Indianapolis, Indiana. In 1918, she unwittingly passed the torch of revivalist celebrity when she received a visit from an eager young woman named Aimee Semple McPherson.

Aimee Semple McPherson

¹⁶ Ibid., 501.

¹⁷ Warner, *The Woman Evangelist: The Life and Times of Charismatic Evangelist Maria B. Woodworth-Etter*, 159.

Aimee Elizabeth Kennedy was born on a farm near Ingersoll, Ontario to a lower middleclass Methodist farmer and his young Salvation Army wife on October 9, 1890. McPherson remembered her early years as an idyllic, pastoral upbringing complete with cow milking, a beloved family horse named "Flossie," and down home cooking.¹⁸ In December of 1907, Robert Semple, an Irish preacher, held a revival meeting at the local mission hall; that meeting introduced McPherson to Pentecostal revivalism.¹⁹ Semple preached about the baptism of the Holy Spirit and speaking in tongues.²⁰ "To me," Aimee Kennedy recalled, "this Spirit-prompted utterance was like the voice of God."²¹

Robert Semple and his young convert shared a desire to spread the good news. In the spring of 1908, they married and began to work together in his evangelistic efforts.²² That August, they accepted a call to the mission field in China. Soon after arriving, a pregnant McPherson contracted malaria. Semple also became ill, and he died of dysentery in the fall of 1910. McPherson was left in China alone. She bore a daughter, named her Roberta named after her father, borrowed money from her mother, and returned home.

Upon her return, McPherson traveled back and forth between New York where her mother worked for the Salvation Army, Chicago where Robert Semple's

¹⁸ Aimee Semple McPherson, "The Story of My Life," *The Bridal Call Foursquare* 8, no. 10 (1925): 19.

¹⁹ ———, *Aimee: The Life Story of Aimee Semple Mcpherson* (Los Angeles, CA: Foursquare Publications, 1979), 23.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 24.

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² *Ibid.*, 32.

Pentecostal friends remembered her, and her childhood home in Canada. She was determined to “take up Robert’s task of evangelism,” but McPherson felt alone in big cities and restless in the small town of Ingersoll.²³ She worried about providing for her infant daughter; without a husband to provide income, the future was dim.²⁴

McPherson’s loneliness did not last long. Harold McPherson, a young hotel manager, soon fell in love with Robert Semple’s pretty widow. They married and quickly conceived a son named Rolf. “By all the laws of domestic arrangement,” wrote McPherson of her time as a stay-at-home mother, “I should have been happy.”²⁵ The only obstacle to marital bliss was that “a voice kept hammering at my [McPherson’s] heart. It shouted, ‘Preach the Word! Do the work of an evangelist!’”²⁶ McPherson thus felt torn between the belief that she was called to preach and her responsibilities as a wife. She eventually gave in to the call.

An innovator from the beginning, she had an idea to travel the country in a “Gospel Car.” By 1916, she was crisscrossing the country in a car with the following slogan: “JESUS IS COMING SOON – GET READY” [Figure I.1]. In 1918, she drove to Woodworth-Etter’s church in Indianapolis. “We rejoiced and praised the Lord together,” she wrote of her encounter with Woodworth-Etter, “the power of God fell.”²⁷

²³ Ibid., 70.

²⁴ ———, *Aimee: Life Story of Aimee Semple Mcpherson* (Los Angeles: Foursquare Publications, 1979), 70.

²⁵ McPherson, *Aimee: The Life Story of Aimee Semple Mcpherson*, 73.

²⁶ ———, *Aimee: Life Story of Aimee Semple Mcpherson*, 73.

²⁷ Aimee Semple McPherson, *This Is That: Personal Experiences, Sermons and Writings of Aimee Semple Mcpherson* (Los Angeles, CA: Echo Park Evangelistic Association, 1923), 213.

At first, Harold McPherson decided to follow his wife into itinerant ministry. He even preached occasionally, but he quickly grew tired of being known as the preacher's husband. Citing spousal abandonment, he filed for divorce; their marriage officially ended in 1921.²⁸

After her divorce, McPherson's career profited immensely. She published a nationally distributed periodical called *The Bridal Call*, which she used to keep her audience informed about her ministry and to spread her revivalist message. In January of 1923, she opened a five-thousand seat auditorium in Los Angeles. In February of 1924, she purchased a radio station (KFSG, Kall Foursquare Gospel) and began broadcasting. She began her own Bible college, the Lighthouse of International Foursquare Evangelism (L.I.F.E.) in 1926. In 1927, she founded her own denomination, the International Church of the Foursquare Gospel (Foursquare). No revivalist minister rivaled McPherson for power, fame, and influence in the twenties and early thirties.

A Famous Female Minister

There are many reasons why Woodworth-Etter and McPherson's power, popularity and influence are surprising. First, the women had few conventional qualifications to recommend them to the ministry. They lacked seminary education that revivalists like Christian Missionary Alliance Albert Benjamin "A. B." Simpson

²⁸ Edith Waldvogel Blumhofer, *Aimee Semple Mcpherson: Everybody's Sister*, Library of Religious Biography (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 1993), 128.

had, recognition from a denominational governing body like Presbyterian J. Frank Norris enjoyed, or apostolic succession that Methodist revivalists claimed.²⁹ Woodworth-Etter had an elementary-level education, and McPherson had a high school diploma. Both were largely self-taught in the theory and methods of ministry. They also had spotty track records when it came to ordination. Woodworth-Etter held ordination briefly with the Church of God (Anderson, Indiana), but the denomination revoked her license.³⁰ She was embraced by holiness congregations and Pentecostals, but she had no official ordination in either circle. At different points during her career, Baptist, Assemblies of God, and Methodist Episcopal Church bodies ordained McPherson, but she did not remain with any denomination but her own for very long.³¹ Therefore, the women's authorization to lead, perform rites, discern and interpret the divine, and instruct congregants was in question perpetually.

In addition to lacking traditional ministerial markers, there were few 1890s-1920s American ministers as scandalous as Woodworth-Etter and McPherson. National newspapers branded the women as quacks for their controversial practice of divine healing.³² They were criticized for their association with African American

²⁹ Mark Chaves, *Ordaining Women: Culture and Conflict in Religious Organizations* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997), 187-88.

³⁰ Edith Waldvogel Blumhofer, *Restoring the Faith: The Assemblies of God, Pentecostalism, and American Culture* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1993), 24.

³¹ Matthew Avery Sutton, *Aimee Semple McPherson and the Resurrection of Christian America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007), 42.

³² "Aver They Are Cured: One Threw Her Brace Away Holy Rollers Fail to Help Blind Boy," *The Boston Globe*, August 27 1913; "The Medical Critic and Guide," *Journal of Sociology and Humanity* 28-29(1930): 12. Male ministers were also accused of quackery during this period, but chapter six

people and practices.³³ Their sanity was questioned.³⁴ They had regular run-ins with the law. Woodworth-Etter was accused of disturbing the public peace and embezzlement. She was arrested several times and tried for fraud in 1913. In 1926, at the height of her fame, McPherson was tried for misuse of public funds. Her trial garnered international news coverage and solidified McPherson's status as one of the most famous women in the world and one of the biggest celebrities in American Protestantism. She also weathered numerous other scandals, lawsuits, a third marriage,³⁵ and second divorce.³⁶ In short, the women were as notorious as they were admired.

Finally, the women eschewed the institution closely associated with late nineteenth and early twentieth-century era womanliness, and instead participated in an institution thought to be reserved for men. As divorcees, the women withdrew from the "central act" of womanhood: marriage.³⁷ Instead they participated in the male *métier* of the ministry. The Discontented Man voiced the opinion of many others who believed that women were not meant to pursue public vocations like the

will argue that the punishment for female faith healers was more severe than for their male counterparts.

³³ Charles W. Wendite, "Voodoo Priestess," *Oakland Tribune*, November 30 1889, 200; Sutton, *Aimee Semple Mcpherson and the Resurrection of Christian America*.

³⁴ "Victims of Hypnotism.; Religious Frenzy Inspired by an Insane Revivalist," *The New York Times*, September 1 1890; "Aimee's Sanity Aired in Trial," *The Windsor Daily Star*, October 29 1937.

³⁵ George H. Beale, "Aimee Bride for Third Time; Weds 250 Pound Preacher," *Modesto News-Herald*, September, 14 1931.

³⁶ McPherson, *Aimee: The Life Story of Aimee Semple Mcpherson*, 234.

³⁷ Frances B. Cogan, *All-American Girl: The Ideal of Real Womanhood in Mid-Nineteenth-Century America* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1989), 103.

ministry.³⁸ The women's unconventional qualifications, notorious lives, and proven ability to overcome the "inwardness of instinct" of their fellow revivalists make them useful subjects for the study of gender, the ministry, and revivalism in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Historiography

Woodworth-Etter and McPherson are well known to students of gender and American Protestantism although the historiography of gender, revivalism, and the ministry in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries is limited.³⁹ Turn-of-the-century gender studies focus primarily on how women were permitted or denied access to the pulpit. Examples include Susan Hill Lindley's *You Have Stepped Out of Your Place: a History of Women and Religion in America*,⁴⁰ *Women and Twentieth Century Protestantism*,⁴¹ edited by Margaret Bendroth and Virginia Lieson Brereton, Catherine Wessinger's edited volume *Religious Institutions and Women's*

³⁸ Chaves, *Ordaining Women: Culture and Conflict in Religious Organizations*, 84-129.

³⁹ In contrast, scholarship flourishes in fields dedicated to women, gender, and Protestantism from the Puritan era through the nineteenth-century. See for example: Catherine A. Brekus, *Strangers & Pilgrims: Female Preaching in America, 1740-1845*, Gender and American Culture (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1998); Ruth H. Bloch, *Gender and Morality in Anglo-American Culture, 1650-1800* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2003); Marilyn J. Westerlind, *Women and Religion in Early America, 1600-1850: The Puritan and Evangelical Traditions*, Christianity and Society in the Modern World (New York: Routledge, 1999); Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, *Disorderly Conduct: Visions of Gender in Victorian America*, 1st ed. (New York: A.A. Knopf, 1985); Nancy F. Cott, *The Bonds of Womanhood: "Woman's Sphere" In New England, 1780-1835*, 2nd ed. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1997).

⁴⁰ Susan Hill Lindley, *You Have Stept out of Your Place: A History of Women and Religion in America*, 1st ed. (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996).

⁴¹ Margaret Lamberts Bendroth and Virginia Lieson Brereton, *Women and Twentieth-Century Protestantism* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2002).

Leadership: New Roles inside the Mainstream,⁴² and Mark Chaves's *Ordaining Women: Culture and Conflict in Religious Organizations*.⁴³ Works specifically dedicated to the study of gender and revivalist ministers also analyze ways in which women were allowed or disallowed ordination. Margaret Bendroth and Betty DeBerg examine how Fundamentalist revivalists harbored anxieties about women entering leadership roles in society and in particular the church.⁴⁴ Grant Wacker discusses the access women had to Pentecostal leadership posts compared to their mainline and evangelical counterparts.⁴⁵ Catherine Wessinger's *Women's Leadership in Marginal Religions* analyses the ways in which female revivalists were admitted to the pulpit.⁴⁶

These studies examine how women entered the ministry, recover the "experiences of women who did gain the title and office of minister,"⁴⁷ and uncover the social and cultural shifts that made the ordination of women possible or impossible, but they do not reveal how women, once ordained, established authoritative ministries. This is a significant oversight because studies have

⁴² Catherine Wessinger, *Religious Institutions and Women's Leadership: New Roles inside the Mainstream*, Studies in Comparative Religion (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1996).

⁴³ Chaves, *Ordaining Women: Culture and Conflict in Religious Organizations*.

⁴⁴ Margaret Lamberts Bendroth, *Fundamentalism & Gender, 1875 to the Present* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 54-72; Betty A. DeBerg, *Ungodly Women: Gender and the First Wave of American Fundamentalism* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2000), 75-98.

⁴⁵ Grant Wacker, *Heaven Below: Early Pentecostals and American Culture* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001), 158-76.

⁴⁶ Catherine Wessinger, *Women's Leadership in Marginal Religions: Explorations Outside the Mainstream* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1993), 10.

⁴⁷ Cynthia Grant Tucker, *Prophetic Sisterhood: Liberal Women Ministers of the Frontier, 1880-1930*, 1st Indiana University Press ed. (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1994), 1.

repeatedly demonstrated that simply having access ordination did not (and does not) guarantee female power from the pulpit.⁴⁸

For example, Mark Chaves points out that denominations that ordain women have few in influential pulpits or in upper-level organizational leadership.⁴⁹ Conversely, denominations that do not allow women access to ordination often have women in prominent leadership roles such as leading missions or women's organizations.⁵⁰ Late nineteenth and early twentieth century female ordination, Chaves concludes, had more to do with the public message that female ordination sent to the outside world than about empowering female church leaders.⁵¹ Ordination therefore granted access to the office, but it did not necessarily grant authority upon female ministers. This project seeks to fill the gap in scholarship by identifying the strategies (beyond ordination) that two popular women used to catapult themselves into the upper echelon of American ministerial celebrity.

Although she was famous and powerful in her own day, analysis of Woodworth-Etter's revivalist influence and legacy is generally limited to short entries in women's history encyclopedias. Roberts Liardon compiled a volume of her teachings and several newspaper articles written about her.⁵² Wayne Warner's

⁴⁸ See for example: Chaves, *Ordaining Women: Culture and Conflict in Religious Organizations*, 1-13; Paula D. Nesbitt, *Feminization of the Clergy in America: Occupational and Organizational Perspectives* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 10.

⁴⁹ Chaves, *Ordaining Women: Culture and Conflict in Religious Organizations*, 1-13.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Maria Beulah Woodworth-Etter and Roberts Liardon, *Maria Woodworth-Etter: The Complete Collection of Her Life Teachings* (Tulsa, OK: Albury, 2000).

biography *The Woman Evangelist: the Life and Times of Charismatic Evangelist Maria B. Woodworth-Etter* is largely descriptive, and it stops short of providing analysis of the minister's methods and their efficacy. Scholarly investigation into her ministerial authority has not yet been done.

Aimee Semple McPherson, in contrast, is the subject of several biographies. McPherson-centric literature explores her appeal, but it does not speak to how she developed and wielded power. Edith Blumhofer's *Aimee Semple McPherson: Everybody's Sister* argues that McPherson attracted followers because of her simple message, practical methods, and her all-American persona.⁵³ Matthew Sutton's recent *Aimee Semple McPherson and the Resurrection of Christian America* argues that McPherson's appeal came from her ability to tap into proto-religious right sensibilities with patriotic sermons and calls for America to return to its Christian roots.⁵⁴ While Sutton is correct in noting McPherson's turn toward the patriotic (particularly during World War II), he does not provide a direct family tree between her teachings and the activism of later generations. In addition, the connection between McPherson's teachings and late twentieth-century religious right revivalists is relatively insignificant compared with her much more politically active celebrity revivalist contemporaries like William "Billy" Sunday and J. Frank Norris. Richard E. Etulain claims that "thousands found solace and a sense of community" from her "charisma and presence," but does not explain what it was about her presence that provided said solace and community, or how her charisma authorized

⁵³ Blumhofer, *Aimee Semple McPherson: Everybody's Sister*, 1-21.

⁵⁴ Sutton, *Aimee Semple McPherson and the Resurrection of Christian America*, 212-36.

her to lead.⁵⁵ Peter Gardella argues that McPherson's relationship with God gave her power to heal, but he does not explain how her intimacy with God translated into power over people.⁵⁶ The question of how McPherson wielded power over her followers, therefore, has not been satisfactorily addressed. This project seeks to fill these lacunae.

Theory and Method

In this project I study Woodworth-Etter and McPherson as revivalists. Historians typically classify Woodworth-Etter as a holiness person turned Pentecostal⁵⁷ and McPherson as a Pentecostal or charismatic fundamentalist who became evangelical and then went back to Pentecostalism.⁵⁸ Pentecostals, fundamentalists, and evangelicals are most often identified according to their theological leanings. For example, fundamentalists are distinguished by their doctrine of the inerrancy of scripture, evangelicals set apart by their crucicentrism, and Pentecostals are distinct because of their pneumatology.⁵⁹

⁵⁵ Richard W. Etulain, *Western Lives: A Biographical History of the American West* (Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press, 2004), 312.

⁵⁶ Peter Gardella, *Innocent Ecstasy: How Christianity Gave America an Ethic of Sexual Pleasure* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 83.

⁵⁷ Douglas G. Jacobsen, *A Reader in Pentecostal Theology: Voices from the First Generation* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2006), 20.

⁵⁸ Sutton, *Aimee Semple McPherson and the Resurrection of Christian America*, 37-65.

⁵⁹ D. W. Bebbington, *The Dominance of Evangelicalism: The Age of Spurgeon and Moody, A History of Evangelicalism* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2005), 23; Lynn Bridgers, *The American Religious Experience: A Concise History* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2006), 59; Wacker, *Heaven Below: Early Pentecostals and American Culture*, 26.

Framing these women denominational is problematic because their doctrinal commitments were notoriously malleable. Although they themselves argued that theology had no place in their work, Woodworth-Etter and McPherson created theological amalgams of various kinds. Woodworth-Etter counted the holiness movement and Methodism among her theological influences.⁶⁰ Aimee Semple McPherson drew upon her Salvation Army and Methodist roots as well as upon A. B. Simpson's Christian Missionary Alliance to construct her denomination's fourfold gospel.⁶¹

It is likewise unfruitful to classify the women by the doctrines of their many denominational affiliations (Salvation Army, Church of God, Assemblies of God, Baptist, etc.). Both Woodworth-Etter and McPherson changed movements several times (sometimes voluntarily, sometimes involuntarily), and attracted followers from diverse denominational backgrounds. Therefore, classifying them by affiliation does provide a meaningful context in which to study them.

This project examines the women by their practices as revivalists rather than by their doctrines or denominations. Revivalists are Protestants known primarily for their distinctive practices. Historians trace the practice of reviving or "awakening" American Protestantism to the eighteenth century during a period known as the "Great Awakening."⁶² Revivalists sought to breath life into what they

⁶⁰ Woodworth-Etter, *Marvels and Miracles God Wrought in the Ministry for Forty-Five Years*, 1.

⁶¹ Blumhofer, *Aimee Semple Mcpherson: Everybody's Sister*, 191.

⁶² Many revivalist scholars agree that the practice was born in the eighteenth century during what is usually called the "Great Awakening." See for example: Michael James McClymond, *Embodying the Spirit: New Perspectives on North American Revivalism* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004), 2; William Gerald McLoughlin, *Revivals, Awakenings, and Reform: An Essay on*

saw as ailing American Christianity.⁶³ Revivalist practitioners, whether in the North or South, Calvinist or Arminian, Baptist or Pentecostal, shared several common practices including public individual conversions (often displayed during an “altar call”), enthusiasm and other “scandalous practices”⁶⁴ (e.g., crying, laughing, shouting, wailing, fainting, dancing, lifting hands, tongues), holy living (refraining from dancing, drinking, going to movies, playing cards, etc., and embracing Bible reading, evangelism, caring for the poor, etc.), and what Charles Finney called, “social religious meetings” or what historians usually refer to as “revivals.”⁶⁵

Revivalist ministers were ordained in several different ways. Revivalists from mainline denominations, like Presbyterians Albert Benjamin (A. B.) Simpson and Mark Matthews, attended seminary and were ordained by presbyteries.⁶⁶ Others, like 1910s’ Methodist Martin Wells Knapp or 1920s’ Presbyterian-turned-Baptist Billy Sunday, were self-educated and then ordained by a bishop or

Religion and Social Change in America, 1607-1977, Chicago History of American Religion (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), 1. Leigh Eric Schmidt traces the roots of this style of worship to post-Reformation Scotland in: Leigh Eric Schmidt, *Holy Fairs: Scotland and the Making of American Revivalism*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2001).

⁶³ McClymond, *Embodying the Spirit: New Perspectives on North American Revivalism*, 1-2.

⁶⁴ William H. Cooper, *The Great Revivalists in American Religion, 1740-1944: The Careers and Theology of Jonathan Edwards, Charles Finney, Dwight Moody, Billy Sunday and Aimee Semple McPherson* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, 2010), 32; Mark A. Noll, *America's God: From Jonathan Edwards to Abraham Lincoln* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 295.

⁶⁵ George M. Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), iv; Edith Waldvogel Blumhofer and Randall Herbert Balmer, *Modern Christian Revivals* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993), xi; Michael James McClymond, *Embodying the Spirit: New Perspectives on North American Revivalism* (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004), 6. Marsden’s work credits Charles Finney’s nineteenth century *New Measures* with introducing the importance of group meetings in revivalism, although the impulse can be traced to George Whitefield’s seventeenth century outdoor revival meetings.

⁶⁶ Randall Herbert Balmer, "Matthews, Mark (Allison)," in *Encyclopedia of Evangelicalism*, ed. Randall Herbert Balmer (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2004), 359; Albert E. Thompson, *The Life of A. B. Simpson* (Brooklyn, NY: The Christian Alliance Publishing Company, 1920), 42.

presbytery.⁶⁷ Some from the so-called low-church traditions like Baptists or holiness people received ordination from individual congregations, and many claimed to have been self-ordained.⁶⁸

The most critical component of revivalist ordination could not be bestowed by any denominational governing body. Revivalist ministers were authorized primarily by “the call.”⁶⁹ The call, or an ecstatic experience (or series of experiences) providing a sense of “mission to the lost and service to God”⁷⁰ was part of any revivalist pastor’s ordination. In many ways the call superseded all other forms of authorization. Denominations, seminaries, or congregations might affirm a pastor’s suitability to the ministry, but the revivalists believed that the call came directly from the Divine.⁷¹ “If God really gives men a special call to this special work,” wrote turn-of-the-century revivalist Henry Trawick, “then all argument is at an end.”⁷²

Many scholars of revivalism argue that because of this emphasis on calling, women like Woodworth-Etter and McPherson had more access to the ministry and

⁶⁷ Lyle W. Dorsett, *Billy Sunday and the Redemption of Urban America*, Library of Religious Biography (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans 1991), 75.

⁶⁸ William Kostlevy, *Holy Jumpers: Evangelicals and Radicals in Progressive Era America*, Religion in America Series (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 18.

⁶⁹ Thomas A. Robinson and Lanette R. Ruff, *Out of the Mouths of Babes: Girl Evangelists in the Flapper Era* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 100.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Henry Trawick, *Modern Revivalism* (Nashville, TN: Barbee & Smith, 1898), 30.

more authority as ministers than their Protestant counterparts.⁷³ It is certainly true that the call gave revivalist women a way around traditional avenues to the pulpit such as seminary education or denominational ordination. The revivalist call then did function to give women more access to the institution, and Woodworth-Etter and McPherson reported typical revivalist calls. Woodworth-Etter claimed to have received an intense calling experience, which she and her followers considered to be sufficient for her to be considered a minister.⁷⁴ McPherson likewise relayed to her followers her ecstatic call experience that she believed gave her permission to minister.⁷⁵

Access, however, did not guarantee authority. Grant Wacker, Edith Blumhofer, Lisa Stephenson, and Elaine Lawless demonstrate that women in revivalist communities faced many of the same institutional barriers to the ministry that other Protestant female ministers faced.⁷⁶ Even with a compelling call, female revivalist ministers were relegated to small churches, prohibited from making

⁷³ See for example: Bendroth, *Fundamentalism & Gender, 1875 to the Present*, 4; Allan Anderson, *An Introduction to Pentecostalism: Global Charismatic Christianity* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 273; Ruth Tucker and Walter L. Liefeld, *Daughters of the Church: Women and Ministry from New Testament Times to the Present* (Grand Rapids, MI: Academie Books, 1987), 359; Glenn C. Altschuler and Jan M. Saltzgaber, *Revivalism, Social Conscience, and Community in the Burned-over District: The Trial of Rhoda Bement* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1983), 76.

⁷⁴ Blumhofer, *Restoring the Faith: The Assemblies of God, Pentecostalism, and American Culture*, 24.

⁷⁵ Sutton, *Aimee Semple Mcpherson and the Resurrection of Christian America*, 42.

⁷⁶ Margaret M. Poloma and John Clifford Green, *The Assemblies of God: Godly Love and the Revitalization of American Pentecostalism* (New York: New York University Press, 2010), 118; Lisa P. Stephenson, *Dismantling the Dualisms for American Pentecostal Women in Ministry: A Feminist-Pneumatological Approach*, *Global Pentecostal and Charismatic Studies* (Boston: Brill, 2012), 2; Wessinger, *Women's Leadership in Marginal Religions: Explorations Outside the Mainstream*, 41; Wacker, *Heaven Below: Early Pentecostals and American Culture*, 158.

doctrine or policy, and absent from positions of power in denominational leadership.⁷⁷

In addition to their lack of upward institutional mobility, female revivalist ministers failed by what was perhaps the most enduring measure of authority for any revivalist minister: attendance.⁷⁸ Accounts of late nineteenth and early twentieth-century revivalist meetings usually began or ended with a notation of the number of the faithful in attendance. Revivalists maintained that one of the first signs of “vigorous preaching” was a ministers’ ability to “call a crowd.”⁷⁹ The larger the meeting, the logic went, the more powerful the minister and his or her message. The scarcity of female ministers with large congregations further demonstrates that attaining authority in revivalist communities, as in any other Protestant group, was a much more complex process than simply gaining ordination or receiving and relaying a call.

Authority has a plethora of meanings,⁸⁰ and it remains undefined in many texts that explore gender and American revivalism.⁸¹ Historians’ use of the term

⁷⁷ Poloma and Green, *The Assemblies of God: Godly Love and the Revitalization of American Pentecostalism*, 118; Stephenson, *Dismantling the Dualisms for American Pentecostal Women in Ministry: A Feminist-Pneumatological Approach*, 2; Wessinger, *Women's Leadership in Marginal Religions: Explorations Outside the Mainstream*, 41; Wacker, *Heaven Below: Early Pentecostals and American Culture*, 158.

⁷⁸ Cooper, *The Great Revivalists in American Religion, 1740-1944: The Careers and Theology of Jonathan Edwards, Charles Finney, Dwight Moody, Billy Sunday and Aimee Semple Mcpherson*, 172; McClymond, *Embodying the Spirit: New Perspectives on North American Revivalism*, 17; Phyllis D. Airhart, *Serving the Present Age: Revivalism, Progressivism, and the Methodist Tradition in Canada*, McGill-Queen's Studies in the History of Religion (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1992), 81.

⁷⁹ William Bell Riley, *The Perennial Revival; a Plea for Evangelism*, 2nd ed. (Philadelphia, PA: American Baptist Publication Society, 1916), 114.

⁸⁰ See for example: Thomas Steven Molnar, *Authority and Its Enemies* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction, 1995); Bruce Lincoln, *Authority: Construction and Corrosion* (Chicago: University of

typically reflects a Weberian understanding: authority is “a species of power, the kind of power one person exercises over another when he invokes a principle of legitimation which the person subject to domination himself views as a binding norm.”⁸² For Weber, an authoritative leader led without the use of coercion or force because she or he had power that was based in legitimacy and as such was “considered binding” by followers.⁸³

Weber famously identified three principles of authority from which leaders exercise legitimate power: traditional, rational-legal, and charismatic.⁸⁴ Traditional authority is maintained through “an established belief in the sanctity of immemorial traditions and the legitimacy of the status of those exercising authority under them.”⁸⁵ Rational-legal authority is power to make binding prescriptions legitimized through “a belief in the “legality” of patterns of normative rules and the

Chicago Press, 1994); Yves René Marie Simon, *A General Theory of Authority* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1980); Richard Sennett, *Authority*, 1st Vintage Books ed. (New York: Vintage Books, 1981); Max Weber, Hans Heinrich Gerth, and C. Wright Mills, *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, Routledge Classics in Sociology (New York: Routledge, 2009).

⁸¹ For example, Michael James McClymond’s edited volume *Embodying the Spirit: New Perspectives on North American Revivalism* contains numerous discussions of the ways in which authority is created and maintained in revivalism, but no definition of the term. See: McClymond, *Embodying the Spirit: New Perspectives on North American Revivalism*, 264. Similarly, William H. Cooper Jr.’s *The Great Revivalists in American Religion: 1740-1944* refers to “traditional authority of the churches,” the authority of the Bible or reason, but does not give a theoretical definition of the term. See: Cooper, *The Great Revivalists in American Religion, 1740-1944: The Careers and Theology of Jonathan Edwards, Charles Finney, Dwight Moody, Billy Sunday and Aimee Semple Mcpherson*, 46, 167.

⁸²Anthony T. Kronman, *Max Weber*, Jurists Profiles in Legal Theory (London: E. Arnold, 1983), 43.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 39.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

⁸⁵ C. K. Ansell, "Legitimacy," in *International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioral Sciences*, ed. Neil J. Smelser and Paul B. Baltes (New York: Elsevier, 2001), 8705.

right of those elevated to authority under such rules to issue commands.”⁸⁶

Charismatic authority is legitimized through devotion to the “exceptional sanctity, heroism, or exemplary character of an individual person and of the normative patterns or order revealed or ordained by him.”⁸⁷

Even though Weber recognized that authoritative leaders rarely appealed to only one form of legitimization,⁸⁸ historians of American revivalism often classify ecclesial leaders as one type or another. Thus, authority given to and exercised by mainline ministers is classified as traditional because of their participation in an ancient office, or rational-legal authority because they complied with the regulations enacted by their respective denominations.⁸⁹ Charismatic authority is often used as a catchall category for those who receive power from non-mainstream sources. Historians often cite charismatic authority as the primary means by which any non-white, non-middleclass, non-male persons attain public power.⁹⁰

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ See for example: McClymond, *Embodying the Spirit: New Perspectives on North American Revivalism*, 97; Cooper, *The Great Revivalists in American Religion, 1740-1944: The Careers and Theology of Jonathan Edwards, Charles Finney, Dwight Moody, Billy Sunday and Aimee Semple Mcpherson*, 167; Wessinger, *Women's Leadership in Marginal Religions: Explorations Outside the Mainstream*, 1; Nesbitt, *Feminization of the Clergy in America: Occupational and Organizational Perspectives*, 15-17.

⁹⁰ See for example: Ira L. Mandelker, *Religion, Society, and Utopia in Nineteenth-Century America* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1984), 114; Westerkamp, *Women and Religion in Early America, 1600-1850: The Puritan and Evangelical Traditions*, 1; Derek Davis and Barry Hankins, *New Religious Movements and Religious Liberty in America*, 1st ed. (Waco, TX: J.M. Dawson Institute of Church-State Studies : Baylor University Press, 2002), 93; Eugene V. Gallagher and W. Michael Ashcraft, *Introduction to New and Alternative Religions in America*, 5 vols. (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2006), 192; Anthea D. Butler, *Women in the Church of God in Christ: Making a Sanctified World* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 6.

Because of revivalist ministers' emphasis on an extra-denominational call experience and because of their affinity for public displays of "scandalous practices" outside mainstream Protestantism, scholars typically argue that these ministers are legitimated through charismatic authority.⁹¹ Female revivalist ministers in particular, who were often marginalized by their gender, education, and class but who established popular ministries without the traditional markers of denominational authority are frequently noted as examples of charismatic authority in action.⁹²

This categorization is ultimately unhelpful, however, because any celebrity minister was authorized to a certain degree through charisma. Woodworth-Etter and McPherson were not the only popular and powerful pastors whose followers responded to their display of sanctity, heroism, or exemplary character from the pulpit. For example, mainline educated professional minister Harry Fosdick was authorized through traditional means (ordination, church appointment), but he was also hailed as an exemplary liberal Protestant man known for his "electric" pulpit

⁹¹ E. Brooks Holifield, *God's Ambassadors: A History of the Christian Clergy in America*, Pulpit & Pew (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2007), 69; James R. Goff and Grant Wacker, *Portraits of a Generation: Early Pentecostal Leaders* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 2002), 400; Jeanne Halgren Kilde, *When Church Became Theatre: The Transformation of Evangelical Architecture and Worship in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 230.

⁹² See Margaret Poloma's influential discussion of Pentecostal revivalist authority in Weberian terms: Margaret M. Poloma, *The Assemblies of God at the Crossroads: Charisma and Institutional Dilemmas*, 1st ed. (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1989). Many subsequent discussions of Pentecostal authority rely heavily on Poloma's analysis, see for example: Elaine Lawless, "Not So Different a Story after All: Pentecostal Women in the Pulpit," in *Women's Leadership in Marginal Religions: Explorations Outside the Mainstream*, ed. Catherine Wessinger (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1993), 41. See also, Grant Wacker's discussion of Woodworth-Etter and McPhersons' charisma in: Wacker, *Heaven Below: Early Pentecostals and American Culture*, 114-15.

presence.⁹³ Similarly, revivalist ministers like A. B. Simpson and Billy Sunday were legitimized through traditional and legal rational means of denominational affiliation (Christian Missionary Alliance and Presbyterian) as well as through charismatic authority.

This project therefore eschews Weberian categorization and instead analyzes the women's authority through their interaction with their congregations. Rather than arguing that power is generated through types of authority, Catherine Bell claims that power is created and managed through the relationship between leaders and followers during the performance of ritualized acts.⁹⁴ Amy Hollywood links Judith Butler's notion of the performative, that speech acts constitute that to which they refer, with Bell's articulation of ritualization by arguing that bodily practices signify as do speech acts.⁹⁵ And, Hollywood claims that performative acts, just like speech acts, are subject to "misfirings."⁹⁶ These misfirings, or acts that are not performed conventionally or appropriately by all involved,⁹⁷ have, "room for improvisation and resistance within the very authoritarian structures (e.g., of child rearing, education, and religion) in which subjects are constituted."⁹⁸ Thus,

⁹³"Religion: Fosdick," *Time*, October 13 1924; ""Who Is City's Greatest Preacher?" Here's Pen Picture of Popular One," *New York Tribune*, March 10 1919.

⁹⁴ Catherine M. Bell, *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 216.

⁹⁵ Amy Hollywood, "Performativity, Citationality, Ritualization," *History of Religions* 42, no. 2 (2002): 101.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*: 110.

⁹⁷ Hollywood argues that bodily acts are subject to the same slippages and misfirings that Austin and Derrida identify in speech acts in: *Ibid.*

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*: 115.

although outside the boundaries of convention and propriety, theoretically, one could create, through ritualized acts, an identity of authoritative, female, ministry.

I will show that the key to Woodworth-Etter and McPherson's authority was their ability to create female ministry through misfirings of male revivalist practice. This project examines Woodworth-Etter and McPherson at the height of their popularity from the apex of Woodworth-Etter's career in 1890s–1910s to the pinnacle of McPherson's ministry in the 1920s and early 1930s.⁹⁹ Chapter one begins by examining how gender (specifically maleness), beyond a call or official ordination, authorized revivalist ministers from the 1890s to the early 1930s.

Gender is a highly theorized term.¹⁰⁰ The study of gender, according to Daniel Boyarin, is a study of the “praxis and process by which people are interpellated into a two (or for some cultures more) sex system that is made to seem as if it were nature, that is, something that always existed.”¹⁰¹ Joan Scott, in her influential monograph, *Gender and the Politics of History*, writes that “Gender...is a primary way of signifying relationships of power” and “a constitutive element of social relationships based on perceived differences between the sexes [male and

⁹⁹ McPherson's existing records, preserved by her denomination, are more numerous than those from the non-denominational Woodworth-Etter. In addition, McPherson's ministry utilized more media forms (e.g. film, radio) than did her predecessor.

¹⁰⁰ See for example: Janet Saltzman Chafetz, *Handbook of the Sociology of Gender*, Handbook of Sociology, Social Research (New York: Springer, 2006); James A. Winders, *Gender, Theory, and the Canon* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1991); Ellen T. Armour and Susan M. St. Ville, *Bodily Citations : Religion and Judith Butler*, Gender, Theory, and Religion (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006); Judith Squires, *Gender in Political Theory* (Malden, MA: Polity Press Blackwell Publishers, 1999); Paula England, *Theory on Gender/Feminism on Theory*, Social Institutions and Social Change (New York: A. de Gruyter, 1993).

¹⁰¹ Daniel Boyarin, "Gender," in *Critical Terms for Religious Studies*, ed. Mark C. Talor (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 117.

female].”¹⁰² Gender history, therefore, is the study of how the practices and processes that create this system of power relations change over time.

American gender has been understood as part of a binary system inherited from the Enlightenment¹⁰³ wherein the world is divided into two discrete brackets such as:

Table I.1

Male	Female
Public	Private
Society	Individual
Science	Religion
Secular	Sacred
Rational	Irrational/Non-Rational ¹⁰⁴

Maleness, manliness, and masculinity were attached to any persons, places, things, and acts associated with the public world of science, rationality, and society.

Femaleness, womanliness, and femininity referred to the private, sacred, non-rational realm. This binary also produced a sense of “normative sexuality.”¹⁰⁵ Men and women who performed acts that identified their bodies within the heterosexual framework of dominant gender binaries (e.g. men showing their attraction for and attractiveness to women and vice versa) performed normative sexuality.

Chapter one uses prominent newspapers and monographs of the era to outline 1890s – 1920s articulations of gender binaries and the idealized forms of

¹⁰² Joan Wallach Scott, *Gender and the Politics of History*, Gender and Culture (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), 42-44.

¹⁰³ Richard King, *Orientalism and Religion: Postcolonial Theory, India and 'the Mystic East'* (New York: Routledge, 1999), 13.

¹⁰⁴ Adapted from King's table on the dichotomies of Enlightenment thought: Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, Thinking Gender (New York: Routledge, 1990), xiv.

womanhood and manhood that these binaries beget. Then, this chapter employs advice literature, newspaper articles, and editorials written by and for revivalist pastors to show how, for revivalists of the era, the ideal minister was an ideal man. Thus the ideal woman and ideal minister inhabited mutually exclusive gendered categories. Chapter one then outlines the (generally unsuccessful) strategies employed by women who found that their womanliness kept them from the pastorate.

Gender was not the only obstacle facing female revivalists. Chapter two asks how the women overcame the biblical prescriptions used to deter women from the ministry. This chapter uses 1890s-1920s literature discussing women, the ministry, and the Bible to argue that while other female ministers and their proponents claimed that biblical passages used to restrict the office to men should be reinterpreted, Woodworth-Etter and McPherson forwent this strategy. They circumvented the problem of the Bible by using biblical arguments as an engine for identity creation. Chapter two argues that Woodworth-Etter and McPherson constructed biblical narratives that incorporated aspects of popular womanhood with their status as ministers. Their efforts brought the women's seemingly incoherent biographical details and ministerial impulses into one consistent, biblically authoritative identity.

Chapter three asks how the women provided their followers with corresponding images for their narrative identities. The body was (and is) an

enduring instrument of representation,¹⁰⁶ and for late nineteenth and early twentieth-century revivalists, the body of the ideal revivalist minister was a fit, conservatively groomed, suited white male. Female ministers were tasked therefore with providing followers with an image of a minister without a male body or the male professional garb. Using photographic evidence and first-hand accounts, chapter three shows that Woodworth-Etter and McPherson solved this problem by constructing visual representations of their biblical identities, respectively, as mother and bride rather than wearing traditional ministerial garb.

Bodies were not the only instruments through which revivalist leaders constructed their identities. Chapter four investigates how the women used the sacred space of their revivalist meeting places, in addition to their bodies, to communicate their status as female ministers. This chapter outlines both the close relationship revivalist ministers had with their meeting places and the ways in which revivalist sacred space communicated the masculinity and power of celebrity ministers. Chapter four then shows how Woodworth-Etter and McPherson constructed meeting places to display their power as ministers and their status as womanly women.

It is one thing to give followers narratives and images of authority, but it is another thing to exercise authority over followers. Chapter five examines how the women realized their authority over their followers during their worship services. Chapter five analyzes 1890s-1920s revivalist preaching as such a ritualized act. This

¹⁰⁶ William LaFleur, "Body," in *Critical Terms for Religious Studies*, ed. Mark C. Taylor (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 37.

chapter argues that male ministers repeated masculine preaching acts that gave the minister the masculine role of the initiating aggressor, and their congregation the feminine role of submitting receiver. Woodworth-Etter and McPherson repeated acts that were a “misfiring” of womanliness and conventional revivalist preaching performance. They maintained their womanly biblical identities while simultaneously performing in ways that evoked submission from their audiences. Using insider testimony and outsider accounts of revivalist services, chapter five shows how the women’s performances and performance venues signified ideal notions of femininity and ministerial authority.

During the preaching moment maleness was a critical concern for late nineteenth and early twentieth-century revivalists, but race and class also played a part. Pentecostal revivalists, with their interracial meetings and reputation for widespread appeal in working class and indigent circles, wrestled with how to convey middleclass white respectability in the pulpit. Chapter five analyzes how Woodworth-Etter and McPherson performed their gender, race, and class, and how their performance shaped their mainstream revivalist authority.

In spite of their authoritative revivalist meetings, chapter six shows how the boundaries surrounding the discreet categories of woman and minister were policed in the ministries of Woodworth-Etter and McPherson. Chapter six compares the public response to Woodworth-Etter and McPherson to the coverage that scandalous male revivalists received and concludes that ridicule heaped upon female ministers for comparable (and in the case of McPherson lesser) crimes was more severe than for their male counterparts. The women’s criminal trials – how

they were tried and how they were covered in the media – illustrate why many believed the women were not legitimate, authoritative ministers.

In the conclusion, I evaluate the extent of each woman's ministerial impact. I do this by examining and evaluating the women's legacies. I also compare the women's approaches to ministry, gender, and sexuality. Finally, I discuss what their ministries illuminate about the study of revivalism and gender in the 1890s – 1920s.

CHAPTER I

THE IDEAL AMERICAN REVIVALIST

“God Almighty’s business in this world, let us say it reverently,
is the making of manhood.”¹⁰⁷

One Hundred Revival Sermons and Outlines, 1908

As J. Z. Smith has noted, context is key for any comparative enterprise.¹⁰⁸

Therefore, chapter one begins by providing context for this study of gender and American revivalism in the 1890s–1920s. Like all else at the turn of the twentieth century, ideals of Christian ministry were informed by regnant notions of what women and men ought to be. Chapter one argues that the institution of the ministry was gendered male during the 1890s–1920s according to the era’s standards of masculinity. Revivalists in particular expressed this masculinity through rhetoric and displays of late nineteenth and early twentieth-century manliness. Strategies that female revivalists employed to lead in an institution that was ideally masculine had limited success.

That the minister was gendered male in late nineteenth and early twentieth century American life is hardly a surprise. The ministry is an office that, from its

¹⁰⁷ Frederick M. Barton, *One Hundred Revival Sermons and Outlines* (Cleveland, OH: George H. Doran Company, 1908), 134.

¹⁰⁸ Jonathan Z. Smith, *Drudgery Divine: On the Comparison of Early Christianities and the Religions of Late Antiquity*, Jordan Lectures in Comparative Religion 14 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 33.

inception and with few exceptions, has been considered male.¹⁰⁹ Female ministers throughout the formation of the Christian tradition were members of a very small, usually derided, and often persecuted group.¹¹⁰ But, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, many advocates for female ministers saw in the era's progressive spirit an opportunity for change.¹¹¹ In this age of first wave feminism,¹¹² in the years between 1890 and 1930, Susan B. Anthony, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, and their colleagues encouraged women to enter institutions of higher learning at greater rates than ever before.¹¹³ Once they graduated, these women entered into professional life at unprecedented rates and began careers in traditionally male vocations such as the law, medicine, and the academy.¹¹⁴ They also created new so-called "female professions" such as social work and public

¹⁰⁹ See Paula Nesbitt's brief outline of the history of the male institution in: Nesbitt, *Feminization of the Clergy in America: Occupational and Organizational Perspectives*, 15.

¹¹⁰ For a history of obstacles facing the few American women who "stepped out" of their place and into ministerial leadership, see: Lindley, *You Have Stepped out of Your Place: A History of Women and Religion in America*. For a survey of the obstacles facing female ministers from the biblical era to the twentieth century, see: Barbara J. MacHaffie, "Her Story: Women in Christian Tradition." (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2003).

¹¹¹ Steven J. Diner, *A Very Different Age: Americans of the Progressive Era*, 1st ed. (New York: Hill and Wang, 1998), 5.

¹¹² American first-wave feminism can be traced to the eighteenth century liberal thought of John Stuart Mill and Harriet Taylor, although it gained traction in American political circles during the abolitionist movement in the mid-nineteenth century. First wave feminists were defined in large part by their desire for female suffrage (as well as temperance, labor, education, and health care reform) during the years between 1890-1920. See: James P. Sterba, *Controversies in Feminism, Studies in Social, Political, and Legal Philosophy* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2001), 173-76.

¹¹³ Barbara Miller Solomon, *In the Company of Educated Women: A History of Women and Higher Education in America* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1985), 78-93.

¹¹⁴ Robyn Muncy, *Creating a Female Dominion in American Reform, 1890-1935* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), xii-xiii.

health nursing.¹¹⁵ In addition, women of the era mobilized to effect change in many aspects of American public life: health care and welfare reform, the temperance movement, and suffrage.¹¹⁶

This shift in the place and presence of women in non-ecclesial professions put pressure on the country's oldest institution to follow suit.¹¹⁷ Many denominations responded to progressive trends by changing their policies on female ministers. For example, between 1890 and 1930, the Methodist Episcopal Church, the African American Episcopal Zion Church, the Church of the Nazarene, and the Mennonite Church among others, opened ordination to women.¹¹⁸ Thus, the number of female ministers grew to an all-time high in the 1890s and 1920s.¹¹⁹

Proponents of female ministers expressed optimism in light of their accomplishments. "In five or ten years," said Methodist Rev. M. Madeline Southard, "all denominations will grant ecclesiastical equality to women."¹²⁰ Southard's prediction proved to be optimistic. In spite of the influx of women into the

¹¹⁵ Ibid., xiv; Karen Graves, *Girls' Schooling During the Progressive Era: From Female Scholar to Domesticated Citizen*, Garland Reference Library of Social Science (New York: Garland, 1998), 56.

¹¹⁶ Nancy Schrom Dye, "Introduction," in *Gender, Class, Race, and Reform in the Progressive Era*, ed. Noralee Frankel and Nancy Schrom Dye (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 1991), 4.

¹¹⁷ Mark Chaves, "External Pressures," in *Ordaining Women: Culture and Conflict in Religious Organizations* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997), 38-63.

¹¹⁸ Chaves, *Ordaining Women: Culture and Conflict in Religious Organizations*, 18.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 41.

¹²⁰ Euphemia Drysdale, "Woman and the Ministry," *The Homiletic Review* 5, no. 83 (1922): 349.

profession, for Protestants from fundamentalism to the mainline, the ministry, in its most ideal form, remained male.¹²¹

The trend toward female ministers was followed by swift and intense backlash against female ministers and their supporters. The fundamentalists, a group born (in part) out of frustration with shifting gender roles in the nineteenth century, produced some of the best-documented and most virulent responses to female ministers.¹²² Fundamentalists imposed harsh restrictions against women in church leadership.¹²³ For example, they undercut female institutional power in missionary and aid societies.¹²⁴ They also peppered their rhetoric with accusations of female theological shallowness and moral feebleness.¹²⁵ "Woman," wrote fundamentalist H. B. Taylor, "is too easily beguiled to be a leader."¹²⁶ Whereas women ministers were depicted as too weak and gullible for the ministry, fundamentalists portrayed men as the natural defenders of orthodoxy and the hope for the future of American Christianity.¹²⁷

Fundamentalists provided some of the more extreme instances of retaliation, but they were not alone in their disapproval of female ministers. Evangelical and

¹²¹ Glenn T. Miller, *Piety and Profession: American Protestant Theological Education, 1870-1970* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2007), 177.

¹²² Bendroth, *Fundamentalism & Gender, 1875 to the Present*.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 56.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, 46.

¹²⁶ H. B. Taylor, "New Testament Restrictions of Women," *Western Recorder* 85, no. 27 (1910): 2.

¹²⁷ Bendroth, *Fundamentalism & Gender, 1875 to the Present*, 64.

mainline Protestants alike were uncomfortable with the idea of women entering the ministry.¹²⁸ Protestants in denominations with both permissive and restrictive policies regarding female ministers strongly preferred male ministers.¹²⁹ For example, well-known progressive ministers and theologians Walter Rauschenbush and Harry Fosdick promoted male ministers as the ideal form of the pastorate.¹³⁰ Christian-themed novels such as Charles Monroe Sheldon's *In His Steps* regularly gendered the nature of the ministry by reiterating the importance of a Christian home – wherein men were the public figures who spread the manly good news to the world, and women took care of religious education for children in the domicile.¹³¹

Some revivalists in the 1890s-1920s had a long history of empowering women to teach, preach, testify and prophesy publicly, but that did not exempt them from preferring men in the office of the ministry.¹³² Even individuals and groups who heartily affirmed female access to the pulpit often expressed ambivalence

¹²⁸ Clifford Putney, *Muscular Christianity: Manhood and Sports in Protestant America, 1880-1920* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001), 81.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 10.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*; Janet Forsythe Fishburn, "Walter Rauschenbusch and The "Woman Movement": A Gender Analysis," in *Gender and the Social Gospel*, ed. Wendy J. Deichmann Edwards and Carolyn De Swarte (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2003), 73.

¹³¹ Susan Hill Lindley, "Gender and the Social Gospel Novel," in *Gender and the Social Gospel*, ed. Wendy J. Deichmann Edwards and Carolyn De Swarte Gifford (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2003), 185-201.

¹³² Bendroth, *Fundamentalism & Gender, 1875 to the Present*, 27; Gail Bederman, ""the Women Have Had Charge of the Church Work Long Enough": The Men and Religion Forward Movement of 1911-1912 and the Masculinization of Middle-Class Protestantism," *American Quarterly* 41(1989): 121-22; Eric Robert Crouse, *Revival in the City: The Impact of American Evangelists in Canada, 1884-1914*, McGill-Queen's Studies in the History of Religion (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2005).

toward women ministers.¹³³ Famed turn-of-the-century revivalist A. B. Simpson, who allowed for female pastors, encouraged male ministers to lead followers “into all the fullness of the mature manhood of Christ.”¹³⁴ In 1915, Billy Sunday aggressively called for more men to lead the church in its mission. “We need men,” he wrote, “men that will fight.”¹³⁵

Thus, even as women entered professional ministry in increasingly greater numbers, most American Protestants, and revivalists in particular, called for male ministers. They had a specific kind of man in mind. They wanted a minister who was gendered according to 1890s and 1920s standards of manliness.

Making Manly Men

There were many qualities that made a manly late nineteenth and early twentieth century man. First and foremost, the manly man was gendered by what he did not possess: effeminacy.¹³⁶ Effeminacy, “having the qualities of a woman; womanish; soft and delicate in an unmanly degree; destitute of manly qualities,”¹³⁷ was the result of a man taking on womanly behaviors and sensibilities. As such, it was a condition that could only afflict men. “Effeminacy is not being female,”

¹³³ Wacker, *Heaven Below: Early Pentecostals and American Culture*, 160-71.

¹³⁴ A. B. Simpson, *The Holy Spirit* (New York: Christian Alliance Publishing Co., 1895), 392.

¹³⁵ Billy Sunday, *Get on the Water Wagon* (William Ashley Sunday, 1915), 14.

¹³⁶ E. Anthony Rotundo, *American Manhood: Transformations in Masculinity from the Revolution to the Modern Era* (New York: BasicBooks, 1993), 274.

¹³⁷ Newton Marshall Hall, “The Laborer and Her Hire,” *The Outlook* 123, no. 4 (1919): 134.

according to one observer, but “being less masculine.”¹³⁸ Therefore, femininity, while a positive quality in a woman, became the undesirable quality of effeminacy when practiced by a man.¹³⁹

Many worried that the “effeminacy of American youth”¹⁴⁰ was at an all-time high at the turn of the century, and pundits of the era placed the blame for the supposed effeminacy of their generation firmly upon their Victorian ancestors.¹⁴¹ The man that turn-of-the-century Americans inherited – the “archetypal buttoned-down Victorian gentleman” whose manners, reserve, and manful purity of heart and body had once been celebrated as a cornerstone of American civilization – was no longer seen as the kind of man who could lead Americans into the modern era.¹⁴² The customs and mannerisms that had been considered manly, refined, and poised in the nineteenth century became “overcivilized,” “pussyfooted,” and “sissy,” in the 1890-1920s.¹⁴³ According to early twentieth-century Americans, the “weakling” Victorian man possessed none of the self-starting, independent powers that men needed to survive in the modern world; he was lazy, submissive, and had a fondness

¹³⁸ William A. Quale, “The Gospel of Mastery,” *The Advance* 51, no. 2108 (1906): 424.

¹³⁹ Rotundo, *American Manhood: Transformations in Masculinity from the Revolution to the Modern Era*, 277.

¹⁴⁰ Hall, “The Laborer and Her Hire,” 134.

¹⁴¹ Putney, *Muscular Christianity: Manhood and Sports in Protestant America, 1880-1920*, 5.

¹⁴² Mrs. Caesar Misch, “The New America,” in *The American New Woman Revisited: A Reader, 1894-1930*, ed. Martha H. Patterson (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2008), 222; Putney, *Muscular Christianity: Manhood and Sports in Protestant America, 1880-1920*, 5.

¹⁴³ Gail Bederman, *Manliness & Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880-1917*, *Women in Culture and Society* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 17.

for luxury and leisure.¹⁴⁴ Therefore the ideal man of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was further defined as not Victorian.

Instead of being a pussyfooted Victorian, the ideal man was modern, which meant that he welcomed the scientific advancements, technological changes, and intellectual challenges that Americans faced at the turn of the twentieth century. The post-Victorian Era was a time when Americans were at the latter stage of a “hump of transition” from eighteenth-century republic to “complex industrial and urban life.”¹⁴⁵ Americans faced vast changes both in “physical landscape” and in “psychic circumstances” as immigration increased, higher criticism reigned in universities, and technology advanced at exponential rates.¹⁴⁶

Not everyone handled these changes well. “Weakling” Victorian men living in the modern age who were unable to face the “increased pace and technological advancement of modern civilization”¹⁴⁷ risked catching “neurasthenia.” Neurasthenia, “expressed the *cultural* weakness of civilized, manly [Victorian] self-restraint in *medical* terms.”¹⁴⁸ Defined as a mental disorder caused by “the problem

¹⁴⁴ Rotundo, *American Manhood: Transformations in Masculinity from the Revolution to the Modern Era*.

¹⁴⁵ Martin E. Marty, *Modern American Religion* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), 10.

¹⁴⁶ The bibliography for this period of American history is lengthy. The following volumes have sustaining interpretive power: Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*; William R. Hutchison, *The Modernist Impulse in American Protestantism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1992); Ferenc Morton Szasz, *The Divided Mind of Protestant America, 1880-1930* (University, AL: University of Alabama Press, 1982); George Cotkin, *Reluctant Modernism: American Thought and Culture, 1880-1900*, Twayne's American Thought and Culture Series (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1992).

¹⁴⁷ Bederman, *Manliness & Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880-1917*, 87.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 88.

of how the human individual was to adapt to the requirements of modern work and life,"¹⁴⁹ neurasthenia was considered to be a plague among men who were unprepared for the physical and psychic changes in American culture.

Neurasthenics were weak, ineffectual, mediocre, and, most terrifying for turn-of-the-century Americans, effeminate.¹⁵⁰ Ideal men had the strength and education to withstand neurasthenia.¹⁵¹ They were those who took President Woodrow Wilson's 1909 advice and were prepared "adapt themselves to modern life," so as not to risk "passing out of existence."¹⁵²

Part of that adaptation meant becoming middleclass professionals. Between 1870 and 1910, the number of white collar jobs in established fields like the law and medicine as well as in new careers such as engineering grew by eight times until twenty percent of male workers counted themselves as part of the professional middleclass.¹⁵³ Ideas about the consummate turn-of-the-century man followed this trend. The exemplary man was identified as having middleclass qualities such as cleanliness, integrity, and honor, and by his employment in middleclass professions like medicine or the law.¹⁵⁴

¹⁴⁹ Marijke Gijswijt-Hofstra and Roy Porter, *Cultures of Neurasthenia from Beard to the First World War* (Amsterdam: Rodopi 2001), 235.

¹⁵⁰ Bederman, *Manliness & Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880-1917*, 90.

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

¹⁵² "Colleges Must Be Modern," *The New York Times*, June 4 1909.

¹⁵³ Rotundo, *American Manhood: Transformations in Masculinity from the Revolution to the Modern Era*, 248.

¹⁵⁴ Daniel Eli Burnstein, *Next to Godliness: Confronting Dirt and Despair in Progressive Era New York City* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2006), 1-8.

Thanks in part to the growth of the American middle class, American industry, and post World War I economic development, prosperity also became a marker of American manliness in the following decade.¹⁵⁵ The truly masculine man of the 1920s was the independent breadwinner; he was man enough to provide for his wife and children, and he had sufficient financial resources to enjoy the Jazz Age.¹⁵⁶ Films during this period portrayed men as wealthy and heroic with the brawn and the means to rescue damsels in distress.¹⁵⁷ The “young, vibrant, avowedly consumerist masculinity” of the period required an independent man who basked in his self-made wealth.¹⁵⁸ Jay, “the Great” Gatsby, was a fictional version of this kind of manliness. Although possessing a shady, lower-class past, Gatsby manufactured an identity for himself as an ideal man of self-made wealth. Powerful banker and philanthropist Henry Pomeroy Davidson was a nonfiction example of ideal self-made manhood. When he died suddenly in 1922, the *New York Times* eulogized him as a paragon of Roaring Twenties manliness: “He knew finance and business and many other subjects as few men did,” the *Times*, reported, “and was an example of that honored citizen the self-made man.”¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁵ Bethan Benwell, *Masculinity and Men's Lifestyle Magazines*, Sociological Review Monographs (Oxford: Blackwell/Sociological Review, 2003), 65.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid.

¹⁵⁷ Gaylyn Studlar, *This Mad Masquerade: Stardom and Masculinity in the Jazz Age*, Film and Culture (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 13.

¹⁵⁸ Benwell, *Masculinity and Men's Lifestyle Magazines*, 65.

¹⁵⁹ "Davidson's Life Story Reads Like Fiction," *New York Times*, May 7 1922.

The exemplary man of the 1890s-1920s was middleclass, but he did not use his financial gain to become “soft” or domesticated.¹⁶⁰ In addition to modern philosophies and innovations as well as economic prosperity, Americans in the 1890s-1920s inherited a newly closed western frontier and a rapidly industrializing nation.¹⁶¹ In order to tame the American West¹⁶² as well as the new frontier of American industry, the ideal man needed toughness and aggression.¹⁶³ He needed what quintessential turn-of-the-century American outdoorsman Teddy Roosevelt called “rugged courage.”¹⁶⁴ He did not wait for permission. He was the ultimate initiator. He may have worked as an accountant or a salesman, but internally the truly manly man was raw, and primitive.¹⁶⁵ He was a cowboy.¹⁶⁶ Thus, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, terms such as strenuous, vigorous, virile, and strong became watchwords for all things manly.¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁰ Rotundo, *American Manhood: Transformations in Masculinity from the Revolution to the Modern Era*, 258.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 248.

¹⁶² Even after railroads supposedly closed the western frontier, taming the American West was a chief concern for late nineteenth and early twentieth century Americans. Novels recounting the adventures of western figures like Wyatt Earp and Calamity Jane as well as travelling shows like Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show (1883-1916) piqued interest around the country in taming the “primitive” (albeit closed) frontier. See: Susan Kollin, “The Global West: Temporality, Spatial Politics, and Literary Production,” in *A Companion to the Literature and Culture of the American West*, ed. Nicolas S. Witschi, *Blackwell Companions to Literature and Culture* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), 523.

¹⁶³ Rotundo, *American Manhood: Transformations in Masculinity from the Revolution to the Modern Era*, 259.

¹⁶⁴ “Roosevelt Boomers Issue Statement,” *Reading Eagle*, February 11 1912.

¹⁶⁵ ———, *American Manhood: Transformations in Masculinity from the Revolution to the Modern Era*, 258.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁷ Bederman, *Manliness & Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880-1917*, 91.

This emphasis on a man of strength (mental and physical) brought the male body to the forefront of notions of manliness.¹⁶⁸ The ideal man exhibited his strength through robust activities. Teddy Roosevelt, YMCA founder Luther Gulick, and minister Josiah Strong were touted as models of men who “stressed action rather than reflection and aggression rather than gentility.”¹⁶⁹ Throughout the 1890s-1920s, muscle development was considered to be an outer indication of inner manhood, and American men invested in making their bodies into specimens of virility through sports and bodybuilding.¹⁷⁰ Competitive sports became venues to display manly physical prowess¹⁷¹ and men’s magazines like *Esquire* included extensive coverage of professional sports such as boxing and baseball.¹⁷² “Whatever vigor there is in the original protoplasm of your person and your ancestry,” wrote Dr. Leonard Keene Hirshberg of Johns Hopkins University about the connection between muscularity and manliness, “will be found ready to be developed by your physical culture and training in your muscles.”¹⁷³

If there was anything that threatened the virility and power of the “original protoplasm” of the modern American man, it was ancestry. Americans of the era of

¹⁶⁸ Rotundo, *American Manhood: Transformations in Masculinity from the Revolution to the Modern Era*, 222-83.

¹⁶⁹ Putney, *Muscular Christianity: Manhood and Sports in Protestant America, 1880-1920*, 5.

¹⁷⁰ Jennifer Smith Maguire, *Fit for Consumption: Sociology and the Business of Fitness* (New York: Routledge, 2008), 36.

¹⁷¹ Anthony Synnott, *Re-Thinking Men: Heroes, Villains and Victims* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2009), 262.

¹⁷² Benwell, *Masculinity and Men's Lifestyle Magazines*, 71.

¹⁷³ Leonard Keene Hirshberg, ““That Tired Feeling” Best Cured by Physical Culture,” *Evening Tribune*, September 19 1917.

“native-born white, presumably going back generations,”¹⁷⁴ decent were proud of their accomplishments and credited America’s “estimable Anglo-Saxon ancestors,” with their success.¹⁷⁵ Many feared that Chinese, Japanese, Italian, Jewish, Austro-Hungarian, Russian, Polish, and Irish male immigrants were “servile immigrant men” who would only produce more of the same, rather than the virile Anglo-Saxons who had thus far brought the country into the industrial era.¹⁷⁶ Immigrants from predominately Roman Catholic nations were a special worry because they brought with them beliefs and practices that Protestants believed threatened to undermine the supposedly sturdy form of Christianity that made America, America.¹⁷⁷

Many white Americans believed that American manhood and womanhood had domestic as well as foreign racial threats. Prominent immigration activist Prescott Hall warned that African American men were cursed with inferior masculinity and a lack of self-control.¹⁷⁸ According to Hall, their propagation with “morally deviant” but fertile African American women as well as unsuspecting white

¹⁷⁴ David R. Roediger, *Working toward Whiteness: How America's Immigrants Became White - the Strange Journey from Ellis Island to the Suburbs* (New York: Basic Books, 2005), 21.

¹⁷⁵ "South African Question," *The New York Times*, January 4 1904; Bederman, *Manliness & Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880-1917*, 30.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 2,11.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 19.

¹⁷⁸ Wendy Kline, *Building a Better Race: Gender, Sexuality, and Eugenics from the Turn of the Century to the Baby Boom* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 9; Kevin P. Murphy, *Political Manhood: Red Bloods, Mollycoddles, & the Politics of Progressive Era Reform* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), 202; Graves, *Girls' Schooling During the Progressive Era: From Female Scholar to Domesticated Citizen*, 48.

women posed a threat to modern American manhood.¹⁷⁹ The model American man was a man whose gene pool was tainted neither by longstanding nor new non-Anglo American flaws.¹⁸⁰ A real man was the white¹⁸¹ Protestant who shunned Catholicism and the “effeminate traits of southeastern European races.”¹⁸²

New immigrants, newly freed African Americans, and the children they produced made many white Americans worry that their supposedly strong white civilization was in danger.¹⁸³ To preserve the future of the white American man and prevent this so-called “race suicide,” white American men were called to put their virility to very practical use and keep up with the birth rates of immigrants and African Americans by producing children.¹⁸⁴ Therefore, in a complete departure from Victorian predecessors, the ideal American man embraced his sex drive as a public service.¹⁸⁵ The capacity to appear sexually attractive to fertile white women

¹⁷⁹ Kline, *Building a Better Race: Gender, Sexuality, and Eugenics from the Turn of the Century to the Baby Boom*, 9; Murphy, *Political Manhood: Red Bloods, Mollycoddles, & the Politics of Progressive Era Reform*, 202; Graves, *Girls' Schooling During the Progressive Era: From Female Scholar to Domesticated Citizen*, 48.

¹⁸⁰ Petit, *The Men and Women We Want: Gender, Race, and the Progressive Era Literacy Test Debate*, 39.

¹⁸¹ Anglo-Saxons were the ideal, but many European Protestants, if they had been in the country long enough and had adopted enough Anglo-Saxon cultural norms (signaled often by anglicizing given names and surnames), had potential to be considered “white,” at the turn-of-the-century. In this project, I use “white” to refer to those Americans of European descent who fit into this category. Roediger, *Working toward Whiteness: How America's Immigrants Became White - the Strange Journey from Ellis Island to the Suburbs*, 2-9.

¹⁸² Jeanne D. Petit, *The Men and Women We Want: Gender, Race, and the Progressive Era Literacy Test Debate*, Gender and Race in American History (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2010), 37.

¹⁸³ Bederman, *Manliness & Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880-1917*, 170-215.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 204.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 205.

in order to produce more vigorous Americans became a laudatory quality for turn-of-the-century men.

Thus, 1890s–1920s Americans added their culturally specific binaries to established Enlightenment categories:

Table 1.1

Masculine	Feminine
War	Peace
Aggression	Passivity
Initiation	Reception
Dominance	Submission
Virility	Fertility
Professional	Domestic
Strength	Weakness
Christian (Protestant)	Non-Christian (including Roman Catholic)
White	Non-White

The future of men, and indeed public American life, according to 1890s–1920s Americans, was “red-blooded,”¹⁸⁶ virile, and manly. Any kind of civic concern, be it politics, work, economics, foreign policy, or science, was thought to be best executed by a manly man.¹⁸⁷ Politicians sought to portray themselves as masculine men ready to fight (literally or figuratively) their opponents.¹⁸⁸ Newspapers argued

¹⁸⁶ The adjective “red-blooded” came to be associated with all things virile and sexually potent, as well as all things quintessentially American during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. See Kevin P. Murphy’s discussion of the sexual connotations of the term and its relationship to American-ness in: Murphy, *Political Manhood: Red Bloods, Mollycoddles, & the Politics of Progressive Era Reform*, 1-10.

¹⁸⁷ Bederman, *Manliness & Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880-1917*, 170-216; Rotundo, *American Manhood: Transformations in Masculinity from the Revolution to the Modern Era*, 222-46; Ileen A. DeVault, “Give the Boys a Trade”: Gender and Job Choice,” in *Work Engendered: Toward a New History of American Labor*, ed. Ava Baron (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1991), 191-216.

¹⁸⁸ Murphy, *Political Manhood: Red Bloods, Mollycoddles, & the Politics of Progressive Era Reform*, 3.

for the “maintenance of the manhood of our men” and carried appeals for manly men on topics including war, fiscal policy, politics, employment, recreation, and physical fitness.¹⁸⁹ Advertisers promised increased manhood and masculinity in everything from cures from alcoholism to digestion aids to “Urethral Vigoral Pads” and “electrotherapy” to increase male sexual performance.¹⁹⁰ Countless clubs, fraternal orders, and lodges sprang up with promises to produce adult manly specimens.¹⁹¹ Organizations like the Boy Scouts were created to teach manliness to young boys.¹⁹² Manliness was touted as the “most valuable asset of citizenship,” capable of bringing out the “Godlike in the sons of God.”¹⁹³

The Manly Minister

¹⁸⁹ "Get Manhood in a Week," *The San Francisco Call*, February 17 1898; "American Manhood," *The Conservative*, November 1 1900; "Political Pot-Pie," *The Seattle Republican*, January 13 1905; "The Manhood of Men," *The Evening Missourian*, November 6 1917; P. S. Gage, "American 'Boys' Find Manhood in Untamed Wilds as Members of Forest Conservation Groups," *Christian Science Monitor*, November 23 1933; Leonard Merrill, "Millions in Manhood," *Los Angeles Herald*, June 1 1905.

¹⁹⁰ "Two Fine Specimens of Physical Manhood," *The Deseret News*, February 13 1900.

¹⁹¹ Bederman, *Manliness & Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880-1917*, 16; Varda Burstyn, *The Rites of Men: Manhood, Politics, and the Culture of Sport* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999), 62.

¹⁹² Jay Mechling, *On My Honor: Boy Scouts and the Making of American Youth* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), 40.

¹⁹³ "Our Own Opinion," *Public Opinion: a Comprehensive Summary of the Press throughout the World on All Important Current Topics* 39(1905); "Can the Church Solve the Immigration Problem?," *Public Opinion: a Comprehensive Summary of the Press throughout the World on All Important Current Topics* 39, no. 16 (1905); *Official Proceedings of the Grand Lodge, Free and Accepted Masons*, (Macon, GA: Smith and Watson, 1908).

For the most part, American ministers did not resist the manliness movement.¹⁹⁴ Many were among its most enthusiastic supporters. Protestant interest in a manly minister was first and most popularly voiced in the muscular Christianity movement.¹⁹⁵ A British import, muscular Christianity took root in the fertile ground of mid to late nineteenth-century American culture. The movement was in full bloom at the turn of the century, and it maintained a strong presence in American Protestantism throughout the 1920s, particularly in revivalist circles.

The archetypal muscular Christian minister was a virile, white Protestant professional man of keen intellect and physical prowess who stood firm against the dangers that accompanied industrialization, immigration, and other aspects of modern American life.¹⁹⁶ Like most Americans of the era, Protestant ministers and their congregations believed they were facing a masculine scientific era and encroaching secularism while they were armed with nothing but the hopelessly effeminate brand of Victorian Christianity inherited from the previous generation.¹⁹⁷ Motivated by a fear that the faith of their Victorian forefathers could not stand up to

¹⁹⁴ Putney, *Muscular Christianity: Manhood and Sports in Protestant America, 1880-1920*, 2. There were opponents to the muscular Christianity movement. For example Christian Church minister Dr. A. F. Moore's article critiquing the new American masculinity as the, "strongest possible exercise of the human will," (See: Dr. A. F. Moore, "Spirituality," *Herald of Gospel Liberty* 103, no. 27-52 (1911).) Harry Fosdick, although at first a strong proponent of the movement, also rejected it after the Great War. As Putney, Bederman, and Bendroth demonstrate, these dissenting voices were in the minority.

¹⁹⁵ Putney, *Muscular Christianity: Manhood and Sports in Protestant America, 1880-1920*, 1.

¹⁹⁶ Although Protestants were particularly fond of muscular Christianity, muscular Catholicism also surfaced during this period. See: *Ibid.*, 174.

¹⁹⁷ Bederman, *Manliness & Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880-1917*, 17; Rotundo, *American Manhood: Transformations in Masculinity from the Revolution to the Modern Era*, 222-83; Putney, *Muscular Christianity: Manhood and Sports in Protestant America, 1880-1920*, 4.

the rough modern era, muscular Christianity proponents got to work creating a strenuous faith and a strenuous minister for the strenuous life.¹⁹⁸

American churchgoers were, according to one Presbyterian minister, “infallible judges of manliness, and, above all things, they believe in a manly minister.”¹⁹⁹ In accordance with 1890s-1920’s standards of manliness, muscular Christians evaluated their ministers by their physical fitness. In a Progressive Era survey concerning the ideal American minister, respondents listed “manliness and strength” as one of the most important qualities exhibited by an ideal minister.²⁰⁰ These abstract notions of manliness and strength were accompanied by concrete physical details: “he must be tall, stately, six feet, strong to look at, well proportioned, etc.,” with a “finely proportioned body, well developed chest, broad shoulders.”²⁰¹

This consummate masculine minister possessed sex appeal. Revivalists were particularly noted for their combination of preaching and sexuality. “The revivalists,” wrote historian and Vassar professor Woodbridge Riley in 1928, “account as nothing else can do for those twin obsessions of the national mind – salvation and sex.”²⁰² For example, Billy Sunday’s manly persona was popular with

¹⁹⁸ Gerald Roberts, *The Strenuous Life: The Cult of Manliness in the Era of Theodore Roosevelt* (East Lansing, MI: Michigan State University Press, 1977), 51; Charles H. Lippy, *Do Real Men Pray?: Images of the Christian Man and Male Spirituality in White Protestant America*, 1st ed. (Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press, 2005), 81.

¹⁹⁹ Dr. John Watson, *Church Folks: Being Practical Studies in Congregational Life* (New York: Doubleday, Page & Co., 1900), 166.

²⁰⁰ Putney, *Muscular Christianity: Manhood and Sports in Protestant America, 1880-1920*, 82.

²⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 82-83.

²⁰² Woodbridge Riley, “Esoteric Cults,” *The Saturday Review of Literature* 5, no. 20 (1928).

men, but the enthusiastic response he received from attendees at women-only meetings revealed his status as a sex symbol for female revivalists.²⁰³

Revivalist preachers were supposed to use their appeal, according to Congregational revivalist Charles Reynolds Brown, to cultivate an intimate connection between the minister and the congregation. Brown compared the relationship between preacher and congregant to a romantic seduction. "When a man is declaring his affection for a certain young woman and asking her to marry him, he does not get off twenty or thirty feet away and call it out to her in loud tones," wrote Brown. "You are wooing these people to a Christian life and to more active Christian service."²⁰⁴

Not all pastors embodied this "red-blooded" masculinity, but that did not deter muscular Christianity enthusiasts. "Manly ministers are made as well as born," one Baptist minister philosophized.²⁰⁵ Those who were not born with "manliness" were advised to be about the work of "cultivating of manly characteristics of the Christian minister."²⁰⁶ Instructional literature for ministers was full of advice for increasing manliness. Characteristics such as courage, energy, and a "vigorous"

²⁰³ Margaret Bendroth, "Why Women Loved Billy Sunday: Urban Revivalism and Popular Entertainment in Early Twentieth-Century American Culture," *Religion and American Culture: A Journal of Interpretation* 14, no. 2 (2004): 263-64.

²⁰⁴ Charles Reynolds Brown, *The Art of Preaching* (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1922), 158.

²⁰⁵ Harold Pattison, *For the Work of the Ministry: For the Classroom, the Study and the Street* (Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, 1907), 36.

²⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

mind could help a minister develop from a “frail body into manly vigor.”²⁰⁷ Working with deacons and elders who had virile bodies and minds helped as well.²⁰⁸ “Men want a fellow man for a minister,” opined one homiletician; “They want him to be a man before he is a minister.”²⁰⁹

There was perhaps no group more enthusiastically supportive of muscular male church leadership than the revivalists.²¹⁰ They consistently sought ministers with the “supernaturally imparted vitality” of manliness.²¹¹ “Each tool is ordained of God for the reenforcement [sic] of manhood,” wrote revivalist minister William Bell Riley. “Every time a river is enslaved a thousand men are set free. Every time an iron wheel is mastered, a thousand muscles are emancipated.’ Beloved, the machinery in the church of God ought to mean the same thing.”²¹²

Revivalist celebrity ministers were noted examples of “rugged manhood.”²¹³ For example, turn-of-the-century Congregationalist revivalist minister R. A. Torrey embodied turn-of-the-century manliness. He was a white, professional minister with a degree from Yale Divinity School. In addition, he had served under Dwight L.

²⁰⁷ Arthur Stephen Hoyt, *The Work of Preaching: A Book for the Class-Room and Study*, vol. The Macmillan Company (New York 1917), 320; Pattison, *For the Work of the Ministry: For the Classroom, the Study and the Street*, 39, 366.

²⁰⁸ Pattison, *For the Work of the Ministry: For the Classroom, the Study and the Street*, 168.

²⁰⁹ James Farrah, “The Work of a Pastor,” *Homiletic Review: An Interational Monthly Magazine of Current Religious Thought, Sermonic Literature and Discussion of Practical Issues* 63(1912): 202.

²¹⁰ Bendroth, *Fundamentalism & Gender, 1875 to the Present*, 18.

²¹¹ “What Do the People of Lewiston and Auburn Think of Sunday and His Boston Campaign,” *Lewiston Evening Journal*, November 25 1916, 5.

²¹² Riley, *The Perennial Revival; a Plea for Evangelism*, 103.

²¹³ J. H. MacDonald et al., *The Revival: A Symposium* (Cincinnati: Jennings and Graham, 1905), 38.

Moody, whose influential Victorian Era ministry ushered the muscular Christian movement into the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Torrey devoted much of his ministerial life to promoting Christianity's "truly manly"²¹⁴ nature; his books supporting that goal included *Talks to Men about the Bible and the Christ of the Bible* published in 1904.²¹⁵ Billy Sunday, who carried the manliness torch into the 1910s and 1920s was the kind of self-made man adored by muscular Christians: he grew up in obscurity and poverty, became a professional athlete, dramatically converted, and went on the road as a minister.²¹⁶ Sunday celebrated his own masculinity and encouraged others to reject "spineless, effeminate, ossified" liberal expressions of manhood and faith in favor of his more manly conservative Christianity.²¹⁷ "It takes manhood to live for Christ," said Sunday, and he regularly preached the virtue of the manly Jesus.²¹⁸ The ideal muscular revivalist minister was a paragon of late nineteenth and early twentieth century "red-blooded manhood."²¹⁹

Given the masculinity of revivalist ministry, the question becomes: how did women minister with authority in a field that was ideally masculine? The first step

²¹⁴ R. A. Torrey, *Revival Addresses* (Chicago: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1903), 153.

²¹⁵ ———, *Talks to Men About the Bible and the Christ of the Bible* (New York: F. H. Revell Co., 1904).

²¹⁶ Michael S. Kimmel and Amy Aronson, *Men and Masculinities: A Social, Cultural, and Historical Encyclopedia* (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2004), 54-55.

²¹⁷ Bendroth, "Why Women Loved Billy Sunday: Urban Revivalism and Popular Entertainment in Early Twentieth-Century American Culture," 251.

²¹⁸ "Takes Manhood to Live for Christ, Billy Sunday Says," *Boston Daily Globe*, January 20 1917, 2.

²¹⁹ Bishop Thomas Benjamin Neely, *The Minister in the Itinerant System* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1914), 186.

in proposing a response is to consider the gender confusion inherent in early twentieth century ideals of ministry. Though professionals in an historically male office, American ministers were called upon to exhibit traits outside the boundaries of late nineteenth and early twentieth century constructions of masculinity. Whereas manly men were aggressive, bold, and rugged, ministers were required to nurture, soothe, and sympathize with their congregants.²²⁰ Like physicians, ministers were often called to visit congregation members in their homes. Unlike doctors, ministers did not dispense masculine medical or scientific expertise. Instead, they brought emotional and spiritual care to the family.²²¹ Whereas the manly man was a figure of public authority, ministers spent many hours in the privacy of the home.²²² In addition to being a bold and aggressive defender of the faith like Torrey or Sunday, a minister was called upon to receive from God and teach others to do the same. Male revivalists attempted to masculinize the supposedly feminine revivalist practice of receiving and accepting, as chapter five will demonstrate. In spite of these efforts, there was no denying that in many ways the duties of a minister aligned more closely with ideal models of late nineteenth and early twentieth century womanliness rather than manliness.

²²⁰ Karin E. Gedge, *Without Benefit of Clergy: Women and the Pastoral Relationship in Nineteenth-Century American Culture*, Religion in America Series (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 13.

²²¹ *Ibid.*, 198-99.

²²² Bederman, *Manliness & Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880-1917*, 17; Rotundo, *American Manhood: Transformations in Masculinity from the Revolution to the Modern Era*, 222-83; Putney, *Muscular Christianity: Manhood and Sports in Protestant America, 1880-1920*, 4. Some male revivalists who toured perpetually like Billy Sunday spent fewer hours doing home visitations, but other prominent revivalists like A. B. Simpson and J. Frank Norris did home visitations regularly.

The Womanly Woman

Manhood was not the only gender construct being redesigned during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The ideal woman was also a work in progress. Like the consummate masculine man, the quintessential turn of the century woman was constructed against a caricature of her Victorian predecessor. The consensus among opinion-makers of the day was that the “adorably weak”²²³ Victorian woman was just as ill equipped to survive and thrive in the scientific age as her male counterpart.²²⁴ Late nineteenth and early twentieth century Americans worried that women, exposed to the “more demanding mental activity”²²⁵ of the modern era ran the risk of becoming neurasthenics as well as men. Thus, the supposedly demure, placid Victorian woman of “unquestioning unintelligence”²²⁶ was discarded for a more suitable complement to the modern man.

The ideal woman was modern, which meant that she was educated and embraced intellectual life.²²⁷ The corseted woman had stepped off the “pedestal of homebound domesticity and female purity,” and was given unprecedented access to

²²³ Mrs. Burnett, "Mrs. Burnett Outlines Woman's Sphere," *The New York Times*, September 29 1907; "Centenary of Trousers Rouses an Ancient Debate," *The New York Times*, January 5 1913.

²²⁴ Putney, *Muscular Christianity: Manhood and Sports in Protestant America, 1880-1920*, 5.

²²⁵ Bederman, *Manliness & Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880-1917*, 87.

²²⁶ Misch, "The New America," 222.

²²⁷ Graves, *Girls' Schooling During the Progressive Era: From Female Scholar to Domesticated Citizen*, 49.

education and professional opportunities.²²⁸ Unlike the supposedly overly-mannered Victorian woman, the educated “New” modern woman was committed to “willing, thinking, and doing,” in the world beyond domestic confines.²²⁹

There were, however, limits to what an exemplary woman willed, thought, and did outside the home. For example, she was not a feminist.²³⁰ That is, she did not take on the male duty of professional life and therefore she rejected “non-motherhood, free love, easy divorce, economic independence,” and other sorts of “destructive theories,” first wave feminists adopted.²³¹ A truly womanly woman knew that her modern powers were best exercised within the home.²³² Thus, the ideal woman of the 1890s – 1920s was founded on two enduring models of domestic womanhood: motherhood and wifedom.²³³

The womanly woman of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was portrayed, more often than not, as a mother. Proponents of motherhood as the epitome of womanhood were careful to distinguish between the mother of the

²²⁸ Trisha Franzen, *Spinsters and Lesbians: Independent Womanhood in the United States*, The Cutting Edge (New York: New York University Press, 1996), 48; Stephanie Coontz, *Marriage, a History: From Obedience to Intimacy or How Love Conquered Marriage* (New York: Viking, 2005), 195.

²²⁹ "The New Woman: What She Is Saying, Thinking and Doing," *Mansfield Daily Shield*, December 9 1904.

²³⁰ Franzen, *Spinsters and Lesbians: Independent Womanhood in the United States*, 49.

²³¹ *Ibid.*

²³² Carolyn L. Kitch, *The Girl on the Magazine Cover: The Origins of Visual Stereotypes in American Mass Media* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 4.

²³³ Kitch identifies several alternative visions of womanhood to the mainstream models in: *Ibid.*, 75-100.

Victorian Era and the modern mother.²³⁴ The Victorian mother was a standard of domestic purtiy, but modern mother was an “educated mother.”²³⁵

An educated mother²³⁶ used the latest scientific expertise and technology to raise her children and manage her household.²³⁷ She was encouraged to “become scientific” and acquire “knowledge of hygiene and cleanliness” in order to provide her household with the latest medical and technological innovations.²³⁸ She was to learn the latest “fastidious and painstaking mothering practices.”²³⁹ Educated mothering became so popular that schools dedicated to the art and science of “mothercrafting” with the purpose of assisting women in the development of modern mothering skills opened during the early twentieth century.²⁴⁰ Publishers also produced manuals such as *Mothercraft* and *The Mothercraft Manual* to teach women the latest mothering skills.²⁴¹ Classifying mothering as a craft gave women a kind of professional skill that was exclusively practiced in the home. As

²³⁴ Sharon Hays, *The Cultural Contradictions of Motherhood* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), 39-54.

²³⁵ Ibid.

²³⁶ Elizabeth Macfarlane Sloan Chesser, *Woman, Marriage, and Motherhood* (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1913), 6.

²³⁷ Hays, *The Cultural Contradictions of Motherhood*, 39-54.

²³⁸ "Woman's Part in Life as Dr. Adler Sees It," *New York Times*, January 13 1913, 116; "Urges Occupation for Every Woman," *New York Times*, February 28 1915; Edward Marshall, "This School Teaches Women How to Be Good Mothers," *New York Times*, June 9 1912; Dye, "Introduction," 3.

²³⁹ Amber E. Kinser, *Motherhood and Feminism*, Seal Studies (Berkeley, CA: Seal Press, 2010), 41.

²⁴⁰ Marshall, "This School Teaches Women How to Be Good Mothers."

²⁴¹ Sarah Comstock, *Mothercraft* (New York: Hearst's International Library, 1915); *Mothercraft: A Selection of Courses of Lectures on Infant Care Delivered under the Auspices of the National Association for the Prevention of Infant Mortality*, (London: National League for Physical Education and Improvement, 1916).

craftswomen, they belonged to a domestic guild that corresponded to the male public professional but did not put them in competition with men for male professions.

Mothercrafting included a number of skills. One of the most important was teaching, and so the educated mother was herself an educator. Her classroom was her home, and her students were her children.²⁴² She was responsible for the “mental life” of her children which included their religious (Protestant) and moral development.²⁴³ To many, the most important act of motherhood was to “teach religion” to the children.²⁴⁴ Thus, the educated mothers’ first educational duty was to “make God real in the hearts and lives of their children.”²⁴⁵

A true educated mother, according to one 1910 essayist, “recognizes the value of obedience and insists upon her children being obedient to authority.”²⁴⁶ In order to have authority over her growing obedient, vigorous, healthy American children, an educated mother herself had to be strong and in good health.²⁴⁷ One of

²⁴² Petit, *The Men and Women We Want: Gender, Race, and the Progressive Era Literacy Test Debate*, 28.

²⁴³ "Woman's Part in Life as Dr. Adler Sees It."; "Urges Occupation for Every Woman."; "Woman and Home," *Washington Reporter*, November 11 1892.

²⁴⁴ Margaret Lamberts Bendroth, "Religion, Feminism, and the American Family: 1865-1920," in *Religion, Feminism, and the Family*, ed. Anne E. Carr and Mary Stewart Van Leeuwen (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996), 188; Anna Freeloove Betts, *The Mother-Teacher of Religion*, ed. D. G. Downey and G. H. Betts, The Abingdon Religious Education Texts (New York: The Abingdon Press, 1922), 15.

²⁴⁵ Betts, *The Mother-Teacher of Religion*, 4.

²⁴⁶ Mrs. L. E. Corlett, "Educated Motherhood," *The Iowa Year Book of Agriculture* 11(1910): 690.

²⁴⁷ Sherrie A. Inness, "'It Is Pluck, but - Is It Sense?': Athletic Student Culture in Progressive-Era Girls' College Fiction," in *The Girl's Own: Cultural Histories of the Anglo-American Girl, 1830-1915*, ed. Claudia Nelson and Lynne Vallone (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1994), 221.

the surest ways to reach that goal was for her to strengthen her body through exercise. Magazines, advertizements, and other literature encouraged women to develop vigorous physiques, and women's colleges like Vassar, Wellesley, and Smith (and an increasing number of co-educational institutions)²⁴⁸ promoted gymnastics, basketball, and physical education to make scientifically improved mothers.²⁴⁹

The goal of educated mothering was to "produce the healthiest, best educated, and most honorable citizens."²⁵⁰ Just as the virility needing for impregnating white women was part of the turn-of-the-century ideal consruction of masculinity, birthing children from a "quality" (Anglo) American gene pool was another responsibility of an educated mother.²⁵¹ White women of marriageable age were encouraged to choose a mate with whom they would be likely to produce healthy, intelligent, attractive children of Anglo-Saxon descent.²⁵²

The standard of the educated mother was often impossible to achieve. One reason for this was because it was based upon several factors that were outside the control of female practitioners. For example, it depended upon skin color, the ability to conceive, and access to education.

²⁴⁸ By the late nineteenth century, a majority of women were educated in co-educational colleges and universities. Leslie Miller-Bernal and Susan L. Poulson, *Challenged by Coeducation: Women's Colleges since the 1960s*, 1st ed. (Nashville, TN: Vanderbilt University Press, 2006), 3.

²⁴⁹ Inness, "'It Is Pluck, but - Is It Sense?': Athletic Student Culture in Progressive-Era Girls' College Fiction," 221.

²⁵⁰ Marshall, "This School Teaches Women How to Be Good Mothers."

²⁵¹ Kline, *Building a Better Race: Gender, Sexuality, and Eugenics from the Turn of the Century to the Baby Boom*, 19.

²⁵² Marshall, "This School Teaches Women How to Be Good Mothers.," "Plan Nation-Wide Eugenics Society," *New York Times*, November 16 1913.

It also depended upon money. The educated mother, like her vigorous male counterpart, was middleclass.²⁵³ Supported by a prosperous professional husband, she was a fastidious mothercrafter, but she did not work for pay. The educated mother dedicated her life to the welfare of her children and the efficiency of her home, and she had time to donate to making other homes models of modern competency and economy. Educated mothers energetically worked to make sure the food, education, and health of their children (and other Americans' children) were safe.²⁵⁴ Mother-activist Elizabeth MacFarlane Chesser argued that mothering led naturally to activism:

The ideal of motherhood cannot be restricted to the care of one's own children. The mother spirit must go out to every child who needs us and who we can serve. The joy of motherhood must find expression in the desire to help those mothers to whom maternity means only suffering and sorrow. What a power in social reform might not we have in intellegent mother love awakened, eager to serve!"²⁵⁵

Thus, the ideal mother of the turn of the century had "mother love," financial resources that freed her volunteer time, and middleclass sensibilities to apply to a variety of health, education, and labor reforms.

The boundaries around the educated mother were strictly maintained. Women whose sexual practices were outside the married, heterosexual norm were

²⁵³ Dye, "Introduction," 3.

²⁵⁴ Ibid., 3-5.

²⁵⁵ Chesser, *Woman, Marriage, and Motherhood*, 6.

classified as “bad girls” in need of intervention and reform.²⁵⁶ Those who did not marry earned the unflattering name of “spinster,” were pitied for their inability to acquire a husband, feared for their unnatural sense of independence, and often suspected of lesbianism.²⁵⁷ Those who failed to uphold the motherhood ideal because their economic status prevented them from doing so, or those whose racial or religious identity placed them outside the Protestant white American ideal were accused of being “mentally inferior,” pitied for their ignorance, and criticized for their supposed irresponsibility.²⁵⁸

The reward for fulfilling the ideal was great. Educated mothers were celebrated for bringing up hearty young Americans, for raising the socio-economic status of their families, for uplifting the entire human race, and for being an all-around “superior woman.”²⁵⁹

Educated motherhood was the dominant way of performing womanliness properly, but it was not the only popular model of womanhood. The “companionate wife” joined the educated mother as an ideal form of mainstream womanliness in the 1910s-1920s.²⁶⁰ The companionate wife was in many ways similar to the

²⁵⁶ Lynne Vallone, “The True Meaning of Dirt”: Putting Good and Bad Girls in Their Place(S),” in *The Girl's Own: Cultural Histories of the Anglo-American Girl, 1830-1915*, ed. Claudia Nelson and Lynne Vallone (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1994).

²⁵⁷ Franzen, *Spinsters and Lesbians: Independent Womanhood in the United States*, 6.

²⁵⁸ “Is Motherhood Crime,” *The Pittsburg Press*, November 14 1913; Rima D. Apple, *Perfect Motherhood: Science and Childrearing in America* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2006), 47.

²⁵⁹ Hays, *The Cultural Contradictions of Motherhood*, 41; Apple, *Perfect Motherhood: Science and Childrearing in America*, 47-49; “Is Motherhood Crime.”; Kinser, *Motherhood and Feminism*, 40.

²⁶⁰ Christine Bolt, *The Women's Movements in the United States and Britain from the 1790s to the 1920s* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1993), 250; Christina Simmons, *Making Marriage Modern: Women's Sexuality from the Progressive Era to World War II*, *Studies in the History*

educated mother: she was white (Anglo); middleclass which meant she was supported by her husband; and educated, which meant that she could engage her husband with conversation as well as rear their children.²⁶¹

While the primary domestic relationship of the educated mother was from mother to child, the primary relationship for the companionate wife was between the husband and the wife. A companionate wife was one of a two-member partnership.²⁶² She was devoted to her husband's wellbeing (and he to hers) in a marriage whose goal was that "each partner would develop his or her separate talents and interests to the fullest while enjoying lifelong intimacy and companionship."²⁶³

American women's books, magazines, and advertising heavily propagated the companionate wife model.²⁶⁴ Literature analyzing the culture, such as *The Trend of the Race: A Study of Present Tendencies in the Biological Development of Mankind*, included lengthy discussions of the "requirements of an ideal wife": health, "looks," housekeeping ability, education, maternity, etc.²⁶⁵ Magazines such as *Good*

of Sexuality (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 105-37; Lori J. Kenschaft, *Reinventing Marriage: The Love and Work of Alice Freeman Palmer and George Herbert Palmer*, Women in American History (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2005), 1.

²⁶¹ Simmons, *Making Marriage Modern: Women's Sexuality from the Progressive Era to World War II*, 20, 159; Julia Kirk Blackwelder, *Now Hiring: The Feminization of Work in the United States, 1900-1995*, 1st ed. (College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 1997), 90.

²⁶² Kenschaft, *Reinventing Marriage: The Love and Work of Alice Freeman Palmer and George Herbert Palmer*, 8.

²⁶³ Ibid., 1.

²⁶⁴ Kitch, *The Girl on the Magazine Cover: The Origins of Visual Stereotypes in American Mass Media*, 11.

²⁶⁵ Samuel J. Holmes, *The Trend of the Race: A Study of Present Tendencies in the Biological Development of Civilized Mankind* (New York: Harcourt Brace and Company, 1921), 227.

Housekeeping promoted women who embodied “ideal wife” qualities. For example, in his article “The Superwoman,” *Good Housekeeping* writer Arthur Crabb told the story of a woman who took advantage of “these new days of freedom and equal rights” not by getting a profession but by throwing off tradition and proposing marriage to her husband.²⁶⁶ Crabb approved of this use of female freedom. In his view, the advances in women’s educational and vocational opportunities were best put to use in the marital relationship. “I’ll make him a good wife,” wrote “The Superwoman” heroine in a pledge to conform to this domestic ideal, “the very best wife I know how.”²⁶⁷

The idea of a mutually satisfying marriage was hardly new, but the 1910s and 1920’s version took on qualities specific to the culture.²⁶⁸ The first was the notion that the marriage relationship was *the* location for fulfillment of all desires, dreams, and relational needs.²⁶⁹ While in earlier generations a woman had an intimate same-sex friend with whom to confide (as did her spouse), the companionate wife’s one and only “best friend” was her husband.²⁷⁰

The marital relationship was built not only upon friendship but also upon passionate sexual intimacy.²⁷¹ This was a change from the previous generation’s

²⁶⁶ Arthur Crabb, “The Superwoman,” *Good Housekeeping*, May 1922, 29.

²⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 197.

²⁶⁸ Lori Kenschaft traces the celebration of a marriage characterized by intimacy and friendship as far back as ancient Greek mythology. See: Kenschaft, *Reinventing Marriage: The Love and Work of Alice Freeman Palmer and George Herbert Palmer*, 8.

²⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 9.

²⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

²⁷¹ Simmons argues that 1920s Americans created a mythical period of sexual repression in the Victorian Era and then rebelled against this largely imaginary past with more supposedly liberal

notion of womanliness. In the 1890s-1910s, according to popular literature, “bad girls” enjoyed sex and displayed sexuality.²⁷² “Good” women of the era, very much like their Victorian predecessors, keep their sexual urges firmly under control.²⁷³ Their bodies, like their households were “clean,” which meant free from dirt and disease as well as sexual behaviors outside of procreation.²⁷⁴

In contrast to her predecessor, the ideal woman of the 1920s – while expected to be chaste for the general public – was encouraged to “abandon herself fully to the sexual embrace” of her husband.²⁷⁵ The American film industry quickly became one of the leading purveyors of this ideal womanliness.²⁷⁶ Films such as *Why Change Your Wife* (1920), *Too Wise Wives* (1921), and *What Do Men Want* (1922) promoted wives as encouraging their husbands in their careers and provided them with sexual satisfaction along with friendship.

The companionate wife’s celebration of friendship and sexual satisfaction did have limitations. First, ideal women were supposed to express sexual interest in their husbands only.²⁷⁷ Although the sexually adventurous flapper was a

sexual mores. This was expressed properly within the confines of the heterosexual marriage relationship. See: Christina Simmons, “Modern Sexuality and the Myth of Victorian Repression,” in *Passion and Power: Sexuality in History*, ed. Kathy Lee Peiss, Christina Simmons, and Robert A. Padgug (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1989), 168-69.

²⁷² Vallone, “The True Meaning of Dirt”: Putting Good and Bad Girls in Their Place(S),” 259.

²⁷³ Ibid.

²⁷⁴ Ibid.

²⁷⁵ Simmons, “Modern Sexuality and the Myth of Victorian Repression,” 165.

²⁷⁶ Kathleen Anne McHugh, *American Domesticity: From How-to Manual to Hollywood Melodrama* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 113.

²⁷⁷ Simmons, “Modern Sexuality and the Myth of Victorian Repression,” 165.

memorable model of womanhood during the 1920s, she was by no means the ideal woman of the day. Flappers were received with ambivalence.²⁷⁸ Some celebrated their healthy enjoyment of sex and sexuality,²⁷⁹ but they were most often scolded for flaunting their bodies outside the bonds of marriage.²⁸⁰

In addition, a companionate wife was supposed to pursue her own happiness but not if that happiness led her away from “life-enriching domesticity.”²⁸¹ Her career came second to her primary duty to “achieve in the world without giving up feminine graces.”²⁸² Feminine graces referred in this case to a life that centered on caring for her husband and bearing and raising children.²⁸³

As with the educated mother, the companionate wife was a model that was heavily policed. To step outside the ideal was to step into a hazardous world. Advertisements and magazine covers portrayed the woman who lacked the protection of parents or spouse as a woman who lived a life “fraught with physical danger and reputation-tarnishing temptation.”²⁸⁴ Unmarried women were blamed with threatening the foundations of society. “The unmarried woman,” wrote the

²⁷⁸ See analysis of the pros and cons of flappers in women’s college circles in: Margaret A. Lowe, *Looking Good: College Women and Body Image, 1875-1930*, Gender Relations in the American Experience (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003), 113.

²⁷⁹ Angela Schlater, “Flaming Youth: Gender in 1920s Hollywood” (Dissertation, Loyola University, 2008), 177.

²⁸⁰ Simmons, *Making Marriage Modern: Women’s Sexuality from the Progressive Era to World War II*, 143.

²⁸¹ Kenschaft, *Reinventing Marriage: The Love and Work of Alice Freeman Palmer and George Herbert Palmer*, 215.

²⁸² Ibid.

²⁸³ Ibid.

²⁸⁴ Kitch, *The Girl on the Magazine Cover: The Origins of Visual Stereotypes in American Mass Media*, 54.

University of Georgia's 1920 *Studies in Citizenship*, "presents a problem both in industry and in the professions. Our present institution, the home, is founded upon the principle of a married man and a married woman, father and mother, living together and rearing a family of children. All of home life is centered around this plan of economy."²⁸⁵

Unmarried mothers had a particularly hard life. Not only did they lack a husband, the "predominant measure of women's success and normalcy in life,"²⁸⁶ they faced limited marriage prospects and (if they had children born outside of wedlock), humiliation for their sexual indiscretions.²⁸⁷ They also had to take on the masculine role of breadwinner for their children and the majority of single mothers were faced with problems including economic woes, housing shortages, and labor discrimination.²⁸⁸

Thus, in order for a woman to embody the ideal of the 1920s, she needed to be a mother and a wife. She was welcome to pursue her own satisfaction, so long as her primary satisfaction was found in the home. For both the educated mother and the companionate wife, therefore, ideal womanliness remained domestic.

A Female Ministry

²⁸⁵ Thomas Jackson Woofter, *Studies in Citizenship*, vol. 23 (Athens, GA: University of Georgia School of Education, 1920), 72.

²⁸⁶ Simmons, *Making Marriage Modern: Women's Sexuality from the Progressive Era to World War II*, 219.

²⁸⁷ Mary E. Odem, *Delinquent Daughters: Protecting and Policing Adolescent Female Sexuality in the United States, 1885-1920*, Gender & American Culture (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995), 52.

²⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 168-69.

Given the ministry's emphasis on nurture, education, and its domestic associations, female ministers saw an opportunity to reconcile the seemingly discordant identities of "woman" and "minister" in the gender confusion of the ministry. Unitarian Anna Garlin Spencer, Universalist Olympia Brown, Methodist Protestant Anna Howard Shaw, United Brethren minister Ella Niswonger, and Presbyterian Louisa Woosley argued that their status as seminary-educated professionals qualified them to minister.²⁸⁹ But more often than not women ministers argued that it was their status as ideal women – as educated mothers and/or companionate wives – that qualified them to pastor.²⁹⁰

For the most part, female revivalist ministers sought authority in the ministry through motherhood and wifedom. Turn-of-the-century married female revivalists such as Baptists Virginia Broughton and Helen Barrett Montgomery, who led congregations and held denominational leadership in their Baptist Conventions (National and Northern, respectively),²⁹¹ argued that American religious wellbeing fell under their purview as mothers.²⁹² Like other mother activists, female revivalist ministers believed they were specially qualified to minister based on their role as

²⁸⁹ Wessinger, *Religious Institutions and Women's Leadership: New Roles inside the Mainstream*, 7-12.

²⁹⁰ Catherine M. Prelinger, *Episcopal Women: Gender, Spirituality, and Commitment in an American Mainline Denomination*, Religion in America Series (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 24.

²⁹¹ Kendal P. Mobley, "The Ecumenical Woman's Missionary Movement: Helen Barrett Montgomery and *the Baptist*, 1920-30," in *Gender and the Social Gospel*, ed. Wendy J. Deichmann Edwards and Carolyn De Swarte Gifford (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2003).

²⁹² *Ibid*; Bendroth and Brereton, *Women and Twentieth-Century Protestantism*, 174.

mothers to their congregations.²⁹³ They argued that as mothers of congregations they had authority to oversee the mental, spiritual, and physical needs of their spiritual children. In turn, their spiritual children entrusted their development to their female ministers' watchful mothercrafting. Proponents argued that the mother minister was not just beneficial for one individual church but the entire community in which she lived. "It's the woman pastor," wrote itinerant Methodist minister Madeline Southard in 1923, "who mothers the town."²⁹⁴

Other revivalist women used the model of a companionate wife to make a bid for pastoral legitimacy. Married women ministers often argued that as long as they were dutiful wives with happy husbands and home lives, they were entitled to minister: their responsibilities to the men in their lives were fulfilled, and their free time could be invested in a pastorate.²⁹⁵ For example, revivalist Pentecostal Emma Cotton proclaimed her legitimacy based upon fulfilling her wifely duties to her spouse and their felicitous union.²⁹⁶ Carrie Judd Montgomery made a point of repeatedly mentioning her husband's status as her "help-meet," which placed him in the feminine role as Eve from Genesis 2:18.²⁹⁷ She downplayed his feminization, however, by emphasizing her dependence upon him, even though his assistance was

²⁹³ Mobley, "The Ecumenical Woman's Missionary Movement: Helen Barrett Montgomery and *the Baptist*, 1920-30."; Bendroth and Brereton, *Women and Twentieth-Century Protestantism*, 174.

²⁹⁴ "For More Women Pastors," *St. Joseph News-Press*, August 30 1923.

²⁹⁵ Estrela Alexander, *The Women of Azusa Street* (Cleveland, OH: Pilgrim Press, 2005), 164.

²⁹⁶ Butler, *Women in the Church of God in Christ: Making a Sanctified World*, 62.

²⁹⁷ Anna W. Prosser, "Wedding Bells," *Triumphs of Faith* 10, no. 6 (1890).

primarily behind the scenes.²⁹⁸ Some widowed ministers inherited their ministries from their deceased husbands and claimed ministerial authority based upon their previous work as companionate wives. For example, Jennie Seymour, widow of Azusa Street revivalist William Seymour, continued her husband's legacy by mission, teaching, preaching and mentoring younger pastors.²⁹⁹

Still other women ministers forsook models of ideal womanhood and based their claim to the ministry on their decision to abstain from motherhood, marriage, and even womanhood altogether. Salvation Army General Evangeline Booth eschewed marriage for the sake of the ministry and portrayed herself as a chaste pastor who forsook relationships with men in order to serve the church.³⁰⁰

Pentecostal Uldine Utely ministered as a virginal woman committed to preaching rather than a husband, but after she married, her preaching career ended.³⁰¹ African American minister Mary Evans, pastor of Cosmopolitan Community Church in Chicago wore men's clerical clothing in the pulpit and observers believed Evans's pulpit gestures, dress, and hairstyles were "sexually ambiguous."³⁰² Evans attempted to change the subject of whether or not a woman could be accepted as a

²⁹⁸ Ibid.

²⁹⁹ Cheryl J. Sanders, "History of Women in the Pentecostal Movement," *Cyberjournal for Pentecostal-Charismatic Research* 2, no. 2 (1997).

³⁰⁰ Diane H. Winston, *Red-Hot and Righteous: The Urban Religion of the Salvation Army* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), 151.

³⁰¹ Edith Waldvogel Blumhofer, "'A Little Child Shall Lead Them': Child Evangelist Uldine Utely," in *The Contentious Triangle: Church, State, and University: A Festschrift in Honor of Professor George Huntston Williams*, ed. George Huntston Williams, Rodney Lawrence Petersen, and Calvin Augustine Pater (Kirksville, MO: Thomas Jefferson University Press, 1999), 313.

³⁰² Wallace D. Best, *Passionately Human, No Less Divine: Religion and Culture in Black Chicago, 1915-1952* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005), 157-60.

minister by deflecting attention from her gendered self. “All is required is that he or she have the interest of the people at heart,” said Evans of the qualifications for a legitimate minister.³⁰³ European American Methodist minister Anna Howard Shaw wore traditional black robes in the pulpit and at the beginning of her career in the late nineteenth-century she wore her hair cropped short.³⁰⁴ After facing criticism for appearing too manly, however, she made a conscious effort to take on traditionally feminine attire, to wear her hair long, and to appear more womanly when not preaching.³⁰⁵

Thus, female ministers in the 1890s-1920s used diverse means to make a case for their authority as ministers. A few tried to make a way outside the popular domestic roles for women. But most, recognizing the gender ambiguity of the office of the ministry and attempting to capitalize on that fact, chose to make their case as mothers and wives.

A Profession in Peril

Had the institution of the ministry been thriving during this period, as was the case for the law or medicine, these arguments may have become widely accepted. Instead, Protestants of the era believed that the profession of ministry

³⁰³ Ibid., 167.

³⁰⁴ Anna Howard Shaw and Elizabeth Garver Jordan, *The Story of a Pioneer*, National American Woman Suffrage Association Collection (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1915), 193.

³⁰⁵ Ibid., 130.

was in jeopardy, and that the gendered confusion of the institution was to blame.³⁰⁶ In many ways this fear was justified. Once *the* profession of American society, the crown jewel of the academy, and the most powerful institution in any given American village, at the onset of the turn of the century the office of the ministry was a shadow of its early republican self.³⁰⁷ Whereas the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were a golden age for classic professions such as the law and medicine and new professions like psychology and engineering,³⁰⁸ American ministers were floundering.³⁰⁹ Ministers saw their salaries decrease and their voice

³⁰⁶ Bederman, *Manliness & Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880-1917*, 17; Rotundo, *American Manhood: Transformations in Masculinity from the Revolution to the Modern Era*, 222-83; Putney, *Muscular Christianity: Manhood and Sports in Protestant America, 1880-1920*, 4.

³⁰⁷ Diner, *A Very Different Age: Americans of the Progressive Era*, 177; Bruce A. Kimball, *The "True Professional Ideal" In America: A History* (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1992), 98,287; Miller, *Piety and Profession: American Protestant Theological Education, 1870-1970*, 314-39, 81-403. E. Brooks Holifield challenges this narrative of decline, citing historians' tendency to romanticize a non-existent pious American past as well as simplistic analysis of the kinds of authority wielded by ministers in American society. Holifield argues that in many ways American clergy maintained much of their authority over congregation members even as they relinquished certain areas of their dominion to social scientists and mental health professionals, (Holifield, *God's Ambassadors: A History of the Christian Clergy in America*, 4.). In this project, I side with the majority of scholars on this topic and argue that the loss of jurisdiction to psychology and social science, as well as loss of salary, and public esteem is tantamount to decline.

³⁰⁸Diner, *A Very Different Age: Americans of the Progressive Era*, 177; Kimball, *The "True Professional Ideal" In America: A History*, 198-300; Nathan O. Hatch, *The Professions in American History* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1988), 24.

³⁰⁹ Historians provide several possible explanations for the changing status of late nineteenth and early twentieth century American ministers. Steven K. Green argues that the nineteenth century's gradual "second disestablishment" undermined the authority of religious institutions and their leaders, Steven K. Green, *The Second Disestablishment: Church and State in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 388. Glenn T. Miller and E. Anthony Rotundo blame the changing status, in part, on a profession-wide talent vacuum as the best and brightest chose between more profitable careers in medicine or the law and less prestigious service to the church, Miller, *Piety and Profession: American Protestant Theological Education, 1870-1970*, xxiii; Rotundo, *American Manhood: Transformations in Masculinity from the Revolution to the Modern Era*, 172. Charles Lippy contends that competition from various men's organizations such as fraternal lodges and the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) seduced young men away from their ecclesiastical commitments, Lippy, *Do Real Men Pray?: Images of the Christian Man and Male Spirituality in White Protestant America*, 81. Bruce Kimball points to the marginalization of theological reflection, preference for scientific inquiry, and a corresponding skepticism about

in public policy diminish.³¹⁰ “He [the minister] must not now interfere in politics,” wrote British historian James Bryce on his perception of the state of American ministers and public life; “he must not speak on any secular subject *ex cathedra*.”³¹¹ Ministers also saw their status as pillars of society wane. Sinclair Lewis’s *Elmer Gantry* popularized the image of a corrupt and greedy twentieth century minister rather than a knowledgeable, competent professional.³¹² Indeed from the perspective of many early twentieth century ministers, the period was an “American Religious Depression.”³¹³ Church attendance declined, the liberal-fundamentalist controversy raged, and ministers worried about both the future of American Christianity and the clergy’s future in American society.³¹⁴

Ministry as an institution faced an uncertain future as funding to seminaries disappeared, fewer talented young people sought to enter the profession, and Americans expressed increasingly less confidence in the office to help them cope with industrial life.³¹⁵ “The great reason why young men are not going into the

religious authority claims as causes for the decline of American clergy, Kimball, *The “True Professional Ideal” In America: A History*, 287.

³¹⁰ For a chart comparing ministers’ salary increases with that of other full-time employees, see Table 4.3 in: Kimball, *The “True Professional Ideal” In America: A History*, 259.

³¹¹ Viscount James Bryce, *The American Commonwealth*, vol. 2 (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1919), 777.

³¹² Miller, *Piety and Profession: American Protestant Theological Education, 1870-1970*, 382.

³¹³ P. R. Hayward and Merle N. English, “What the Depression Is Doing to the Cause of Religious Education,” *Religious Education* 27, no. 10 (1932); Sydney E. Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People*, 2nd ed. (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2004), 895.

³¹⁴ Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People*, 895; English, “What the Depression Is Doing to the Cause of Religious Education.”; Robert T. Handy, *The American Religious Depression, 1925-1935*, Facet Books. Historical Series, 9 (Philadelphia,: Fortress Press, 1968).

³¹⁵ Miller, *Piety and Profession: American Protestant Theological Education, 1870-1970*, 710.

ministry,” wrote one culture critic, “is that when children they didn’t hear father say that the ministry was much of a profession. Father was talking mostly about making big money in real estate and oil wells. Father was too busy running after the dollar to have family prayers.”³¹⁶

For 1890s–1920s Protestants, the perceived womanliness of the ministry was cited as a (if not the) reason for the institution’s decline.³¹⁷ Ministers themselves recognized that the practices associated with the vocation, such as home visits and pastoral care, contributed to the notion that the ministry was a feminine profession.³¹⁸ “It is said that religion breeds effeminacy,” wrote frustrated Methodist minister and theologian Edgar Sheffield Brightman, “that it appeals to women and children, but that it lacks masculinity.”³¹⁹

The solution to the problem of a supposedly effeminate profession was to purge the church of leftover Victorian femaleness and masculinize it.³²⁰ “Might it not be well to consider,” asked *The Christian Advocate*, “the importance of a more manly type of Gospel, a Gospel in which young men will see the qualities that directly appeal to them – virility, force, independence, power? Can we not manage in some way to make our young men feel that religion gives them fiber, stamina,

³¹⁶ Milton O. Nelson, “The Church and the Critic: A Few of the Comments from the Independent Readers on the Article by Dr. Franklin H. Giddings, “Can the Churches Be Saved?,”” *The Independent* 106, no. 3784 (1921): 153.

³¹⁷ Putney, *Muscular Christianity: Manhood and Sports in Protestant America, 1880-1920*, 82.

³¹⁸ Gedge, *Without Benefit of Clergy: Women and the Pastoral Relationship in Nineteenth-Century American Culture*, 13.

³¹⁹ Edgar Sheffield Brightman, *Religious Values* (New York: The Abingdon Press, 1925), 83.

³²⁰ Holifield, *God's Ambassadors: A History of the Christian Clergy in America*, 163-64.

character, and purpose and that in it they have the noblest preparation for the strife and turmoil which lie before them?"³²¹ Female ministers, along with the so-called "perfumed pastors of dotting parishes," were out of fashion and "men with red blood," were the future of the ministry.³²² The most ideal minister of the 1890s and 1920s, therefore, was a man who displayed the modern, red-blooded, muscular qualities so treasured by late nineteenth- and early-twentieth century Americans.

Conclusion

The institution of the ministry was informed to a significant degree by gender binaries of the 1890s-1920s. In addition to being ideally white and middleclass, the ministry was supposed to be male. In every era of the church, maleness was an enduring qualification for ministering, but for Protestants of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and for revivalists in particular, manliness had critical value. A manly minister and his vigorous, manly church were qualified to face the anxieties that modernity brought to the American church. In addition, manly ministers, it was hoped, would attract more energetic young men to an institution that was seen by many as in decline. The ideal revivalist minister, therefore, was a man who could use his muscular body and manly rhetoric and gestures to inspire a, "rise in manhood" as well as "the cause of our Christ."³²³

³²¹ "New York Letter - By "Stylus"," *The Christian Advocate* 75, no. 6 (1900): 24.

³²² "Ordination of Rev. George Fuller," *The Pacific Unitarian* 10, no. 1 (1901): 230.

³²³ Charles B. Hershey, "Wiping Off Boundary Lines," *Herald of gospel liberty* 102, no. 14 (1910).

Strategies that female revivalists employed to lead in an institution that was ideally masculine, therefore, had limited success. Women tried diverse ways of circumventing the notion that the ministry was male. Although many used their status as ideal wives and mothers as proof that they were qualified to lead in the church, few potential congregants were convinced by their efforts. Thus, during the 1890s-1920s, while women in the law, medicine, and other professions made significant advancements in their institutions, for most, the idea of an authoritative female minister seemed as far away as it had ever been.

CHAPTER II

“WALKING BIBLES”: THE STORY OF FEMALE MINISTRY

“A pastor is one who has authority of a church, and there is nothing recorded in the Bible of that [female] kind.”³²⁴

“Women as Pastors,” *Moody Bible Institute Monthly*, 1920

The manner in which the ministry was gendered male was not the only impediment for women entering the pastorate. The inconsonance between the identities of woman and minister was compounded by the legal prescriptions in the New Testament used to ward off ministers. The most powerful source for authority for American Protestants (revivalist or otherwise) was the Bible.³²⁵ It therefore followed that in order for any individual to achieve ministerial authority, biblical endorsement was essential.³²⁶ Unfortunately for women ministers, several biblical passages have been used to preclude female pastors.³²⁷ These include: I Timothy 2:12, “But I [Paul] suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man,

³²⁴ Grant Stroh, “Women as Pastors,” *Moody Bible Institute Monthly* 21, no. 1 (1920): 25.

³²⁵ Nathan O. Hatch and Mark A. Noll, *The Bible in America: Essays in Cultural History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), 4. Mark Noll noted that until the late nineteenth century, “the Bible existed as the most coherent, the most widely respected, and the most powerful of those means by which American ordered their daily existence and made sense of the universe in which they lived.” Mark A. Noll, “The Bible and American Culture,” (2007).

³²⁶ Sally K. Gallagher, *Evangelical Identity and Gendered Family Life* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2003), 36.

³²⁷ Nesbitt, *Feminization of the Clergy in America: Occupational and Organizational Perspectives*, 14-15.

but to be in silence”; I Corinthians 14:34, “Let your women keep silence 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”; I Corinthians 11:3, “But I [Paul] would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God”; and Ephesians 5:22-23, “Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body.”³²⁸ Most churches insisted that women needed to follow the Pauline model for husband-wife/man-woman relationships and so excluded women from exercising authority over men in the church as well as in the home.³²⁹

The issue of female ministers and the Bible was contended hotly in all sects of Protestantism during the 1890s-1920s. For hundreds of years the minister’s inherent maleness had not been a question for most Protestants. By the late nineteenth century, the academic science of biblical study, known as “higher criticism,” had trickled down from German-influenced seminaries into American ministerial circles.³³⁰ Higher critical approaches to the Bible led some Protestants to question church positions on passages related to the prohibition of female pastors.³³¹ This, coupled with the influx of women into professions like the

³²⁸ In this project I use the King James Version of every text because this was the version used by most revivalists in the 1890s-1920s. American Bible Society, *The Holy Bible, Containing the Old and New Testaments* (New York: American Bible society, 1901).

³²⁹ Nesbitt, *Feminization of the Clergy in America: Occupational and Organizational Perspectives*, 15.

³³⁰ Bendroth, *Fundamentalism & Gender, 1875 to the Present*, 34.

³³¹ Ibid.

ministry, brought the Bible and its relationship to female ministers to the fore of public discourse.³³²

Protestant rhetoric arguing about whether the Bible permitted women to minister was sharp. Many in favor of female ministers argued that the so-called prohibitive passages had been misinterpreted, and when read in the light of higher critical scholarship were not in fact bans on all female pastors.³³³ The historical critical principle of investigating the context in which passages were written led pro-female ministry advocates to argue that the world in which prohibitive passages were written was so different from modern American life, that Pauline restrictions no longer applied to late nineteenth and early twentieth century Christians. For example, Presbyterian Louisa Woolsey wrote that in the modern era, “only poor, stereotyped dark age theologians,” would think of keeping women called to the ministry from the pulpit.³³⁴ Journalist W. T. Stead echoed this sentiment and gave thanks that modern female ministers were no longer in, “bondage to Corinthian standards.”³³⁵

³³² Nesbitt, *Feminization of the Clergy in America: Occupational and Organizational Perspectives*, 21.

³³³ Lois A. Boyd and R. Douglas Brackenridge, *Presbyterian Women in America: Two Centuries of a Quest for Status*, 2nd ed., Contributions to the Study of Religion (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1996), 101; Nesbitt, *Feminization of the Clergy in America: Occupational and Organizational Perspectives*, 21.

³³⁴ Louisa M. Woosley, *Shall Woman Preach? Or, the Question Answered* (Caneyville, KY: Cumberland Presbyterian Church, 1891).

³³⁵ W. T. Stead, *Life of Mrs. Booth, the Founder of the Salvation Army* (New York: Fleming H. Revell company, 1900), 92.

Opponents to female ministers remained unmoved.³³⁶ “Is this a translation,” asked one irked biblical scholar of a Salvation Army translation of I Timothy 2:11-14 that retranslated the King James Version of the passage in such a way that removed the ban on women from “usurping authority over the man,” “or a travesty?”³³⁷ Those against women ministers argued that using modern approaches to overturn the ban against female ministers would lead to all manner of debauchery. “If we have the right to interpret [I Corinthians 14:34] thus [as invalid for modern times],” wrote Lutheran minister Juergen Ludwig Neve, “and so get rid of something that does not suit the taste of our age, what then can we answer if, for instance, a champion of “free love” attacks the institution of marriage, saying that such requirements of the Bible do not hold for our day?”³³⁸

In general, revivalists were leery of higher critical methods.³³⁹ They worried that such approaches would undermine biblical authority in the church and would ultimately stymie revivalism.³⁴⁰ “We have never seen, nor have we ever heard of a preacher who was a higher critic and believed this infidel doctrine (for it is nothing else),” wrote revivalist J. Walter Malone, “that held revivals or had souls born into

³³⁶ DeBerg, *Ungodly Women: Gender and the First Wave of American Fundamentalism*, 77.

³³⁷ F. Godet, “Women’s Share in the Ministry of the Word,” *The Contemporary Review* 45(1884).

³³⁸ Juergen Ludwig Neve, “Shall Women Preach in the Congregation? An Exegetical Treatise,” *Lutheran Quarterly* 23, no. 3 (1903).

³³⁹ Benjamin L. Hartley, *Evangelicals at a Crossroads: Revivalism and Social Reform in Boston, 1860-1910*, 1st ed., *Revisiting New England: The New Regionalism* (Durham, NH: University of New Hampshire Press, 2011), 119-20.

³⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

the kingdom under his ministry.”³⁴¹ Those who were opposed to female ministers blamed their increase on higher critics and their “modernist” theories about the Bible.³⁴²

Revivalists who advocated for female ministers eschewed appeals to modern interpretations and instead used time-tested arguments to make their case.³⁴³ The story of Deborah (Judges 4-5), the judge and prophet who led Israel, was a popular passage for revivalists promoting women in ministry.³⁴⁴ Revivalists asked their critics, if women church leaders were prohibited by God, then “why did God send Deborah to show Barak his duty and not Barak to show Deborah?”³⁴⁵

Another scripture touted by early twentieth century revivalists was Joel 2:28-29 (and the Apostle Peter’s sermon quoting it in Acts 2:17-18), “And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions: And also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my spirit.”³⁴⁶ Revivalist ministers such as Carrie Judd

³⁴¹ WM. C. Ladd, "George Adam Smith and Others," *The American Friend* 6, no. 42 (1899): 997.

³⁴² Bendroth, *Fundamentalism & Gender, 1875 to the Present*, 40.

³⁴³ Priscilla Pope-Levinson, "Revivalism," in *Encyclopedia of Women and Religion in North America*, ed. Rosemary Skinner Keller, Rosemary Radford Ruether, and Marie Cantlon (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2006), 422.

³⁴⁴ Ibid.

³⁴⁵ Katherine Caroline Bushnell, *God's Word to Women: One Hundred Bible Studies on Women's Place in the Divine Economy*, 2d ed. (Oakland, CA: K.C. Bushnell, 1930), 231. See also: Alma White, *The New Testament Church* (Denver, Col.: Pillar of Fire, 1907), 218.

³⁴⁶ See for example: Carrie Judd Montgomery, "The Fulness of the Spirit," *Triumphs of Faith* 49, no. 9 (1929); Bushnell, *God's Word to Women: One Hundred Bible Studies on Women's Place in the Divine Economy*, 260; Society, *The Holy Bible, Containing the Old and New Testaments*; White, *The New*

Montgomery and Alma White argued that they were the prophetic daughters of Joel 2 whom Peter identified in Acts 2, and that the passage “forever settles the question as to woman’s ministry.”³⁴⁷ Those in favor and those opposed to female involvement in the clergy, argued repeatedly with one another throughout the first few decades of the twentieth century.³⁴⁸ Rarely did they convince one another to change positions.

For those women ministers who did succeed in their quest to overcome traditional biblical prohibitions, permission to join the guild did not equal authority from the pulpit. Even those who through argument and bureaucratic measures won the right to be ordained struggled to gain ministerial appointments or to exercise authority over congregants,³⁴⁹ in part because late nineteenth and early twentieth century muscular Christians believed the manly gospel of the scriptures naturally bestowed such power to lead upon male ministers.³⁵⁰ Many revivalists took for granted the idea that the authority of the scriptures was interwoven with masculinity. “The Gospel of Christ is a manly Gospel,” wrote revivalist Frederick Taylor, who warned that without a manly preacher, the message of the Bible would become “anemic in character.”³⁵¹ “Nobody can read the Bible thoughtfully,”

Testament Church, 223; Henry Eyster Jacobs, *A Summary of the Christian Faith* (Philadelphia: General Council Publication House, 1905), 592.

³⁴⁷ Alma White, *The New Testament Church* (Bound Brook, NJ: The Pentecostal union, 1912), 223.

³⁴⁸ DeBerg, *Ungodly Women: Gender and the First Wave of American Fundamentalism*, viii-viv.

³⁴⁹ Miller, *Piety and Profession: American Protestant Theological Education, 1870-1970*, 189.

³⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

³⁵¹ Frederick E. Taylor, “The Gospel for This Age,” *The Bible Magazine by Bible Teachers Training School* 1, no. 7 (1913): 518.

observed Billy Sunday, “and not be impressed with the way it upholds the manhood of a man.”³⁵² Revivalist Grant Stroh summed up revivalist sentiment on the subject in the *Moody Bible Institute Monthly* periodical. “A pastor is one who has authority of a church,” he wrote, “and there is nothing recorded in the Bible of that [female] kind. We admit that it is difficult to interpret Paul’s words to the Corinthians and to Timothy on this subject in light of experience [with women ministers], but you will agree that on general principles it is safer to stand on the Word of God than on human experience.”³⁵³

Maria Woodworth-Etter and Aimee Semple McPherson were able to circumvent these biblical prohibitions to female ministry. One way that they overcame the biblical barrier to ministering was by simply changing the subject. While their counterparts argued about restrictive texts, Woodworth-Etter and McPherson went around them. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, it was common for women ministers like Madeline Southard to host conventions, rallies, and give newspaper interviews arguing that the Bible endorsed “ecclesial suffrage.”³⁵⁴ Woodworth-Etter showed little interest in arguments for overturning the historic ban on female pastors. Of the hundreds of pages of her surviving written materials – her autobiography, sermons, and other writings – Woodworth-

³⁵² Billy Sunday and William T. Ellis, *“Billy” Sunday, the Man and His Message, with His Own Words Which Have Won Thousands for Christ*, Authorized ed. (Philadelphia: The John C. Winston company, 1914), 77.

³⁵³ Stroh, “Women as Pastors,” 25.

³⁵⁴ Kendra Irons, “Madeline Southard (1877-1967) On “Ecclesial Suffrage,” *Methodist History* 45, no. 1 (2006): 16.

Etter published only one sermon on female access to the ministry.³⁵⁵ What she said in the sermon was in line with other revivalists. On the topic of female pastors, she cited “Miriam, Deborah, Hannah, Hulda, Anna, Phoebe, Narcissus, Tryphena, Persis, Julia, and the Marys, and the sisters who were co-workers with Paul in the gospel whose names were in the Book of Life, and many other women whose labors are mentioned with praise,” as evidence of a woman’s right to minister.³⁵⁶

Like Woodworth-Etter, McPherson was not particularly interested in the debates about whether or not the Bible allowed for women ministers. And, like her predecessor, what she did say was in line with conventional revivalist rhetoric. In her autobiography, McPherson placed arguments against female ministers in the Bible in the mouth of her mother, Minnie Kennedy and then recollected her own response.

“Mother, do women ever preach the gospel?” I asked one night over the ironing board. “No, dear.” “Why?” “Oh you and your whys! Well, Eve the mother of all living was the first transgressor.”

Gathering up my algebra, trigonometry, and physiology books, I retired to my room and got out my Bible and concordance. “Women... women... women,” I queried aloud. “Why are they prevented from Christianizing the world?” I found that Deborah, a woman, led forth her gleaming armies beneath the 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 commissioned her.³⁵⁷

³⁵⁵ Maria Beulah Woodworth-Etter, “Woman’s Privilege in the Gospel,” (Indianapolis, IN: Mrs. M. B. W. Etter, 1922).

³⁵⁶ Woodworth-Etter, *Marvels and Miracles God Wrought in the Ministry for Forty-Five Years*, 13-14.

³⁵⁷ McPherson, *Aimee: Life Story of Aimee Semple Mcpherson*, 25-26.

McPherson then recounted her reaction to what her father, the head of her household, suggested.

“Why wasn’t a man dispatched with that first all-important message?” I mused audibly.

“Because the men were all in bed and sound asleep, I presume,” replied my father, who had appeared unexpectedly in the doorway.

Sheepishly, I leaped up and faced him. “How long have you been standing there?”

“Just a moment. Why?”

“Why are there no women preachers, dad?” I demanded.

“There’s Evangeline Booth.”

“But her work is mostly that of a commander. She doesn’t pastor a church.”

“But Paul was taught by a man and his wife, Priscilla and Aquila. He tells of one man who had seven daughters and another who had nine that prophesied.”³⁵⁸

In this conversation between her father and herself, McPherson created an extra-biblical narrative. While Acts records Paul working and ministering alongside Priscilla and Aquila (Acts 18:2, 18) Apollos, not Paul was their theological mentee (Acts 18:26). The writer of Luke-Acts (and not Paul) mentions Philip the Evangelist’s four (not seven or nine) prophesying daughters in Acts 21:8-9. McPherson’s extra-biblical story served her well. It gave her discussion of biblical women in prominent positions additional clout because it came with Paul’s apostolic authority, and it quadrupled the number of prophesying daughters.

McPherson most likely invented Minnie Kennedy’s position to give voice to the argument against female ministers. Kennedy was raised Salvation Army, a denomination that ordained women, and for most of McPherson’s career she was one of her staunchest supporters. Placing a discussion of Paul’s supposed female

³⁵⁸ Ibid., 27.

mentor and prophesying daughters in her father's mouth had strategic value. To have the man in the house, not the woman, speak the rhetoric that McPherson used as permission to pastor carried with it additional gendered authority.

Other than this childhood vignette, McPherson did not write or speak much more on the topic. In her autobiography, *This is That*, she referred to Joel 2:28 although not in order to defend her right to preach, but to encourage her congregation's ecstatic worship.³⁵⁹ Elsewhere, she offered occasional exclamations such as, "Oh, don't you ever tell me that a woman cannot be called to preach the Gospel!"³⁶⁰

Woodworth-Etter and McPherson's relative lack of engagement with scripturally based arguments about female ministers did not mean that they devalued the Bible. Rather than offer their own interpretations of the scriptures being analyzed and reanalyzed by higher critics, fundamentalists, and evangelicals, Woodworth-Etter and McPherson did something arguably more powerful than address legal prescriptions. They used the Bible to make an identity. "God wants us to be walking Bibles,"³⁶¹ claimed Woodworth-Etter, and the narratives that each woman created made them just that. Like the fictional Jay Gatsby, the women created their own identities, but unlike Gatsby, they were not self-made heroes. The identities that they created came from biblical models that highlighted aspects of

³⁵⁹ ———, *This Is That: Personal Experiences, Sermons and Writings of Aimee Semple McPherson*, 57.

³⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 102.

³⁶¹ Maria Beulah Woodworth, *The Life, Work, and Experience of Mariah Beulah Woodworth* (St. Louis, MO: Commercial Printing Company, 1894), 439.

their ministries that repeated 1890s-1920s womanhood, obscured events that undermined their womanliness, and emphasized aspects of their biblical identities that authorized them to lead.

The Warring Mother

Woodworth-Etter had many disparate identities: mother, minister, publisher, divorcee, and defendant. The overarching plot of her story as a minister, as recounted in her autobiographies, sermons, tracts and occasional newspaper interviews, was that of a mother protecting her children both biological and spiritual. Woodworth-Etter told her followers that she resisted her initial call to the ministry because she wanted to fulfill her duties as a mother. “Oh Lord!” she wrote of her struggle both to minister and to parent her son Willie, “I cannot take Willie with me, nor can I leave him behind.”³⁶² “If I were a man I would love to work for Jesus,” she wrote.³⁶³ She found her inspiration to mother a congregation through her vision of her five dead children “shining in dazzling beauty around God’s Throne.”³⁶⁴ “If mothers could see their children as I saw them,” she wrote, “they would never weep for them, but would leave all and follow Jesus.”³⁶⁵

³⁶² Woodworth-Etter, *Marvels and Miracles God Wrought in the Ministry for Forty-Five Years*, 9.

³⁶³ Etter, *Signs and Wonders God Wrought in the Ministry for Forty Years*, 27.

³⁶⁴ Woodworth-Etter, *Marvels and Miracles God Wrought in the Ministry for Forty-Five Years*, 7.

³⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

As she grieved the loss of her children and read her Bible, Woodworth-Etter came to understand her identity as a warring mother minister. She claimed,

The dear Savior stood by me one night in a vision and talked face to face with me, and asked what I was doing on earth.

I felt condemned, and said, 'Lord, I am going to work in thy vineyard.'

The Lord said, 'When,' and I answered, 'When I get prepared for the work.'

I told Him I wanted to study the Bible; that I did not understand it well enough. Then there appeared on the wall a large open Bible, and the verses stood out in raised letters. The glory of God shone around and upon the book. I looked, and I could understand it all.³⁶⁶

Having received a gift for supernaturally understanding the Bible,

Woodworth-Etter set out to find a biblical mentor. "I would go to my Bible and search for teaching and examples," she wrote. "When the Lord put his erring people in remembrance of his great blessing to Israel he said, 'Did I not send thee Moses and Aaron and Miriam to be your leader?'"³⁶⁷ Although Woodworth-Etter found encouragement in the story of Miriam, the figure that she took as her exemplar was Deborah, the Mother in Israel. "And when there was trouble on hand," she wrote, "Barak dare not meet the enemy unless Deborah led the van. And the noble woman, always ready to work for God and his cause, said, 'I will surely go. God's people must not be prey to the enemy.' Oh no; call out the men of Israel; Sisera's mighty hosts are gathering."³⁶⁸

³⁶⁶ Ibid., 12.

³⁶⁷ Ibid., 13.

³⁶⁸ Ibid.

Woodworth-Etter retold the story of Deborah many times in her sermons and autobiographies.³⁶⁹ She was careful to emphasize the Mother in Israel's leadership, her responsibility to the children of Israel, and her status as a military leader.

Deborah, a prophetess, the wife of Lapidoth she judged Israel at that time. See the responsible position God gave her, to sit and judge the hosts of the children of Israel. The children of Israel had sinned and God would not fight their battles, and for twenty years the nations arose against them and defied them to come out to battle. Barak dared not meet the enemy unless Deborah led the van. This brave woman, ever ready to defend the cause of God, said, 'I will surely go.' God's people must not be taken by the enemies. Oh, no; call out the armies of the Lord. Sisera's mighty host is gathering. Every soldier at his post.³⁷⁰

Woodworth-Etter referred to herself as a "Mother in Israel; a Deborah,"³⁷¹ and her congregation as "own children."³⁷² Like Deborah, she spoke of her mission on earth to "lead the van"³⁷³ to protect God's children.

Choosing to model herself on Deborah the Mother in Israel served Woodworth-Etter well. First, the Mother in Israel benefited Woodworth-Etter because Deborah was a biblical figure to whom she could relate as a mother. Unlike

³⁶⁹ Etter, *Signs and Wonders God Wrought in the Ministry for Forty Years*, 30; Woodworth-Etter, *Marvels and Miracles God Wrought in the Ministry for Forty-Five Years*, 13-14; Maria Beulah Woodworth-Etter, *Life and Testimony of Mrs. M. B. Woodworth-Etter* (Indianapolis, IN: August Feick, 1925), 180-81; ———, *Acts of the Holy Ghost* (Dallas, TX: John P. Worley Printing Co., 1912), 34, 480.

³⁷⁰ Etter, *Signs and Wonders God Wrought in the Ministry for Forty Years*, 212.

³⁷¹ Woodworth-Etter, *Marvels and Miracles God Wrought in the Ministry for Forty-Five Years*, 101.

³⁷² Ibid.

³⁷³ Maria Beulah Woodworth-Etter, *The Life, Work, and Experience of Maria Woodworth, Evangelist, Written by Herself* (St. Louis, MO: Commercial Printing Company, 1894), 227; Woodworth-Etter, *Signs and Wonders*, 106.

Rebecca, Rachel, or Leah who were known for their relationship to their offspring, Deborah, mothered people who were not her biological children. By claiming to mother like her, Woodworth-Etter was able to find a way to use her mothering skills even though only one of her children survived into adulthood.

Second, the Mother in Israel tapped into the ideal educated motherhood of the 1890s-1910s.³⁷⁴ The Mother in Israel was deployed in a number of positive ways in the turn of the century American Protestantism.³⁷⁵ For some, Deborah symbolized ideal female American citizenship. "This mother in Israel does not mean mother of children," wrote commentator Emily Oliver Gibbes, "but is the same as we say that Washington was the father of his country. A mother in Israel is a mother of her country."³⁷⁶ The *Baltimore Sun* defined a "true mother in Israel" in the following manner: "Her life was one of service to her country. She had determination and energy without loss of gentleness. She was a good citizen."³⁷⁷ Therefore, by calling herself a Mother in Israel, Woodworth-Etter evoked a sense of dutiful American citizenship.

³⁷⁴ Hays, *The Cultural Contradictions of Motherhood*, 39-54; Maria Beulah Woodworth-Etter, *Spirit Filled Sermons* (Indianapolis, IN: Mrs. M. B. W. Etter, 1921), 10.

³⁷⁵ In addition to its mainstream Protestant usage, many different groups used Mother in Israel in the Progressive era. The term appears in Jewish, Latter Day Saint, Christian Science, and Theosophical publications of the period. See for example: Charles W. Penrose, "Death of Mrs. E. H. Cannon," *Deseret News Weekly*, February 1882; Wilford Woodruff, "Talks to the Sisters," *Deseret News*, February 24 1894; Hugh Ireland, "Mother," *Liahona The Elders' Journal* 14, no. 1 (1916); Hjalmar Hjorth Boyesen, "A Mother in Israel," *New Era Illustrated Magazine*, July 1905; I. M. Haldeman, *Christian Science in the Light of Holy Scripture* (New York, Chicago etc.: F. H. Revell Company, 1909); Nurho de Manhar, "The Sepher Ha-Zohar or Book of Light," *The Word* 7, no. 1 (1907).

³⁷⁶ Emily Oliver Gibbes, *The Origin of Sin, and Dotted Words in the Hebrew Bible* (New York: C. T. Dillingham, 1893), 300-01.

³⁷⁷ "A Mother in Israel," *Baltimore Sun*, October 19 1909.

Progressives used Deborah as a biblical precedent for women in public leadership. Deborah was, “*the first public woman of the Bible, if not of history.*”³⁷⁸ The Mother in Israel, for women anxious to join their male counterparts in the professions, was an example of “a ‘new woman’ in an age that is very old.”³⁷⁹ She was called the “first suffragette, the mother in Israel,” a woman who, like her turn of the century descendents, “introduced all the beautiful reforms,” although the author did not specify which reforms Deborah was supposed to have introduced.³⁸⁰ Deborah was a “female head of the people,”³⁸¹ and a woman with “much authority, and knew how to use it.”³⁸² Pioneering female lawyer Phoebe Couzins used the Mother in Israel as a prototype for modern female professionals. “Deborah, who judged in Israel,” she wrote, “said: ‘The highways were occupied, and travelers walked through the byways, until I, Deborah, arose a mother in Israel.’ She took command of the army, routed the enemy, and for forty years there was peace in the land. I tell you, ladies, that is the way we women fight.”³⁸³ For progressives, Woodworth-Etter’s identification with the Mother in Israel was an apology for her status as a public figure of authority.

³⁷⁸ William Mackintosh Mackay, *The Woman of Tact, and Other Bible Types of Modern Women* (New York: Hodder and Stoughton, 1912), 79-80.

³⁷⁹ Ibid.

³⁸⁰ G. Selikowitsch, "Flats and Sharps," *The Advocate: America's Jewish Journal* 37, no. 1 (1909): 15.

³⁸¹ W. M. Flinders Petrie, *Egypt and Israel* (New York: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge; E. S. Gorham etc., 1911), 26.

³⁸² Ibid.

³⁸³ "Miss Couzins on Law and Women," *The New York Times*, March 27 1894.

For conservatives, Deborah was not a radical reformer but a model of educated motherhood. The Mother in Israel was celebrated as a beacon of ideal womanliness who, “stood for home, for domestic purity, and social order.”³⁸⁴ “For the most part,” wrote popular commentator J. B. Lightfoot, “the Israel of which she is mother will be her own home, her own social circle, her own parish and neighborhood. By her stronger affections and her finer sensibilities, by her greater sympathy and her truer tact, by her comparative physical weakness, by the direct demands made upon her as a wife and mother, she will commonly be guided to a less conspicuous, but not less useful, sphere of action.”³⁸⁵ From this perspective Deborah was not an example of authority, but of “meekness and humility,” and “simplicity and lowliness.”³⁸⁶ Rather than fighting social ills as a suffragette, the conservative Mother in Israel used the weapons of “patience and tact,” to improve her domicile.³⁸⁷ Unlike the progressives who used Deborah as a precedent for female public authority, conservatives praised her “personally humble station, evidently without any ambitious wish, or attempt to elevate her rank or prospects.”³⁸⁸ And, like any educated mother, the ideal Mother in Israel’s ultimate

³⁸⁴ J. Glentworth Butler, *The Bible-Work* (New York: The Butler Bible-Work Company, 1892), 191.

³⁸⁵ Joseph Barber Lightfoot, *Leaders in the Northern Church: Sermons Preached in the Diocese of Durham* (New York: Macmillan and Co., 1890), 59.

³⁸⁶ Grace Aguilar, *The Women of Israel* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1888), 210.

³⁸⁷ William Pringle Livingston, *Mary Slessor of Calabar* (New York: Hodder and Stoughton, 1916), 170.

³⁸⁸ Aguilar, *The Women of Israel*, 212.

calling was to raise “manly boys” and fill her days with “mothering service.”³⁸⁹ Thus, for conservatives, Woodworth-Etter’s allusion to Deborah signaled a comforting preservation of the models of womanhood progressives sought to dismantle.

Woodworth-Etter deployed the term “Mother in Israel” in a variety of ways. The narrative that she created for her ministry highlighted aspects that repeated “mothering service.” For example, she described pastoring her followers in terms of a mother nurturing her children. She called her congregation her “dear children” or “children of the Lord,”³⁹⁰ “a son or a daughter of the most high God”³⁹¹ (I John 3:2), or as “children of the light”³⁹² (I Thessalonians 5:5). When she spoke of pastoring other pastors, the role that could have been termed “bishop” became a maternal one. “They look to me,” she wrote about the young ministers who came to her, and “as a mother for advice. I feel a care and love for them, as a mother does for her own children.”³⁹³ She believed her mothering would lead her children to the eschatological feast Jesus referred to in Luke 13:29 and Matthew 8:11, and keep them from suffering the “weeping and gnashing of teeth,” that awaited those outside the feast. “I thought,” she wrote of her congregants after a revival meeting, “when I

³⁸⁹ Frank K. Sims, “A Model Mother and a Father Who Failed,” *Expositor and Current Anecdotes* 11, no. 1 (1909): 507; Dinsdale T. Young, *The Crimson Book* (New York: A. C. Armstrong and Son, 1903), 283.

³⁹⁰ Maria Beulah Woodworth-Etter, *Trials and Triumphs of the Evangelist Mrs. M. B. Woodworth Written by Herself* (St. Louis, MO: Mrs. M. B. Woodworth, 1885), 50.

³⁹¹ *Ibid.*

³⁹² Woodworth-Etter, *Signs and Wonders*, 15.

³⁹³ ———, *The Life, Work, and Experience of Maria Woodworth, Evangelist, Written by Herself*, 227; ———, *Signs and Wonders*, 106.

shall sit down with the dear children God has given me, who shall come from the east, west, north and south [Luke 13:29].”³⁹⁴

Part of caring for her children meant that she instructed them. She noted with satisfaction that, “multitudes from all parts have received instruction and teaching concerning the things of God.”³⁹⁵ She saw herself as a teacher whom “He [God] could use to enlighten His children and bring sinners to Christ.”³⁹⁶ She warned her followers, “False teachers will rise up having the form of godliness, but denying the power thereof... *“from such turn away.”*³⁹⁷ Rather, they were to consider her teachings and “exhortations.” “You need this knowledge,” she told her follower of her teachings, “Do not fail to get this literature. Read them and get faith.”³⁹⁸ “We teach them, and pray with them,” she wrote of her followers, “helping them as best we can to trust Jesus for both soul and body.”³⁹⁹ She predicted that upon reading her words, “the children of God will be stirred to more earnestness and diligence.”⁴⁰⁰

By portraying herself as a Mother in Israel who loved, nurtured, and instructed her children, Woodworth-Etter constructed a narrative that gave her the same sort of authority claimed by many mother activists. Casting her ministerial

³⁹⁴ Woodworth, *The Life, Work, and Experience of Mariah Beulah Woodworth*, 308.

³⁹⁵ Woodworth-Etter, *Marvels and Miracles God Wrought in the Ministry for Forty-Five Years*, 113.

³⁹⁶ ———, *Acts of the Holy Ghost*, 12.

³⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 538.

³⁹⁸ ———, *Marvels and Miracles God Wrought in the Ministry for Forty-Five Years*, 568.

³⁹⁹ ———, *The Life, Work, and Experience of Maria Woodworth, Evangelist, Written by Herself*, 164.

⁴⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 581.

acts as motherly meant that she occupied a familiar, socially acceptable position. By infantilizing her congregation, she made herself an acceptable figure of authority. Not everyone had a female minister, but everyone had a mother, and Woodworth-Etter was her congregation's mother. She wrote that her children gave her a "highly honored" place in their congregation.⁴⁰¹

Woodworth-Etter complemented her invocation of Deborah as nurturing mother and domestic authority by drawing upon images of the manly ministry revivalists desired. Her Mother in Israel story was the tale of a female military commander as well as educated mother. Woodworth-Etter adjusted the biblical narrative to emphasize the military power of her Mother in Israel. Judges 4:9-15 mentions that Deborah travelled with the army of Israel and commissioned Barak to lead it, but the text does not place her on the battlefield. In Woodworth-Etter's account, Deborah joined the army and fought for her people. "See the brave woman riding with Barak, the commander," she wrote, "at the head of the army cheering on the hosts to victory, shouting victory as she led on the armies, sweeping through the enemies' ranks carrying death and destruction."⁴⁰² Woodworth-Etter's Mother in Israel not only nurtured her children but also participated in the manly act of war on their behalf.

Just as Sisera's army had amassed to battle Israel so, "gross spiritual darkness is fast settling low over the people," wrote Woodworth-Etter.⁴⁰³ While

⁴⁰¹ ———, *Marvels and Miracles God Wrought in the Ministry for Forty-Five Years*, 164.

⁴⁰² Etter, *Signs and Wonders God Wrought in the Ministry for Forty Years*, 212.

⁴⁰³ Woodworth-Etter, *Marvels and Miracles God Wrought in the Ministry for Forty-Five Years*, iii.

Deborah oversaw a battle between the Israelites and Canaanites, Woodworth-Etter's battlefield was significantly larger. "The whole world will be taken in a snare at the winding up of the awful time with the great battle of God Almighty with the armies of the earth," she wrote.⁴⁰⁴ Her role was to lead an army of God to fight the enemy. "God was preparing me," she wrote of her early days in the ministry, "and opening the way for the great battle against the enemy of souls."⁴⁰⁵ She wrote that she and "the armies of the Lord and the soldiers of Jesus have left the various battlefields and have come together."⁴⁰⁶

Woodworth-Etter claimed that her part in the battle was to act as God's agent. "I was to be God's mouth-piece," she wrote. "I must trust God to speak through me to the people the words of eternal life."⁴⁰⁷ As God's mouthpiece, she like Deborah led her congregants into battle. She wrote the following account of a particularly discouraging season:

As we look over the last year with all its bitter trials and persecutions, the weariness of body, the many hard battles we were engaged in with the powers of darkness arrayed against us, cold professors, and false shepherds to oppose the work when we had to stand alone, leaning on the arm of the Great Shepherd.

Then he [God] would whisper, "I am with you, be not afraid. I will fight your battles."

Then I would shout, "Victory through faith in the blood," and souls would

⁴⁰⁴ ———, *The Life, Work, and Experience of Maria Woodworth, Evangelist, Written by Herself*, 164.

⁴⁰⁵ Etter, *Signs and Wonders God Wrought in the Ministry for Forty Years*, 28.

⁴⁰⁶ Woodworth-Etter, *Trials and Triumphs of the Evangelist Mrs. M. B. Woodworth Written by Herself*, 148.

⁴⁰⁷ Woodworth, *The Life, Work, and Experience of Mariah Beulah Woodworth*, 36.

come flocking to Christ.⁴⁰⁸

Woodworth-Etter's commander-in-chief was Jesus. "Our captain," she said, "will soon call us poor weary, battle-scarred soldiers from the field to shout victory together in a grand reunion that will last forever."⁴⁰⁹ This captain was a "man of war"⁴¹⁰ who was ruthless in battle. His mission as a warrior was to exact God's will upon the unrighteous. "Jesus comes now as the stern Judge," she claimed in a sermon on Revelation 20:5-6, "not the despised Nazarene; not the bridegroom in all his glory for his bride. He comes in flaming fire, taking vengeance on the wicked."⁴¹¹ She also identified God the Father as a warrior, "He will send out His arrows," she wrote, "*His Word* dipped in the blood of Jesus, shot out with the lightning of His power, and they shall wound the king's enemies in the head. They shall fall at His feet when God has His way the tent ground looks like a battlefield; men, women, and children lying in all parts, like dead men."⁴¹²

While she depicted herself as an exemplary mother to her congregation and a commander like Deborah in the army of God, Woodworth-Etter also obscured certain aspects of her identity that did not conform to notions of educated motherhood: her status as a divorcee and her unconventional second marriage. As a

⁴⁰⁸ Woodworth-Etter, *Trials and Triumphs of the Evangelist Mrs. M. B. Woodworth Written by Herself*, 175.

⁴⁰⁹ Woodworth, *The Life, Work, and Experience of Mariah Beulah Woodworth*, 325.

⁴¹⁰ Maria Beulah Woodworth-Etter, *Signs and Wonders* (Chicago: Hammond Press, 1916), 235; Woodworth, *The Life, Work, and Experience of Mariah Beulah Woodworth*, 125.

⁴¹¹ Woodworth-Etter, *Trials and Triumphs of the Evangelist Mrs. M. B. Woodworth Written by Herself*, 152.

⁴¹² Maria Beulah Woodworth-Etter, *Holy Ghost Sermons by Mrs. M. B. Woodworth-Etter* (Indianapolis, IN: Mrs. M. B. Woodworth-Etter, 1918), 66.

mother first and foremost, the story that she constructed for herself did not include that of wife.⁴¹³ She rarely spoke of her two husbands. The first, Philo Woodworth, whom she divorced for infidelity,⁴¹⁴ appears only as a brief bump in her career. “My husband was not willing for me to go, or to engage in the work in any place,”⁴¹⁵ she wrote, although he eventually agreed to sell concessions at her meetings.⁴¹⁶ She did not give an account for their divorce; instead she spoke of their separation after his death, which implied that she was widowed.⁴¹⁷

Although her marriage to Samuel Etter was more successful, she mentioned him rarely as well.⁴¹⁸ The longest description she did provide was not a picture of traditional marriage roles. “He takes the best care of me, in and out of the meetings,” she wrote.⁴¹⁹ Taking care of a spouse was part of what traditional husbands were supposed to do, but the ways in which Etter took care were atypical. In essence, Etter served as her assistant. “It makes no difference what I call on him to do,” she wrote.⁴²⁰ “He will pray, and preach, and sing, and is very good around the altar. He does about all of my writing,⁴²¹ and he also helps in getting out my books, and looks

⁴¹³ Woodworth, *The Life, Work, and Experience of Mariah Beulah Woodworth*, 30, 42, 49; Woodworth-Etter, *Acts of the Holy Ghost*, 37.

⁴¹⁴ Warner, *The Woman Evangelist: The Life and Times of Charismatic Evangelist Maria B. Woodworth-Etter*, 86.

⁴¹⁵ Woodworth-Etter, *Acts of the Holy Ghost*, 32.

⁴¹⁶ ———, *Life and Testimony of Mrs. M. B. Woodworth-Etter*, 12.

⁴¹⁷ Etter, *Signs and Wonders God Wrought in the Ministry for Forty Years*, 310.

⁴¹⁸ Woodworth-Etter, *Holy Ghost Sermons by Mrs. M. B. Woodworth-Etter*, 124.

⁴¹⁹ ———, *Acts of the Holy Ghost*, 339.

⁴²⁰ Ibid.

⁴²¹ Etter assisted his wife by writing many of her personal correspondences.

after the meeting, in and outside. The Lord knew what I needed, and it was all brought about by the Lord, through his love and care for me and the work.”⁴²² By her description, Samuel Etter’s primary role in their marriage was as her subordinate.

Nothing, not even her happy marriage, superseded her work as her congregation’s mother. Marriage was something she accomplished, literally, on the way to another church meeting. “On the first day of January, 1902, I married Mr. S. P. Etter of Hot Springs, Ark. Then we went back to Iowa where I had labored several years before,” she wrote unsentimentally. “We held meetings for seven weeks.”⁴²³

In addition to obscuring her marital history, Woodworth-Etter found in her warring mother persona a way to frame her run-ins with authorities as spiritual battles rather than causes for disgrace. Woodworth-Etter had a long history of trouble with the law including riot police called to meetings in 1890, a trial for fraud in 1913, a clash with police in 1915, and an arrest for practicing medicine without a license in 1920.⁴²⁴ Any of these scandals had the potential to discredit her. While she could avoid the story of P.H. Woodworth’s adultery and their divorce because of his timely death, she had no choice but to address her public arrests.

She wrote about these potentially embarrassing events as epic battles that God helped her win. “So the devil brings all his forces into the battle against Jesus and his saints; but He that is in us, is greater than all that are against us; and the Lord

⁴²² Woodworth-Etter, *Acts of the Holy Ghost*, 339.

⁴²³ Etter, *Signs and Wonders God Wrought in the Ministry for Forty Years*, 138.

⁴²⁴ Warner, *The Woman Evangelist: The Life and Times of Charismatic Evangelist Maria B. Woodworth-Etter*, 88, 233, 39.

will fight our battles, if he has to bring down all the Armies of Heaven," she wrote of her clash with police in 1890.⁴²⁵ She credited the devil with her 1913 arrest. "Satan, the enemy of Jesus Christ, and His power, surely over reached himself when he caused the chief of police of South Framingham, Mass. To issue warrants," she wrote. "This arrest," she claimed, "gave a glorious opportunity to put upon the witness stand," many who "all told of the wonderful power of God."⁴²⁶

Her masculine God and warring language helped reframe her trials and also gave her ministry manly credibility by superseding the aggressive rhetoric of many of her male revivalist counterparts. Manly ministers like A. B. Simpson taught that, the essence of the scripture was an "exchange of strength" between a human and the "perfect manhood" of Jesus.⁴²⁷ "Scriptural faith," according to Simpson, produced "good soldiers of Jesus,"⁴²⁸ but Woodworth-Etter supplemented this masculine portrait of the gospel with graphic details of the ruthlessness of God and her part as one of his commanders. Thus, Woodworth-Etter's *Mother in Israel* brought the seemingly disparate aspects of her identity, her status as a mother, a divorcee, and a minister, together into the story of a woman without a husband who upheld the ideals of educated motherhood and also did some very unwomanly things such as go to war, lead men, and hold a public position of power.

⁴²⁵ Woodworth-Etter, *Marvels and Miracles God Wrought in the Ministry for Forty-Five Years*, 102-03.

⁴²⁶ Etter, *Signs and Wonders God Wrought in the Ministry for Forty Years*, 323.

⁴²⁷ A. B. Simpson, *Wholly Sanctified*, (on Cover: The Alliance Colportage Series) (New York, N.Y.: Christian Alliance Publishing Co., 1890), 7.

⁴²⁸ ———, "A Larger Christian Life," (New York: Christian Alliance Publishing Co., 1889), 89.

The Bride of Christ

Woodworth-Etter's biblical narrative to appealed to 1890s-1910s sensibilities, but the story was less attractive by 1920s standards. The Mother in Israel was a lot of things, but she was not a figure of sexual intimacy and marital friendship. In other words, she was no companionate wife. Woodworth-Etter's successor Aimee Semple McPherson found a way to tell the story of female ministry that combined the companionate model of American womanhood with biblical authority.

McPherson was many things: a minister, a denomination founder, a radio star, an entrepreneur, a mother, a divorcee, and a defendant. Unlike Woodworth-Etter's story of a mother in Israel, the central plot which brought all of these aspects together into one identity, as McPherson told it in her autobiography, sermons, speeches, and tracts, was that of a biblical bride of Christ. When she shared the story of her life and ministry (which she did often), she always began with the story of her literal bridegroom, Robert Semple, who was her first love and the man she married as a teenager. "He stood some six feet and two inches in stature had a shock of chestnut-brown curly hair," she wrote admiringly, "one lock of which he was continually brushing back from his Irish blue eyes."⁴²⁹ Semple's preaching had a profound physical and emotional effect on McPherson. "Cold shivers ran up and down my back," she wrote about hearing him preach, "No one had ever spoken to

⁴²⁹ McPherson, *Aimee: The Life Story of Aimee Semple Mcpherson*, 23.

me [from the pulpit or to her personally] like this before.”⁴³⁰ While she admired him as a preacher, she reveled in their relationship as man and wife. “Tall, dark and smiling,” she wrote, “He was like a knight in shining armor.”⁴³¹ McPherson considered Semple to be the ideal companionate husband. He satisfied her intellectually as her “theological seminary,” spiritually as her “spiritual mentor,” and intimately as her “unfailing lover.”⁴³²

When Semple died, McPherson wrote that her loneliness was overpowering and that she missed the intimacy of her companionate marriage. In her autobiography she recalled of her years living as a widow:

I felt increasingly sad and sentimental. Whenever some tall, smiling man would take his lady’s arm and help her across the street, I would hastily lower my black chiffon veil. I was as a chip tossed aimlessly in a maelstrom of a definite, classified, well-ordered life. ‘Where shall I go? What shall I do?’ I whispered to the pillow at night as I lay wide-eyed staring through the murky darkness at the grimy street lamp that shone in my window or as I turned in utter desolation to kiss my own shoulder a lonely good night.⁴³³

Although she remarried twice afterward, McPherson never recaptured the ardor of her first marriage. Harold McPherson, her second husband, provided her with companionship and support for her children, but he did not share his wife’s love of the ministry. David Hutton, the third, swept McPherson off of her feet, but his career as a Vaudeville singer and his relationships with other women dampened

⁴³⁰ Ibid., 23.

⁴³¹ Ibid., 32.

⁴³² Ibid., 34.

⁴³³ Ibid., 70.

their emotional connection.

Lacking that original passion after her first husband's death, McPherson found meaning in the pages of the Bible. For McPherson, reading the Bible was an act of intimacy with Jesus. To illustrate this, she compared the Bible to a temple. "Picture the Word of God," she wrote, "the Bible represented as a building, a temple with turrets and minarets and towers. A temple with a large number of pillars and with blocks-thirty-nine granite blocks, twenty-set-en granite and alabaster pillars; a temple with its beautiful, mighty dome, and its doorway."⁴³⁴ There were many rooms in the Temple of the Bible, and McPherson gave different writings their own room names. The Psalms were the "Music Room," the Pentateuch was the "Art Gallery," and the Song of Solomon was the "Conservatory."⁴³⁵

The most important room in the temple was the room that held the four gospels otherwise known as the "Audience Chamber," where Jesus resided.⁴³⁶ McPherson modeled her experiences in the Audience Chamber after interactions between Queen Esther and Ahasuerus' audience chamber in Esther 5:1-8. Esther approached her husband in his chamber (Esther 5:1) and touched her husband's scepter (Esther 5:2), and in the Audience Chamber of the Gospels, McPherson experienced the companionate marriage that she could not recapture in her earthly relationships:

⁴³⁴ Aimee Semple McPherson, "The Temple of the Word: Dome of Revelations," *The Bridal Call Foursquare* 11, no. 3 (1927): 15.

⁴³⁵ *Ibid.*: 8-10.

⁴³⁶ *Ibid.*: 11.

Oh! I am so glad I ever got into the Audience Chamber of the King!
And there I saw Him whom to see is to adore. I saw His nail pierced hands,
His wounded feet, and I said:

"O Lord, may I draw near?"

Then I turned to my Guide. "Would He mind if I went a little closer,
think you?"

My Guide answered, "No."

Gently I heard the Master say, "Come unto me! Draw near unto me
and I will draw near unto you."

And so, timidly, I went, and as I approached Him He reached out the
scepter of His love to me and I touched it. Oh! I will never forget how I knelt
at His wonderful feet in the Audience Chamber of the King, how I kissed His
nail pierced hands and how they were placed in blessing on my head and
how I fell at His dear wounded feet: and bathed them with my tears.⁴³⁷

McPherson's ecstasy when she touched the, "scepter of his love" and felt the thrill of
being in his presence had phallic overtones that recalled the kinds of thrills that
Robert Semple evoked from her. Indeed, McPherson's meetings with Jesus had all
the markings of infatuation: she swooned, she longed, she cried, and she begged for
him. "Now I had found the one to cling to and fasten my hold upon," she wrote, "One
who would never die or leave me. Oh, it was Jesus! Jesus!!"⁴³⁸

In addition to consuming passion, the two also enjoyed the sympathy and
friendship of an ideal marriage. Jesus was her confidant and companion. She
referred to him with the familiarity of a spouse and frequently called him, "Jesus
dear."⁴³⁹ In a sermon entitled, "They Have Taken My Lord Away," based on John
20:13, McPherson demonstrated her dependence upon Jesus as her close
companion as well as lover. She began the sermon with John's description of Mary

⁴³⁷ Ibid.

⁴³⁸ McPherson, "The Story of My Life," 18.

⁴³⁹ Aimee Semple McPherson, "The Vacant Chair," *The Bridal Call Foursquare* 8, no. 10
(1925): 14.

responding to two angels at the tomb, "They have taken my Lord away, and I do not know where they have laid him."⁴⁴⁰ Then, she imagined Mary's more elaborate inner monologue, "Oh, Jesus - where are you? Oh, Jesus, I want you! All the world is dark and drear, and my heart is gripped with loneliness without you. Jesus, Jesus of Nazareth, Jesus of the Tender Heart - where are you? Oh! He will not answer me! The tomb is empty! They have taken away, they - have - taken - away - my - Lord!" McPherson continued with a personal request, "Oh, miracle-working, prayer-answering Jesus, where are you? I need you - want you so!"⁴⁴¹ She asked Jesus, "Oh, don't you know - can't you see - we of today need you - need you just as much as those who lived nineteen hundred years ago."⁴⁴²

McPherson also wrote that Jesus responded to her emotional needs. "Brokenly I began to sob, "Oh Jesus, forgive me! For - " McPherson wrote, "Before I could finish the words, it seemed as though the Lord had placed his hand over my trembling lips, saying, "There, there, my child. Say no more about it."⁴⁴³ "My heart is so full," she wrote of her friendship with Jesus, "Oh precious friends, the Lord has been so real to me in these past days. He has been so close to my side, and how I rejoice I ever stepped out on His promises and put my all upon the altar."⁴⁴⁴

McPherson wrote that it was her friend and lover Jesus who called her to

⁴⁴⁰ ———, "They Have Taken My Lord Away," *The Bridal Call Foursquare* 12, no. 4 (1928).

⁴⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴⁴² Ibid.

⁴⁴³ McPherson, *Aimee: The Life Story of Aimee Semple Mcpherson*, 76.

⁴⁴⁴ Aimee Semple McPherson, "Drops from Ye Editorial Brow," *The Bridal Call Foursquare* 15, no. 5 (1931).2.

pastor. After a moment in Jesus' presence while reading the Gospel of John, McPherson reported receiving her call. Her story paralleled Simon Peter's three-part commission in John 21:15-17:

So when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these?"

He saith unto him, "Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee."

He saith unto him, "Feed my lambs."

He saith to him again the second time, "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?" He saith unto him, "Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee."

He saith unto him, "Feed my sheep."

He saith unto him the third time, "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?"

Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, "Lovest thou me?" And he said unto him, "Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee."

Jesus saith unto him, "Feed my sheep."

Like Woodworth-Etter's treatment of Deborah, McPherson adjusted the original narrative. In her version of the scene, she employed many biblical tropes. She alluded to the John 13 account of the Last Supper, and identified with the beloved disciple who enjoyed a physical connection with Jesus.

Then I drew closer yet. He said I might lay my head upon His bosom and I might rest awhile. It is when we draw close to Him there that our own hearts catch the throbbing of His heart and we say, "Lord, I will never leave you. I am going to stay right here with you."

He then asked, "Do you love me?"

"Yes, Lord, you know I love you."

"Then feed my sheep. Feed my lambs."⁴⁴⁵

As John's disciple "whom Jesus loved," McPherson heightened the sense that she

⁴⁴⁵ McPherson, "The Temple of the Word: Dome of Revelations," 11.

enjoyed a privileged position in Jesus' inner circle. Then, McPherson supplemented the call to Peter with a reference to Jesus' call to evangelism in John 4:35, Luke 10:2, and Matthew 9:38:

"Go out into the harvest fields of life and gather in the grain for the fields are white unto the Harvest."⁴⁴⁶

Like Mary Magdalene who clung to the resurrected Jesus in John 20:17, McPherson wrote that she was reluctant to leave his chamber and go into the world:

"Oh no, no, Lord! I don't want to leave you. I never want to leave Thy presence."⁴⁴⁷

Then, she wrote that Jesus gave her a promise of continued intimacy in a vow that echoed the Great Commission in Matthew 28:20 as well as the covenant made between Ruth and Naomi in Ruth 1:16-17:

And then, with a sweet and wonderful smile, He bends a little closer and whispers, "Lo, I am with you always. Wherever you go, I will go with you, if it is out to the Mission Field, if it is out to the harvest lands. Where thou goest, I will go, and I will hold your hand in mine."

"Oh! that is all right, Lord. If you will go with me, I will go anywhere!"⁴⁴⁸

By putting Ruth's promise to her mother-in-law in Jesus' call, McPherson eased some of the sexual language between the minister and her savior, but overall her additions to Jesus' call in John 15 – the description of their physical closeness,

⁴⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁴⁸ Ibid.

his “sweet and wonderful smile,” and their whispered conversations – foregrounded the romantic relationship she enjoyed with her savior. In addition, in her vision of her commission, she illustrated her heightened responsiveness to the call. Jesus did not ask McPherson three times – once was enough.

McPherson’s romance with Jesus shared little in common with Woodworth-Etter’s status as an educated mother and military captain. Rather, it resembled many popular stories of companionate marriage in early twentieth century literature and film.⁴⁴⁹ The typical plotline of Roaring Twenties romance novels, films, and magazines featured a young white woman overcoming big-city loneliness, poverty, and hardship and finding love, marriage, and a family.⁴⁵⁰ McPherson’s ministry, located in the heart of the burgeoning film industry, appropriated cinematic plots.⁴⁵¹ Thus, her self-presentation of an adventurous young woman who survived the tragic death of her true love, endured poverty and loneliness, and went on to find happiness in an eternal, divine romance told a familiar story. While viewers watched the “grand romance” of Mary Pickford and Douglas Fairbanks on the silver screen, they read about Jesus and his companionate wife in the pages of *The Bridal Call*.⁴⁵²

⁴⁴⁹ Schlater, "Flaming Youth: Gender in 1920s Hollywood", 106.

⁴⁵⁰ Joanne J. Meyerowitz, *Women Adrift: Independent Wage Earners in Chicago, 1880-1930*, Women in Culture and Society (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), 129; Schlater, "Flaming Youth: Gender in 1920s Hollywood", 106.

⁴⁵¹ Schlater, "Flaming Youth: Gender in 1920s Hollywood", 106.

⁴⁵² Richard Dyer MacCann, *Films of the 1920s*, American Movies (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 1996), 37.

McPherson found within the Bible a relationship that both captured the romantic intimacy between herself and her savior and authorized her to lead a congregation: she was the bride of Christ and he was her bridegroom. She used the metaphor of Jesus the bridegroom and the church his bride as the central theme of her writings, as her publication's name, *The Bridal Call*, suggests. She often preached and wrote on passages that explicitly used bride/bridegroom language (e.g. Revelation 21:2; 21:9; 22:17, Matthew 25:1-13, Mark 2:18-22).⁴⁵³ For example, she quoted Matthew 25:6 in a popular sermon series entitled, "When Is He Coming," and advised "the bridegroom cometh," and that the church's calling was to "go ye out to meet him!"⁴⁵⁴ "The Bridegroom is near!" she wrote, "He is even at the door."⁴⁵⁵ She encouraged her congregation to ready themselves for his return by adorning themselves in anticipation of worshipping him alongside the twenty-four elders of Revelation 4:10.⁴⁵⁶

For McPherson, no text was safe from being subsumed under the divine love story. She turned the story of Ruth and Boaz into the "wedding in the morn" between Jesus and his bride.⁴⁵⁷ The marriage of Isaac and Rebecca was a

⁴⁵³ Aimee Semple McPherson, "When Is He Coming," *The Bridal Call* 4, no. 6 (1920): 2; ———, "The Holy Spirit: Who Is He and Why to Receive Him?," *The Bridal Call* 4, no. 6 (1920); ———, "As a Bride Adorned: Glowing Sermon on the Glorious Second Coming of Christ," *The Bridal Call* 9, no. 9 (1926): 14.

⁴⁵⁴ McPherson, "When Is He Coming."

⁴⁵⁵ ———, "As a Bride Adorned: Glowing Sermon on the Glorious Second Coming of Christ," 13.

⁴⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁵⁷ Aimee Semple McPherson, "Four Mountain Peaks of Glory from the Book of Ruth," *The Bridal Call* 6, no. 5 (1922): 8.

prefiguration of the eschatological bride and bridegroom.⁴⁵⁸ Even the eagle face of the four-faced cherubim in Ezekiel 10:14 was the bridegroom, the “Coming King, whose pinions soon would cleave the shining heavens, whose silvery voice would set the milky way echoing as He came to catch His waiting bride away.”⁴⁵⁹

McPherson was not alone in her appreciation for “bride of Christ” imagery.⁴⁶⁰ Revivalists in the early twentieth century were particularly fond of it. “The Church is the Bride of Christ,” wrote Moody Bible Institute Dean and minister Harold Lundquist.⁴⁶¹ “The Bible plainly teaches that those who are truly born again and regenerated in their hearts by the Holy Spirit make up the bride of Christ,” said revivalist “Evangelist Smith,” referring to Ephesians 5:29-30 in a sermon on Matthew 24:44.⁴⁶²

⁴⁵⁸ Ibid; McPherson, “They Have Taken My Lord Away.”

⁴⁵⁹ Aimee Semple McPherson, “The Foursquare Gospel,” *The Bridal Call Foursquare* 2, no. 2 (1929).4.

⁴⁶⁰ See for example: “Evangelist to End Services Tomorrow,” *The Owosso Argus-Press*, March 22 1930, 145; J. Pressler Barrett, “Brethren, Can This Be Possible?,” *The Herald of Gospel Liberty* 110, no. 48 (1918); J. Corson Miller, “A Bride of Christ,” *Catholic World* 112, no. 667 (1920); Elizabeth Randolph, “Young People’s Work,” *The Sabbath Recorder* 89, no. 1 (1920); Church of God (Cleveland), *The Book of Doctrines: Issued in the Interest of the Church of God* (Cleveland, TN: Church of God Publishing House, 1922); Keith L Brooks, *Sermon Illustrations of the Bible, Topically Arranged* (Los Angeles: Bible Institute of Los Angeles, 1920), 14; Clarence Larkin, *Rightly Dividing the Word* (Philadelphia: Fox Chase, 1921), 47; James Moore Hickson, *The Healing of Christ in His Church* (New York: E. S. Gorham, 1919), 43; Jonathan Ritchie Smith, *The Wall and the Gates* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1919), 186; Alanson Wilcox, *A History of the Disciples of Christ* (Cincinnati: The Standard Publishing Company, 1918), 140.

⁴⁶¹ Harold L. Lundquist, “Sunday School Lesson,” *Farmer’s Advocate*, February 4 1938.

⁴⁶² “Large Audience Hears Evangelist on Lord’s Return,” *The Evening Independent*, December 5 1928.

The bride of Christ was immensely popular in the Pentecostal movement.⁴⁶³ Pentecostals regularly spoke about themselves as the bride of Revelation 21:2, 21:9, and 22:17 that waits for a heavenly bridegroom, and about Jesus as the Lamb, the heavenly bridegroom. "The members of His Bride everywhere, one after another are longing with unutterable longing for Himself, His Glorious Presence," wrote one early Pentecostal.⁴⁶⁴ Popular preaching passages included the parable of the ten virgins in Matthew 25:1-13 and Jesus' discussion of fasting while the bridegroom was present in Mark 2:18-22.⁴⁶⁵ References to the bride and bridegroom peppered early Pentecostal preaching and literature. "Every man and woman that receives the baptism with the Holy Ghost is the bride of Christ," wrote Azusa Street Revival founder William Seymour.⁴⁶⁶ Bridal language made its way into early Pentecostal publications such as Gaston B. Cashwell's 1907 journal *The Bridegroom's Messenger*, and books such as G. F. Taylor's *The Spirit and the Bride*.⁴⁶⁷ It also seeped into Pentecostal hymnody; for example, G. T. Haywood's "Baptized into the Body" included the stanza, "Are you in the Church triumphant? Are you in the Savior's Bride?"⁴⁶⁸ Unlike muscular Christians' call for manly, aggressive Christians who took

⁴⁶³ Douglas G. Jacobsen, *Thinking in the Spirit: Theologies of the Early Pentecostal Movement* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003), 102-03.

⁴⁶⁴ A. T. Lange, "The Glory That Excelleth," *Triumphs of Faith* 29, no. 11 (1909): 255.

⁴⁶⁵ William Seymour, "Behold the Bridegroom Cometh," *The Apostolic Faith* 1, no. 5 (1907). 2.

⁴⁶⁶ ———, "The Holy Ghost and His Bride," in *The Azusa Street Revival* (Shippensburg, PA: Destiny Image Publishers, 2006).129.

⁴⁶⁷ George Floyd Taylor, *The Spirit and the Bride: A Scriptural Presentation of the Operations, Manifestations, Gifts and Fruit of the Holy Spirit in His Relation to the Bride with Special Reference to The "Latter Rain" Revival* (Dunn, NC1907).

⁴⁶⁸ G. T. Haywood, "Baptized into the Body," (Christian Outlook: Pentecostal Assemblies of the World, circa 1925).

charge of their lives, brides of Christ were required to submit to their husband, Jesus. "Christ's bride has but one husband (2 Cor., 11:2)," wrote William Seymour, "She is subject to him (Eph. 5:25)."⁴⁶⁹

McPherson's use of the term "bride of Christ" was distinct from revivalist depictions in two ways. First, her treatment compounded the bride of Christ's inherent femininity to an unprecedented degree. She exploited every detail about the bride's womanly qualities in describing the church as Jesus' betrothed. For example, in a sermon on the second coming, she gave special attention to the church as a woman who receives a beautiful dress from her lover. "He gives to us a beautiful white dress. You may have worn beautiful dresses in your life, but you have never had a dress as beautiful as this which the Lord will give you. It is not an outward dress. It is a dress inside the heart – although you wear it without, too. My dear brothers and sisters, the Lord is adorning His bride, His church, His company today."⁴⁷⁰

In a sermon on Song of Songs 2:8-10, McPherson compared the book's sensual lover/beloved relationship to Jesus and his bride.⁴⁷¹ "Ever thus has come the message unto the expectant church, whose yearning, eager soul awaits the

⁴⁶⁹ Seymour, "The Holy Ghost and His Bride."129.

⁴⁷⁰ McPherson, "As a Bride Adorned: Glowing Sermon on the Glorious Second Coming of Christ," 14.

⁴⁷¹ In many ways, McPherson's erotic treatment of the relationship between the bridegroom and the bride of Christ resembled Medieval interpretations of the figure. See: Dyan Elliott, "The Eroticized Bride of Hagiography," in *The Bride of Christ Goes to Hell: Metaphor and Embodiment in the Lives of Pious Women, 200-1500, The Middle Ages Series* (Philadelphia: University of Philadelphia Press, 2012), 174-233.

literal appearing of her Lord."⁴⁷² Like the beloved in Song of Songs, McPherson's bride was "a beautiful woman."⁴⁷³ Her rhetoric gave concrete features to the figurative bride. "Her eyes," she wrote, "beheld no guile, but they were tender as a doves eyes. Her lips were pure, and dropped as the honey-comb. Her ears were kept for His alone, her Lover, her Bridegroom, her King."⁴⁷⁴ She had grace, tenderness, a sweet voice and a beautiful fragrance, "as the rose of Sharon."⁴⁷⁵ "With the eyes of the soul she hath beheld Him," she wrote, "but within her breast is the burning desire to behold face to face Him whom having not seen she loves."⁴⁷⁶

Second, McPherson used bride and bridegroom language specifically to describe her personal relationship with Jesus. Jesus was the bridegroom and figure of romantic masculinity, and McPherson depicted herself as the bride, Christ's female counterpart. In one *Bridal Call* article, McPherson wrote that she had a vision of a bride of Christ and the bride. "Slowly my eyes traversed the distance from his nail pierced hands to his glowing eyes," and she shivered after hearing "glorious, soul thrilling voice."⁴⁷⁷ The bride had a face, and that face was hers. "As she [the bride] drew nigh," she wrote, "I gazed with amazement into her face, and saw that it was myself. I heard the voice of the Master speaking unto me, saying:

⁴⁷² Aimee Semple McPherson, "The Song of Songs: An Exposition of the Song of Solomon by Aimee Semple Mcpherson," *The Bridal Call Foursquare* 8, no. 7 (1929): 13.

⁴⁷³ McPherson, *This Is That: Personal Experiences, Sermons and Writings of Aimee Semple Mcpherson*, 653-55.

⁴⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁷⁶ ———, "The Song of Songs: An Exposition of the Song of Solomon by Aimee Semple Mcpherson," 13.

⁴⁷⁷ ———, *Aimee: The Life Story of Aimee Semple Mcpherson*, 101.

‘This is My beloved.’”⁴⁷⁸ When McPherson’s readers read of the bride of Christ in her writings or in the Bible, they were reading both the story of the church and of their leader.

McPherson capitalized on the blurred line between the church as the bride and herself as the bride. She relayed a (perhaps hypothetical) conversation with a congregant on the subject. “Sister McPherson,” asked one devotee, “are you the bride of Christ?”⁴⁷⁹ McPherson responded, “I am only a little part of that company. If I can be a little part of the little toe, I will be happy! Thank God we can all be a little part.”⁴⁸⁰

For all of its usefulness in presenting an idealized version of womanhood, and a recognizable Pentecostal biblical figure, McPherson’s narrative had distinct drawbacks when it came to establishing her ministerial authority. The bride of Christ was not a soldier who went to war like Woodworth-Etter and her congregation. She did not initiate battle. She received the love of the bridegroom. The question then for McPherson was how to make such a thoroughly feminine story authoritative. Personalizing the biblical image authorized her ministry: as Jesus’ bride, she had a special position as his lover and confidant, which gave her power to act on his behalf. Yet sharing the bride’s role with the church enabled her to be in partnership with her congregation: they all held the same role, and the same

⁴⁷⁸ Aimee Semple McPherson, *This Is That; Personal Experiences, Sermons and Writings of Aimee Semple Mcpherson* (Los Angeles, Calif.: Echo Park evangelistic association, 1923), 653-55.

⁴⁷⁹ ———, “The Holy Spirit in Old Testament Types and Shadows,” *The Bridal Call Foursquare* 11, no. 2 (1927): 30.

⁴⁸⁰ Ibid.

call, and so they worked for the same purpose. For example, when McPherson took on the monumental task of creating her own denomination, the International Church of the Foursquare Gospel (Foursquare), she claimed that it was not her idea, but rather something she received from Jesus while reading the book of Ezekiel:

In my soul was born a melody that seemed to strike and be sustained upon four full quivering strings as I thought upon the vision of the prophet Ezekiel. I stood still for a moment and listened, gripping the pulpit, almost shaking with wonder and joy. Then there burst from the white heat of my heart the words, "Why – why it's the Foursquare Gospel. The Foursquare Gospel!" Since that day when the Lord gave me that illumination, the term Foursquare Gospel has been carried around the world.⁴⁸¹

In her narrative the decisions that she made were not her decisions, but those of her future husband. She frequently noted that her sermons and tracts were "writings straight from God, by the power of the Holy Ghost, on the fourfold message of the hour which He has given and sent her out to preach."⁴⁸²

McPherson acknowledged and even emphasized her apparent limitations as a woman but she couched them in terms of her dependence on God and relationship to Jesus. "If I were a man," she wrote, "I could do a lot more. But I'm only a woman who yielded herself for God to use."⁴⁸³ She also foregrounded additional disqualifications, but turned them into assets. "Never have I attended any earthly Bible school. I clung to the promise that I was to take no thought for what I should

⁴⁸¹ McPherson, *Aimee: Life Story of Aimee Semple Mcpherson*, 112.

⁴⁸² Aimee Semple McPherson, "This Is That," *The Bridal Call* 2, no. 11 (1920): 1.

⁴⁸³ ———, *This Is That: Personal Experiences, Sermons, Writings of Aimee Semple Mcpherson* (Los Angeles: Foursquare Publications, 1979). 251-252.

say, but that he would teach me in the needed hour, also that out of my innermost being should flow rivers of living water.”⁴⁸⁴

In McPherson’s narrative these weaknesses worked to give her a kind of apostolic authority. She compared her situation to the Apostle Paul who in II Corinthians 12:10 claimed, “That is why, for Christ’s sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.” McPherson wrote, “I found myself preaching the Gospel, weak in myself but strong in Him.”⁴⁸⁵ “God uses the weak things, and the small to confound the wise,” she wrote of her ministry.⁴⁸⁶

Like Woodworth-Etter, McPherson categorized her most scandalous moments as attacks from Satan. “Before those days in 1926,” she wrote of her trial that year, “I used to say often as I watched hundreds of people come to Jesus at Angelus Temple, ‘Why doesn’t the devil fight this work more?’ I said jokingly at the time but I guess maybe he took the hint! I would never again give him any more suggestions!”⁴⁸⁷ Unlike her predecessor, however, McPherson did not frame her trial as a battle in which she fought, but rather an attack from which she, as a damsel in distress, needed to be rescued. “Weak and trembling,” she recalled, “I struggled to my feet, praying for God to give me help.”⁴⁸⁸ McPherson wrote about her trial not as

⁴⁸⁴ ———, “Lost and Restored: Or the Dispensation of the Holy Spirit from the Ascension of the Lord Jesus to His Coming Descension,” *The Bridal Call* 1, no. 2 (1918): 1.

⁴⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁸⁶ ———, “God’s David,” *The Bridal Call* 8, no. 1 (1924): 27.

⁴⁸⁷ McPherson, *Aimee: Life Story of Aimee Semple Mcpherson*, 211.

⁴⁸⁸ Ibid., 157.

a triumph of her morals, and her legal team, but another instance of her companionate husband coming to her rescue. "To God we can give all the glory," she wrote about herself and her staff, "for we stood helpless except for divine intervention. But God helped."⁴⁸⁹ By making herself the victim and Jesus her rescuer, the story of her trial fit nicely within the frame of the bride-bridegroom narrative.

Other aspects of her biography – her children and her divorces – that did not fit the bride-bridegroom narrative held much less prominent positions in her story. McPherson compared the dissolution of her marriage to Harold McPherson to the story of Rebecca and Isaac.⁴⁹⁰ Just as Rebecca left everything to become Isaac's bride, and so McPherson left behind her husband and domestic life to become the bride of Christ. In her brief account, McPherson wrote that she felt intense guilt over leaving her husband, but eventually that feeling passed when she realized that she was leaving him to enter into a life of intimacy with Jesus.⁴⁹¹ "Never mind," she wrote, "Rebecca's on her way to the well – to the fountain-head – to the sure source of supply – to the banqueting table of the King, and we'll soon be filled up now."⁴⁹² She made no mention of Harold McPherson afterward. She was similarly reticent about her divorce from David Hutton. She quickly shifted attention from her failed relationship to her enduring heavenly one. "My romance and sorrows with Mr.

⁴⁸⁹ Ibid., 221.

⁴⁹⁰ Aimee Semple McPherson, "Rebekah at the Well," *The Bridal Call Foursquare* 15, no. 5 (1926).9.

⁴⁹¹ ———, "The Story of My Life," *The Bridal Call* 8, no. 10 (1925).

⁴⁹² Ibid.

Hutton would have been crushing indeed were it not for that ever-present overwhelming divine love that is ours for the taking.”⁴⁹³

Her two children, Roberta and Rolf, like her husbands, were not major figures in her narrative even though both were actively involved in her ministry. Roberta was a preacher, children’s church supervisor, vice president of the Echo Park Evangelistic Association, and McPherson’s heir apparent until she left the ministry in 1936.⁴⁹⁴ Rolf also served as vice president, was his mother’s closest companion as a young adult, and ultimately succeeded his mother as president of her denomination and pastor of her church.⁴⁹⁵ Calling attention to them might have given McPherson credibility as a mother, but it also would have reminded her audience that she was not only the perpetual bride of her romantic narrative, but also a normal mother with very earth-bound concerns. Thus, McPherson occasionally spoke of her children, especially if they had been present during a service,⁴⁹⁶ but she rarely utilized her status as their mother to bolster her ministerial authority.⁴⁹⁷ Mention of Roberta, named after her late father and once

⁴⁹³ McPherson, *Aimee: The Life Story of Aimee Semple Mcpherson*. 238-39.

⁴⁹⁴ Blumhofer, *Aimee Semple Mcpherson: Everybody's Sister*, 368.

⁴⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 374.

⁴⁹⁶ See for example: Aimee Semple McPherson, "My Journeylog," *The Bridal Call Foursquare* 10, no. 2 (1926): 18; ———, "There Was an Old Woman Who Lived in a Shoe," *The Bridal Call Foursquare* 12, no. 6 (1928): 25; ———, "The British Isles Call Sister," *The Bridal Call Foursquare* 12, no. 7 (1928): 30.

⁴⁹⁷ McPhersons listed her parenting duties alongside other business and, unlike Woodworth-Etter did not write about her responsibility to them as a part of her calling to ministry. See for example the following discussion of her ministry chores: "There were all the diplomas to be signed; two payrolls to get out for the workmen, missionaries, Temple and field staffs; the pay roll to keep this great work moving is between five and seven thousand dollars per month. Teachers, stenographers, artists, writers, musicians, announcers for radio, janitors, office force, printers, editorial staff, and a host of others are needed for wheels to carry the work along. There was

groomed to succeed her mother, was usually coupled with a lengthy description of Robert Semple's death, McPherson's grief, and her eventual triumph.⁴⁹⁸

McPherson's fallout with Roberta, also redacted from her story, might explain some of her daughter's absence in her writings, but her son Rolf McPherson, arguably her most trusted confidant as an adult and eventual successor, also received sparse treatment. The central plot was not that of a mother's love for her children, but of a wife's love for her husband.

Conclusion

Woodworth-Etter and McPherson harnessed the significant authority of the Bible in a manner distinct from their female minister counterparts. Rather than be drawn into an unending argument over whether or not the scriptures prohibited or endorsed a female ministry, they avoided the conversation altogether. The women put their considerable scriptural knowledge to work creating a story of their lives and ministries that engaged popular notions of 1890s and 1920s womanliness as well as the timeless biblical figures of mother in Israel and bride of Christ. These narratives allowed the women to emphasize aspects of their lives that harmonized with ideal womanliness and ministry, and obscure those aspects that had potential

unfinished business to complete; my own darling Roberta and Rolf to plan and care for. There was teaching in the big school and the closing of school for the holidays, and the plans for the immediate opening of the Summer School...." in Aimee Semple McPherson, "Drops from Ye Editorial Brow," *The Bridal Call Foursquare* 12, no. 7 (1928): 3; ———, "The Story of My Life: The Story So Far," *The Bridal Call Foursquare* 9, no. 8 (1926): 21.

⁴⁹⁸Aimee Semple McPherson, "Roberta Star Semple," *The Bridal Call Foursquare* 12, no. 4 (1928): 10.

to detract from their status as female ministers. Therefore, in their sermons, autobiographies, and other writings, Woodworth-Etter and McPherson were not divorced single mothers with scandalous histories. Woodworth-Etter was the mother in Israel who would lead God's people to a final eschatological victory, and McPherson was the lover, confidant, and bride of the coming bridegroom, Jesus.

CHAPTER III

“PANTS DON’T MAKE PREACHERS”: THE IMAGE OF A FEMALE REVIVALIST MINISTER

“One Picture is Worth a Thousand Words.”⁴⁹⁹

Fred R. Barnard, in advertising periodical *Printer’s Ink*, 1927

“We humans,” wrote William LaFleur, “cannot exist without representation.”⁵⁰⁰ Indeed, images have power to create meaning for church practitioners, provide interpretation of one’s life and existence, and connect viewer(s) to a larger worshipping community.⁵⁰¹ Visual sites for meaning making, interpretation, and connection include not only illustrations, paintings, shrines, and monuments,⁵⁰² but also the body. The physical form is an enduring instrument of representation as well as a “readily accessible altar or temple” in which devotees claim to house and display the divine.⁵⁰³ There is more than one way to play this instrument. Some consider the body to be divinely “given” or “natural” and thus not to be altered for any reason.⁵⁰⁴ From this perspective, to alter the body is to defile it

⁴⁹⁹Fred R. Barnard, "One Picture Is Worth a Thousand Words," *Printer's Ink* 10(1927).

⁵⁰⁰ LaFleur, "Body," 37.

⁵⁰¹ David Morgan and Sally M. Promey, "Introduction," in *The Visual Culture of American Religions*, ed. The Visual Culture of American Religions (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2001), 12.

⁵⁰² Ibid., 1-26.

⁵⁰³ LaFleur, "Body," 37.

⁵⁰⁴ Ibid., 38.

and deprive it of its spiritual significance.⁵⁰⁵ Others see the body as malleable and available for modification.⁵⁰⁶ From this perspective, the body is a “ready made canvas” upon which practitioners illustrate their message.⁵⁰⁷

Through the mass distribution of images in print and film during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the body in its given or modified state⁵⁰⁸ had unprecedented potential as a medium for revivalist messages. Advertising executive Fred R. Barnard’s now famous observation, “One picture is worth a thousand words,”⁵⁰⁹ speaks to the communicative power of images, and it is no coincidence that the phrase was coined in the 1920s. Between 1890 and 1930, Americans were bombarded as never before with images.⁵¹⁰ These portraits created a heightened celebrity culture⁵¹¹ and communicated much about what it meant to be an ideal American. Through advancements in print technology, photography, and eventually film, advertisers, publishers, and filmmakers provided the American public with countless portraits of American life.⁵¹² Through fan

⁵⁰⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁰⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁰⁷ Ibid., 37.

⁵⁰⁸ In this project, no subject is a proponent of the unmodified body (strictly defined), because every person wore clothing. This chapter argues that Woodworth-Etter believed that the body should be modified as little as possible in contrast to McPherson who modified her appearance freely for the sake of communicating her message.

⁵⁰⁹ Barnard, "One Picture Is Worth a Thousand Words."

⁵¹⁰ Kitch, *The Girl on the Magazine Cover: The Origins of Visual Stereotypes in American Mass Media*, 17.

⁵¹¹ Karen Sternheimer, *Celebrity Culture and the American Dream: Stardom and Social Mobility* (New York: Routledge, 2011), 2-3.

⁵¹² Kitch, *The Girl on the Magazine Cover: The Origins of Visual Stereotypes in American Mass Media*, 17.

magazines and newspaper articles, filmmakers and radio promoters gave celebrities unprecedented ways to be seen embodying these ideals. As public figures, ministers were not immune to the power of mass media. Indeed, celebrity ministers used their personal appearance to signal the propriety and authority of their office, as well as their own ministerial message.

McPherson once summed up her views on women in the ministry by arguing that “sex has nothing to do with the pulpit and pants don’t make preachers.”⁵¹³ The sentiment was witty, but inaccurate. Traditionally, pants did make preachers. American Protestant ministers represented the authority of their male office by their clothing.⁵¹⁴ In the early Victorian Era, professionals wore multicolored suits and accessories.⁵¹⁵ The minister’s black (or dark colored) suit, free from ornamentation, expensive fabric, and flamboyant color, as well as the conservatively groomed body in it, was intended both to distance Protestant ministers from their Roman Catholic counterparts and to signal the sobriety, unostentatiousness, and propriety of the office.⁵¹⁶ Although the cut and location of buttons changed over time, American Protestant pastors typically wore black suits with white shirts (with the possible addition of pulpit robes or a white clerical collar in high church settings such as Episcopalian or Lutheran congregations).⁵¹⁷

⁵¹³ "Pulpit Sex Given Blow," *Los Angeles Times*, January 8 1936.

⁵¹⁴ Kelly J. Baker, "Religious Dress," in *Material Culture in America*, ed. Helen Sheumaker and Shirley Teresa Wajda (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2008), 388.

⁵¹⁵ Ibid.

⁵¹⁶ Ibid.

⁵¹⁷ Ibid.

By the mid nineteenth century, the meaning of the black, conservatively cut suit had changed.⁵¹⁸ Magazines and advertisements published portraits of ideal men as white professionals working in middleclass fields such as medicine, the law, and engineering.⁵¹⁹ In these portraits, professional men of all types eschewed the colorful ensembles of the Victorian Era and wore dark colored, simply designed suits.⁵²⁰ Ministers were no longer distinguished from their professional counterparts because the black suit signaled the expert, up-to-date authority associated with other modern professions.⁵²¹

Turn-of-the-century male ministers appeared aware of the increasing power of the image in American public life and keen to use their personal appearance to lend propriety, respectability, and professionalism to the office. "The pastor's appearance," according to *The Pastor's Guide*, "both as to his person and dress, should be clean and always command respect and esteem."⁵²² "People expect their pastor to look his part, to dress in keeping with his high calling,"⁵²³ argued one layman, while another cautioned ministers to "magnify your office" with

⁵¹⁸ Ibid.

⁵¹⁹ Kitch, *The Girl on the Magazine Cover: The Origins of Visual Stereotypes in American Mass Media*, 12.

⁵²⁰ Gayle V. Fischer, *Pantaloons and Power: Nineteenth-Century Dress Reform in the United States* (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 2001), 22.

⁵²¹ Miller, *Piety and Profession: American Protestant Theological Education, 1870-1970*, 385; Diner, *A Very Different Age: Americans of the Progressive Era*, 165; Fischer, *Pantaloons and Power: Nineteenth-Century Dress Reform in the United States*, 22.

⁵²² Jacob Fry, *The Pastor's Guide: Or, Rules and Notes in Pastoral Theology* (Philadelphia: General Council Publication House, 1915), 73.

⁵²³ J. B. A., "A Commercial Traveler's Plea for a Better-Salaried Clergy," *The Fortnightly Review* 24, no. 1 (1917).

appropriate personal appearance.⁵²⁴ Male ministers advised one another to provide congregants with a representation of middleclass manliness by being clean (brush their coats, shine their shoes, button their buttons), avoiding “eccentric” dress, keeping their hair neatly (but not too meticulously) arranged, and wearing black, white or grey.⁵²⁵

Many revivalist celebrity ministers augmented the black suit to communicate their version of the muscular Christian message. For example, Christian Missionary Alliance A. B. Simpson presented hale, dark-suited images of himself in rural settings as evidence of that message [Figure 3.1].⁵²⁶ His biographers claimed that his appearance had a number of muscular traits: it was of “sturdy” and “rugged” stock.⁵²⁷ “One could not fail to see in him,” wrote one admirer, “the marks of highest manhood.”⁵²⁸ 1920s revivalist and former professional athlete Billy Sunday traveled with several suits and accessories that complemented his muscular gospel. He tailored his suits to complement his physique and allow him maximum

⁵²⁴ William E. Barton, "What Laymen Wish Ministers Knew," *The Expositor* 8, no. 3 (1900).

⁵²⁵ Ibid; George Henry Gerberding, *The Lutheran Pastor* (Philadelphia: Lutheran Publication Society, 1902), 153; Fry, *The Pastor's Guide: Or, Rules and Notes in Pastoral Theology*, 73; A., "A Commercial Traveler's Plea for a Better-Salaried Clergy," 274; Herman Joseph Heuser, *The American Ecclesiastical Review: a Monthly Publication for the Clergy* 83(1930): 139; C. Abbtmeyer, "Some Externals of Worship," *Homiletic Magazine* 42, no. 1 (1918): 45; "The American Lutheran," *The American Lutheran* 11-12, no. 1 (1928): 622; A. W. Pegues, "The Necessity of a Trained Ministry," in *The United Negro: His Problems and His Progress*, ed. Irvine Garland Penn and John Wesley Edward Bowen (Atlanta, GA: D. E. Luther Publishing Co., 1902), 120; Albert Josiah Lyman, *The Christian Pastor in the New Age* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell & Co., 1909), 118.

⁵²⁶ Heather D. Curtis, *Faith in the Great Physician: Suffering and Divine Healing in American Culture, 1860-1900*, Lived Religions (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007), 105.

⁵²⁷ Thompson, *The Life of A. B. Simpson*, 1,237.

⁵²⁸ Ibid., 272.

movement onstage.⁵²⁹ Sunday knew that his image was a draw for revivalist audiences: he regularly took photos in various athletic poses and helpfully supplied newspapers with his manly image [Figure 3.2, 3.3]. Similarly, fundamentalist revivalist and flamboyant Texan J. Frank Norris preached frequently about the need to oppose the feminizing forces of modernism through fisticuffs if necessary.⁵³⁰ Norris, a Texan, accessorized his suits by wearing cowboy hats and fedoras (a visual signal of cinematic “tough guys”)⁵³¹ and by carrying a gun to drive the point home [Figure 3.4].⁵³²

Revivalist ministers widely distributed images of their manly ministries.⁵³³ Simpson and Sunday had biographers who published their images as well as their life stories. Norris and Sunday’s photos often appeared in newspapers. Posters advertising their revivalist meetings often carried images of the ministers in their manly attire.

For female ministers, no traditional attire signaled womanly propriety as well as professional ministerial authority. While women ministers lacked guidance for how to signal their female ministerial identities, for women in general, there were countless portraits of ideal womanhood. *Scribners, Harpers, Good*

⁵²⁹ Elijah Brown, *The Real Billy Sunday: The Life and Work of Rev. William Ashley Sunday, D.D., the Baseball Evangelist* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1914), 227.

⁵³⁰ Seth Dowland, "Defending Manhood: Gender, Social Order and the Rise of the Christian Right in the South" (Dissertation, Duke University, 2007), 7.

⁵³¹ Lee Grieveson, Esther Sonnet, and Peter Stanfield, *Mob Culture: Hidden Histories of the American Gangster Film* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2005), 167.

⁵³² Dowland, "Defending Manhood: Gender, Social Order and the Rise of the Christian Right in the South", 7.

⁵³³ Lippy, *Do Real Men Pray?: Images of the Christian Man and Male Spirituality in White Protestant America*, 91.

Housekeeping and *Life Magazine* published photographs and illustrations of the “American Woman.”⁵³⁴ In print and on film, she was white, middleclass, educated, and she wore the latest in hairstyle, cosmetic, and dress fashions.⁵³⁵ She was pictured going to college and engaging in a variety of domestic activities such as cooking for her husband, teaching their children, or playing with the family dog.⁵³⁶ Mainstream media images did not include women clothed or working as doctors, engineers, ministers, or any other profession.⁵³⁷ Unlike male professionals who signaled their professional status by wearing dark colored suits, there was no generally accepted uniform for female professionals.

A few women of previous generations had attempted to create professional images by imitating men. They developed a version of the suit for professional women, but their efforts at portraying themselves as respectable members of the business class were largely unsuccessful.⁵³⁸ Until the mid twentieth century, women who wore suits risked their reputation by having their sexuality being called into question or by being dismissed as an oddity rather than accepted as a professional.⁵³⁹

⁵³⁴ Kitch, *The Girl on the Magazine Cover: The Origins of Visual Stereotypes in American Mass Media*, 12.

⁵³⁵ Ibid.

⁵³⁶ Ibid.

⁵³⁷ Ibid.

⁵³⁸ Fischer, *Pantaloons and Power: Nineteenth-Century Dress Reform in the United States*, 176.

⁵³⁹ Ibid., 3.

Thus, Woodworth-Etter and McPherson had to find a way of “showing forth the mighty power of God”⁵⁴⁰ as pastors without the benefit of a male body or a suit. Rather than try to appropriate professional men’s wear, both presented images that corresponded to their narrative identities.

The “Plainly Attired”⁵⁴¹ Pastor

Woodworth-Etter represented her warring mother identity with “plainly attired,”⁵⁴² old-fashioned, matronly personal appearance. During the 1890s, women discarded the supposedly “unhygienic” Victorian corsets, hoop skirts, and handmade, elaborate clothing, for simpler, mass-produced fashions.⁵⁴³ Upper-class women often traded the hoop skirts of the Victorian Era for bustles and puffed sleeves.⁵⁴⁴ They wore their hair long and piled high upon their heads, often augmented with an elaborately decorated hat. Fashionable women demonstrated femininity and sex appeal with corsets, which cinched in their waists and enhanced

⁵⁴⁰Fred Lohmann, “God Visiting San Antonio with Mighty Power,” *Word and Witness*, February 20 1913.

⁵⁴¹ “Visions in Trances.”

⁵⁴² “Took Her Child to See Christ, She Tells Judge,” *Topeka Daily Capital*, August 13 1915.

⁵⁴³ Martha H. Patterson, *Beyond the Gibson Girl: Reimagining the American New Woman, 1895-1915* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2005), 44.

⁵⁴⁴ Sherrie A. Inness, *Intimate Communities: Representation and Social Transformation in Women's College Fiction, 1895-1910* (Bowling Green, OH: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1995), 100.

their busts. Images of graceful, small-waisted, big-busted, college educated white women populated American advertising space [Figure 3.5].⁵⁴⁵

Maria Woodworth-Etter's typical dress was a simplified, de-sexualized version of turn-of-the-century styles. In contrast with the black suit of the professional male, Woodworth-Etter usually wore crisp, simply cut white dresses. Her unofficial uniform was a plain white dress and a modest, full-length (usually black) coat [Figure 3.6]. While her more fashionable counterparts wore corsets to display their womanly form, her loose-fitting dresses deemphasized her waist and bust; the sleeves were minimally puffed. Her most flamboyant accessories were a chaste black bonnet and thin white gloves. Woodworth-Etter wore this plain ensemble in and out of fashion and in and out of the pulpit.

During her decades long career, her clothing rarely changed [Figure 3.6]. Even though magazine and film images showed hemlines becoming shorter as the nineteenth century turned to the twentieth, she insisted on wearing floor-length dresses.⁵⁴⁶ She was loath to accessorize and wore little to none of the lace, ruffles, brooches, "frills and flounces," rings, and other jewelry popular during the era.⁵⁴⁷ Woodworth-Etter was equally conservative about her hair. She wore it tightly wound at the top of her head with no elaborate hats, or any other decorative accessories.

⁵⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁴⁶ Kitch, *The Girl on the Magazine Cover: The Origins of Visual Stereotypes in American Mass Media*, 133.

⁵⁴⁷ John E. Main, *The Booze Route; a Reform Book* (Los Angeles: Commercial Printing House, 1907), 154.

Although committed to modesty and averse to flamboyant clothing, Woodworth-Etter was not reluctant to display her image publicly. On the contrary, in every autobiography (some of which were self published), she provided followers with self-portraits that conveyed aspects of her profession and message. Her conservative, matronly wardrobe signaled white, middleclass respectability in a way that her background and her church services did not. Even though they mocked her “unrefined” language⁵⁴⁸ and compared her ecstatic preaching to an exotic “voodoo priestess”⁵⁴⁹ members of the press were repeatedly surprised by her bourgeois look. One such reporter observed that Woodworth-Etter “dressed in no unusual fashion,” with “hair worn in a high knot above her head, gray eyes, fairly good-looking. She does not,” wrote the reporter, “look like a fanatic.”⁵⁵⁰

Modest clothing had deep doctrinal meaning in Woodworth-Etter’s teachings. Woodworth-Etter, like other revivalist women, believed that modest clothing had a sacramental function: outward appearance displayed inward godliness and power.⁵⁵¹ Disturbed by what they thought of as sinful modern fashions around them, many revivalists, particularly those of the holiness or Pentecostal persuasion, embraced strict codes of modesty. “The society women,” wrote one exasperated holiness writer of early twentieth-century fashions, “nearly

⁵⁴⁸ “Said to Be Religion: Strange Scenes At “Revival Meetings” Held in Indiana,” *New York Times*, January 23 1885; “Visions in Trances,” *Warsaw Daily Times*, May 18 1885.

⁵⁴⁹ “Aver They Are Cured: One Threw Her Brace Away Holy Rollers Fail to Help Blind Boy.”; “Minors Take Part in Holy-Roller Services,” *The Topeka Daily Capitol*, August 29 1913.

⁵⁵⁰ “Visions in Trances.”

⁵⁵¹ Butler, *Women in the Church of God in Christ: Making a Sanctified World*, 80; Vinson Synan, *The Holiness-Pentecostal Tradition: Charismatic Movements in the Twentieth Century*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1997), 35.

all dress like the women of the Red Light.... Of course, women who are virtuous will be looked at, and spoken to, by sporting men, as if she was a fallen woman, if she dresses like the scarlet woman."⁵⁵² These codes of modesty were meant to allow women to display their bodies in their most natural, "God-given"⁵⁵³ state and thereby sanctify practitioners around them.⁵⁵⁴ "When women get saved and a clean heart," wrote one holiness writer, "it takes the sporty dress, lodge pins, frills and flounces out of their wardrobe. Amen."⁵⁵⁵ One early holiness pastor and historian wrote that in obedience to I Timothy 2:9's advice to women, "People who got this great grace of sanctification pulled off their gaudy dress, and stripped off their jewelry."⁵⁵⁶ Plain dress thus showed holiness people that Woodworth-Etter was unencumbered by earthly concerns for fashion or beauty and that her heart and mind were set toward heaven.⁵⁵⁷ This freedom from the world imbued her ministry with spiritual power only available through modest, clean living.⁵⁵⁸

Woodworth-Etter's commitment to plain clothing made its way into her teachings wherein she equated saved people with those who dressed appropriately.

⁵⁵² Main, *The Booze Route; a Reform Book*, 154.

⁵⁵³ Butler, *Women in the Church of God in Christ: Making a Sanctified World*, 69-71; Susie Cunningham Stanley, *Holy Boldness: Women Preachers' Autobiographies and the Sanctified Self*, 1st ed. (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2002), 82-85.

⁵⁵⁴ Butler, *Women in the Church of God in Christ: Making a Sanctified World*, 69-71. See also: Percy Given, "Deets Pacific Bible College " *Nazarene Messenger* 12, no. 1 (1907).

⁵⁵⁵ Main, *The Booze Route; a Reform Book*, 154.

⁵⁵⁶ Charles Brougher Jernigan, *Pioneer Days of the Holiness Movement in the Southwest* (Kansas City, MO: Pentecostal Nazarene Publishing House, 1919), 7-8.

⁵⁵⁷ Stanley, *Holy Boldness: Women Preachers' Autobiographies and the Sanctified Self*, 82-85.

⁵⁵⁸ Anthea D. Butler, *Women in the Church of God in Christ : Making a Sanctified World* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 81.

Even the ability to speak with God was interwoven with proper clothing. “To pray,” wrote one of Woodworth-Etter’s favorite commentators on I Timothy 2:9, “is supposed to be in verse 9 and to be connected with ‘in modest apparel.’”⁵⁵⁹ She warned against elaborate accessories or hairstyles and condemned “bangs and frizzes” as “the devil’s implements of war.”⁵⁶⁰ Extravagant clothing was not only a waste of money, it was also a tool of Satan to distract believers from what was truly important. “People washed their clothing,” she wrote the biblical meaning of modest, clean clothing, “This [appropriate, unblemished apparel] was the emblem of purity. This was the sign of the inward cleansing. The people were in a condition to meet God – clean bodies, clean garments. God help us to get the cleansing power.”⁵⁶¹ She discouraged her congregants from following the latest fashions and instead encouraged them to follow Jesus and be “clothed with immortality” and “clothed with the glory of heaven,” as Paul instructed the Corinthian church in I Corinthians 15:53, and II Corinthians 5:2.⁵⁶² She described Jesus and his followers as “clothed in white linen,” like those in Revelation 19:8 and 14, and the coming Christ as a man “clothed in power,” which was a possible allusion to Jesus’ post-resurrection instructions to the church in Luke 24:49.⁵⁶³

⁵⁵⁹ Woodworth-Etter, *Marvels and Miracles God Wrought in the Ministry for Forty-Five Years*, 558.

⁵⁶⁰ ———, *Trials and Triumphs of the Evangelist Mrs. M. B. Woodworth Written by Herself*, 110.

⁵⁶¹ ———, *Acts of the Holy Ghost*, 243.

⁵⁶² ———, *Signs and Wonders*, 129.

⁵⁶³ *Ibid.*, 537; ———, *Marvels and Miracles God Wrought in the Ministry for Forty-Five Years*, 49.

Clean clothing signaled class distinction as well as spiritual power. Cleanliness was associated with wholesome middleclass values in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, whereas filth was a signal of lowerclass “social pathology, filth, and needless disease.”⁵⁶⁴ Stories of poorly dressed sinners coming to the altar, finding Jesus, and going away well and modestly clothed were typical narratives of Woodworth-Etter meetings. One convert wrote that before she attended a meeting, she dressed her baby in a “‘greased cloth,’ but afterward, I made him clothes like other children.”⁵⁶⁵ When speaking of the success of one revival meeting, Woodworth-Etter wrote with satisfaction, “The women and children began to wear cleaner clothes, and came with their bonnets on, and left their dirty aprons at home.”⁵⁶⁶ These stories indicated that Woodworth-Etter’s meetings had power to reform attendees. They may have entered in as members of the lower classes, but they left as respectable, clean, middleclass people.

Holy apparel also served as a buffer between women and the sexual desires of men – a buffer lowered significantly by the introduction into mainstream fashion of skirts that revealed female ankles. Whereas American revivalists were free to admire the “well developed chest” and “broad shoulders”⁵⁶⁷ of her male counterparts, Woodworth-Etter refrained from clothing and undergarments like the

⁵⁶⁴ Burnstein, *Next to Godliness: Confronting Dirt and Despair in Progressive Era New York City*, 4.

⁵⁶⁵ Woodworth-Etter, *Marvels and Miracles God Wrought in the Ministry for Forty-Five Years*.

⁵⁶⁶ ———, *Signs and Wonders*, 116.

⁵⁶⁷ Clifford Putney, *Muscular Christianity: Manhood and Sports in Protestant America, 1880-1920* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2001), 82, 83.

corset that gave her audience an opportunity to evaluate the attractiveness of her physique.

Although she adopted a matronly, female look, Woodworth-Etter did not portray herself in photographs as a motherly figure. For example, she did not pose surrounded by children or cooking in a kitchen. Rather, she chose poses that represented her critical mission to fight on behalf of her spiritual children. She positioned herself with one arm pointed up toward heaven and the other holding a Bible [Figure 3.7]. Other times, she posed with one hand pointing upward and another pointing down. Posing with the Bible reminded the viewer of her authority to wield it. Her hand positions illustrated her message about the battle between heaven and hell.

Thus, Woodworth-Etter's personal appearance benefitted her ministry in several ways. It served as a visual cue of her identity as a biblical Mother in Israel and her teachings on holiness and modesty. It also gave her and her ministry a visual sense of middleclass respectability. Her posed pictures were portrait of Woodworth-Etter's status as a militant leader engaging in the masculine act of spiritual warfare.

The "White Clad Los Angeles Soul Saver"⁵⁶⁸

⁵⁶⁸ "Aimee Mcpherson Starts Battle with Voliva for Souls," *The Deseret News*, September 6 1929, 1.

Like Woodworth-Etter, McPherson eschewed male professional wear and favored white dresses to black suits. Whereas Woodworth-Etter's holiness and early Pentecostal leanings led her to shun beautification, Aimee Semple McPherson treated her body as a pliable instrument for communicating her romantic bride-and-bridegroom message. Her personal appearance was constantly evolving to create an image that underscored her status as the leading lady of her flock and as their representative bride of Christ. In her early days as an itinerant preacher, McPherson adopted a look similar to the womanly professional attire that nurses wore [Figure 3.8, 3.9]. "She couldn't afford an expensive dress," recalled McPherson's daughter Roberta Salter, so she wore a blue and white maid's uniform and accessorized it "with a cape put on like the Red Cross nurses had."⁵⁶⁹ Her ensemble was simple, but she knew how to make the most of it. "When she rolled into town," said Salter, "she had to have a clean uniform for the next church service and she stopped by the roadside, and washed it in the stream, hung it out to dry... and then when it was dry she ironed it using for the ironing board the backseat of the car. And when she arrived in town, she was beautiful and dazzling. You would have thought she had ten thousand maids at home."⁵⁷⁰

McPherson's uniform did much to give promote her middleclass respectability. It was clean and modest, and it gave her a visual association with nursing, a quasi-public acceptable profession for women. The association with nursing also helped to give McPherson a maternal-like role as nurturer who was

⁵⁶⁹ "Dedication to the Memory of Aimee Semple Mcpherson," in *I Believe in Miracles, Vol. 5* (USA1973).

⁵⁷⁰ Ibid.

subordinate⁵⁷¹ to the “Great Physician,” Jesus. It also had the potential to heighten her sex appeal in the years following the First World War. Nurses were well-known objects of soldier desire in the Great War,⁵⁷² and her visual association with that guild allowed McPherson to capitalize on that kind of appeal. Finally, the uniform harkened back to her respectable Salvation Army roots and she made it the official garb for all female ministers in the Foursquare church.

The simple uniform, however, was out of step with the glamorous celebrity culture emerging from 1920s Hollywood. Therefore, as she gained fame, McPherson departed from earlier women preachers who downplayed their femininity by hiding their curves and refusing to use beauty-enhancing products. Instead, like Billy Sunday, she chose figure-flattering ensembles. Whereas Sunday emphasized his athletic prowess and manly virility, McPherson chose fashionable 1920s clothing that enhanced her feminine sex appeal.

In the 1920s, women’s fashions differed from the early twentieth-century corseted profile.⁵⁷³ A slimmer, less voluptuous figure replaced the ideal curvaceous woman. Women illustrated their femininity and sexuality by displaying their

⁵⁷¹ Janet Lee, *War Girls: The First Aid Nursing Yeomanry in the First World War* (New York, NY: Manchester University Press 2005), 80.

⁵⁷² Jonathan H. Ebel, *Faith in the Fight: Religion and the American Soldier in the Great War* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010), 141.

⁵⁷³ Kitch, *The Girl on the Magazine Cover: The Origins of Visual Stereotypes in American Mass Media*, 121-81; Lee, *War Girls: The First Aid Nursing Yeomanry in the First World War*, 64.

shapely ankles and calves rather than their small waists and big busts.⁵⁷⁴ Hemlines and sleeves also became shorter, as did hair.⁵⁷⁵

Images of women in advertising and film also shifted from the portraits of womanliness popular at the turn of the century.⁵⁷⁶ In addition to pictures of women caring for their children in their homes, women were depicted enjoying the world outside.⁵⁷⁷ Young women were often shown playing sports, going to college, or grocery shopping. Companionate wives (and future companionate wives) were shown holding hands, kissing, dancing or even drinking with their husbands (and future husbands).⁵⁷⁸

There was much handwringing among Protestants at the arrival of the “tall, thin, cartoonish young woman preoccupied with dancing, drinking, and necking” that dominated magazine print.⁵⁷⁹ Liberals like Harry Fosdick and conservatives like Billy Sunday both criticized portraits of 1920s women enjoying activities that those with supposedly loose sexual morals appreciated.⁵⁸⁰ Revivalists, particularly

⁵⁷⁴ Kitch, *The Girl on the Magazine Cover: The Origins of Visual Stereotypes in American Mass Media*, 121-81.

⁵⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 122.

⁵⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 136-59.

⁵⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 74, 164.

⁵⁷⁹ Carolyn L. Kitch, *The Girl on the Magazine Cover : The Origins of Visual Stereotypes in American Mass Media* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 121.

⁵⁸⁰ DeBerg, *Ungodly Women: Gender and the First Wave of American Fundamentalism*, 99-118; Robert Moats Miller, *Harry Emerson Fosdick: Preacher, Pastor, Prophet* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 425-28.

those of the holiness and Pentecostal variety, were also troubled by 1920s images of womanhood.⁵⁸¹

McPherson, however, was unafraid. "The flapper had arrived," wrote 1920s journalist Carey McWilliams, "a little tipsy, with short skirts and bobbed hair. It was time for petting and necking; for flasks and roadside taverns; for movie 'palaces' and automobiles...and Aimee was determined to lead the parade on a grand detour to Heaven."⁵⁸² By all accounts, McPherson embraced the changing fashions. Indeed, she viewed Roaring Twenties as a field ripe unto harvest. "On the question of flappers," reported the *Boston Daily Globe*, "Mrs. McPherson was content to shrug her shoulders and say, 'I see beyond the cosmetics and the clothes.'"⁵⁸³

In fact, McPherson embraced many of the same cosmetics and clothes feared by her revivalist contemporaries, and her openness to modifying her personal appearance pushed the boundaries too far for revivalists who believed that spiritual purity was signaled through an unaltered physique. Her usual twenties and early thirties pulpit clothing consisted of form-fitting (sometimes sequined) white gowns with long, wide sleeves [Figure 3.10]. "She clings to white," observed one sarcastic Temple guest, "and the fabric clings to her."⁵⁸⁴ McPherson's image as a bride waiting for her bridegroom was clearly understood by reporters. When she took the

⁵⁸¹ Robinson and Ruff, *Out of the Mouths of Babes: Girl Evangelists in the Flapper Era*, 157.

⁵⁸² Carey McWilliams, "Sunlight in My Soul," in *The Aspirin Age, 1919-1941*, ed. Isabel Leighton (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1949), 60.

⁵⁸³ "Aimee Sails South Lauding New York," *Boston Daily Globe*, March 4 1927.

⁵⁸⁴ Grover Cleveland Loud, *Evangelized America* (Freeport, NY: Books for Libraries Press, 1928), 325.

platform, she did so, “Wearing the garb and manner of a bride on her honeymoon.”⁵⁸⁵

McPherson’s white gowns were not the only signature aspect of her look. She was not afraid to experiment with the latest beauty products. She employed her own “beauty specialists” including a hairdresser and make up artist⁵⁸⁶ to make sure she looked “like her old self,” from the pulpit.⁵⁸⁷ In addition, flowers were a staple of her apparel. She was often photographed wearing a corsage or carrying a large bouquet. She accessorized with a sequined stole that was designed to rest over her breasts [Figure 3.10], and she wore glittering symbols such as a cross, a bible superimposed over a shield, or a Foursquare emblem across her chest. The result was a clerically inspired evening gown that fit in nicely with the glitz and glamour of early Hollywood culture.

Arguably the most symbolic aspect of McPherson’s person to change over time was her hair. Early twentieth-century revivalists were particularly interested in the relationship among hair, godliness, and worldliness.⁵⁸⁸ Long, undyed hair symbolized the “natural” femininity of sound revivalist teaching, while bobbed hair was worn only by those “stupefied by some Satanic opiate” of the “fashions of the day.”⁵⁸⁹ When McPherson began her career, she had “high-piled, unshorn dark hair”

⁵⁸⁵ Frank Sibley, "Aimee Arrives for Big Revival," *Daily Boston Globe* 1931.

⁵⁸⁶ Janet Simonsen (The Foursquare Heritage Center Director), March 15 2008.

⁵⁸⁷ Sutton, *Aimee Semple Mcpherson and the Resurrection of Christian America*, 293.

⁵⁸⁸ Robinson and Ruff, *Out of the Mouths of Babes: Girl Evangelists in the Flapper Era*, 58.

⁵⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

[Figure 3.11].⁵⁹⁰ Eventually, she began to experiment with her hair color and it attracted national attention. Newspapers reported that she wore it red,⁵⁹¹ strawberry blonde, and platinum.⁵⁹²

Changing her hair color was newsworthy, but as long as McPherson maintained her long locks, she remained relatively uncontroversial. By wearing long hair, she communicated to her flock that she had not completely given herself over to “worldly” cultural norms. Given her penchant for sartorial trends, it was inevitable that McPherson would cut her hair into a fashionable marcelled bob. In 1927, she did just that [Figure 3.12].⁵⁹³ The cut was front-page news, and it was cited as the primary cause in a church split.⁵⁹⁴ “Mrs. McPherson hurt her followers beyond endurance,” said choir leader and church defector Gladwyn Nichols, “when she had her hair bobbed recently.”⁵⁹⁵

Had McPherson’s teachings about personal appearance, worldliness, and the power of the Holy Spirit been similar to Woodworth-Etter’s, Nichols’ splinter church would have probably been large and their absence would have been damaged her church. Because McPherson had been gradually embracing 1920s fashions, however, most of her followers were willing to stay with her after the bob scandal.

⁵⁹⁰ "Religion: Disappearance," in *Time* (Time Warner, 1926).

⁵⁹¹ United Press, "Angelus Temple Funds Tied up by Mrs. Kennedy," *Berkeley Daily Gazette*, July 30 1927.

⁵⁹² Beale, "Aimee Bride for Third Time; Weds 250 Pound Preacher."

⁵⁹³ "A Slipping Sister," *The Miami News*, May 5 1927.

⁵⁹⁴ "Aimee Bobs Her Hair: Followers Secede," *Lawrence Journal - World*, April 25 1927.

⁵⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

The fact that her congregation did not crumble shows a marked shift in Pentecostal revivalist thinking about the relationship between the believer and the world.

Unlike the first-generation Pentecostal revivalists who usually adopted strict modesty codes, McPherson and her growing circle of colleagues and followers were much more comfortable with fashion. Instead of seeing it as a mark of spiritual deficiency, they used fashion as a tool in service to their revivalist messages. Thus, with her short hair and fashionable gowns, McPherson's power and congregation continued to grow.

At the height of her fame and influence in the 1920s, McPherson combined the Hollywood glamour of the emerging film industry with popular, bridal images of womanliness. She took on a number of leading lady roles from the pulpit, and she had costumes that corresponded to each. In some sermon illustrations, she played the part of biblical brides such as Ruth and Rebecca.⁵⁹⁶ For these parts, she dressed in "authentic Arab garb" that she had purchased on a trip to the Holy Land [Figure 3.13].⁵⁹⁷ Taking full advantage of her Hollywood surroundings, McPherson frequently called upon film industry costumers to create elaborate costumes with which to illustrate her sermons.⁵⁹⁸ Playing the role of a Southern belle in one sermon, she wore a professionally designed antebellum dress [Figure 3.14]. Her popular illustrated sermon of the Dutch folktale about a leaky dike she wore a Dutch

⁵⁹⁶ McPherson, "Four Mountain Peaks of Glory from the Book of Ruth."; ———, "They Have Taken My Lord Away."

⁵⁹⁷ "Aimee Semple Mcpherson in Costume of Palestinian Woman, Which She Wore During the Recounting of Her "Journeylog.," *The Bridal Call Foursquare* 10, no. 2 (1926).

⁵⁹⁸ Thomas Fish, "Sister Aimee's Dutch Swan Song: A Study of the Illustrated Sermon," *Journal of Religion and Theatre* 8, no. 1 (2009).

girl costume [Figure 3.15]. When she preached a sermon about staying away from the dangers of sin, she had a tailor-made police officer uniform made to reinforce her message, "Stop! You're going the wrong way!" [Figure 3.16]. Her famous sermon about her small town Canadian roots came complete with a farm girl costume [Figure 3.17].

In many cases, McPherson's costumes bore strong recollections of popular 1920s films. For example, the farm girl costume was similar to Mary Pickford's clothing in *Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm* (1918) [Figure 3.18].⁵⁹⁹ Her biblical costumes were similar to those worn in biblical epics like *Ben-Hur: A Tale of Christ* (1925) [Figure 3.19].⁶⁰⁰ Thus, when her followers looked at their pastor, they saw images taken directly off Hollywood studio lots,⁶⁰¹ and when McPherson preached, she was often compared to romantic film heroines like silent movie star Mary Pickford.⁶⁰²

McPherson's image was ubiquitous in the 1920s. Pictures depicting a perfectly coiffed pastor wearing the latest fashions appeared in *Los Angeles Times* and other newspapers as well as Angelus Temple's façade [Figure 3.20]. She graced the cover of magazines, postcards, and her own denominational literature and

⁵⁹⁹ Kate Douglas Wiggin, Pickford Film Corporation, and Artcraft Pictures Corporation, *Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm* (Los Angeles: Pickford Film Corporation Released by Artcraft Pictures Corporation, 1917), Motion Picture.

⁶⁰⁰ Fred Niblo et al., "Ben-Hur: A Tale of the Christ," (United States: Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, 1925).

⁶⁰¹ Henry James Forman, "New Faiths, and the Men and Women Who Follow Them," *The New York Times*, December 1 1946.

⁶⁰² "Cold Fails to Halt M'pherson Crowds," *The New York Times*, February 20 1927.

autobiographies [Figure 3.21]. She sat for numerous publicity photographs and even advertised her meetings in film shorts.

McPherson also showed her skill at manipulating her personal appearance during her 1926 trial. On Tuesday, May 18 of that year, McPherson disappeared while on a trip to Ocean Park beach. Her followers believed that she had drowned. McPherson's mother Minnie Kennedy and Angelus Temple leaders held beachside vigils for several days, and when efforts to recover her body failed, they planned an elaborate funeral.⁶⁰³ Meanwhile, the Los Angeles Police Department poured hours into a search for her body.

The search became something of a national pastime, and McPherson sightings ran rampant. Some speculated that she had run off to Canada, while others thought that she had left for China.⁶⁰⁴ *Time Magazine* satirized the obsession with finding the beautiful pastor: "Her description has been so minutely detailed that it is certain she prepared to go in swimming. Her bathing suit had a white edging around the armholes. It was a one-piece suit with the pretense of a short skirt. The trunks came down almost to her knees. Her legs that day were vague."⁶⁰⁵

On June twenty-third, McPherson came back to the public in dramatic fashion. Emerging from the Arizona desert, she claimed to have been kidnapped by

⁶⁰³ "Thousands Wait Many Hours for Pastor's Resurrection," *The Atlanta Constitution*, May 24 1926.

⁶⁰⁴ "Sure She Is Dead," *Berkeley Daily Gazette*, June 4 1926; Alma Whitaker, "Aimee Semple M'pherson," *The Los Angeles Times*, June 13 1926; "Woman Pastor Found, Canada Dispatch Says; Aimee Semple Mcpherson Reported in Alberta by Detectives," *Miami Daily News*, June 5 1926.

⁶⁰⁵ "Religion: Disappearance."

a small ransom-seeking gang.⁶⁰⁶ Her congregation rejoiced and showered her with affection and flowers,⁶⁰⁷ but from the moment of her reappearance, those outside of her flock were suspicious that McPherson was not telling the truth.

Police searched for the shack in Mexico from where McPherson supposedly escaped. They found no evidence of its existence. Many speculated that she had a personal relationship with her former radio engineer Roy Ormiston,⁶⁰⁸ and Los Angeles buzzed with rumors that she had left her pulpit to share a romantic "love nest"⁶⁰⁹ at Carmel-by-the-Sea. Several Carmel-by-the-Sea residents claimed that they had seen a man with an attractive redhead matching McPherson's description in a romantic cottage.⁶¹⁰

The rumors of McPherson's alleged sexual indiscretion eventually brought her into conflict with the law. Los Angeles District Attorney Asa Keyes believed that she had run off with Ormiston. He charged McPherson with criminal conspiracy and perjury for allegedly hiding her ten-day affair with Ormiston and sending Los Angeles police on an expensive wild goose chase.⁶¹¹

⁶⁰⁶ "Religion: Return," in *Time* (Time Warner, 1926).

⁶⁰⁷ "Cheering Throngs Hail Aimee M'pherson Here: Crowd of 30,000 Showers Pastor with Flowers as She Returns; Appreciation Expressed," *Los Angeles Times*, June 27 1926.

⁶⁰⁸ "Man Sought in Mcpherson Case, Reappears," *The Atlanta Constitution* May 28 1926.

⁶⁰⁹ "Keyes Will Listen to Miss "X" Story; Woman Was to Get \$5,000 from Aimee M'pherson, She States.," *Telegraph-Herald*, September 13 1926.

⁶¹⁰ "Five in M'pherson Case Swear Pastor in Carmel; Cheers and Hisses Greet Evangelist as Dramatic Hearing Starts; Sharp Clashes Mark Day," *Los Angeles Times*, September 28 1926.

⁶¹¹ Licoln Quarberg, "Aimee Ordered Held over for Perjury Trial," *Berkeley Daily Gazette*, September 2 1926.

Keyes portrayed McPherson as a highly sexed vixen who seduced a man and ran off to a “love nest” in Carmel-by-the-Sea.⁶¹² She visually countered this depiction in several ways. First, on her first day in court, she eschewed her “picturesque temple garb” and wore instead to court a sober “simple black satin coat suit with soft white shirtwaist and a plain black mushroom straw, high crowned and banded in grosgrain ribbon.”⁶¹³ For the duration of the trial, she usually wore an equally somber ensemble or the simple, modest Foursquare uniform.

Second, she gave the press images of piety that reminded viewers of her divine relationship. During her trial, she often posed in prayer, with her eyes lifted up toward heaven [Figure 3.22].⁶¹⁴ She had moments of frustration and “hysteria” outside the courtroom, but during her hearing, McPherson looked angelic and serene.⁶¹⁵ On the first day of her testimony, she augmented her heavenly look by arriving in flanked by several young women dressed in white and carrying hymnals.⁶¹⁶ The women, fiercely devoted to McPherson, were pictures of purity and innocence even as their leader faced accusations of fornication.

McPherson also published a series of pictures that depicted her supposed kidnapping. These portraits showcased a modestly dressed figure in poses that mirrored those struck by the silent movie heroines. Like Christine Daaé, who

⁶¹² "Keyes Will Listen to Miss "X" Story; Woman Was to Get \$5,000 from Aimee M'pherson, She States.."

⁶¹³ "Evangelist Cool as Trial Starts," *Boston Daily Globe*, September 28 1926.

⁶¹⁴ "At Aimee Mcpherson's Counsel Table," *The Evening Independent*, October 8 1926.

⁶¹⁵ "Aimee's Mother under Arrest," *The Morning Leader*, September 18 1926.

⁶¹⁶ "Kidnaped Evangelist before Jury," *Warsaw Union*, July 8 1926.

struggled to break free from the Phantom of the Opera⁶¹⁷ [Figure 3.23] or Nanette Roland who was endangered by the obsessive love of the villainous Buck McDougal⁶¹⁸ [Figure 3.24], McPherson's photographs told a story of an innocent damsel in distress who narrowly escaped becoming a victim to corrupt mercenaries [Figure 3.25].⁶¹⁹

Thus, while McPherson did not subscribe to Woodworth-Etter's notion that plain clothing was the key to spiritual power, she did understand the usefulness of clothing and actively modified it to suit her needs. Her openness to bodily modification for the purpose of communicating her message was such that she was rumored to have undergone plastic surgery to preserve her youthful, bridal look. "You see," her mother and former church administrator "Ma" Kennedy told reporters about rumors of McPherson's face-lift in 1930, "Sister believes that everyone is an instrument of the Lord that may be used if His purposes are to be accomplished. According to her philosophy, a plastic surgeon, by making her more beautiful, would be helping along the Lord's work with a modern miracle of science."⁶²⁰ McPherson never publicly admitted undergoing such a procedure, but she was undoubtedly committed to maintaining her image as a "well-gowned, flashing-eyed and well-preserved" leading lady.⁶²¹

⁶¹⁷ Gaston Leroux et al., *The Phantom of the Opera* (Universal Pictures Corp., 1925).

⁶¹⁸ James Oliver Curwood and Charles Livingston Bull, *Nomads of the North: A Story of Romance and Adventure under the Open Stars* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1919).

⁶¹⁹ "Caught Evangelist in Falsehood, Is Claim of Former Boston Pastor," *The Morning Leader*, October 12 1926.

⁶²⁰ Don Roberts, "Sister Aimee and Ma," *The Pittsburg Press*, September 24 1930.

⁶²¹ "Religion: Sisters V. Satan," in *Time* (Time Warner, 1937).

Conclusion

Woodworth-Etter and McPherson were able to present ministerial images for their congregations without wearing masculine professional attire by providing followers with images that corresponded to their biblical identities as well as popular images of womanliness. For holiness woman Woodworth-Etter, who believed that attempts to change the body were “worldly,” that meant presenting herself as a plainly dressed, matronly figure. For McPherson, to whom the body was a blank slate upon which she communicated her revivalist message, she portrayed herself as an increasingly feminine Hollywood bride awaiting her heavenly bridegroom.

CHAPTER IV

“A GLORIOUS SYMBOL”: BUILDING A FEMALE WORSHIP SPACE

“A celestial golden, light-like mist filled the Tabernacle, a glorious symbol of the outpouring of the latter rain, which melted the audience and created in them a desire to be more like Christ.”⁶²²

On the opening of the Maria B. Woodworth-Etter Tabernacle, 1918

“From the day the doors opened on January 1, 1923, a mighty spiritual revival surged into Angelus Temple with ever-increasing power and fervor.”⁶²³

On the opening of Aimee Semple McPherson’s Angelus Temple, 1923

Personal appearance was not the only way of representing 1890s-1920s revivalist ministry. The space in which ministry occurred was equally important. 1890s–1920s revivalists were keenly aware of the “capacity of architecture both to embody and to broadcast ideas and meanings.”⁶²⁴ Since the early days of the early republic, American Protestant churches had been designed to imitate classically inspired British church architecture and to promote the traditional modes of Protestantism the architecture facilitated.⁶²⁵ Beginning in the mid-nineteenth century (1840s-1880s), the meanings conveyed by worship spaces shifted as

⁶²² Maria Beulah Woodworth-Etter, “Woodworth-Etter Campaign in Indianapolis,” *The Christian Evangel* 242, no. 308 (1918).

⁶²³ McPherson, *Aimee: Life Story of Aimee Semple Mcpherson*, 126.

⁶²⁴ Kilde, *When Church Became Theatre: The Transformation of Evangelical Architecture and Worship in Nineteenth-Century America*, 11.

⁶²⁵ *Ibid.*, 1-3.

revivalists borrowed as much from theaters and domestic architecture as they did from traditional church design.⁶²⁶ One result from this shift was that the church building itself became closely associated with the specific looks, personality, and talents of the (presumably male) presiding minister.⁶²⁷ Revivalist celebrity ministers who had the financial and political resources to build their own churches took an active role in the design of their meeting places.

For the most part, the meaning of the ministry conveyed by revivalist worship spaces was male. One innovation that ensured this maleness was that church layouts began to be modeled primarily after turn-of-the-century homes⁶²⁸ with rooms that corresponded to domestic spaces. For example, instead of a child's room, they had a Sunday School room.⁶²⁹ Where homes had a dining room, churches featured a fellowship hall, and often had a kitchen.⁶³⁰ Instead of a parlor to greet non-family members, churches had an auditorium.⁶³¹ Turning the church into a home did not imply that women, as keepers of the home, were welcome to exercise authority. By domesticating the worship space, revivalists actually reinforced the masculine gender of the minister.⁶³² While women were welcome to serve in traditional wife/mother private spaces such as the kitchen, the children's

⁶²⁶ Ibid., 19.

⁶²⁷ Ibid., 132.

⁶²⁸ Ibid., 149.

⁶²⁹ Ibid., 198.

⁶³⁰ Ibid.

⁶³¹ Ibid.

⁶³² Ibid., 159.

room, or the dining area, the public space wherein non-family members assembled, like any other public space, belonged to the men.⁶³³

The layout of revivalist worship space was not the only aspect that conveyed the masculinity of the minister. Male revivalists communicated masculinity by building “very vigorous and masculine”⁶³⁴ worship spaces that conformed to late nineteenth- and early-twentieth century notions of architectural manliness.⁶³⁵ For example, one signal of the architectural manliness was size.⁶³⁶ A. B. Simpson’s six-story church exterior was praised for being “one of the most imposing churches west of New York City”⁶³⁷ and admired for its masculine quality of being “the most aggressive center of evangelism in New York City.”⁶³⁸

Another indication of 1890s–1920s decorative manliness was “manly simplicity.”⁶³⁹ Ornate décor was described as “weak or effeminate,”⁶⁴⁰ but the “finer and franker the lines, the more reserved and powerful the parts,” wrote early

⁶³³ Ibid.

⁶³⁴ “The Decoration of Trinity Church, Boston,” *The American Architect and Building News* 5, no. 178 (1879).

⁶³⁵ Annette Benert, *The Architectural Imagination of Edith Wharton: Gender, Class, and Power in the Progressive Era* (Madison NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2007), 52.

⁶³⁶ Ibid.

⁶³⁷ Thompson, *The Life of A. B. Simpson*, 57.

⁶³⁸ Ibid., 96.

⁶³⁹ Russell Sturgis, “The Revival of Cathedral Building: Great Christian Houses of Worship Which Have Been Erected in Recent Years or Are Now in Process of Construction - Their Effectiveness and Artistic Meaning,” *Munsey’s Magazine*, April 1907, 192.

⁶⁴⁰ Ralph Adams Cram, *Church Building: A Study of the Principles of Architecture in Their Relation to the Church* (Boston: Small, Maynard & Company, 1901), 83.

twentieth-century architect and critic Ralph Cram.⁶⁴¹ Revivalist ministers' worship spaces were often sparsely decorated, angular structures that resembled armories more than cathedrals.⁶⁴² As the leaders of "spiritual armories," pastors sheltered those inside from the turbulent modern times and fortified the worship space from the attacks of modernism.⁶⁴³

In addition to imbuing worship spaces with late nineteenth and early twentieth-century manliness, revivalists sought to convey a sense of supernatural vigor. In order to signal spiritual power, many revivalists gave their worship spaces a moniker associated with extraordinary biblical dynamism. They named their churches "tabernacles," otherwise known as the "architectural icon of revival."⁶⁴⁴ A staple of the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century revivalist preaching circuit, tabernacles were originally large tents named for their resemblance to biblical tents (mentioned in passages such as Exodus 25:8-9, Exodus 33:7-10, and 2 Samuel 2:6-7) wherein the presence of God was supposed to dwell.⁶⁴⁵ Like their biblical counterparts, early revivalist tabernacles were portable, temporary structures that housed itinerant ministers in primarily rural settings.

⁶⁴¹ Ibid.

⁶⁴² Kilde, *When Church Became Theatre: The Transformation of Evangelical Architecture and Worship in Nineteenth-Century America*, 111.

⁶⁴³ Ibid., 219.

⁶⁴⁴ Jeanne Halgren Kilde, "Church Architecture and the Second Great Awakening," in *Embodying the Spirit: New Perspectives on North American Revivalism*, ed. Michael James McClymond (Baltimore, MD: 2004), 84.

⁶⁴⁵ Ann Taves, "The Camp Meeting and the Paradoxes of Evangelical Protestant Ritual," in *Teaching Ritual*, ed. Catherine M. Bell, *Aa Teaching Religious Studies Series* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 126.

Revivalist tabernacles showcased their ministers in large part because the preacher was one of the only design pieces. Tabernacles were simply constructed with a small, usually raised platform in the center.⁶⁴⁶ This platform, sometimes accompanied by a music stand and a piano, served as a pulpit [Figure 4.1].⁶⁴⁷ Chairs or benches were arranged around or facing the minister. The audience's attention was thus immediately drawn to the platform and the body performing on it.

In keeping with their biblical models, revivalist tabernacles had altars,⁶⁴⁸ although they did not serve as a location for the sacrifice of animals, grain, or incense.⁶⁴⁹ They were also distinct from mainline and high church altars that held relics or were the tables from which Eucharist was served.⁶⁵⁰ Revivalist altars were located just in front of the pulpit and were places where participants stood to accept the sacrifice of Jesus or receive healing from him.⁶⁵¹ In some cases altars included a small table, or were accompanied by a bench or two, but they were often no more than a marked off space just below the pulpit.⁶⁵²

⁶⁴⁶ Kilde, *When Church Became Theatre: The Transformation of Evangelical Architecture and Worship in Nineteenth-Century America*, 113.

⁶⁴⁷ McClymond, *Embodying the Spirit: New Perspectives on North American Revivalism*, ix.

⁶⁴⁸ Fisher Humphreys, "Altar Call," in *Encyclopedia of Religion in the South*, ed. Charles H. Lippy, Samuel S. Hill, and Charles Reagan Wilson (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2005), 50-51.

⁶⁴⁹ Mark K. George, *Israel's Tabernacle as Social Space*, Society of Biblical Literature: Ancient Israel and Its Literature (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2009), 85.

⁶⁵⁰ James F. White, *Protestant Worship: Traditions in Transition*, 1st ed. (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1989), 231.

⁶⁵¹ Humphreys, "Altar Call," 50-51.

⁶⁵² Rodger M. Payne, *The Self and the Sacred: Conversion and Autobiography in Early American Protestantism*, 1st ed. (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1998), 74.

The altar was the place where a revivalist minister proved the power of his or her message by the number of respondents he or she received. Therefore, revivalist altars occupied a public and prominent place in the tabernacle.⁶⁵³ Next to the minister, they were the most talked about aspect of revival services. "First Church, New Philadelphia, Ohio has been visited with a glorious revival of religion," wrote one Methodist Episcopal publication of the Reverend J. V. Orin's efforts. "In every service held we saw many seekers of Christ at the altar of prayer."⁶⁵⁴

By the end of the nineteenth century, few tabernacles were actual tents,⁶⁵⁵ and many were distinct from churches or cathedrals in name only. There were wooden, brick, and stone tabernacles. The name nevertheless retained a biblical sense of power. Adherents believed that within their walls they encountered the primordial presence and power of God.⁶⁵⁶ Tabernacle worshipers were transients passing through the present and not meant to stay in or partake of the sinfulness of the world around them. They were to be empowered for holy living through their worship. After experiencing the "secret of his [God's] tabernacle," wrote one observer, attendees emerged, "armed with faith and buoyant with expectation."⁶⁵⁷

In addition to the promise of biblical power, for late nineteenth and early twentieth-century revivalists, the word tabernacle also carried connotations of the

⁶⁵³ Ibid., 75.

⁶⁵⁴ "Advanced Lines of Church Activity," *Western Christian Advocate*, February 10 1915, 16.

⁶⁵⁵ Anne C. Loveland and Otis B. Wheeler, *From Meetinghouse to Megachurch: A Material and Cultural History* (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 2003), 82-83.

⁶⁵⁶ ———, *From Meetinghouse to Megachurch : A Material and Cultural History* (Columbia, Mo.: University of Missouri Press, 2003), 82-83.

⁶⁵⁷ J. O. Peck, *The Revival and the Pastor* (New York: Cranston & Curtis, 1894), 180.

“old time religion” of earlier tented meetings.⁶⁵⁸ For the many revivalists fearful of modernism, the idea of worshipping in the manner that predated the modernist-fundamentalist controversy was comforting.⁶⁵⁹ Revivalists utilized the old-fashioned sensibility that tabernacles brought to worship services and deliberately preserved the rural elements of nineteenth century tabernacle décor.⁶⁶⁰ For example, Billy Sunday insisted that host cities include his trademark sawdust flooring in even the most urban settings.⁶⁶¹ This let attendees know that he retained the “old time” power of previous generations.

Although they claimed to retain the holiness and “old time religion” of early nineteenth century tented revivals, 1890s-1920s revivalist tabernacles were much larger than earlier tents and they utilized modern theatre equipment and architecture.⁶⁶² “The Revivalists have to deal with a vast crowd in a huge building,” wrote one observer, “but they have adapted themselves with remarkable intuitive skill.”⁶⁶³ They maximized attendance using architectural techniques such as sloping floors and stadium seating.⁶⁶⁴ They employed inventions such as microphones to

⁶⁵⁸ “Church Intelligence from Trinity Chapel, Wells County, Indiana,” *The Church Advocate* (1897); Loveland and Wheeler, *From Meetinghouse to Megachurch: A Material and Cultural History*, 14.

⁶⁵⁹ Loveland and Wheeler, *From Meetinghouse to Megachurch: A Material and Cultural History*, 14.

⁶⁶⁰ Douglas Carl Abrams, *Selling the Old-Time Religion : American Fundamentalists and Mass Culture, 1920-1940* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2001), 21.

⁶⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶⁶² Ibid., 1.

⁶⁶³ A. C. B., “The Albert Hall Revival,” *The Speaker* 11(1905): 607-08.

⁶⁶⁴ Kilde, *When Church Became Theatre: The Transformation of Evangelical Architecture and Worship in Nineteenth-Century America*, 21.

carry the minister's voice⁶⁶⁵ and theatrical lighting to highlight the minister's performance.⁶⁶⁶ These innovations gave attendees the opportunity to admire the minister's "real manhood"⁶⁶⁷ in his body, gestures, and vocal patterns, and revivalists adapted their preaching to reach as many hearers as possible. The result of these innovations was an emphasis upon the masculine aspects of revivalist ministers and an increasing focus upon the personality of male revivalist stars.⁶⁶⁸

Female ministers like Woodworth-Etter and McPherson faced a challenge when it came to constructing their own buildings. Without male bodies and corresponding masculine personae, they did not have the advantage of appearing naturally authoritative in the worship space. Thus, they had to find alternative visual cues to signal authority. Just as they did with their use of scriptural narrative and their personal appearance, the women took much different approaches.

The House of God and the Battlefield

In terms of layout and architecture, very little differentiated Woodworth-Etter's itinerant meeting places from the tabernacles of male revivalist ministers. Her tented tabernacles, which held anywhere from several hundred to several thousand attendees, displayed all of the simplicity and roughness of her masculine

⁶⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁶⁷ Torrey, *Revival Addresses*, 103.

⁶⁶⁸ Kilde, *When Church Became Theatre: The Transformation of Evangelical Architecture and Worship in Nineteenth-Century America*, 35-37, 230.

counterparts' meeting places, even as they reflected her personal commitment to plainness [Figure 4.2].⁶⁶⁹ Her travelling tabernacles had several rows of benches or wooden chairs arranged to face a small wooden platform designated as the altar. From there, Woodworth-Etter stood and preached.⁶⁷⁰ When she was in the country, she set her tent up in campgrounds such as the popular Pentecostal destination Montwait. When she was in the city, she erected her tents in empty lots. The only decorations were posters announcing meeting times or short slogans for her meetings.

For over forty years, Woodworth-Etter held meetings in temporary tabernacles. Eventually, she decided to build a permanent home in Indianapolis. "For years the hearts' cry of the saints over the country has been for us to establish a permanent, central place somewhere, where they can come at all times and receive the help they need for spirit, soul and body," she wrote. "California and other places wanted this established place, but the Lord has shown me to build at Indianapolis, which is very centrally located, where the saints can gather together from all parts in one spirit, and have unity and liberty."⁶⁷¹

The permanent Maria Woodworth-Etter Tabernacle retained the modest and austere qualities that characterized her tented meeting places [Figure 4.3].⁶⁷² It was a long, rectangular wooden building with a few windows and a small platform at one

⁶⁶⁹ Woodworth-Etter, *Marvels and Miracles God Wrought in the Ministry for Forty-Five Years*, 48.

⁶⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁶⁷¹ Ibid., 352.

⁶⁷² Ibid.

end. Décor in the Tabernacle was sparse and mainly consisted of posters with popular Pentecostal exhortations to believe in Jesus, seek the Holy Spirit, or prepare for the Second Coming [Figure 4.3]. The Tabernacle's plain appearance was designed to showcase Woodworth-Etter's preaching and healing performances. There was very little to look at besides the warring mother.

Woodworth-Etter did embrace the revivalist penchant for technological innovation, although any amenities she installed were for functionality rather than form. "It is, fully equipped," Woodworth-Etter wrote proudly of the Tabernacle's ability to facilitate revivalist practices, "with baptistry [sic], electric lights and A-1 seats."⁶⁷³ Woodworth-Etter did allow herself one luxury item. She was given a "large beautiful chair from the Assembly [of God]"⁶⁷⁴ that she displayed prominently on the Tabernacle stage.⁶⁷⁵ In her later years, she preached and presided over her services from her custom-made perch.⁶⁷⁶

Like her male counterparts, Woodworth-Etter used her plain surroundings and simple pulpit to direct her audience's attention to the altar. During crowded services, she placed three wooden chairs on the platform in order to draw attention to her faith cures.⁶⁷⁷ "Everybody was interested and wanted to see and hear, or get

⁶⁷³ Ibid., 353.

⁶⁷⁴ ———, *Life and Testimony of Mrs. M. B. Woodworth-Etter*, 97.

⁶⁷⁵ Wayne E. Warner, *The Woman Evangelist: The Life and Times of Charismatic Evangelist Maria B. Woodworth-Etter*, Studies in Evangelicalism No. 8 (Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow Press, 1986), 53.

⁶⁷⁶ Woodworth-Etter, *Life and Testimony of Mrs. M. B. Woodworth-Etter*, 97.

⁶⁷⁷ ———, *Marvels and Miracles God Wrought in the Ministry for Forty-Five Years*, 412.

some blessing,” she explained. “We placed chairs on the platform; those who wanted special prayer and laying on of hands sat in the chairs.”⁶⁷⁸

Her meeting places resembled typical revivalist tabernacles, but they were also spaces where Woodworth-Etter accomplished two seemingly opposing tasks: her masculine duties as a warrior and her womanly responsibilities as a mother. She therefore used two metaphors for her meeting places.

Woodworth-Etter frequently referred her meeting places a “house of God,” a “home,” or a “house of prayer.”⁶⁷⁹ Whereas revivalist ministers often designated the sanctuary as a public place for the head of the household to govern the church service, Woodworth-Etter viewed the entire “house of God” as a classroom wherein she educated her children. All of her building was reserved for the private activity of domestic nurture. She spoke about her tabernacles as places wherein she could “teach divine healing pray for the sick.”⁶⁸⁰ “God showed me one night that I was to build a tabernacle,” she wrote, “so that people from all parts of the country could come in and spend some time in a good spiritual mission, and get established in God.”⁶⁸¹ She spoke proudly about her children going from the “school of the prophets,” as “flames of fire” for the Pentecostal cause.⁶⁸²

⁶⁷⁸ Woodworth, *The Life, Work, and Experience of Mariah Beulah Woodworth*, 201.

⁶⁷⁹ Woodworth-Etter, *Marvels and Miracles God Wrought in the Ministry for Forty-Five Years*, 27.

⁶⁸⁰ Maria Beulah Woodworth-Etter, *Acts of the Holy Ghost, or the Life, Work, and Experience of Mrs. M. B. Woodworth-Etter, Evangelist* (Dallas, TX: John F. Worley Printing Co., 1915), 108.

⁶⁸¹ Woodworth-Etter, *Spirit Filled Sermons*, 202.

⁶⁸² Ibid; Warner, *The Woman Evangelist: The Life and Times of Charismatic Evangelist Maria B. Woodworth-Etter*, 264; Woodworth-Etter, *Marvels and Miracles God Wrought in the Ministry for Forty-Five Years*, 352-53.

Describing the tabernacle as a domestic classroom feminized the worship space, but Woodworth-Etter also spoke of her meeting places as battlefields wherein she and her followers engaged in the very masculine act of war.⁶⁸³ Other revivalists built spiritual armories to protect believers from the onslaught of modernism, but Woodworth-Etter took it a step further and spoke of her buildings as spaces intended to go on the offensive against the powers of Satan. “As the gospel trumpet blew loud and long, the tramp of feet, of the Lord's army could be heard from all parts of the country,” she wrote of one tabernacle meeting. “They had the Lord's armor and the blood stained banners of Jesus floating in the breeze. On they came, [to the tabernacle] marching to the music of Heaven, shooting victory over all the enemies of Christ. Soon they were on the field of battle, ready to fire into the enemy's ranks.”⁶⁸⁴ The tabernacle was a warzone and Woodworth-Etter described herself as one of the Lord's commanding officers. From the stage she executed her divinely inspired battle plan. “I am still pressing the battle to the gate,”⁶⁸⁵ she wrote of her duties as a revivalist minister.

Woodworth-Etter's worship space thus held feminine aspects of her identity in tension with the masculine qualities she displayed. Her meeting places were homes where a mother could educate her children, and battlefields where a general could lead soldiers in the masculine act of war. The tabernacles' simplicity repeated

⁶⁸³ Woodworth-Etter, *Acts of the Holy Ghost, or the Life, Work, and Experience of Mrs. M. B. Woodworth-Etter, Evangelist*, 555.

⁶⁸⁴ Maria Beulah Woodworth-Etter, *Life and Experience Including Sermons and Visions of Mrs. M. B. Woodworth-Etter* (St. Louis, MO: Commercial Printing, 1904), 58.

⁶⁸⁵ Woodworth-Etter, *Acts of the Holy Ghost, or the Life, Work, and Experience of Mrs. M. B. Woodworth-Etter, Evangelist*, 11.

Woodworth-Etter's personal modesty and testified to her holiness teachings. This setting served her well in the heartland city of Indianapolis.

The Temple of the Lord

Aimee Semple McPherson, who built her worship space a mere five years after her mentor's, needed something more than Woodworth-Etter's middle-American tabernacle. Her ever-changing, hyper-feminine persona contrasted too sharply with plain, masculine tabernacle architecture, and her California setting required a worship space built on a much grander, more entertaining scale. McPherson's worship space, like her personal appearance, underwent many changes to fit her evolving identity as the bride of Christ.

During the first few years of her career, McPherson held services in traditional revivalist tents [Figure 4.4, 4.5]. Like Woodworth-Etter's, her tabernacles were sparsely decorated. They had wooden benches or chairs that faced a simple platform where McPherson stood to preach her sermons and where a pianist or a small band assembled to play music. The tabernacles' exterior had a large sign stating the minister's name and service times.

Six years after she began preaching, when she became a draw on the Pentecostal preaching circuit and quickly gathered a national following, McPherson decided to build a permanent center for her ministry. As a young woman newly separated from her husband, she found the American West an appealing place to

start over. She moved her ministry to Los Angeles and bought a piece of property in Echo Park, a neighborhood famous for its artistic, movie star residents.⁶⁸⁶

McPherson's original vision for her permanent meetinghouse was a tabernacle similar to that of Billy Sunday.⁶⁸⁷ When she first arrived, she believed that what Los Angelinos needed was the old-fashioned camp meeting atmosphere, and she imagined attending to their spiritual needs from sawdust-covered floors. She spoke about her desire to "go forth to seek and bring back the old time power into the Tabernacle of the Most High," in Los Angeles.⁶⁸⁸

McPherson's increasingly glamorous persona and her larger than life church services hardly fit a camp meeting setting. The more time she spent in Los Angeles, the more she became convinced that her church needed other than sawdust to compete with the burgeoning entertainment industry.⁶⁸⁹ "Certainly the term *tabernacle*," wrote McPherson, "was not adequate to describe the building as restructured to class A specifications."⁶⁹⁰ She then decided that what Los Angeles needed was a temple, not a tabernacle. Accordingly, what was known formerly as the Echo Park Revival Tabernacle became Angelus Temple.⁶⁹¹

⁶⁸⁶ Kevin Kuzma, "The Presence of the Past," Echo Park Historical Society.

⁶⁸⁷ Dorsett, *Billy Sunday and the Redemption of Urban America*, 65.

⁶⁸⁸ Aimee Semple McPherson, "Bringing Back the Ark," *The Bridal Call* 5, no. 2 (1921): 5.

⁶⁸⁹ ———, *The Personal Testimony of Aimee Semple Mcpherson* (Los Angeles: Heritage Department of the International Church of the Foursquare Gospel, 1998), 56.

⁶⁹⁰ McPherson, *Aimee: Life Story of Aimee Semple Mcpherson*, 123.

⁶⁹¹ ———, *The Personal Testimony of Aimee Semple Mcpherson*, 56.

The name changed the meaning of the worship space considerably. First, while tabernacles were associated with rural gatherings, a temple was urban. Thus, McPherson's meeting place veered away from the rural revivalist images upon which Woodworth-Etter and Billy Sunday capitalized. Second, a temple carried different biblical allusions than a tabernacle. Whereas a tabernacle was a portable place for itinerant people to worship God in temporary settings, a temple was a fixed place where supplicants could worship permanently. This shift had potential to change the relationship between the building (and those inside) and the outside world. A tabernacle was not meant to have a permanent geographical location, and those inside were not meant to stay and make relationship with those around them. Temples, on the other hand, were meant to be the crown jewel of a city and so to be in some sort of relationship with that city. Third, while tabernacles were simple structures by design, a temple was meant to impress visually. Just as the opulent Temple of Solomon was built in the city of Jerusalem, McPherson built her permanent, extravagant Angelus Temple, or the Temple as it came to be known, in her very own "Promised Land" of Los Angeles.⁶⁹²

The Temple's design reflected McPherson's identity as a romantic partner to her heavenly husband. Architects of the 1910s-1920s drew sharp distinctions between the "feminine grace" of certain structures "as compared with the more masculine vigor" of others.⁶⁹³ "Feminine characteristics" of architecture were defined as "softness and roundness of physical form, refinement of mentality, and

⁶⁹² Ibid., 45.

⁶⁹³ R. S. Fanning, "The Mystery of the Ionic Volute," *Architectural Record* 40(1916): 288.

grace and sweetness of spirit.”⁶⁹⁴ Whereas masculine buildings were known for their angularity and straight lines, feminine edifices were identified by their “graceful curve and enticing form, [which] seems to possess and alluring power.”⁶⁹⁵

Style Moderne epitomized this alluring power. *Style Moderne*, or art deco as it was later called, was an architectural trend from France characterized by its proponents has having feminine “grace” and “complete expressiveness”⁶⁹⁶ in contrast to the “muscular English” style that dominated American architecture.⁶⁹⁷ The clean, rounded silhouettes and curved lines coupled with elaborate, intricate appliqués and artwork were derided by detractors as an “effeminate manifestation” of modern architecture.⁶⁹⁸

Angelus Temple, designed by McPherson with the well-known Mediterranean art deco architect A. F. Leicht, was built in the *Style Moderne*.⁶⁹⁹ Whereas Woodworth-Etter’s Tabernacle was boxy and plain, the Temple was all rounded edges and soft lines. It had none of the rough-hewn angularity of revivalist tabernacles like Billy Sunday’s. It had gracefully arched windows, a domed ceiling, a rounded auditorium, and a curved stage [Figure 4.6].

⁶⁹⁴ Irving K. Pond, *The Meaning of Architecture; an Essay in Constructive Criticism* (Boston,: Marshall Jones company, 1918), 96.

⁶⁹⁵ Fanning, "The Mystery of the Ionic Volute," 288.

⁶⁹⁶ Lucy Fischer, *Designing Women : Cinema, Art Deco, and the Female Form*, Film and Culture (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), 27.

⁶⁹⁷ James Fergusson, Richard Phené Spiers, and Robert Kerr, *A History of Architecture in All Countries from the Earliest Times to the Present Day* (London: J. Murray, 1901), 311.

⁶⁹⁸ Ibid., 172.

⁶⁹⁹ Simonsen (The Foursquare Heritage Center Director).

The interior of the Temple, from entrance to exit, reflected its founder's beauty and femininity. In detail that rivaled the account of Solomon's Temple recorded in Chronicles, McPherson published page after page about the pulchritude of Angelus Temple.⁷⁰⁰ She described the Temple's blood-red carpet, velvet curtains, intricately carved wooden chairs, ornate stained glass windows, and the grand entrance.⁷⁰¹ "It is constructed," she told her followers, "of concrete and steel with multi-colored rays piercing great 30 foot stained glass windows which I designed during the journey from San Francisco to Sydney, Australia. Beautiful Angelus Temple! How I love it!"⁷⁰²

The Temple's interior design showcased two figures: Jesus the bridegroom and McPherson his bride. The ceiling was a large dome [Figure 4.7] that McPherson commissioned to be "painted as the azure blue of the sky with white fleecy clouds to remind us that Jesus is coming in the clouds of glory so that I and others might look up at it while preaching and wonder, 'Jesus are you coming during this service? Will I be ready to meet you with souls if you come right now?'"⁷⁰³

The cloudy reminder was not the only visual reference to McPherson's leading man. "To me," she wrote, "even all this was not enough. I realized that some might wonder, 'How is Jesus coming?'"⁷⁰⁴ Therefore, above the stage, McPherson

⁷⁰⁰ See for example: Aimee Semple McPherson, "The Echo Park Revival Tabernacle News," *The Bridal Call* 5, no. 11 (1922): 20.

⁷⁰¹ McPherson, *Aimee: The Life Story of Aimee Semple Mcpherson*, 122.

⁷⁰² ———, *The Personal Testimony of Aimee Semple Mcpherson*, 58.

⁷⁰³ ———, *Aimee: The Life Story of Aimee Semple Mcpherson*, 124.

⁷⁰⁴ ———, *Aimee: Life Story of Aimee Semple Mcpherson*, 124.

commissioned a forty-foot wide mural of the triumphant, resurrected Jesus. McPherson's Jesus was every bit the leading man: he was handsome, had large, expressive eyes, and he was posed with his arms outstretched to receive his bride [Figure 4.8]. On either side of the mural were four stained-glass windows depicting in great detail the life of Jesus in eight stages: birth, baptism, walking upon the waters, with the woman caught in adultery, healing the masses, in Gethsemane, on the cross, and ascending to heaven.

The window depicting the Second Coming contained one anachronistic figure: McPherson [Figure 4.9]. She waited alongside the apostles. This placement had strategic importance when it came to establishing McPherson's pastoral authority. It visually elevated her authority to biblical proportions. She was the only woman depicted in the scene, as well as the only extra-biblical figure. Her presence in the window signaled to her followers that she had the same authority and intimacy with Christ as had the ancient apostles.

McPherson's Temple took the revivalist appreciation for the theatrical to extremes. Angelus Temple bore much more resemblance to theater than chapel. Its large proscenium arch (reportedly designed by McPherson with Charlie Chaplin's assistance) was built to host pageants, cantatas, and plays [Figure 4.7].⁷⁰⁵ The stage had several entrances for dramatic presentations of the biblical stories and morality plays in which McPherson starred. A staircase on the side provided her with opportunities to make dramatic entrances. The Temple was outfitted with professional lighting (McPherson had her own spotlight), theatre seats (for

⁷⁰⁵ Janet Simonsen, 2008.

comfortable viewing), and an orchestra pit. In addition, it had an electric sound system that projected McPherson's voice to every corner of the sanctuary. Six ornately carved wooden chairs and a wooden pulpit were placed onstage. The largest and most intricately carved throne-like chair was saved for McPherson who sat under the mural of Jesus and preached about waiting for her bridegroom's return.⁷⁰⁶

Angelus Temple strikingly resembled Interwar Era movie theaters. It had similar architecture and décor to famous movie theaters such as Grauman's Million Dollar Theater (built in Los Angeles in 1918), El Capitan (built in Los Angeles in 1926) and the Fox Theatre (built in Pomona in 1931) [Figure 4.10].⁷⁰⁷ The movie theater marquee advertized the latest films starring Mary Pickford, and McPherson's Temple exterior featured a large sculpture of the minister and a billboard advertising her latest illustrated sermon [Figure 4.11]. Thus by its very appearance, the Temple prompted attendees to expect a theatrical story complete with a heroine.

In addition to signaling its builder's femininity and leading lady status, the Temple was also a monument to McPherson's power. Acquiring the funding for such a massive project was a significant display of her leadership, and the manner in which she received funding spoke to the breadth and depth of her influence. Even with large donations of labor and materials from congregation members, the Temple's construction cost some two hundred fifty thousand dollars, the equivalent

⁷⁰⁶ Simonsen (The Foursquare Heritage Center Director).

⁷⁰⁷ Fischer, *Designing Women : Cinema, Art Deco, and the Female Form*, 25.

of over three million dollars in 2012 currency.⁷⁰⁸ In order to raise funds for its construction, she spread the word about her project in *The Bridal Call*, and the money poured in.⁷⁰⁹ Some donations came one thousand dollars at a time, some of it came in twenty-five dollar increments, and some donors gave as little as one cent. According to McPherson, the Temple was constructed with an average contribution of one cent per supporter, making it a building built by hundreds of thousands of her followers.⁷¹⁰

The Temple's theatrical façade and technological accessories were also proof of McPherson's media power. In an era that saw a dramatic increase in the reach and role of the media in American public life,⁷¹¹ McPherson and her Temple were at the vanguard of every major mass media innovation. She advertized the Temple in her periodicals, and national newspapers covered its construction. Soon after it opened, McPherson purchased one of the first radio stations in Los Angeles and proudly displayed radio towers on either side of the Temple in post cards and in *Bridal Call Foursquare*.⁷¹² The radio towers told followers that McPherson's ministry was powered by exciting new technology that had a nationwide reach. Later, McPherson installed a lighted, revolving cross at the pinnacle of the Temple

⁷⁰⁸ McPherson, *Aimee: Life Story of Aimee Semple Mcpherson*, 123. According to the United States Department of Labor's Consumer Price Index, Angelus Temple's construction would cost \$3,348,473.68 in 2012 dollars. "Cpi Inflation Calculator," ed. Bureau of Labor Statistics (Washington, DC: United States Department of Labor, 2012).

⁷⁰⁹ McPherson, *Aimee: Life Story of Aimee Semple Mcpherson*, 123.

⁷¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 121.

⁷¹¹ Sternheimer, *Celebrity Culture and the American Dream: Stardom and Social Mobility*, 2-3.

⁷¹² Tona J. Hangen, *Redeeming the Dial: Radio, Religion & Popular Culture in America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 68.

dome.⁷¹³ The cross became a local landmark and a symbol of McPherson's twenty-four hours a day, seven days per week ministry.

Another demonstration of McPherson's spiritual authority was the famous "500 Room." She designated this small auditorium located off the main sanctuary as a space dedicated to teach, practice, and receiving prayer for healing.⁷¹⁴ The room, which hosted over 80,000 participants in 1924 alone,⁷¹⁵ was decorated with various medical paraphernalia discarded by those claiming to have been healed.⁷¹⁶ Thus, casts, crutches, eyeglasses, etc. surrounded attendees and testified to the power of McPherson's healing ministry.

The Temple's commissary demonstrated McPherson's significant civic presence as well as her spiritual authority. At the commissary, locals in need were served with groceries, clothing, and medical supplies.⁷¹⁷ McPherson was fond of boasting that the Temple surpassed municipal powers when it came to providing for local immigrant and poor Los Angelinos.⁷¹⁸ Her boast was fair. The Temple provided food and social services throughout the 1920s and was one of the city's primary relief organizations in the early years of the Great Depression.⁷¹⁹ "Aimee

⁷¹³ Dr. Page Putnam Miller, Jill S. Topolski, and Vernon Horn, "National Historic Landmark Nomination Form," ed. Department of the Interior National Park Service (Washington, DC: National Register of Historic Places, 1991).

⁷¹⁴ Daniel Mark Epstein, *Sister Aimee: The Life of Aimee Semple Mcpherson*, 1st ed. (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1993), 266.

⁷¹⁵ Blumhofer, *Aimee Semple Mcpherson: Everybody's Sister*, 250.

⁷¹⁶ Simonsen (The Foursquare Heritage Center Director).

⁷¹⁷ Ibid.

⁷¹⁸ Ibid.

⁷¹⁹ Sutton, *Aimee Semple Mcpherson and the Resurrection of Christian America*, 189.

Simple McPherson-Hutton and her Angelus temple are something more to Los Angeles than a source of surprising and entertaining news," reported one *Associated Press* writer. "In the last 11 months the 'commissary' of the temple provided free groceries to 40,110 persons, or 10,769 families."⁷²⁰ The aid that the Temple provided bolstered McPherson's status as a power player in Los Angeles and gave her a national reputation as a community leader as well as a celebrity revivalist. Thus, in form and function, Angelus Temple represented McPherson the ministerial bride of Christ.

Conclusion

Like their male counterparts, Woodworth-Etter and McPherson used their revivalist space to convey their ministerial identities and their messages. Whereas male revivalist used the space to showcase their masculine form and manly sensibilities, Woodworth-Etter and McPherson reframed the space to suit their female ministries. Woodworth-Etter's tabernacles displayed all the power of a male ministry, but in her rhetoric she made it the home for a warring mother rather than a manly minister. Her tabernacles' austere architecture and lack of ornamentation were an ideal venue for spreading her message of modesty and holiness; the Maria B. Woodworth-Etter Tabernacle was unencumbered by the things of the world. It was a place for spiritual nomads passing through to the Promised Land.

⁷²⁰ "Angelus Temple Gives Aid to Thousands of Needy: Free Dining Hall Has Also Been Opened," *The Florence Times*, March 18 1932.

McPherson's Temple on the other hand showcased its minister's leading lady, bridal persona through its elaborate décor and its theatrical design. It also served as a visual reminder of her clout in Pentecostal revivalist circles, her influence in broadly evangelical revivalism, and her political power in the city of Los Angeles. In this way, it was large-scale proclamation of the minister and her message.

CHAPTER V

THE ROAR OF THUNDER AND THE SWEETNESS OF A WOMAN: POWER AND GENDER IN REVIVALIST PERFORMANCE

“Her appearance was so striking, so supernatural that it would have impressed anyone.”⁷²¹

On a stirring Woodworth-Etter performance, 1890

“Her voice is the roar of thunder and the sweetness of a woman.”⁷²²

On the power of McPherson’s preaching, 1926

Woodworth-Etter and McPherson’s worship spaces provided followers and skeptics with visual signals of their identities as female ministers. The buildings were impressive, but the bodily acts⁷²³ performed within them in the form of revivalist preaching were what made them sacred vessels of the ministers’ messages. These “spatial practices – the ‘techniques of the body,’ the formalized ‘gestures of approach,’ and the location and direction of embodied movement – all contribute[d] towards producing the distinctive quality of sacred space,” in Woodworth-Etter and McPherson’s revivalist meeting places.⁷²⁴

⁷²¹ Theodore Diller, "Hypnotism in a Religious Meeting," *The Medical News* 57, no. 13 (1890): 303.

⁷²² Allene Sumner, "Prison Bars Will Not Dim Ardor of Aimee Mcpherson's Faithful," *Milwaukee Journal*, September 25 1926.

⁷²³ Bell, *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice*, 205.

⁷²⁴ David Chidester and Edward Tabor Linenthal, *American Sacred Space*, Religion in North America (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995), 10.

Revivalist preaching performances were, “fundamentally a way of doing things to trigger the perception that these practices are special,” and as such were ritualized acts.⁷²⁵ It was during the ritualized act of revivalist preaching, a performance during which the minister received and the congregation gave power,⁷²⁶ that Woodworth-Etter’s Tabernacle became “a glorious symbol”⁷²⁷ of her powerful work and McPherson’s Temple became host to “a mighty spiritual revival.”⁷²⁸

Woodworth-Etter and McPherson were not alone in their penchant for revivalist preaching. 1890s-1920s celebrity revivalist ministers were not best known for their public image, their buildings, or their biblical interpretations. They were famous for their performances during revivalist services.⁷²⁹ Characterized as an effort to spontaneously “awaken, alarm, excite,”⁷³⁰ by proponents, and as “vulgarity wrongfully labeled religious exhortations,”⁷³¹ by opponents, revivalist services were the most noteworthy and notorious aspect of any revivalist minister’s career.

⁷²⁵ Bell, *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice*, 205.

⁷²⁶ *Ibid.*, 216.

⁷²⁷ Woodworth-Etter, “Woodworth-Etter Campaign in Indianapolis.”

⁷²⁸ McPherson, *Aimee: Life Story of Aimee Semple McPherson*, 126.

⁷²⁹ Holifield, *God’s Ambassadors: A History of the Christian Clergy in America*, 127.

⁷³⁰ R. M. Patterson, “Revival Preaching,” *The Presbyterian Banner* (1902): 12.

⁷³¹ Emil Hirsch, “A Case with a Difference,” *The Advocate* 49, no. 10 (1915): 301.

Revivalist services shared a standard structure. Usually, they included singing and prayer, a sermon, an offertory, and an altar call.⁷³² The order or elements of the service might change slightly (for example many services included extended testimony time or a healing service in addition to an altar call),⁷³³ but for the most part, the components of the revivalist service were fixed.

Ministers did not necessarily perform all aspects of the service, but they were the masters of ceremonies, and the responsibility for creating and promoting the revival experience rested primarily upon their shoulders.⁷³⁴ Instructional books such as *Revivals: How to Promote Them, One Hundred Revival Sermons and Outlines, The Revival and the Pastor, The Revival*, and *Revivalist Addresses* argued that pastors made or broke revival meetings.⁷³⁵ “The Christian minister,” observed one revivalist, “stands somehow at the center of this [revivalist] task.”⁷³⁶ “Nothing moves without the pastor,” wrote another, “and nothing moves ahead of the pastor.”⁷³⁷

⁷³² Robinson and Ruff, *Out of the Mouths of Babes: Girl Evangelists in the Flapper Era*, 111-19.

⁷³³ Wacker, *Heaven Below: Early Pentecostals and American Culture*, 113.

⁷³⁴ Mark A. Noll, *A History of Christianity in the United States and Canada* (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 1992), 176.

⁷³⁵ See: C. P. McIlvaine et al., *Revivals. How to Promote Them.*, ed. Walter P. Doe (New York: E. B. Treat, 1895), 444; W. A. Tyson, *The Revival* (Nashville: Cokesbury Press, 1925), 187; Peck, *The Revival and the Pastor*, 264; Barton, *One Hundred Revival Sermons and Outlines*, viii; Riley, *The Perennial Revival; a Plea for Evangelism*, 50; Frank Grenville Beardsley, *A Mighty Winner of Souls: Charles G. Finney, a Study in Evangelism* (New York: American tract society, 1937), 35.

⁷³⁶ MacDonald et al., *The Revival: A Symposium*, 9.

⁷³⁷ Committee on the War and Religious Outlook, *Christian Unity: Its Principles and Possibilities* (New York: Association Press, 1921), 262.

Ministers promoted revival through their pulpit performances.⁷³⁸ The primary goal of the revivalist sermon was to, “arrest their [audience’s] attention and tell them that Christ will save them *now*.”⁷³⁹ With emotional appeal and a sense of immediacy, revivalist preaching was expected to mediate an emotional, psychological, and physical experience to attendees.⁷⁴⁰ The power of the minister’s preaching and ability to facilitate revival was evidenced through the “scandalous practices”⁷⁴¹ exhibited by attendees. Weeping, laughing, shouting, kneeling, fainting, shaking, testifying, speaking in tongues, or speaking prophetically demonstrated the minister’s authority.⁷⁴²

Revivalist literature testifies to the role that a minister’s performance played in setting apart the special time and space of revivalist services. A minister’s preaching, according to revivalist Jonas Oramel Peck, brought the presence of God into the lives of the attendees. He wrote that the pastor would “marshal his forces

⁷³⁸ Robinson and Ruff, *Out of the Mouths of Babes: Girl Evangelists in the Flapper Era*, 118; Hartley, *Evangelicals at a Crossroads: Revivalism and Social Reform in Boston, 1860-1910*, 16.

⁷³⁹ J. O. Peck, *The Revival and the Pastor* (New York, Hunt & Eaton; Cincinnati,: Cranston & Curts, 1894), 118.

⁷⁴⁰ See: Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 73; Bridgers, *The American Religious Experience: A Concise History*, 8; Richard E. Wentz, *American Religious Traditions: The Shaping of Religion in the United States* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003), 201; Donald Charles Swift, *Religion and the American Experience: A Social and Cultural History, 1765-1997* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1998), 4; Marianne Perciaccante, *Calling Down Fire: Charles Grandison Finney and Revivalism in Jefferson County, New York, 1800-1840* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2003), 66.

⁷⁴¹ Cooper, *The Great Revivalists in American Religion, 1740-1944: The Careers and Theology of Jonathan Edwards, Charles Finney, Dwight Moody, Billy Sunday and Aimee Semple Mcpherson*, 32; Noll, *America’s God: From Jonathan Edwards to Abraham Lincoln*, 295.

⁷⁴² Cooper, *The Great Revivalists in American Religion, 1740-1944: The Careers and Theology of Jonathan Edwards, Charles Finney, Dwight Moody, Billy Sunday and Aimee Semple Mcpherson*, 32; Noll, *America’s God: From Jonathan Edwards to Abraham Lincoln*, 295.

to bring about times of refreshing from on high."⁷⁴³ Revivalist William Bell Riley wrote that, "when he [the preacher] appeared in the pulpit on Sundays, the people were overawed with the sense of Christ being in the preacher. It was Christ's face they saw beaming on them in the face of their pastor, and his tones thrilled with the power of the voice which once spoke on earth as 'never man spake.'"⁷⁴⁴ Riley's ideal revivalist minister sanctified himself and his pulpit by setting both apart from every day moments.

The "Throne of Eloquence"

As ritualized acts, revivalist preaching performances were the site for the creation and negotiation of power.⁷⁴⁵ For male ministers, each performance was an opportunity for the minister to signify⁷⁴⁶ his masculinity and authority for his congregation, and for his congregation to recognize, submit, and further constitute that male power.⁷⁴⁷ "The work of soul-saving," wrote Jonas Oramel Peck, author of *The Revival and the Pastor*, "will develop the most robust qualities of manhood [in the pastor]."⁷⁴⁸ The primary method for accomplishing this was to present

⁷⁴³ Peck, *The Revival and the Pastor*, 12-13.

⁷⁴⁴ Riley, *The Perennial Revival; a Plea for Evangelism*, 49-50.

⁷⁴⁵ Bell, *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice*, 216.

⁷⁴⁶ Hollywood, "Performativity, Citationality, Ritualization," 101.

⁷⁴⁷ Bendroth, *Fundamentalism & Gender, 1875 to the Present*, 13.

⁷⁴⁸ Peck, *The Revival and the Pastor*, 40.

congregants with a “representative man”⁷⁴⁹ who possessed a manly body and manly gestures and vocal patterns. “Effeminate habits of voice, of manner, of thought, of method or language,” wrote the William Henry Young in his revivalist instructional manual, *How to Preach with Power*, “should therefore be eschewed.”⁷⁵⁰

Revivalists showed their masculinity in their pulpit performance.⁷⁵¹ Billy Sunday gave the quintessential manly performance of the early twentieth century. The minister billed himself as the “most vigorous speaker on the platform today,” and his body was an integral part of his manly preaching.⁷⁵² “Sunday is a physical sermon,” wrote his official biographer; “no posture is too extreme for this restless gymnast.”⁷⁵³ Sunday developed several signature moves that showed off his physical form and his virile energy. The former baseball player was best known for sliding into an imaginary home plate in the pulpit or raising his hands over his congregation and making an overhand throwing motion as if his gospel were a baseball and his sermon was full of pitches.⁷⁵⁴ He had several other folksy-named signature moves that included the “bucking broncho [sic],” “a balky mule,” and

⁷⁴⁹ Thomas D. Morison, “The Evangelical Repository,” (Philadelphia, PA: W.S. Young, 1883), 90.

⁷⁵⁰ William Henry Young, *How to Preach with Power*, 3rd ed. (Athens, GA: The How Publishing Co., 1909), 276.

⁷⁵¹ Roxanne Mountford, *The Gendered Pulpit: Preaching in American Protestant Spaces*, Studies in Rhetorics and Feminisms (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2003), 45; Best, *Passionately Human, No Less Divine: Religion and Culture in Black Chicago, 1915-1952*, 155.

⁷⁵² William T. Ellis, *Billy Sunday: The Man and His Message* (Philadelphia: The John C. Winston Company, 1936), 138.

⁷⁵³ *Ibid.*, 139.

⁷⁵⁴ “Easter,” (United States 1917).

“shelling the woods.”⁷⁵⁵ His raspy voice and intense, rapid, sing-song cadence was known to deliver “word bullets with his Gatling gun which grew almost white with heat at times.”⁷⁵⁶ His performances gave audiences a demonstration of ideal manhood: physically fit, tough, fearless, and aggressive.

Ministers displayed their masculine authority most clearly during the distinctively revivalist performance of the altar call. This “invitation,” as it was also known, was the grand finale of the revivalist service. After the singing, offertory,⁷⁵⁷ and preaching, ministers invited sinners and the sick to the altar to pray. Ministers offered followers the opportunity to come forward to pray for salvation or to rededicate their lives to the revival gospel, and those who specialized in “faith cures” like A. B. Simpson, William Seymour, Smith Wigglesworth, and John G. Lake added prayer for healing to their altar call.

Revivalist literature was replete with recommendations for the efficacious execution of the altar call. Revivalist William Edward Biederwolf recommended a series invitations for salvation and healing followed by a series of questions such as, “How many of you are ready now to say that if God should call you tonight you would like to be prepared and to know that God would be pleased with you when you meet Him, will you rise?”⁷⁵⁸ The pastor “must simply proceed, with all the

⁷⁵⁵ “I Am Too Tired!” Billy Sunday Cries,” *The New York Times*, May 30 1917.

⁷⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁵⁷ The offertory was probably the most mobile of all revivalist service elements. Sometimes a preacher would give the offertory before the altar call and sometimes the offertory closed the service.

⁷⁵⁸ William Edward Biederwolf, *Evangelism: Its Justification, Its Operation, and Its Value* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1921), 195-202.

power God has given him,” wrote revivalist Jonas Oramel Peck, “in a legitimate and sensible method, to warn, entreat, and arouse his hearers to accept the invitation of the Gospel and be saved.”⁷⁵⁹ The job of the revivalist minister, according to R. A. Torrey, was to perform the manly act of explaining the reasonableness of the revivalist gospel. He argued that the pastor was responsible for convincing the attendee of “how utterly irrational and absurd are all the excuses that men make for not coming to Christ,” when prompted by the altar call.⁷⁶⁰

During the altar call, the preacher, the masculine initiator, invited men and women to come forward and receive the salvation or healing they offered on behalf of Christ. When women and men came forward to the altar, the act of response was characterized in virtually every revivalist publication as the feminine act of surrender or yielding.⁷⁶¹ “I will guarantee one thing,” wrote R. A. Torrey, “that if you will accept Jesus Christ with all your heart and surrender your whole life to Him, and His control, and publicly confess Him before the world, God will send you His

⁷⁵⁹ Peck, *The Revival and the Pastor*, 109.

⁷⁶⁰ Torrey, *Revival Addresses*, 219.

⁷⁶¹ William Bell Riley, *Revival Sermons; Essentials in Effective Evangelism* (New York: Fleming H. Revell company, 1929), 24, 32, 81; MacDonald et al., *The Revival: A Symposium*, 36, 123, 34, 41; Riley, *The Perennial Revival; a Plea for Evangelism*, 37, 70-72, 81, 87, 117, 46, 55; Evan Roberts et al., *The Story of the Welsh Revival as Told by Eyewitnesses: Together with a Sketch of Evan Roberts and His Message to the World* (New York: F.H. Revell, 1905), 13, 69; Torrey, *Revival Addresses*, 83, 140, 91, 201, 70; J. Wilbur Chapman, *Revival Sermons* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1911), 135, 91, 211; Peck, *The Revival and the Pastor*, 30, 61, 68-69, 80, 122, 64, 66-67, 99, 244, 62; Frederick M. Barton, *One Hundred Revival Sermons and Outlines* (New York: Hodder & Stoughton, 1906), 89, 128, 68, 80, 209, 38, 49, 361, 79, 427, 33, 47-48, 51; Len G. Broughton, *The Revival of a Dead Church*, vol. 5, The Colportage Library (Chicago: The Bible Institute Colportage Association, 1900), 11-12, 23-24, 46, 53, 60, 101; Orrin Philip Gifford, *Honest Debtors; Sermons and Addresses* (Philadelphia: The Judson Press, 1922), 25-26, 48-49, 69, 85-86, 89, 114-15, 27-29, 48, 54, 71, 215; Frederick Watson Hannan, *Evangelism* (New York: The Methodist Book Concern, 1921), 162, 84, 229; Alfred E. Garvie, *The Christian Preacher*, International Theological Library (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1920), 102, 83, 287, 315, 96, 441.

Holy Spirit into your heart, filling it with a joy you never knew before.”⁷⁶² “Yield yourselves to him.’ He leads the yielded one,” advised William Bell Riley.⁷⁶³

Yielding and surrender were the ultimate goal of any invitation. “I do not much care whether you hold a protracted meeting or do not hold one; whether you invite people to the altar or to an inquiry-room, or do not invite them to either; whether you invite people to rise for prayers or sign a ‘Decision Card;’ whether you draw the line sharply, or do not draw it at all; whether you hold special services, or make services special,” wrote revivalist J. H. MacDonald, “so long as in some way – and that your own way – you get men and women, boys and girls, to surrender to Jesus Christ.”⁷⁶⁴

These acts of surrender were often accompanied by non-masculine acts of weeping, kneeling, or embracing fellow worshipers.⁷⁶⁵ “When the sermon was over,” wrote one revivalist pastor, “the governor as he passed out took my hand, but could not speak. He was trembling with emotion and his eyes overflowed with tears.”⁷⁶⁶

The masculine minister and yielding congregation placed the congregants (both male and female) in the role of the feminine. Given that muscular Christians were anxious to avoid labeling their male followers as feminine in any way, many revivalists tried to frame the invitation and subsequent response as a manly task.

⁷⁶² Torrey, *Revival Addresses*, 247.

⁷⁶³ Riley, *The Perennial Revival; a Plea for Evangelism*, 81.

⁷⁶⁴ MacDonald et al., *The Revival: A Symposium*, 134.

⁷⁶⁵ McClymond, *Embodying the Spirit: New Perspectives on North American Revivalism*, 33.

⁷⁶⁶ Peck, *The Revival and the Pastor*, 261.

For example, A. B. Simpson countered the notion that faith cures were expressions of femininity.⁷⁶⁷ He spoke of divine healing not a passive, receptive, and feminine practice, but an act in keeping with the manly, “strenuous life.”⁷⁶⁸ “It is a manly, robust thing to follow Jesus Christ,”⁷⁶⁹ preached revivalist Gipsy Smith to young men who believed that only women, “grip God’s altar;” “Put on thy strength,” he wrote quoting Isaiah 52:1, “Pull your full weight, man! Play the game! Pluck out everything that saps your manhood and palsies your spiritual achievement.”⁷⁷⁰ Billy Sunday’s altar calls went out to woman and men, but he paid special attention to the men in the audience. The altar calls were often accompanied by appeals to men in the audience to, “show your manhood. In the name of your pure mother, in the name of your manhood, in the name of your wife, and in the name of the pure innocent children that climb up in your lap and put their arms around your neck, in the name of all that is good and noble, fight the curse.”⁷⁷¹ One revivalist even tried to show that the emotionality that characterized revivalist meetings was not a womanly

⁷⁶⁷ "Faith-Healing, Christian Science, and Kindred Phenomena," *The Popular Science Monthly* 43, no. 2 (1893): 271.

⁷⁶⁸ Curtis, *Faith in the Great Physician: Suffering and Divine Healing in American Culture, 1860-1900*, 106.

⁷⁶⁹ Gipsy Smith, *Real Religion; Revival Sermons Delivered During His Twentieth Visit to America* (New York: George H. Doran Company, 1922), 102.

⁷⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷⁷¹ Brown, *The Real Billy Sunday: The Life and Work of Rev. William Ashley Sunday, D.D., the Baseball Evangelist*, 214; Robert Francis Martin, *Hero of the Heartland: Billy Sunday and the Transformation of American Society, 1862-1935* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002), 128.

response, but an act of masculine bravery. "If you are afraid of emotions," he challenged his readers, "you'd better give the revival a wide berth."⁷⁷²

Celebrity revivalists were known for their ability to encourage followers to yield money as well as their person, and large public offerings were opportunities for followers to display their masculine prosperity. For example, late nineteenth and early twentieth century revivalist A. B. Simpson was famous (and infamous) for his ability to collect money and converts simultaneously. At the end of a typical sermon, Simpson said to his congregation, "I want to ask every one here who is willing to devote his life to the work of spreading the Gospel in heathen lands to rise."⁷⁷³ He paused and waited. Several women and men stood. "The first pledge," reported the *New York Times*, "was one of \$50. Then there followed several of small amount, and then there came one for \$400. The next two were small, but were followed by a pledge of \$1,800. The next was for \$100 and the next for \$3,000. As this last was announced the congregation began to sing, 'Oh How I love Jesus.' Then there came pledges of \$1,200, \$1,000, \$1,600, \$2,000, and \$4,000."⁷⁷⁴

In spite of efforts to make male respondents seem masculine, the minister-congregant revivalist performance was essentially a masculine-feminine exchange. While large offerings showed the prosperity of the follower, in the 1910s and 1920s, when financial prosperity was closely aligned with masculinity, Simpson and other revivalists' ability to evoke financial submission ultimately underscored the

⁷⁷² Roberts et al., *The Story of the Welsh Revival as Told by Eyewitnesses: Together with a Sketch of Evan Roberts and His Message to the World*, 31.

⁷⁷³ "Pledges for Missions," *New York Times*, October 15 1900.

⁷⁷⁴ Ibid.

minister's manliness and the congregation's status their feminine respondent. While it may have taken courage to show emotions, stereotypical weeping and wailing of a revivalist meeting departed from rational late nineteenth and early twentieth century masculinity. The altar call, with its feminine response of yielding and surrender, made the role of the minister seem naturally male and the role of the congregant female. On one side was the aggressive masculine minister and on the other side, the receptive feminine audience.

A female stepping in to the role of altar caller disrupted this neat binary and threatened the sanctity of the masculine pulpit. Many believed that women in this role went against nature. The "Discontented Man's" argument that, "there is in most of us an inwardness of instinct against setting up a female in the prominence of the pulpit to lecture on their sins to a mixed congregation of men and women," gave voice to this popular opinion.⁷⁷⁵ 1890s-1920s Protestants worried that female ministers would neuter the pulpit's power with their womanliness. "Everything," wrote revivalist William Henry Young, "that savors more of the woman than the man [in the pulpit] is a virtual abdication of that [pulpit's] 'Throne of eloquence.'"⁷⁷⁶

In spite of the danger of abdicating the "throne of eloquence," female revivalist ministers were required, like any other revivalist, to demonstrate power in the pulpit. Woodworth-Etter and McPherson's preaching showed that demonstrating power without manliness was a complex task. On the surface, the women appeared to run business-as-usual revival meetings. Their services included

⁷⁷⁵ "The Malcontent Woman by a Discontent Man."

⁷⁷⁶ Young, *How to Preach with Power*, 276.

music, sermons, offertories, and altar calls, but their performances could not be the exchange of power between a male minister demonstrating and receiving power and his feminized audience. Thus the challenge was to perform powerfully enough to induce submission and surrender, yet not to compromise their womanliness.

The Mother and the War at Home

Woodworth-Etter made up for her non-maleness by emphasizing her status as a receptacle of God during her preaching performances. After several minutes of singing, shouting, dancing, and crying, her audience was “held as under a spell,” ready to hear from their pastor.⁷⁷⁷ Woodworth-Etter came to the platform. Instead of beginning her sermon immediately, as her male counterparts did, she stood in front of her congregation and waited to receive power from God.⁷⁷⁸ “At the meeting when Sister Etter entered,” wrote one observer, “the power of God came upon her and she stood with uplifted hands looking out into the beyond, for a long while.”⁷⁷⁹ “She rose on her toes a number of times and her eyes assumed a glassy stare, wide

⁷⁷⁷ Woodworth-Etter, *Signs and Wonders*, 100.

⁷⁷⁸ Stanley Frodsham, “Spiritual Life Must Precede Her Cures: Alleged Divine Healer Says That Her Successes Are Due to Spirit of the Lord Working through Her,” *The Indianapolis Star*, September 10 1904.

⁷⁷⁹ Woodworth-Etter, *Marvels and Miracles God Wrought in the Ministry for Forty-Five Years*, 454.

open," wrote the *Indianapolis Star*.⁷⁸⁰ "She remained in this position half an hour. After a time, all was deathly still. All waited to see what she would do."⁷⁸¹

This moment of silence gave the audience opportunity to observe Woodworth-Etter receive direct, unmediated access to God.⁷⁸² Her silence deemphasized her agency by highlighting the role that God played in and through her. Woodworth-Etter always vehemently denied being a medium or spiritualist, but her words and actions tended to undermine her objections. "God has had possession of my body," she said in a typical utterance.⁷⁸³ "He is giving you a warning. I am not God, but he is here. The gates of heaven will soon be shut. Christ is coming again, while many of you here are living. You will see Him."⁷⁸⁴

Once she had received power, Woodworth-Etter wielded it freely. Rather than adopting gestures that displayed feminine virtues of submission, deference, or domesticity, such as kneeling or bowing, she assumed the role of commanding officer in the coming, "battle against the enemy of souls."⁷⁸⁵ From the pulpit, she executed her battle plan by dispensing male and female "praying lieutenants" to pray with attendees.⁷⁸⁶ As a spiritual military leader she used large, commanding

⁷⁸⁰ "Woodworth-Etter Goes into a Trance," *The Indianapolis Star*, October 2 1904.

⁷⁸¹ Ibid.

⁷⁸² Frodsham, "Spiritual Life Must Precede Her Cures: Alleged Divine Healer Says That Her Successes Are Due to Spirit of the Lord Working through Her."

⁷⁸³ "Woodworth-Etter Goes into a Trance."

⁷⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁸⁵ Woodworth-Etter, *Marvels and Miracles God Wrought in the Ministry for Forty-Five Years*, 10.

⁷⁸⁶ "An Insane Female Evangelist Declares Herself in Communion with the Blessed Trinity and the Devil."

gestures similar to those of her male counterparts.⁷⁸⁷ “I raised my hand in the name of the Lord and commanded them to listen. I said the Lord had sent me there to do them good, and that I would not leave until the Lord told me to – when our work was done. The power of God fell,” she wrote of their response to her gesture and message, “and the fear of God came upon the multitude. One Catholic said that I had struck him down, and showed him hell.”⁷⁸⁸

Woodworth-Etter used her “strong and clear” voice to transmit her message.⁷⁸⁹ When she preached, she had none of the softness, quietness, or “too high pitched” qualities associated with the “feminine voice.”⁷⁹⁰ The small woman boomed her messages about the end of the world with a raspy resonance. “God gave me voice and power to hold the people still as if death was in our midst,” she wrote after a particularly rousing “battle.”⁷⁹¹ Her followers wrote that her voice even had authority to exorcise and resurrect. “In Jesus’ name [Woodworth-Etter] commanded the drug demon to come out of him, it threw him on the ground and fought like a snake. Some thought he was dying, and apparently he did die; but when the Resurrection Power struck him he arose from the floor and walked back and forth across the platform, shouting and praising God, very much alive.”⁷⁹²

With her strong voice, she ordered local pastors, her fellow soldiers in the

⁷⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸⁸ ———, *Marvels and Miracles God Wrought in the Ministry for Forty-Five Years*, 65.

⁷⁸⁹ ———, *Signs and Wonders*, 66.

⁷⁹⁰ Ibid., 100.

⁷⁹¹ ———, *Marvels and Miracles God Wrought in the Ministry for Forty-Five Years*, 252.

⁷⁹² Ibid.

fight, to the platform for prayer and exhortation.⁷⁹³ She charged her attendees to support the future work of the church by supporting the “dear boys” (usually men) that were the area’s permanent ministers.⁷⁹⁴ Referring to the pastors as boys likely reinforced her role as mother and it bolstered her authority because it showed that Woodworth-Etter had power even to command male ministers.

Woodworth-Etter domesticated her performance with acts reminiscent of an educated mother,⁷⁹⁵ including childcare, and providing, “the benefits of education,” to the public sphere of her congregation.⁷⁹⁶ For example, she dedicated time to teaching her congregants the proper use and meaning of Pentecostal practices. The *Topeka Daily Capital* reported one such instance:

As two young people danced frenziedly back and forth on the stage Mrs. Woodworth-Etter smiled at them approvingly.

“The Spirit of God,” she frequently exclaimed.

As they danced the young woman’s hair had become loosened and hung below her waist. She frequently brushed aside the locks that fell over her face. The two danced unceasingly for twenty-two minutes. As they paused, the young woman stretched out her arms toward the audience and began uttering unintelligible words, mostly made up of sibilant sounds and ending in vowels.

“God speaking through lips and tongues of clay,” exclaimed Mrs. Woodworth-Etter.

The young woman continued and spoke rapidly. Occasionally her words could be distinguished. Her eyes were closed as she spoke. Finally she stopped and retired to a nearby seat. The young man who had stood by with his hands covering his face suddenly stepped forward and began talking

⁷⁹³ ———, *Life and Experience Including Sermons and Visions of Mrs. M. B. Woodworth-Etter*, 63; Seeley D. Kinne, “God’s Deeds of Mercy and Power in Chicago,” *Word and Witness* 9, no. 8 (1913).

⁷⁹⁴ Stanley Frodsham, “Glorious Victories of God in Dallas, Texas,” *Word and Witness* 9, no. 1 (1913).

⁷⁹⁵ Hays, *The Cultural Contradictions of Motherhood*, 39-54.

⁷⁹⁶ Zenas Davis, “Useless Knowledge,” *Good Housekeeping*, March 1888, 280; Wilbur Fisk Tillett, “Southern Womanhood,” *The Century Illustrated Monthly Magazine*, November 1891, 16.

in the same manner that his companion had, but his words were more inarticulate, though louder. After speaking for several moments, he stopped abruptly and put his hands over his face. He was silent a moment and then began groaning in a wailing tone, not unlike a patient first recovering consciousness after an anesthetic.

“Heed the Spirit’s warning,” said Mrs. Woodworth-Etter.

“Amen,” shouted a dozen others.

Mrs. Woodworth-Etter explained that the two converts had received the gift of tongues. She said that they spoke in different languages and could be understood by a linguist or parts of their speech could be understood by those familiar with the language in which it was spoken.⁷⁹⁷

This account is a typical example of how Woodworth-Etter used the pulpit to teach her children about Pentecostal practices (in this instance, glossolalia) and their proper execution. She permitted and encouraged certain expressions such as dancing and tongues, and gave these practices doctrinal support. According to her teachings, they were not freakish expressions, but the “Spirit’s warning,” and “words of God.”⁷⁹⁸

Like other revivals, Woodworth-Etter meetings ended with an altar call for salvation and for healing. “I prayed for God to display his power,” she said of one altar call, “that the sinner might now that God still lives.”⁷⁹⁹ During crowded meetings, she used her onstage chairs to expedite the process. “We had three chairs on the platform in which the sick sat to be prayed for. I had one of my best workers at each chair; they would talk to the sick – some spiritually, and others physically

⁷⁹⁷ Woodworth-Etter and Liardon, *Maria Woodworth-Etter: The Complete Collection of Her Life Teachings*, 495.

⁷⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 97-102.

⁷⁹⁹ Woodworth-Etter, *Marvels and Miracles God Wrought in the Ministry for Forty-Five Years*, 31.

sick – and teach them the Word of God, and how to receive; then I would pray for them.”⁸⁰⁰

Woodworth-Etter could have performed healings with the demeanor of a medical professional. She could have invited people to the stage, diagnosed them, and then prayed for healing. She could have imitated her male contemporaries and taken on the role of masculine healer warring with sickness on behalf of her congregation. Unlike male healing revivalists such as A. B. Simpson, who presented the “faith cure” as an opportunity for followers to display muscular energy,⁸⁰¹ Woodworth-Etter’s healing services were an invitation to experience healing from a “mother’s hand.”⁸⁰²

Rather than taking on the role of military coordinator during altar calls, Woodworth-Etter’s plump, diminutive frame changed when she prayed for healing. The extended arms and grand gestures that elongated her frame and filled the stage with energy while she preached were replaced by smaller gestures and more personal body language during healing services. She went from being a warrior to a caregiver. As Woodworth-Etter reached down from her podium to pray for sick attendees, she struck a nurturing, motherly pose. She touched people’s faces, arms, backs, and stomachs and prayed for healing.⁸⁰³ She spoke quietly with the sick,

⁸⁰⁰ Ibid., 412.

⁸⁰¹ Curtis, *Faith in the Great Physician: Suffering and Divine Healing in American Culture, 1860-1900*, 106.

⁸⁰² Walter Baxendale, *Dictionary of Anecdote, Incident, Illustrative Fact, Selected and Arranged for the Pulpit and the Platform* (New York: T. Whittaker, 1888), 406.

⁸⁰³“The Day of God's Visitation: The Lame Walk, the Blind See, the Deaf Hear," *The Latter Rain Evangel* 5, no. 11 (1913): 4.

nodding with understanding as men and women told her about their illnesses. She made a point to pray individually with as many sick or injured people as she could during her services. She made house calls.⁸⁰⁴

The *Chicago Herald* recorded one such healing moment. "Stooping over, the evangelist began removing the bandages, speaking words of hope all the while. Other assistants were around the woman singing and calling on the Lord for help. Finally Mr. [sic] Sea arose with a look of happiness and relief. She moved her arms and joined in the demonstrations made over her recovery."⁸⁰⁵ Woodworth-Etter frequently replicated the actions she performed for Mrs. Sea as she bandaged, wiped brows, hugged, and held the hands of her followers. Attendees regularly came forward to ask, "Dear Mother Etter"⁸⁰⁶ to lay hands on them, pray for them, and heal them.

By all accounts, Woodworth-Etter's followers accepted her role as their educator and nurturing healer. "Mrs. Etter gave us some motherly advice and encouraged us very much," wrote Herbert W. Thomas and Wife, of their time at the Tabernacle.⁸⁰⁷ "Mother Etter preached the most wonderful sermon," wrote admirer

⁸⁰⁴ "Indiana State News: Happenings Throughout the State During the Past Week," *Bluffton Weekly Chronicle*, September 17 1885.

⁸⁰⁵ "Made Whole by Faith," *Chicago Herald*, October 20 1887.

⁸⁰⁶ Woodworth-Etter, *Life and Testimony of Mrs. M. B. Woodworth-Etter*, 128. For additional examples of testimonies to Woodworth-Etter's healing act, see: ———, *Marvels and Miracles God Wrought in the Ministry for Forty-Five Years*, 432-35; ———, *Life and Experience Including Sermons and Visions of Mrs. M. B. Woodworth-Etter*, 97-102.

⁸⁰⁷ Woodworth-Etter, *Marvels and Miracles God Wrought in the Ministry for Forty-Five Years*, 402.

W. B. Oaks of the “power and victory” of her ministry.⁸⁰⁸ Attendees sang songs and recited poetry celebrating her spiritual motherhood. “Many rise up to call you blessed, dear,” wrote one poet whose sonnet echoed the ideal woman and mother in Proverbs 31:28.⁸⁰⁹ Her pastor disciples gave her motherly authority over their lives and ministries. Her protégés Reverend Birdsall and Reverend F. F. Bosworth acknowledged her role in their lives as that of a “mother in Israel,” and that they were her “two dear boys.”⁸¹⁰ Pentecostals who came to the movement through her ministers referred to her as their grandparent. “He said he had been converted through a minister who was converted through me. He had heard so much about me,” Woodworth-Etter wrote about one young attendee, “he had come fifty miles to see his grandmother.”⁸¹¹

Woodworth-Etter’s performance evoked more than a mother-child relationship from her attendees. It also garnered powerful responses from her followers. Their effusive physical and emotional reactions went beyond occasional hand clapping, shouting “amen,” or crying. They flailed, they shouted, they cried, and they danced when they heard her preach.

Going beyond the typical altar call response, they performed physical acts known as falling “under the power.”⁸¹² During this “religious fervor,” congregants came forward to the altar, fell at Woodworth-Etter’s feet, and lay there anywhere

⁸⁰⁸ Ibid., 286.

⁸⁰⁹ Ibid., 268.

⁸¹⁰ ———, *Signs and Wonders*, 167.

⁸¹¹ ———, *Marvels and Miracles God Wrought in the Ministry for Forty-Five Years*, 84.

⁸¹² “Very Latest,” *The Clinton Age*, June 22 1888.

from several minutes to over an hour.⁸¹³ These acts of submission were not necessarily to the minister herself, but to whom she served as receptacle. “I hadn’t been praying for three minutes,” wrote one Atlanta revival attendee, “until I began swaying under the power of God. I had just told him everything I had was on the altar, even husband and baby; and I wanted all He had for me. I knew it was the power of God and did not resist, but gave up completely.”⁸¹⁴

Often when under the power, attendees reported having visions of their pastor.⁸¹⁵ These visions elaborated on the warring mother with military authority that Woodworth-Etter created in her biblical script, dress, tabernacles, and pulpit performance. They were often imaginative riffs on her own self-description as a warring mother like Deborah. “I had a wonderful vision, which made a stir in the congregation,” wrote one anonymous follower; “I saw the devil and his army, and on the right was the Lord and his army. I saw the army of Heaven and Sister Etter was in front; she was leading the army and the Lord was leading her.”⁸¹⁶

These accounts were flavored with language borrowed from biblical apocalyptic imagery. In the visions, the minister often stood alongside the “Lamb that was slain”⁸¹⁷ in Revelation 5. “While Sister Etter was standing addressing the audience,” wrote Elder H. C. Mears, “I saw a great concourse of angels, and a Large

⁸¹³ "Indiana State News: Happenings Throughout the State During the Past Week."

⁸¹⁴ ———, *Marvels and Miracles God Wrought in the Ministry for Forty-Five Years*, 183.

⁸¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 95.

⁸¹⁶ ———, *Life and Experience Including Sermons and Visions of Mrs. M. B. Woodworth-Etter*, 125.

⁸¹⁷ ———, *Acts of the Holy Ghost, or the Life, Work, and Experience of Mrs. M. B. Woodworth-Etter, Evangelist*, 397.

Golden Two-edged Sword was in her hand.”⁸¹⁸ This imagery put Woodworth-Etter in the company of the angels in Revelation 1-2, one of which received a message from “one like a son of Man” with “sharp, double edged sword,” (Revelation 2:12). For Mears, the two-edged sword likely meant the word of God as described in Hebrews 4:12, “For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.” Thus, in this vision, Woodworth-Etter stood alongside angels with the powerful word of God in her hand.

Her followers’ visions of a divine showdown between Satan and Jesus and illustrated their understanding that Woodworth-Etter was an important player in cosmic spiritual events and so more than a 1890s-1910s mother. Outsiders saw a frumpy, middle-aged holy roller. Her followers believed that their visions revealed their pastor for the figure that she really was: a commanding officer in God’s army.

Woodworth-Etter’s authority was pronounced in holiness and Pentecostal revivalist circles. Smith Wigglesworth, Paul Rader, Roscoe Russell, Thomas and Lyda Paino, and other early revivalist greats traveled to her tabernacle to hear her teachings and to learn about her revivalist style.⁸¹⁹ Well-known Pentecostal revivalist Carrie Judd Montgomery praised her work regularly in her periodicals. “After hearing Mrs. Woodworth handle the word of God with such Divine unction,” wrote Montgomery, “it would seem like sacrilege to speak one word against her or

⁸¹⁸ Ibid.

⁸¹⁹ Wayne Warner, *Maria Woodworth-Etter : For Such a Time as This* (Alachua, FL: Bridge-Logos, 2009), 287.

against the work God is now doing through her."⁸²⁰ Her autobiographies sold thousands of copies and their value was seen by many as tantamount to scripture. "I wish all the saints in the pentecostal movement had a copy of Sister Etter's book," wrote revivalist radio celebrity F. F. Bosworth; "It is such a help to faith! There has been no such record written since the 'Acts of the Apostles' recording such victories by the Lord in our day over sin and sickness as this book."⁸²¹

Despite her skillful, charismatic performance, her sizeable, responsive audiences, and her influence in holiness and Pentecostal revivalism, Woodworth-Etter never achieved the broadly evangelical influence of her revivalist contemporaries J. Wilbur Chapman or A. B. Simpson. One reason for this was that interwoven with issues of gender, Woodworth-Etter's ministry faced hurdles of race and class. That is to say, her meetings, in contrast to her male colleagues', seemed (at least to reporters) to include more working class, African American attendees.⁸²² A. B. Simpson and Billy Sunday's meetings were reported as being "conspicuously

⁸²⁰ Carrie Judd Montgomery, "The Work and the Workers," *Triumphs of Faith* 10, no. 1 (1890): 22.

⁸²¹ Etter, *Signs and Wonders God Wrought in the Ministry for Forty Years*, 160.

⁸²² The difference in racial and class make up was not necessarily due to Simpson and Sunday's prejudice or Woodworth-Etter's lack of it. It is possible that the two male ministers, as representatives of white, middleclass manliness and by extension the dominant culture, were less appealing to those who did not resemble them. Perhaps a female counterpart, who, by virtue of her femaleness was outside the hegemony of middleclass white American revivalism, was more inviting to people of color or persons in the working/poor classes. Another explanation could have been that the emerging Pentecostal movement had interracial roots and as an early Pentecostal architect Woodworth-Etter attracted more African American attendees. In addition, there could have been more diversity in Simpson and Sunday's meetings that went unseen by reporters. Woodworth-Etter, as part of the Pentecostal revivalist movement was known for an association with African American Protestantism and so reporters could have been expecting to see greater diversity in her meetings.

middleclass."⁸²³ Reporters noted that Simpson's meetings were made up of people with money enough to finance extensive missionary ventures.⁸²⁴ "The crowd," wrote an official Sunday biographer, "is quite respectable. It is comfortably dressed, well behaved."⁸²⁵ Outside observers did not note people of color in attendance at Simpson meetings.⁸²⁶ Although deeply interested in "converting the heathen" of all creeds and colors abroad, his revivals were overwhelmingly made up of European Americans.⁸²⁷ Likewise, besides describing a few "swarthy human curiosities" or the occasional "old, white-wooled negro," that attended Sunday's meetings, reporters wrote that his services attracted prominent community leaders, businessmen, "society folk," and other examples white middleclass life.⁸²⁸

Woodworth-Etter's ecstatic meetings, on the other hand, were often associated with working class audiences.⁸²⁹ These audiences occasionally benefitted her public image, such as when Salem, Oregon reporters politely noted

⁸²³ F. H., "Billy Sunday," *The New Republic* 2, no. 20 (1915): 173; "Big Missionary Gifts," *New York Times*, October 13 1906.

⁸²⁴ "Crowds Give \$70,000 to Dr. Simpson's Fund," *The New York Times*, October 10 1904.

⁸²⁵ Frederick William Betts, *Billy Sunday, the Man and Method* (Boston, MA: The Murray Press, 1916), 14.

⁸²⁶ "Big Missionary Gifts," *The New York Times*, October 13 1902.

⁸²⁷ "Crowds Give \$70,000 to Dr. Simpson's Fund."

⁸²⁸ Bendroth, "Why Women Loved Billy Sunday: Urban Revivalism and Popular Entertainment in Early Twentieth-Century American Culture," 256; William T. Ellis, *Billy Sunday, the Man and His Message* (Philadelphia, Chicago: The John C. Winston Company, 1936), 165.

⁸²⁹ See for example accounts of Moses Foreford and Jim Barby, two African American attendees: "Paralyzed Negro Becomes Athlete: Moses Foreford Takes Treatment of Mrs. Woodworth-Etter at Revival Meeting," *The Indianapolis Star*, September 28 1904.

⁸²⁹ Warner, *The Woman Evangelist: The Life and Times of Charismatic Evangelist Maria B. Woodworth-Etter*, 79.

that she extended “cordial invitations to the poor.”⁸³⁰ More often than not, she was criticized for the class of attendee she attracted. The *Atlanta Journal* described with horror the men who arrived at a meeting as “rough fellows in working clothes!”⁸³¹ One newspaper reporter in Warsaw, Indiana ridiculed the poorer, less-educated people enamored with her work. “The educated class of the community,” he wrote, “take no stock in the affair.”⁸³²

In addition to her working class audiences, Woodworth-Etter actively sought to integrate African American and white crowds.⁸³³ Indeed, she wrote proudly of the clashes surrounding her efforts to incorporate black congregants into her services. For example, Woodworth-Etter wrote the following account of a meeting in Louisville, Kentucky:

The white people said that if the colored were permitted to come, they would stay home. Then we gave the colored people one corner of the tent and had them sit by themselves. Some of the wealthy citizens said that they like the meetings, would support them, but they would not do anything if we let the negroes come. Ministers and professing Christians said the same. They said that all evangelists who had been in the city could do no good until they drove the negroes away. I told them God mad the whole human family of one blood.⁸³⁴

⁸³⁰ "Evangelist Mrs. Woodworth: Who She Is, Where She Came Frome, and What She Is Doing at Salem," *Daily Statesman*, May 29 1892.

⁸³¹ "Faithful Believe She Can Cure All Ills," *The Atlanta Journal*, April 4 1914.

⁸³² "The Tipton Revival," *Indianian-Republican*, May 14 1885

⁸³³ Paul Harvey, *Freedom's Coming: Religious Culture and the Shaping of the South from the Civil War through the Civil Rights Era* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005), 109-10; David Edwin Harrell, *Varieties of Southern Evangelicalism* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1981), 52.

⁸³⁴ Woodworth-Etter, *Marvels and Miracles God Wrought in the Ministry for Forty-Five Years*, 57-59.

In spite of Woodworth-Etter's apparent satisfaction with interracial or at least semi-desegregated worship, white commentators compared her meetings with black revivalist expression, which they denigrated. "No one who has respect for Holy things or reverence," wrote one editorial, "can give bold utterances to such as 'a cyclone of the Holy Ghost,' I have not witnessed the like since I attended the meetings of the poor black slaves in Kentucky, thirty years ago."⁸³⁵

The actions and the reactions she induced from her followers also contrasted with the relatively subdued "amens" and hand clapping in Chapman or Simpson's white middleclass meetings.⁸³⁶ "These physical manifestations," wrote Unitarian pastor Charles Wendite of Woodworth-Etter meetings, "are of the same low order which characterizes the African Voodoo, the frenzied leaps and gushings of the Mohammedian Dervishes, and the delirium of the Indian Medicine man."⁸³⁷ That the uncivilized "wailing, hollering, and screeching," done by the "voodoo priestess" and her "holy rollers" was performed on primitive, straw covered grounds further served to restrict Woodworth-Etter's influence in large part because it rendered the minister and her people non-Christian and non-European.⁸³⁸

Woodworth-Etter's meetings were also known to attract a rowdy sort. Riot police were called to a meeting in Oakland, California when local health officials, annoyed neighbors, and enthusiastic attendees clashed and had to be subdued with

⁸³⁵ "Camp Meeting in Indiana," *Kokomo Dispatch*, May 28 1885.

⁸³⁶ "Took No Money for Healing: Mrs. Etter Gave God Credit for Cures," *Boston Daily Globe*, August 29 1913.

⁸³⁷ Wendite, "Voodoo Priestess."

⁸³⁸ "Aver They Are Cured: One Threw Her Brace Away Holy Rollers Fail to Help Blind Boy."; "Minors Take Part in Holy-Roller Services."

clubs.⁸³⁹ During meetings near Framingham, Massachusetts, unruly boys threw rocks and eggs and tried to set fires, while people were carried away in “trances.”⁸⁴⁰ Woodworth-Etter’s critics were quick to point out that none of the lowbrow mayhem from the “weaker minded,” that characterized Woodworth-Etter meetings was present in Chapman’s meetings.⁸⁴¹

Woodworth-Etter did little to change her reputation for holding rabble-rousing meetings. On the contrary, her response was often defiant. “Some of the drunken police got mad at some of the workers, and they hated us all,” she wrote of her clash with law enforcement officers in Oakland, California. “It was dark and rainy, and they gathered up a mob, and were going to tear down the tent, and mob us all.”⁸⁴² Woodworth-Etter wrote that rather than speaking with the police about the meeting, she treated them to a demonstration of what she believed to be an impressive display of spiritual power:

The Spirit of the Lord came on me. I stepped up on the altar, and stood looking at them, then began talking as the Spirit gave utterance. I began to walk down the long altar that led down amongst them, talking as the Spirit gave utterance, with power. The Holy Ghost had control of my whole body, arms, hands, and feet. I felt as though I had turned to be a giant, and believed that if they had moved towards us, that God would have smitten them dead.⁸⁴³

Neither the police, nor most other non-holiness or Pentecostal revivalists were

⁸³⁹ Warner, *The Woman Evangelist: The Life and Times of Charismatic Evangelist Maria B. Woodworth-Etter*, 90-93.

⁸⁴⁰ "Took No Money for Healing: Mrs. Etter Gave God Credit for Cures."

⁸⁴¹ "Tells How She Got "Power", " *Boston Globe*, August 30 1913.

⁸⁴² Woodworth-Etter, *Marvels and Miracles God Wrought in the Ministry for Forty-Five Years*, 103-04.

⁸⁴³ *Ibid.*

impressed with her ecstatic display.⁸⁴⁴

Thus, to her followers, Woodworth-Etter's performance in the pulpit knew no equal. By enacting the role of mother and warrior in the pulpit, she gave her followers a figure of authority and womanliness. Her meetings, while exceedingly efficacious for her followers in holiness and Pentecostal circles, had limited authority outside the fold. Her inability or refusal to translate the ecstatic revivalist experiences to outsiders or make it palatable to white middleclass audiences meant that many simply stayed away.

The Bride and Her Bridegroom

In addition to performing her role as a woman and a minister, Aimee Semple McPherson succeeded where her predecessor did not. She created a revival experience that was authoritative, female, white, and middleclass. Unlike Woodworth-Etter, whose revival services were set in a symbolic battlefield and incorporated both the womanly acts of nurture and instruction, and the masculine act of war, McPherson presided over services that were a complete departure from the manly ministry. Like the *Style Moderne* Angelus Temple, McPherson's performance was all things feminine. She transformed her revival services from an opportunity to display masculine authority into a romantic epic.

McPherson put her "good-looking, red-haired, and white-robed,"⁸⁴⁵ physical form to its best use during events that she called "illustrated sermons," a

⁸⁴⁴ "Victims of Hypnotism.; Religious Frenzy Inspired by an Insane Revivalist."

combination of sermon, musical revue, and scripted play. Journalist Sarah Comstock described them in 1927 as, “a complete vaudeville program, entirely new each week, brimful of surprises for the eager who are willing to battle in the throng for entrance.”⁸⁴⁶ Each week, McPherson chose a passage for a sermon – the Second Coming, the need for evangelism, and the love of Jesus were all popular topics – and came up with a story that illustrated it.

Then, McPherson directed songs (many of which she composed) sung by vaudevillian singers, hundreds of choir singers, and backed by a professional orchestra, as well as dances, and skits, and various other forms of stage performance. These entertainments, highly anticipated by Temple attendees, were merely the warm up for the most important performance of the service – McPherson’s sermon dedicated to her chosen theme. Although there are no extant scripts of McPherson’s illustrated sermons, first-hand accounts of McPherson’s sermons, and photographic evidence, provide insight into the form and function of these events.

In every illustrated sermon, no matter what the theme, McPherson had the starring role. Her most popular sermons reinforced her bridal status as well as her role as a leading lady. For one illustrated sermon on the subject of the Second Coming, McPherson chose to illustrate the parable of the wise and foolish virgins in Matthew 25:1-13. In this passage, Jesus compared the kingdom of heaven to ten virgins who go to meet their bridegroom. Five were wise and had plenty of oil to

⁸⁴⁵ Don Roberts, "Sister Aimee and Ma," *The Pittsburgh Press*, September 23 1930.

⁸⁴⁶ Sarah Comstock, "Aimee Semple McPherson: Prima Donna of Revivalism," *Harper's Magazine*, December 1927.

keep their lamps lit while they waited for him. Five were foolish and did not take oil with them. When the foolish virgins realized they had run out of oil, they asked their wise counterparts for more. The wise virgins refused, the foolish virgins had to go and buy their own, and then missed their opportunity to go to the marriage. When they returned the bridegroom told the virgins, “verily I say unto you, I know you not,” [Matthew 25:12]. Jesus ended the story with an admonition: “Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of Man cometh,” [Matthew 25:13].

In McPherson’s interpretation, the Bridegroom was Jesus, the wise virgins were those in a prepared church, and the foolish virgins were those unprepared for his coming.⁸⁴⁷ The service centered upon the story of virgins getting ready for their wedding day. “The blessed Bridegroom of the Church, [will] return to take His Bride away,” she told her congregation.⁸⁴⁸

To illustrate this passage, McPherson assembled on the Temple stage attractive young women dressed in simple white gowns [Figure 5.1]. The biblical passage had only ten virgins, but twelve young women filled the stage more impressively and McPherson bolstered the number with two additional women in wedding apparel. The women symbolized bridal purity as well as sensual anticipation of the wedding night. Then, descending from the stage staircase, McPherson appeared, dressed in a more elaborate satin white gown, as the most

⁸⁴⁷ McPherson, “As a Bride Adorned: Glowing Sermon on the Glorious Second Coming of Christ.”

⁸⁴⁸ Aimee Semple McPherson, “Second Coming of Christ,” *The Bridal Call Foursquare* 12, no. 12 (1929): 8.

beautiful and bridal of the group. With her Bible in hand, she preached about the need to be prepared to be Christ's bride.

In another sermon entitled, "The Rose of Sharon," McPherson claimed that Jesus was the lover in Song of Songs 2:1 who said, "I am the rose of Sharon, and the lily of the valleys."⁸⁴⁹ To illustrate that point, McPherson stood in front of a giant rose that bloomed in a staged garden [Figure 5.2]. As its most ardent gardener, she preached about the rose's beauty, lovely scent, and sweetness.

Unlike Woodworth-Etter, who took the role of military commander in the pulpit, McPherson portrayed herself as the perpetual bride to her eternal groom. During her illustrated sermons, she usually upstaged her heavenly leading man. "In this unique house of worship called Angelus Temple in the city of Los Angeles," wrote Comstock, "the Almighty occupies a secondary position. He plays an important part in the drama, to be sure; but center stage is taken and held by Mrs. McPherson."⁸⁵⁰ When she preached, she was not simply assuming the ordinary role of companionate wife to an earthly husband. She was an exemplar for her followers. She was the ultimate of what they all aspired to be and that status gave her power over her fellow brides of Christ.

McPherson's body, like her Temple, was curvaceous, soft edged, and well decorated,⁸⁵¹ and she used it to provide illustrated sermon attendees with living, breathing displays of a biblical bride of Christ and as well as a leading lady.

⁸⁴⁹ McPherson, *This Is That: Personal Experiences, Sermons and Writings of Aimee Semple Mcpherson*, 653-55.

⁸⁵⁰ Comstock, "Aimee Semple Mcpherson: Prima Donna of Revivalism."

⁸⁵¹ "Aimee to Settle Down, Hutton Says," *The Leader-Post*, June 30 1933.

McPherson did use bold, large gestures associated with masculine pulpit performance. She lifted her arms to toward the Temple dome in prayer to Jesus. She frequently preached with one arm extended confidently over the audience while holding a Bible in the other. She made a fist and shook it passionately when she preached about the dangers of sin. She also used strong gestures to perform typical priestly acts. For example, McPherson extended her arms and blessed her congregation in a typical benediction.

Despite these strong movements, McPherson's surroundings and wardrobe tempered her more powerful gestures. She raised her arm over her congregation, but that arm was clothed in shimmering, draping white material that made the sharpest movement flowing and graceful. She offered a priestly benediction, but that offering was made from a pulpit covered with roses. She moved across the stage with vigor, but as she moved, she showed her attractive curves in motion. Thus, even in her most authoritative moments, she performed the feminine.

As she preached, McPherson repeated many of the same gestures that starlets performed in romantic films, but her repetitions of the gestures contained within them small changes that altered their meaning. She knelt, clasped her hands, and looked up adoringly not at a handsome leading man like Rudolf Valentino, but at the cross, which was a symbol of her heavenly hero [Figure 5.3, 5.4]. McPherson's pose redirected the passion of two film screen lovers to the passion between the minister and her savior. This pose reinforced her status as the most intimate, the most dedicated lover of Jesus.

She also frequently clasped her hands across her chest as film stars like Mary Pickford did in a promotional portrait for her 1929 film *Coquette*. Whereas Pickford was contemplating a human relationship, McPherson clasped the Bible to her chest [Figure 5.5, 5.6]. She posed in front of a round, lighted circle, which gave her a saintly halo in addition to her feminine gestures. This pose depicted McPherson as a womanly woman, but one with the scriptures close to her heart (literally in this case), and one with sainted, haloed, authority.

Like her film star counterparts, flowers were a part of her performance. For stars like Mary Pickford in *Coquette*, the flowers were related to a romantic relationship. For McPherson, posing with flowers (usually roses) was a way of communicating her special relationship with her spiritual Rose of Sharon. She often began services by making a dramatic, unmistakably bridal entrance in a white gown while holding a bouquet. She brought the flowers with her to the pulpit and clasped them with all the anticipation of a Hollywood ingénue. In her sermon *The Rose of Sharon*, McPherson raised the flowers triumphantly over her head and spoke about the value of intimacy with Jesus [Figure 5.7, 5.8]. In her sermon, *The Year of Jubilee*, she stood with her armful of roses and told her audience that “The Rose of Sharon, “will be so completely entwined with your life, interlaced and interwoven, that you can be taken to the house of the Lord and you will grace His service and shine in His beauty.”⁸⁵²

⁸⁵² Aimee Semple McPherson, “The Year of Jubilee,” *The Bridal Call Foursquare* 11, no. 4 (1927): 32.

In addition to imitating familiar movie poses and accoutrements, McPherson used her voice to signal her femininity. Whereas Billy Sunday's raspy, stilted delivery signaled his masculine roughness, and Woodworth-Etter's voice boomed with power, McPherson's cheerful, casual cadence, and conversational manner bespoke femininity.⁸⁵³ Her pleasant, alto intonation, similar to the female voices that 1920s audiences were hearing in film and on the radio, was another auditory signal of ideal popular femininity.⁸⁵⁴

Her altar calls were also demonstrations of ultra-femininity. In contrast to the pleas for a "show of manhood," she invoked passionate confessions of love for Jesus and offered wooing invitations to receive Christ. "Come, brother! Come, Sister! There is room at the Fountain for you," she preached. "Come, radio land! Right where you are the Savior is waiting to save you and make you whole. Open your heart to receive Him. The door of mercy swings wide before you – enter while you may."⁸⁵⁵

Admirer and fellow revivalist Charles S. Price wrote the following flattering portrait of McPherson's desire for Jesus and her congregation's response:

There is a power in her message, a note of victory in her voice, as she tells of the Christ whom she loves and whom she serves.... And then she stops - eyes are closed and heads are bowed; a hush has settled over the building while Sister prays – 'Jesus, won't you give me souls at this opening meeting? I want them, Lord, and you want them, too.'⁸⁵⁶

⁸⁵³ "Mrs. Aimee Hutton Home," *New York Times*, August 2 1933; Amy Lawrence, *Echo and Narcissus: Women's Voices in Classical Hollywood Cinema* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 88.

⁸⁵⁴ Lawrence, *Echo and Narcissus: Women's Voices in Classical Hollywood Cinema*, 88.

⁸⁵⁵ Aimee Semple McPherson, "Fighting His Way to Hell," *The Bridal Call* 8, no. 3 (1924): 29.

⁸⁵⁶ Charles S. Price, "The Opening," *The Bridal Call* 6, no. 8 (1923): 16.

McPherson's palpable desire for new converts made for an exceedingly effective altar call. "Her prayer was answered as they came streaming down the aisles," wrote Price. "The altar was full to overflowing and soon the sweetest music that was ever heard rolled up beyond the great dome to the city whose streets are of gold and whose walls are of jasper. It was the music of praying people finding Jesus as a personal Saviour."⁸⁵⁷

Actor and former Temple band member Anthony Quinn recalled in his autobiography Temple audiences' responses to McPherson's preaching:

"Then that rich melodious voice began slowly, 'Glory! Glory! Glory!' I could feel the audience exhale. We shouted, 'Glory!' She smiled and the congregation felt truly blessed. She closed her eyes, leafed through the Bible, and let her finger fall. She read the passage, caressing each word. She began to interweave sudden bursts of emotion, 'Hallelujah! Hallelujah, brothers and sisters!' All the congregation replied, 'Hallelujah!'"⁸⁵⁸

McPherson's healing services were likewise performances of the romantic bride-bridegroom relationship. Where Simpson presented healing as an opportunity to exercise a manly faith and Woodworth-Etter performed healing as a motherly act, McPherson's divine healings were an opportunity to have an intense, sensual physical experience with Jesus, the "personal healer."⁸⁵⁹ She told her congregants about her own experience with healing: "I suddenly felt as if a shock of

⁸⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁵⁸ Anthony Quinn, *The Original Sin: A Self-Portrait*, 1 ed. (Boston: Little, Brown & Company, 1972), 125-26.

⁸⁵⁹ McPherson, *This Is That: Personal Experiences, Sermons and Writings of Aimee Semple McPherson*, 73.

electricity had struck my foot. It flowed through my whole body, causing me to shake and tremble under the power of God.”⁸⁶⁰

For McPherson, healings were the ultimate feminine act. The petitioner, after a passionate moment of intimacy, received an influx of the presence of an all-powerful bridegroom. She encouraged her congregation to “receive your healing,” from a loving Christ rather than to take hold of it.⁸⁶¹ She presented healing as one more moment to have an encounter with God that left the healed, “trembling with excitement and joy.”⁸⁶² She called followers to come forward in a “soft voice, almost a whisper.”⁸⁶³ She stood or knelt near the supplicants with one or two hands touching them. She closed her eyes and then, “gently implored” the Lord to, “gently touch them with the magic of his love,” and heal them.⁸⁶⁴ She clasped people’s hands; she “clung” to her congregants and prayed and cried.⁸⁶⁵

McPherson’s romantic, feminine atmosphere eliminated any need for traditionally masculine gestures. Priestly functions like delivering benedictions and demonstrations of supernatural power like divine healing were all subsumed under the persona of a womanly bride. From beginning to end and head to toe, McPherson was femininity personified.

⁸⁶⁰ ———, “The Story of My Life,” 12.

⁸⁶¹ Ibid.

⁸⁶² Ibid.

⁸⁶³ Quinn, *The Original Sin: A Self-Portrait*, 125-26.

⁸⁶⁴ W. E. Waggoner, “Noted Wichita Journalist Reviews Revival,” *The Bridal Call* 6, no. 1 (1922): 17.

⁸⁶⁵ Ibid.

McPherson's elaborate, sometimes humorous costumes and her feminine poses and gestures served to establish her authority. She was not leading troops to war or men into muscular health. She was going to a wedding and then to the bridal chamber. She was leading fellow adorers to the object of their adoration by being the most devout, submissive, and ardent lover of Jesus. Thus, the more womanly she behaved, and the more she heightened her intimacy with Jesus, the more qualified she was to lead her fellow brides of Christ.

McPherson's influence over her congregants, male and female, was profound. One Los Angeles housewife was so desperate to experience a McPherson service that she reportedly slit her throat after her husband refused to let her attend Temple services.⁸⁶⁶ Most reactions, however, were less extreme. Attendees wept when she cried, laughed at her jokes, raised their hands with her to Jesus, and submitted their bodies to her altar for healing and prayer.⁸⁶⁷ Newsman Grover C. Loud wrote that they wept "till sobs blend into hallelujahs and the redeemed, weeping, 'talking in tongues,' shadowboxing with the Spirit, choke the aisles in a rush to gather as near as they can to the hem of her stainless garment."⁸⁶⁸ "Old women and men, tear-cheeked flappers on their sweethearts' arms, little bewildered children move toward her," wrote journalist Allene Sumner, "like moths to the

⁸⁶⁶ "Mrs. Aimee Mcpherson, Noted Evangelist, Dead," *The Milwaukee Journal*, September 28 1944.

⁸⁶⁷ Anthony Quinn, *The Original Sin, a Self-Portrait*, [1st ed. (Boston,: Little, 1972), 125-26.

⁸⁶⁸ Loud, *Evangelized America*, 328.

candle. Sometimes, hysterical, they cling to her body, wetting her hands, her dress, with their tears. They will not be pulled away.”⁸⁶⁹

Outsiders speculated that her power was tied to her sex appeal. “She particularly exhorted the “young college boys to come forward,” wrote a reporter for the *Berkeley Daily Gazette* after commenting on McPherson’s beauty. “Many did.”⁸⁷⁰ “Can anyone believe,” asked Loud, “that this could be accomplished by a pinch-faced, wan, sad-eyed, wapper-jawed, slab-sided, long-skirted holy woman, virtuous because no man ever looked upon her with the eyes of desire? It is more plausible that the achievement is due to the fact that the inspirational message was borne by a warm and beautiful creature enhanced by an aura of intriguing mystery.”⁸⁷¹

It is clear that at least one celebrity minister agreed with Loud. The flamboyant Bishop Frank H. Rice of the Liberal Church, Inc. in Denver, Colorado imagined himself as her bridegroom. He was so taken with McPherson and her ministry that he offered to make her his “38th spiritual wife.”⁸⁷² He offered “full assistance in faith healing and any miracle the proposed union might produce,”⁸⁷³ and did not have a problem with McPherson’s rumored penchant for plastic surgery to enhance her looks. “I don’t quite believe it,” he told *The Pittsburg Press* about the rumors in 1930, “But if she wants her face lifted and will come to Denver, I’ll see the

⁸⁶⁹ Sumner, “Prison Bars Will Not Dim Ardor of Aimee Mcpherson's Faithful.”

⁸⁷⁰ “Atheist Fog-Bound on Way to Debate,” *Berkeley Daily Gazette*, January 17 1934.

⁸⁷¹ Loud, *Evangelized America*, 322.

⁸⁷² “Bishop Rice Wants Aimee to Be 38th Spiritual Wife,” *The Pittsburg Press* 1930.

⁸⁷³ *Ibid.*

operation costs her nothing.”⁸⁷⁴ Even though the marriage offer to McPherson was purely “spiritual,” Rice’s legal wife apparently did not approve of his proposed alliance with the beautiful McPherson. “I hope she doesn’t sue me for divorce,”⁸⁷⁵ he said reflecting on her displeasure.

Her followers would have probably refuted Loud’s analysis of her “inspirative” presentations, but the way that they praised her showed that McPherson’s good looks and winsome stage presence was at least part of the reason why her followers loved her. In a lengthy 1928 *Bridal Call* editorial entitled, “A Tribute to Aimee Semple McPherson from Her Elders, Workers and Members in Honor of Her Birthday,” her followers praised her in sensual language from the Song of Solomon. “Like a ‘lily among thorns,’ as Solomon describes the victorious Christian,” wrote her followers, “our Sister has kept sweet and pure amid the trials, sorrows, and cares that have crowded in upon her.”⁸⁷⁶ The article went on to use the Song of Solomon to describe the ways in which McPherson’s person embodied ideal Christian living:

Her lips have been touched with the scarlet [Song of Solomon 4:3] thread of His blood... Her heart has been close to the fountain head of the Throne of God, and therefore from her lips have flowed [4:11] forth the living water of His Word upon a dry and thirsty ground.

Her teeth are even and symmetrical [4:2] as they partake of the whole Word of God....

Upon her cheeks is the veil of humility [1:10]....

⁸⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁷⁶ "A Tribute to Aimee Semple Mcpherson from Her Elders, Workers and Members in Honor of Her Birthday," *The Bridal Call Foursquare* 12, no. 5 (1928).

Her eyes are constant and true and fixed unwaveringly upon the Savior whom she loves...

Her neck is strong [7:4] and has never yet bowed beneath the attack of the enemy....

Her hands, strong and lovely, have ministered to hundreds of thousands, patting the tired head of the little mother, clasping the afflicted child to her bosom, shaking the hard, toil worn hand of the laborer, caressing the silver hair of some dear old mother in Israel. Gently, those hands have been laid upon the heads of countless thousands in the name of Jesus....⁸⁷⁷

Unlike Woodworth-Etter whose followers loved her for her motherly care, McPherson's followers credited their leader for her "unwavering" love for Jesus and her strong and lovely body. For McPherson's followers, therefore, at least part of her power was due to her beauty and the way that she used her beauty in relationship with her bridegroom and on behalf of her people.

"Countless thousands love her,"⁸⁷⁸ her followers wrote about their beautiful minister, and their claim was based in truth. In contrast with Woodworth-Etter, McPherson and her Temple were enormously powerful in general revivalist circles, and in popular culture. The *Moody Bible Institute Monthly*, a staple of mainstream revivalism, gave McPherson a cautious editorial endorsement.⁸⁷⁹ William Jennings Bryan recommended McPherson's ministry and spoke at the Temple.⁸⁸⁰ Billy Sunday came for a visit.⁸⁸¹ McPherson was a member of the Los Angeles elite and

⁸⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁷⁹ James M. Grey, "What About Mrs. Aimee Semple Mcpherson?," *Moody Bible Institute Monthly* 22, no. 3 (1921).

⁸⁸⁰ Edith Waldvogel Blumhofer, *Aimee Semple Mcpherson : Everybody's Sister*, Library of Religious Biography (Grand Rapids, Mich.: W.B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1993), 263.

⁸⁸¹ Ibid., 16.

rubbed shoulders politicians and entertainers like Upton Sinclair and Charlie Chaplin. After its dedication, the Temple quickly became one of the most visited buildings in Los Angeles. Hollywood tours included a drive to Grauman's Chinese Theater, the Hollywood sign, and Angelus Temple.⁸⁸² Postcards of the Temple were commonplace in Los Angeles, and a replica of the Temple was a prize-winning float in the Pasadena Rose Parade.

Part of McPherson's broad influence can be attributed to her location in America's emerging media capital. She attracted national press and a following simply by virtue of being the biggest celebrity minister in the celebrity capital of the country. Her radio ministry gave her access to a national audience. On any given summer night, a person could walk for blocks and blocks and listen to uninterrupted Temple sermons broadcast through open windows.⁸⁸³

McPherson also presented a decidedly more middleclass, white revivalist experience than did Woodworth-Etter. One way that she did this was through her worship space. Her state of the art sets and extravagant décor attracted members of the upper and middle classes more readily than the sawdust flooring and bare walls of Woodworth-Etter's Tabernacle.

Another way she made her services more mainstream was by moving away from the unplanned feel of traditional revivalism. When McPherson began her itinerant preaching, there was little to distinguish her meetings from the rowdy, seemingly chaotic programming of Woodworth-Etter's revivalist services. By the

⁸⁸² McPherson, *Aimee: Life Story of Aimee Semple Mcpherson*, 67.

⁸⁸³ Simonsen (The Foursquare Heritage Center Director).

time she built Angelus Temple, however, she had dramatically changed her meeting style. McPherson's 1920s meetings were polished, seamless, well-orchestrated productions. "As a show-producer with unflagging power to draw she knows no equal," wrote reporter Sarah Comstock. "Many a revivalist of the past has played upon his audience by the old methods of sensational preaching; but Mrs. McPherson has methods of her own."⁸⁸⁴ Unlike previous Pentecostal revivalist meetings that might oscillate between prayer, praise, and testimony for several minutes or even hours, McPherson kept audiences engaged at all times through structured plays, musical numbers, and her own preaching. "The director," Comstock wrote of McPherson, "knows the value of rapid movement, of the quick shift that anticipates boredom."⁸⁸⁵

Some of McPherson's Pentecostal critics complained that her services were so programmed that they were moving too far away from her Pentecostal revivalist roots.⁸⁸⁶ The 500 Room, with its healings, prophecies, and other ecstatic expressions, did much to assuage their fears. It also helped to make her ministry mainstream by segregating the more ecstatic audiences from the main auditorium's illustrated sermons and musical numbers. It therefore (indirectly) increased McPherson's mainstream evangelical power. The layout innovation made the Temple friendly to non-Pentecostal attendees because those who came to hear

⁸⁸⁴ Comstock, "Aimee Semple Mcpherson: Prima Donna of Revivalism."

⁸⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁸⁶ Blumhofer, *Aimee Semple Mcpherson: Everybody's Sister*, 219.

William Jennings Bryan or Billy Sunday preach were not required to participate in the more extreme Pentecostal expressions.

McPherson faced a dilemma when it came to African American, Latin American, and other non-white attendees. On the one hand, she had relatively progressive practices when it came to race. She had many Hispanic members in her Los Angeles congregation and hired interpreters (including a young Mexican-American Anthony Quinn) to translate her sermons to bilingual audiences. She celebrated Gypsy church members.⁸⁸⁷ She also worked with African American preachers like Emma Cotton and Jenny Seymour. In addition, like Woodworth-Etter, she encouraged black and white revivalists to worship together.

Unlike Woodworth-Etter, McPherson was not accused of performing African Voodoo or Indian Medicine. One probable reason for this was that she restricted ecstatic practice to the 500 Room. She also distanced herself from black audiences in her services. For example, McPherson preached sermons declaring the evils of slavery to sin. Choosing for her illustrated sermon theme the antebellum South, she dressed not as a slave like Harriet Tubman, but as a Southern belle [Figure 5.9]. Thus, even while she condemned slavery, she was (at least visually) a representation of the white enslaver.

⁸⁸⁷ McPherson did not give any details as to the ethnicity of the people whom she called "Gypsies," (e.g. Roma, Sinti or Irish Travelers). Anthropologist Albert Thomas Sinclair noted in 1917 that Roma lived in California: Albert Thomas Sinclair, *American Gypsies* (New York: The New York Public Library, 1917), 13.

In addition, McPherson occasionally told “Sambo”⁸⁸⁸ stories about African Americans sharing their faith; these stories upheld stereotypes of childish African Americans.⁸⁸⁹ For example, she used the following exaggerated dialect when she wrote about exchanges with African American attendees:

Only a poor colored man was he, but: “Oh Lawd! Ah done see again – Ah jes knowed ma Savior could do it!” he affirmed. “Fo’ twenty years Ah’ve lived in de da’k; but now – bless de Lawd – Ah kin see!”

“What am I holding up in front of you?” we asked, expecting him to say, “Your hand.” We are startled and the audience convulsed with relieved and happy laughter when he replied with ceremonious exactitude:

“Fo’r fingers – and – one – thumb.”

“How many now?” we asked.

“Two.”

“How many?”

“Three.”

“How many now?”

“You’ve put yo’ hand behind yo’ back.”

“Correct – can you follow me, brother?”

“Sho’ Ah I can –” and in and out, through the line that waits for prayer he follows us, then down the steps where a colored ‘mammy,’ evidently his wife, is wiping the tears from her eyes.⁸⁹⁰

There is no evidence that McPherson consciously distanced herself from black Pentecostal revivalists. But by using terms like “Sambo,” and “mammy,” by portraying her encounters with black attendees in exaggerated dialect, and identifying (at least visually) with antebellum enslavers rather than the enslaved, she created a divide between her own ways of talking and worshiping and those of

⁸⁸⁸ In 1920s film and radio, the term “Sambo” referred to an African American who behaved in a stereotypically cheerful, comical, and submissive manner. See: Joseph Boskin, *Sambo: The Rise & Demise of an American Jester* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 148-97.

⁸⁸⁹ Aimee Semple McPherson, “The Conquering Host,” *The Bridal Call Foursquare* 10, no. 3 (1926): 5; ———, “Satan’s Master Stroke,” *The Bridal Call Foursquare* 10, no. 4 (1926): 21; ———, “The Need of the Hour,” *The Bridal Call Foursquare* 11, no. 3 (1927): 31.

⁸⁹⁰ Aimee Semple McPherson, “Mammoth Divine Healing Services” *The Bridal Call Foursquare* 5, no. 3 (1921): 9.

her African American counterparts. These acts reinforced the whiteness as well as the middleclass qualities of her meetings and placed McPherson comfortably in the mainstream of American revivalism.

By all accounts, her followers adored their white, middleclass sweetheart as illustrated in the testimony of one devoted disciple:

What a small bundle our pastor is, but what a precious bundle! In her snowy white gown, with her glorious red gold hair piled high, and her arms outstretched, one does not need a vivid imagination to see an angel of the Lord before him. (She does not like that we should say such things about her, but we cannot help it, for when we see the Christ in her we must admire and love).⁸⁹¹

Conclusion

Woodworth-Etter and McPherson's pulpit performances repeated many standard revivalist practices: they had music, preaching, offerings, and altar calls. Whereas male revivalists used the preaching moment to reinforce the masculinity of their message and person, Woodworth-Etter and McPherson performed their roles as a mother in Israel and bride of Christ. By putting the emphasis on her status as channel of God, Woodworth-Etter deemphasized her agency from the pulpit. As an instrument of God, she was free to assert her authority in her rhetoric and bodily movements with her strong voice, her bold gestures, and her performance as a spiritual military leader. Woodworth-Etter's role as a healer gave the minister an opportunity to perform nurturing motherly tasks like caring for her sick children. Her followers were mesmerized and readily submitted to her altar calls. Her

⁸⁹¹ Elizabeth C. Collier, "My Church," *The Bridal Call Foursquare* 8, no. 3 (1924): 28.

influence was limited to holiness and Pentecostal circles, however, because of her ecstatic services, her working class followers, and her association with African American attendees.

McPherson used her status as exemplary confidant of Jesus to give her performance power. By striking film star poses and putting on elaborate productions that featured McPherson as the star, she made herself out to be the leading lady of her Temple and of her savior. By performing a heavenly romance, McPherson showed her followers that she was Jesus' most devoted follower. Her power came from her ability to be the ultimate female consort to Jesus and so even her most powerful gestures were clothed in femininity. McPherson successfully broadened her mainstream revivalist authority by partitioning ecstatic expressions in the 500 Room, by distancing herself from African Americans through her performances, and by acting as master of ceremonies of a comfortable, orderly, middleclass production. Therefore while neither A. B. Simpson nor John Chapman came to Woodworth-Etter meetings, William Jennings Bryan and Billy Sunday happily preached in the Temple pulpit.

CHAPTER VI

“A REGULAR JEZEBEL”: FEMALE MINISTRY ON TRIAL

“Even in religious matters, the law allows no cunning or artifice tending to impose on the credulity of weaker minded people.”⁸⁹²

Even though their followers accepted the women as female ministers and they had considerable influence in 1890s-1920s revivalism, some reactions from their contemporaries suggest that the women’s work was not entirely successful in transgressing the boundaries of womanhood and the ministry. In fact, many revivalists disapproved of the women’s ordination and subsequent work as pastors. In some cases, they actively opposed their work.

Woodworth-Etter’s ordination in the Indiana Church of God was revoked after “protest against it from the [male] Indiana Eldership.”⁸⁹³ Flamboyant restorationist and fellow heartland minister John Alexander Dowie denounced the “infernal woman named Woodworth,” after the two had clashed personally and theologically, and some of his followers began to attend her meetings.⁸⁹⁴ According to Dowie, Woodworth-Etter’s teachings on divine healing were ineffective and her

⁸⁹² "Tells How She Got "Power"."

⁸⁹³ C. H. Forney, *History of the Churches of God in the United States of North America* (Harrisburg, PA: The Churches of God Publishing House, 1914), 237.

⁸⁹⁴ John Alexander Dowie, "Elijah's Restoration Messages," *Leaves of Healing* 13, no. 12 (1903): 374; ———, "Trance Evangelist," *Leaves of Healing* 1, no. 24 (1895).

trances were “a witness of Satan.”⁸⁹⁵ “She was,” he wrote, “a regular Jezebel, like her of Revelation.”⁸⁹⁶ “I saw one of my people who had been blessed by God – an ex-doctor of medicine – on his knees howling,”⁸⁹⁷ he wrote after visiting one of Woodworth-Etter’s meetings and seeing a former congregant now in her company. In addition to her tussle with Dowie, Woodworth-Etter frequently clashed with other celebrity healing revivalists in holiness and Pentecostal circles. For example, her fellow Midwestern healing revivalist John Bunyan Campbell accused her of incompetence and insanity. “She like the rest,” he opined, “do not know how to use it [healing power] and may use it too much and thus do much harm.”⁸⁹⁸

McPherson also had her share of detractors. A group of Baptist revivalist ministers called her ministry “under serious question” and protested her Baptist ordination in California.⁸⁹⁹ Robert “Fighting Bob” Shuler, a fellow Los Angeles revivalist celebrity, made McPherson his particular target. Shuler dedicated several articles of his periodical, *Bob Shuler’s Magazine*, to criticizing McPherson (in prose and in limerick form).⁹⁰⁰ One poetic offering about McPherson demonstrates a high level of vitriol:

⁸⁹⁵ John Alexander Dowie, “Trance Evangelism,” *Leaves of Healing* 1, no. 24 (1895): 381.

⁸⁹⁶ Dowie, “Elijah’s Restoration Messages,” 374.

⁸⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁹⁸ John Bunyan Campbell, *Spirit Vitapathy; a Religious Scientific System of Health and Life for Body and Soul* (Cincinnati, OH: H. Watkin, 1891), 348.

⁸⁹⁹ Orville Coats, “The Ordination of Mrs. Mcpherson,” *Moody Bible Institute Monthly* 22, no. 9 (1922): 1027.

⁹⁰⁰ Robert Shuler, *“Fighting Bob” Shuler of Los Angeles* (Indianapolis, IN: Dog Ear Publishing, 2011), 174-84.

I am going to name a lady with a record long and shady,
One who in this world has caused a lot of strife!
Now I know you're laughing hearty – but I do not mean that party!
For the one I have in mind is the devil's wife!⁹⁰¹

Observers also skewered Woodworth-Etter and McPherson's scandal-ridden careers. Woodworth-Etter's 1913 trial and McPherson's 1926 courtroom drama provided critics with ample opportunity to punish the women for stepping outside 1890s-1920s models of womanliness and into the public sphere of the masculine ministry. The women's legal battles were not simply about the crimes the women were accused of perpetrating. The aspects of Woodworth-Etter and McPherson's identities that subverted gender norms were also on trial.

The Hypnotist

In August of 1913, Maria Woodworth-Etter pitched her revival tent at Montwait, a campground and popular venue for Pentecostal meetings near South Framingham, Massachusetts. Initially, the meetings went as planned. The *Framingham Daily Tribune* reported with interest the "peculiar traits and manifestations" of Woodworth-Etter meetings.⁹⁰² The *Tribune* also published an

⁹⁰¹ Ibid., 184.

⁹⁰² "Police Check Hoodlumism. Pentacostal [Sic] Meeting at Montwait Interrupted Many Times Lats Evening," *Framingham Daily Tribune*, August 7 1913.

editorial encouraging local residents to come and see the “signs and wonders” that accompanied the services.⁹⁰³

Although some showed interest in seeing Woodworth-Etter’s “signs and wonders,” not everyone was happy with the meetings. Several young men deemed “hoodlums”⁹⁰⁴ by local police threw rocks and eggs at revival attendees, dumped buckets of water on stage, and caused enough general mayhem to warrant intervention from local law enforcement officers.⁹⁰⁵ Others chose less physical but ultimately more damaging ways of expressing their displeasure. Local doctors came forward and accused Woodworth-Etter of leading meetings that were detrimental to her congregants’ health.⁹⁰⁶ Concerned citizens believed Woodworth-Etter’s healings were fraudulent and complained about the loud meetings.⁹⁰⁷ Their complaints led South Framingham’s prosecuting attorney David C. Ahearn to arrest and charge Woodworth-Etter with cheating her devotees out of one hundred dollars in offerings.⁹⁰⁸ According to Ahearn, Woodworth-Etter had agreed to heal attendees in exchange for their offerings, and then failed to cure her subjects.⁹⁰⁹

Woodworth-Etter’s trial was more about the “nefarious means” she used to control her adherents than it was about whether she stole from them. In fact,

⁹⁰³ "Has the Day of Miracles Past?," *Framingham Daily Tribune*, August 7 1913.

⁹⁰⁴ "Police Check Hoodlumism. Pentacostal [Sic] Meeting at Montwait Interrupted Many Times Last Evening," *Framingham Daily Tribune*, August 7 1913.

⁹⁰⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁰⁶ "Aver They Are Cured: One Threw Her Brace Away Holy Rollers Fail to Help Blind Boy."

⁹⁰⁷ "Took No Money for Healing: Mrs. Etter Gave God Credit for Cures."

⁹⁰⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁰⁹ "Tells How She Got "Power"."

throughout her trial, her fiscal policies got very little attention. Instead, the overarching question was: from where did she get such “superior Pentecostal power” over her followers, particularly the men?⁹¹⁰ Ahearn argued that she used hypnotism to impose her will on the “credulity of weaker minded people.”⁹¹¹

Hypnotism figured prominently in several high profile trials of the era,⁹¹² and it had very specific, usually negative connotations.⁹¹³ It was most commonly associated with two unsavory practices: the occult and quackery. Newspapers characterized hypnotism as a cultic practice brought from the mysterious and dangerous “Far East” to America, with power to harm participants as well as practitioners.⁹¹⁴ Reporters chronicled tales of hypnotisms gone wrong, and blamed deaths, illness, and injury on the practice.⁹¹⁵

The underlying presupposition of Woodworth-Etter’s trial was that she was doing something menacing and even dangerous, and Ahearn’s accusations were nothing new. Opponents of Woodworth-Etter’s ministry had long been

⁹¹⁰ "Took No Money for Healing: Mrs. Etter Gave God Credit for Cures."

⁹¹¹ "Tells How She Got "Power"."

⁹¹² See: "More Hypnotism on Women," *Lewiston Morning Tribune* 1913; "Hypnotism Overcame Her: Begged Husband to Keep Dead Man Away as Unable to Resist His Power," *Lewiston Morning Tribune*, April 5 1913; "Swindled by an Adventuress," *The Star*, December 24 1904; "Hypnotism Did It All," *New York Times*, February 15 1907; "Hypnotism Not a Factor," *New York Times*, April 15 1895.

⁹¹³ Fred Nadis, *Wonder Shows: Performing Science, Magic, and Religion in America* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2005), 85-112.

⁹¹⁴ See: "Student of Occult Sciences Falls Unconscious after Experiments," May 29 1908.

⁹¹⁵ See for example: "Couldn't Awaken Hypnotist's Subject: Friend Cries in Vain to the Man Dead in the Morgue That His Heart Is Beating," *New York Times*, November 10 1909; "Hypnotism Is Fatal: Subject's Support Gives Way and His Head Is Crushed," *Aurora Daily Express*, May 17 1901.

uncomfortable with her supposed hypnotic influence over male minds.⁹¹⁶ A headline reporting on an 1890 Woodworth-Etter meeting warned that the evangelist “STEALS MEN’S WITS AWAY,” through hypnotism.⁹¹⁷ In 1891 she was accused of using hypnosis to procure more substantial offerings.⁹¹⁸ The *New York Times* reported a story of a young man who put himself under Woodworth-Etter’s hypnotic influence and shortly after experienced hallucinations and insomnia from which his doctor believed he would never fully recover.⁹¹⁹

Classifying Woodworth-Etter as a hypnotist allowed Ahearn and other critics to construct alternative identity than what she created for herself. As a pastor she was the epitome of the “Malcontent Woman”⁹²⁰ bemoaned in 1895. Not only did she publicly associate with men as peers, she ordered many of them around, claimed to have authority over sickness, presented herself as God’s mouthpiece, and did it all in the male *métier* of the ministry. In addition, despite her many efforts to position herself as a mother who fulfilled her motherly duties with her congregation, she did not spend her time “mothercrafting” in the home. Detractors therefore did not

⁹¹⁶ See for example: "Victims of Hypnotism.; Religious Frenzy Inspired by an Insane Revivalist." See also: "Woodworth-Etter Goes into a Trance."; "Driven Crazy by Religion; Victims of Mrs. Woodworth's Revivals in St. Lewis," *The New York Times*, April 12 1891; "Sees Visions of Heaven: Strange Reports from Mrs. Woodworth's Meetings," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, December 21 1890.

⁹¹⁷ "Steals Men's Wits Away. Male and Female Bipeds in Frenzied Prayer. They Cry, Shout and Swing Their Arms in Air Till Exhausted. Woman Evangelist Charged with Hypnotizing Her Hearers.," *Boston Daily Globe*, September 1 1890.

⁹¹⁸ "A Hypnotic Revivalist Disappears: Mrs. Maria B. Woodworth Shakes the Dust of St. Louis from Her Feet," *Chicago Tribune*, April 24 1891.

⁹¹⁹ "Driven Crazy by Religion; Victims of Mrs. Woodworth's Revivals in St. Lewis."

⁹²⁰ "The Malcontent Woman by a Discontent Man."

accept that she was a powerful revivalist. To them, she was a quack who dabbled dangerously in the occult.

Ahearn's case, although passionately argued, was flimsy, and a few days after her testimony, Woodworth-Etter was cleared of any wrongdoing.⁹²¹ Many had lingering doubts, however, about her methods of ministry. The Framingham judge's ruling was hardly an endorsement of her ministry. His comments are a revealing glimpse at the ways in which nonbelievers thought she transgressed gender lines.⁹²² "There are sections of the country, perhaps, where these defendants have preached where the laying out in straw on or near a public platform, of a dozen or more persons of both sexes and all ages in an unconscious state might pass as one of the usual and proper incidents of a meeting intended for the worship of God," said Judge Kingsbury. "But it is repugnant to the general public sentiment of this Commonwealth and these defendants will be wise if they recognize the fact as long as they stay with us."⁹²³

Woodworth-Etter's 1913 trial showed that even though her followers found her performance of the warring mother in Israel to be compelling, her power over

⁹²¹ Woodworth-Etter's methods were questioned in many cities where she pitched her revival tent. Worries over the safety of Woodworth-Etter's methods resulted in a Probate Judge ordering minors excluded from her meetings in Topeka, Kansas. See: "Boy Cured by Miracle Is Taken from Meeting," *Topeka Daily Capital*, August 12 1915. Others in Fremont, Nebraska voiced concern for "tragedies enacted by those who hope for relief from suffering." See: "Hundreds Crowd Tent of The "Divine Healer"," *Fremont Evening Tribune*, September 24 1920.

⁹²² Woodworth-Etter's methods were questioned in many cities where she pitched her revival tent. Worries over the safety of Woodworth-Etter's methods resulted in a Probate Judge ordering minors excluded from her meetings in Topeka, Kansas. See: "Boy Cured by Miracle Is Taken from Meeting." Others in Fremont, Nebraska voiced concern for "tragedies enacted by those who hope for relief from suffering." See: "Hundreds Crowd Tent of The "Divine Healer"."

⁹²³ Warner, *The Woman Evangelist: The Life and Times of Charismatic Evangelist Maria B. Woodworth-Etter*, 232.

her congregants was unacceptable to those not in the fold. During her trial, her opponents argued that the acts that constituted an eschatological warring mother for insiders were the very acts that discredited her. Woodworth-Etter's acts of motherly healing were seen by doctors as public health concerns. Her act of receiving a word from "under the power," was seen as a symptom or cause of insanity. The revivalist meeting with "both sexes" was seen as a "repugnant" fraud. The strategies that served her so well were also used as evidence that she was not a minister at all but a (possibly insane) hypnotist and probable fraud. In short, according to the prosecution and the Framingham court of public opinion, she was anything but a legitimate female minister.

Psychopathia Sexualis

As it was with her predecessor, McPherson's career was characterized by a number of legal dramas, but none eclipsed the public scandal surrounding her 1926 disappearance, reappearance, and criminal trial. McPherson's trial was a goldmine for scandal seekers. It involved an alleged kidnapping, a body double, a missing person, and even a suitcase full of lingerie.⁹²⁴ Most of all, it involved sex. The sex appeal McPherson had focused toward her heavenly bridegroom was now redirected in the media to the "love tryst" she supposedly shared with an earthly partner.⁹²⁵ Reporters were only too happy to speculate about McPherson's

⁹²⁴ "Find Second Trunk in McPherson Case," *New York Times*, November 2 1926.

supposed affair. Much of the trial focused not on whether or not she and her staff had conspired to deceive the police, but rather on her alleged affair with Ormiston.⁹²⁶

Like Woodworth-Etter before her, McPherson found that news coverage of the trial was focused upon the power she wielded during her revivalist meetings, not on the charges themselves. Reporters noted that her trial galvanized her congregation. "The temple rafters rang with the applause of thousands of her followers who rose in their seats and, lifting their right hands, pledged their support," wrote one United News observer; "'We are with you!' they shouted as one."⁹²⁷ They were fascinated by McPherson's authority over her congregants in spite of her legal troubles and rumors of her sexual indiscretions.⁹²⁸ "While Aimee Semple McPherson is being drawn into a quagmire of public scandal that each day reveals some new sensation," wrote one disbelieving newspaper, "her followers believe her to be a holy Christian martyr."⁹²⁹

⁹²⁵ Dan Campbell, "Aimee's Captivity Traced through Various Hotels," *The Evening Independent*, October 2 1926.

⁹²⁶ Sutton, *Aimee Semple Mcpherson and the Resurrection of Christian America*, 135.

⁹²⁷ Dan Campbell, "Aimee Apparently at End of Her Kidnaping Romance," *The Evening Independent*, September 16 1926.

⁹²⁸ Mayme Peak, "Mrs. Mcpherson Wrings Sobs from Congregation," *Boston Daily Globe*, September 20 1926; "Aimee's Followers Believe She Is a Christian Martyr," *The Evening Independent*, September 20 1926; "Martyr Show Given by Mrs. M'pherson," *New York Times*, October 3 1926.

⁹²⁹ "Aimee's Followers Believe She Is a Christian Martyr."

To explain her followers' attachment to their pastor, reporters used popular (and usually misinterpreted) versions of Freudianism,⁹³⁰ the rage in the 1920s, to psychoanalyze McPherson's authority. McPherson's critics, "talk of psychopathia sexualis. They say that when Aimee on her platform dances and sways from side to side, clapping her hands, chanting, shouting, she is sending forth emotional vibrations that the thousands catch like a contagion to sway and chant and moan and sing with her. They say that the religious orgy is really a sexual orgy."⁹³¹ In other words, like Woodworth-Etter who supposedly hypnotized her followers, McPherson could not simply be an authoritative minister. She was a hypersexual being whose "vibrations" infected otherwise sane individuals. She was the sexy leader of a "new cult" with a "career of color."⁹³²

For all of her supposed sexual indiscretion and legal misconduct, McPherson's case concluded rather anticlimactically.⁹³³ Keyes ultimately decided that he could not produce conclusive evidence of McPherson's guilt, and in 1927 he dropped the charges.⁹³⁴ McPherson claimed to be satisfied to return to Angelus Temple without a criminal record, but the lack of official vindication was a stain on her reputation.⁹³⁵

⁹³⁰ Schlater, "Flaming Youth: Gender in 1920s Hollywood", 109; Beth L. Bailey, *From Front Porch to Back Seat: Courtship in Twentieth-Century America* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1988), 101.

⁹³¹ Sumner, "Prison Bars Will Not Dim Ardor of Aimee Mcpherson's Faithful."

⁹³² "Mrs. M'pherson, Evangelist, Faces Probe," *Beddeford Weekly Journal*, October 1 1926.

⁹³³ "Keyes Drops Case against Aimee," *Telegraph-Herald*, January 10 1927.

⁹³⁴ Ibid.

⁹³⁵ Even in death, McPherson was known primarily for her famous disappearance. See for example: "Death Comes to the Evangelist," *The Baltimore Sun*, September 28 1944; "Autopsy Ordered

Reaction to McPherson shows that while sex appeal might be acceptable for male ministers, it was not for women. Billy Sunday's athletic, virile performances were known to "just border on the questionable and prohibited phases of sex relations," but he was absolved by those who argued that, "these raw, vulgar, nasty suggestions are just what our boys and girls need."⁹³⁶ McPherson's sensual preaching, however, veered too far from the companionate wifedom she purportedly represented. While Sunday kept his status as a "Reverend," no matter the accusation, McPherson rarely received such an honorific title in the press. In her publications, she referred to herself as the "pastor of Angelus Temple," and her practices there as "pastoral duties."⁹³⁷ In newspapers, she was categorized instead in exotic terms, such as the "high priestess of the four square gospel," the P.T. Barnum of American Protestantism, the "Prima Donna of Revivalism," "Aimee the Actress," or "the Mary Pickford of revivalism."⁹³⁸ McPherson was an actress and entertainer, reporters readily admitted, but she was not a minister.

on Body of Evangelist," *The Evening Independent*, September 28 1944; "Aimee Semple McPherson Dead," *Beaver County Times*, September 29 1944.

⁹³⁶ Betts, *Billy Sunday, the Man and Method*, 31-32.

⁹³⁷ Aimee Semple McPherson, "Christ, Our Spiritual Gibraltar," *The Bridal Call Foursquare* 10, no. 4 (1929): 4.

⁹³⁸ Loud, *Evangelized America*, 322; "Membership Doubled in Few Months," *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, January 18 1927; Sumner, "Prison Bars Will Not Dim Ardor of Aimee McPherson's Faithful."; "Judge Issues Warning in Temple Scrap," *Lawrence Journal-World*, April 24 1937; Comstock, "Aimee Semple McPherson: Prima Donna of Revivalism," 11.

Conclusion

In many ways, Woodworth-Etter and McPherson's trials show that the women were celebrity revivalist celebrities in every sense of the word. Their scandals were (and are) nothing new in celebrity revivalism. Some of their counterparts also were involved in controversy. A. B. Simpson was accused of misusing congregational funds.⁹³⁹ Billy Sunday's ministry was riddled with rumors of financial improprieties,⁹⁴⁰ and his son's numerous brushes with the law shamed the revivalist.⁹⁴¹ J. Frank Norris was charged with arson, and he even killed an unarmed man in his office and was tried (and was subsequently acquitted) for murder.⁹⁴² None of these scandals dimmed the ministers' popularity or influence. Therefore, in many ways, Woodworth-Etter and McPherson's scandals made them full members of the revivalist celebrity club.

The women's trials also show that they did not perform their identities as female ministers so well as to escape punishment for unconventional gender performances.⁹⁴³ Indeed, the women were penalized much more severely than their male colleagues. A. B. Simpson was rumored to have spurious financial practices,

⁹³⁹ "Simpson Will Explain; He Is to Address the Christian Alliance Camp Meeting, Answering Charges of Misuse of Funds," *New York Times*, August 13 1899.

⁹⁴⁰ "Turns on Sunday: Evangelist's Former Secretary to Reveal 'Inside Workings,'" *The Daily Star*, June 15 1915.

⁹⁴¹ "Billy Sunday's Son Is Arrested," *The Miami News*, November 25 1929.

⁹⁴² "Texas Minister Kills Man in Church; the Rev. J. Frank Norris, Fundamentalist, Shoots Fort Worth Lumberman," *New York Times*, July 18 1926.

⁹⁴³ Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, 140.

but unlike Woodworth-Etter, he was never taken to court. J. Frank Norris' 1926 murder trial had the potential to be more sensational than McPherson's 1926 trial for misuse of public funds, but it did not attract a fraction of the media attention McPherson's garnered. Norris, every bit as flamboyant as McPherson, faced no questions about his credibility as a minister. Nor was his legitimacy as a preacher called into question, despite having taken a man's life.⁹⁴⁴

In addition, the courtroom dramas reveal the double-edged relationship between celebrity and gender performance. As celebrity ministers, Woodworth-Etter and McPherson were able to cross gender lines. For example, men willingly subjected themselves to their ministries in part just to see someone famous in action. Their public scandals proved that celebrity cut both ways. Their status made them famous, but it also made them easier targets and the subject of great vitriol. The rewards for Woodworth-Etter and McPherson's revivalist ministries were significant: they were adored, followed, and celebrated. Celebrity revivalist ministry was risky too, however, and for female ministers, the punishment for scandal was severe.

⁹⁴⁴ See: "Norris Acquitted in Swift Trial," *New York Times*, January 26 1927; "Norris, Amid Sobs, Tells of Killing," *New York Times*, January 22 1927; "Preacher Slayer Ready for Trial," *New York Times*, October 31 1926.

CONCLUSION

“But though her voice is silent, she still speaks.”⁹⁴⁵

This project has shown that by employing revivalist methods infused with popular notions of womanhood, Woodworth-Etter and McPherson created personas that reconciled the seemingly discordant identities of minister and woman. Woodworth-Etter used the Bible to create a womanly model of leadership that was at once a celebration of turn of the century motherhood and an invitation to lead women and men into the masculine act of war. McPherson created a biblical model of femaleness that allowed her to revel in the romantic aspects of 1920s companionate marriage while at the same time qualified her to minister based on her exemplary intimacy with Jesus. The women manipulated their bodies to create visions of their biblical personas. They utilized revivalist worship spaces to proclaim the message of their womanliness and leadership. Finally, they achieved authority through revivalist preaching performance.

Their sizable congregations, enthusiastic followers, and publication circulation testify to the fact that Woodworth-Etter and McPherson evoked love, admiration, respect, devotion, and submission from their followers during their preaching performances. The degree of vitriol leveled at the women compared with their male revivalist counterparts, however, suggests that their efforts to become authoritative ministers were not entirely successful. Therefore, the issue of whether

⁹⁴⁵ Woodworth-Etter, *Life and Testimony of Mrs. M. B. Woodworth-Etter*, 134.

or not they were truly gender transgressive or simply the exceptions that proved a gendered rule remains.

Historians have argued that their legacies show that their gender transgression did not last beyond the women's lives.⁹⁴⁶ Many aspects of the events following each woman's death seem to support this position. Woodworth-Etter and McPherson's churches still thrive, but men have led them since their famous founders died.⁹⁴⁷ McPherson's L.I.F.E. Bible College (now Life Pacific College) once boasted that three of four ordinations per graduating class were female,⁹⁴⁸ but it now ordains about thirty-seven percent women.⁹⁴⁹ Few of its female graduates take on senior pastor positions. The Assemblies of God, the largest Pentecostal denomination in America and the one Woodworth-Etter was instrumental in its founding, has never had more than nineteen percent female ministers.⁹⁵⁰

In addition, although many in Foursquare's institutional leadership sought to uphold McPherson's legacy, many also felt her scandals were shortcomings and attributed those shortcomings to all women.⁹⁵¹ Consequently, women were actively

⁹⁴⁶ Edith Waldvogel Blumhofer, "Women in Pentecostalism," in *Encyclopedia of Women and Religion in North America*, ed. Rosemary Skinner Keller, Rosemary Radford Ruether, and Marie Cantlon (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2006), 404.

⁹⁴⁷ Technically, Thomas and Lyda Paino succeeded Woodworth-Etter after her death at the Maria B. Woodworth-Etter Tabernacle, but Thomas assumed primary leadership responsibilities.

⁹⁴⁸ Nathaniel M. Van Cleave and Ronald D. Williams, *The Vine and the Branches: A History of the International Church of the Foursquare Gospel* (Los Angeles: Foursquare Publishing, 1992), 41.

⁹⁴⁹ Bill Shepson, "More Female Senior Pastors Than Ever Before," *Foursquare* 2010.

⁹⁵⁰ Poloma and Green, *The Assemblies of God: Godly Love and the Revitalization of American Pentecostalism*, 109.

⁹⁵¹ Simonsen (The Foursquare Heritage Center Director).

excluded from upper echelons of leadership in Foursquare until very recently.⁹⁵²

Tammy Dunahoo, Foursquare's current Vice President, is the first woman to hold an executive office in Foursquare since Roberta Semple Salter left the church in 1937.⁹⁵³

Evaluating the women's status as ministers based on their institution's continued ability to empower female leaders, however, would be to hold the women accountable to a standard that they did not seek to uphold. Neither Woodworth-Etter nor McPherson showed significant interest in attaining lasting political power for themselves as women or for women in general. Neither their writings nor their actions suggest that they saw themselves as representatives for their gender or as activists for women. Although Woodworth-Etter's ministry reached its zenith concurrently with the suffrage movement, unlike Congregationalist Antoinette Brown Blackwell or Methodist Anna Howard Shaw,⁹⁵⁴ she did not campaign for the right to vote. Unlike Presbyterian Louisa Woosley, who campaigned for female ordination and wrote extensively on the subject,⁹⁵⁵ McPherson made no special attempt to promote women's ordination. Gender transgression for all women for all time was Brown Blackwell and Woosley's goal, not McPherson or Woodworth-Etter's.

Yet, at their expressed goals, the women were wildly successful. The

⁹⁵² Ibid.

⁹⁵³ The Foursquare Church, "Tammy Dunahoo Accepts Vp Role," The Foursquare Church.

⁹⁵⁴ Lucy Stone et al., *Friends and Sisters: Letters between Lucy Stone and Antoinette Brown Blackwell, 1846-93*, Women in American History (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1987), 228.

⁹⁵⁵ Boyd and Brackenridge, *Presbyterian Women in America: Two Centuries of a Quest for Status*, 104.

women's funerals show that followers embraced them as mother and bride in life and in death. At her funeral, Woodworth-Etter's followers remembered her for her authority over her congregation as their mother and as their commander. Her followers had gathered at the Tabernacle and mourned the loss of their spiritual military leader and mother. "A mighty warrior has fallen in the battle," wrote Pastor R. J. Craig. "Would that her mantle [of leadership] might fall on me."⁹⁵⁶ "She was called from the battlefield of sin and has got her reward," wrote another of Woodworth-Etter's "praying lieutenants," of her, "Dear Mother Etter."⁹⁵⁷ An "anonymous friend" composed a poem commemorating her life and pledging to continue her work: "Oh, Mother, Mother, we'll know you there, for a crown of righteousness you'll wear, And the flowers you planted here below, we will water them and make them grow."⁹⁵⁸

McPherson's followers mourned her death twice: once in 1926 when they believed she had drowned and again in 1944 when they discovered that she had died from complications related to a barbiturate overdose. Each time, they mourned the loss of their bride of Christ. She was not their dearly departed mother, but their "Sister," who was a "friend and spiritual partner."⁹⁵⁹ Their grief was for their pastor, but also their sibling. Newspapers reported on the "hysterical men and women" who were "wailing and shouting hallelujahs with the energy of fanaticism,"

⁹⁵⁶ Woodworth-Etter, *Life and Testimony of Mrs. M. B. Woodworth-Etter*, 126.

⁹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 127-28.

⁹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 129.

⁹⁵⁹ "Sea Did Not Give up Dead," *The Evening Independent*, May 24 1924.

while they held vigils for her in 1926.⁹⁶⁰

When she was finally laid to rest in 1944, McPherson's status as a leading lady and bride of Christ was evident in the way her followers mourned. Over thirty-five thousand people came to see her fully made-up, fifty-three-year-old body in state before it was buried with Los Angeles's most famous movie stars in Forest Lawn. *LIFE* magazine reported that of the over ten thousand people who attended the minister's funeral, eight thousand brought flowers.⁹⁶¹ One devotee made a replica of McPherson's chair from orchids and asters.⁹⁶² Another made a harp of flowers to accompany the minister in her heavenly musicals.⁹⁶³ Surrounded by cascades of flowers and dressed in white, McPherson was a bride of Christ to the end. Followers consoled themselves by declaring that McPherson had achieved her goal of union with Jesus. "Then she heard the Master's voice," said one mourner; "'Come up a little higher,' and she who had walked in the light of His word went out into the more glorious Light of his presence."⁹⁶⁴ "She is rejoicing," said her son Rolf, "with Our Savior."⁹⁶⁵

In addition to authority over and appreciation from their congregations, the women also attained their goal of spreading their brand of the revivalist gospel.

⁹⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁹⁶¹ "Aimee Semple Mcpherson: Thousands Mourn at Famed Evangelist's Funeral," *LIFE*, October 30 1944, 85.

⁹⁶² Ibid., 86.

⁹⁶³ Ibid., 85.

⁹⁶⁴ Judge Carlos S. Hardy, "Carry On," *The Bridal Call Foursquare* 10, no. 2 (1926): 27.

⁹⁶⁵ "Aimee Semple Mcpherson: Thousands Mourn at Famed Evangelist's Funeral," 85.

Woodworth-Etter and McPherson's followers took up their leaders' mission and industriously set out to convert others to Pentecostal revivalism. The fruit of their labors was expansive. Pentecostal revivalism, the movement that both women helped to found, now has approximately five hundred million practitioners.⁹⁶⁶ The Assemblies of God now boasts sixty million worshippers, and McPherson's own denomination has nearly eight million worldwide.⁹⁶⁷ For Pentecostal revivalists there could be no greater evidence for the authority of their work than an increase in numbers.⁹⁶⁸

In addition to institutional growth, one of the most telling indicators of McPherson's success over time was the number of her imitators. Woodworth-Etter's desexualized motherly image had limited staying power in revivalist circles, but McPherson's blend of sexy intimacy with Jesus and her love for harnessing mass media in service to her message resonated with subsequent female revivalists. Several famous 1920s, 30s, and 40s women evangelists, such as Rheba Crawford the "Angel of Broadway" and Uldine Uteley the "Girl Evangelist" looked to McPherson as a mentor.⁹⁶⁹ Young women who attended her Bible college dressed in Foursquare

⁹⁶⁶ "Pentecostal Resource Page," in *The Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life* (Pew Research Center, 2006).

⁹⁶⁷ "U.S. Religious Landscape Survey," in *Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life* (Pew Research Center, 2007).

⁹⁶⁸ Cooper, *The Great Revivalists in American Religion, 1740-1944: The Careers and Theology of Jonathan Edwards, Charles Finney, Dwight Moody, Billy Sunday and Aimee Semple McPherson*, 172; McClymond, *Embodying the Spirit: New Perspectives on North American Revivalism*, 17; Airhart, *Serving the Present Age: Revivalism, Progressivism, and the Methodist Tradition in Canada*, 81.

⁹⁶⁹ One time Temple staff pastor Rheba Crawford and well known evangelist Uldine Uteley are examples of this trend. Crawford cultivated a McPherson-like ministry preaching on Broadway in New York. Her white dresses, fresh-faced beauty and dynamic preaching earned her a reputation as the "Angel of Broadway," and also a later homage in the form of the character Sarah Brown in the 1933 short story and 1950 musical, *Guys and Dolls*. See: Damon Runyon, *Guys and Dolls* (New York:

uniforms, styled their hair like McPherson, and self-consciously adopted her gestures.⁹⁷⁰ Women L.I.F.E. graduates preached across the country with methods “a la McPherson.”⁹⁷¹ Men and well as women followers preached on her favorite topic: the bride and the bridegroom.⁹⁷² Female graduates such as Ione Jefferies, Bessie Bruffet, Alice Parham, Alice LaMar, and Evelyn Thompson, although married, took the lead in their ministries and were the featured pastor in their respective churches.⁹⁷³ Many lesser-known women followed McPherson’s lead, left their husbands, took their children to LIFE Bible College and went on to pastor around the country.⁹⁷⁴ For example, in 1929 forty-two year old Rosa M. Phillippi brought her children to California, received her degree, and was later appointed as a pastor in Hood River, Oregon.⁹⁷⁵

McPherson’s influence remains in celebrity revivalist circles. Katherine Kuhlman, a popular female televangelist who followed in McPherson’s footsteps with a healing ministry and preaching career that spanned the 1940s to the 1970s,

Frederick A. Stokes, 1931). Crawford hoped to inherit the Temple from McPherson, but the Angel and the Bride ultimately parted ways acrimoniously. See: "Mrs. Hutton's Flock Uneasy over Control," *Chicago Tribune*, June 10 1933. Utley converted at a McPherson service and copied her taste for flowing dresses and flowers. Utley preached about Jesus as her “Rose of Sharon,” and “Lilly of the Valley.” See: "Religion: Terror's Troth," *Time Magazine*, January 10 1938.

⁹⁷⁰ Simonsen (The Foursquare Heritage Center Director).

⁹⁷¹ *Time Magazine* described Ester Locy’s McPherson-esque meetings as “lusty revival meetings,” “a la McPherson.” “Religion: Mcpherson V. Voliva,” *Time Magazine*, September 16 1929.

⁹⁷² See for example: Dr. Charles A. Shreve, "A Beautiful Bride," *The Bridal Call Foursquare* 14, no. 13 (1931).

⁹⁷³ Van Cleave and Williams, *The Vine and the Branches: A History of the International Church of the Foursquare Gospel*, 42.

⁹⁷⁴ Simonsen (The Foursquare Heritage Center Director).

⁹⁷⁵ Rosa M. Phillippi, "Application for Admission Lighthouse of International Foursquare Evangelism," ed. LIFE Bible College (Echo Park - Los Angeles: Angelus Temple, 1929).

was open about her admiration for McPherson and her desire to imitate her ministry.⁹⁷⁶ "No one in the whole world living today appreciates this woman more than [me]," she said during a broadcast dedicated to McPherson's memory.⁹⁷⁷ Her flowing, feminine gowns, her soothing, friendly voice, her use of mass media, her lack of sustainable marital relationships, her adoration of Jesus as her life partner, and her massive, adoring audiences show that McPherson's method of ministering had continued relevance in the generation after her death.

Kuhlman was just one of many female celebrity ministers who imitated McPherson's approach. Televangelists like Tammy Faye Bakker and Jan Crouch carried the ultra-feminine brand of female minister with murky sexual histories into the 1970s and 1980s.⁹⁷⁸ Bakker and Crouch became famous for their ability to charm television audiences as well as their affinity for cosmetics. The ministers had daily contact with their followers who adored them for their beauty and femininity as much as they loved their message. Similarly, contemporary female ministers like Juanita Bynum and Paula White have had enormous success taking on the role of female ministers with a good dose of sex appeal and very little success in marriage.⁹⁷⁹ As is the case with their predecessor, their scandals have not stopped them from cultivating loyal followers.

McPherson's influence is not limited to female revivalists. Famous male

⁹⁷⁶ "Dedication to the Memory of Aimee Semple McPherson."

⁹⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁷⁸ Kathryn Irene Sheffield, "The Creation of Female Gender Identity on Evangelical Television: Old Wine in New Bottles" (ProQuest LLC, 2009), 34, 36.

⁹⁷⁹ "Megachurch Pastors Put Marriage Asunder," *Deseret News*, September 1 2007; "Lawyer: Televangelist Juanita Bynum Files for Divorce," *Fox News*, September 11 2007.

ministers such as fellow Californian Robert Schuller, Baptist Billy Graham, (now defrocked) Assemblies of God minister Jimmy Swaggart, and countless others followed in McPherson's media-friendly footsteps. Like McPherson, they combined revivalism with mass media, enjoyed spectacular results, and, in many cases, equally spectacular scandals. Thus, McPherson's influence was not limited to female revivalists in her generation, and in this way her work transgressed (and continues to transgress) gender boundaries.

In addition to their influence on Pentecostal revivalism, the women's stories provide several insights into the study of gender and revivalism. First, Woodworth-Etter and McPherson's revivalist ministries illustrate the claim that the "misfirings"⁹⁸⁰ of ritualized acts create opportunities to resist the norms that they ostensibly uphold.⁹⁸¹ Woodworth-Etter and McPherson performed acts such as the altar call that in typical revivalist services signaled the masculinity of the minister and the femininity of the congregation. But instead of being masculine-feminine exchanges, Woodworth-Etter's altar calls were mother-child encounters, and McPherson's were romantic meetings between the bridegroom and bride. The women's services repeated this typically masculine act, but also changed it slightly to accommodate their womanliness. Therefore, through the ritualized act of revivalist preaching the women were able to use practices that were typically used to restrain women from the institution to resist gender and ministerial norms.

⁹⁸⁰ Hollywood, "Performativity, Citationality, Ritualization," 115.

⁹⁸¹ Ibid.: 114.

Second, Woodworth-Etter and McPherson's stories illuminate how the movement as a whole negotiated race and class during the 1890s-1920s. Iain MacRobert's *The Black Roots and White Racism of Early Pentecostalism in the USA* discusses the racial tensions behind theological divisions in the interracial first generation and increasingly segregated second generation of the movement.⁹⁸² Woodworth-Etter and McPherson's story shows that class and racial divisions were facilitated through programming and architectural choices, as well as theological disagreements. McPherson's shift from the 'not of this world,' rural austere holiness of the Woodworth-Etter tabernacle to the urban, opulent, media-savvy Pentecostal temple was a popular innovation that has been repeated in many revivalist circles. McPherson's partitioned areas for ecstatic expression, programmed services, and distinction between herself and African American worshippers ushered her church, and the many who imitated her in Pentecostal circles into the mainstream middleclass of revivalism.

Third, Woodworth-Etter and McPherson's careers demonstrate the power of practice for revivalists. They were credible ministers, in spite of their gender, scandal, and lack of conventional qualifications, because of their ability to *do* revivalism effectively. The minister's gender, even in the masculinized field of revivalist ministry, was subordinate to the ability to perform revivalism.

Fourth, Woodworth-Etter and McPherson's stories show that the Bible was every bit as important to Pentecostal revivalists as it was to other Protestants of the

⁹⁸² Iain MacRobert, *The Black Roots and White Racism of Early Pentecostalism in the USA* (New York, NY: St. Martin's Press, 1988).

era. The women did not use the Bible in the same manner as their fundamentalist or modernist counterparts, but that did not mean that it was not central to their message. Their rhetoric was soaked in biblical references and Woodworth-Etter's biblical mother and McPherson's biblical bride harmonized the seemingly discordant aspects of their identities as women ministers.

Finally, the fact that Woodworth-Etter and McPherson could stretch the boundaries of their womanliness so far and still maintain credibility with their followers shows that gender binaries during this period were not as set as 1890s-1920s Americans or even historians have thought. The historiography of women and public authority in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries is typically told with a rise-fall narrative structure. Women made extraordinary gains in the public sphere through improvements in education, healthcare, and suffrage, the narrative goes, only to lose ground as gender roles resolidified during the prosperous Roaring Twenties when women's political prowess gave way to consumerist ideals, and sexuality gave way to sexiness.⁹⁸³ In other words, women went from political players to household spenders.⁹⁸⁴ This fall continued during the Depression era, historians argue, as women were asked to relinquish public authority roles in the wake of an increasingly dire job market.⁹⁸⁵

⁹⁸³ See for example: Pamela Robertson, "Feminist Camp in *Gold Diggers of 1933*," in *Hollywood Musicals, the Film Reader*, ed. Steven Cohan (New York: Routledge, 2002), 137; Kitch, *The Girl on the Magazine Cover: The Origins of Visual Stereotypes in American Mass Media*, 4; Christina Simmons, *Making Marriage Modern: Women's Sexuality from the Progressive Era to World War II*, 1st pbk. ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 149.

⁹⁸⁴ Kitch, *The Girl on the Magazine Cover: The Origins of Visual Stereotypes in American Mass Media*, 133.

⁹⁸⁵ Robertson, "Feminist Camp in *Gold Diggers of 1933*," 138.

Students of American revivalism have largely accepted this narrative. Female church leaders, according to many, made strides during the 1890s-1910s alongside female lawyers, doctors, and professors, but, the story goes, they then backslid.⁹⁸⁶ Margaret Bendroth's *Fundamentalism and Gender* supports this story by claiming that while the post-Civil War years brought about an "emancipation of women," gender anxieties in fundamentalist revivalism caused the movement to restrict women's leadership roles in the 1920s and 1930s.⁹⁸⁷ Similarly, Anthea Butler's that in the Progressive era, African-American women in Pentecostalism had significant institutional authority.⁹⁸⁸ This authority diminished over time, according to Butler, as Church of God in Christ women moved from the working to middle classes and took on more traditional gender roles.⁹⁸⁹

Woodworth-Etter and McPherson's stories show that at least for some revivalists, this narrative did not apply. Woodworth-Etter embodied the holiness ideals (modesty, plainness, etc.) that Butler credited with empowering women in the Church of God in Christ and enjoyed a powerful holiness career. McPherson's larger, more influential, and more mainstream ministry played into many aspects that historians have argued limited women. She was overtly sexy and embodied some of the consumerist ideals bemoaned by scholars of the era. She wore expensive clothes, make-up, and hairstyles. She did not promote feminist ideals like

⁹⁸⁶ Chaves, *Ordaining Women: Culture and Conflict in Religious Organizations*, 109-10.

⁹⁸⁷ Bendroth, *Fundamentalism & Gender, 1875 to the Present*, 14-19.

⁹⁸⁸ Butler, *Women in the Church of God in Christ: Making a Sanctified World*, 157-66.

⁹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

suffrage or the entrance of women into the professions. McPherson was nevertheless powerful. She exchanged one kind of femininity for another, found authority there, and many more followed suit. In the so-called devolvement into sexiness and consumerism, revivalist women like McPherson and her followers found (and continue to find) power to lead. No matter how “instinctively” male the office of the ministry, gender, divorce, single motherhood, and public scandal were no match for Woodworth-Etter and McPherson’s co-opted versions of ideal womanhood displayed in ministerial identities through classic revivalist methods.

APPENDIX



Figure I.1

Aimee Semple McPherson in her "Gospel Car" in 1918
Image Courtesy of The Foursquare Church



Figure 3.1

A. B. Simpson at approximately 40 years of age in 1883
Public Domain



Figure 3.2
Sunday warming up for a pulpit performance,
Image courtesy of the Library of Congress



Figure 3.3
Billy Sunday demonstrating a variety of his “vigorous” fighting stances for
The Detroit News Tribune, 1914.



Figure 3.4
J. Frank Norris (left) and John Roach Straton (circa 1925)
Image courtesy of the Library of Congress



Miss Camille Gifford, Gibson Girl, 1900

Figure 3.5

Public Domain



Figure 3.6
Maria Woodworth-Etter, circa 1900 (left); circa 1920 (right)
Public Domain



Figure 3.7
Maria Woodworth-Etter, circa 1890
Public Domain

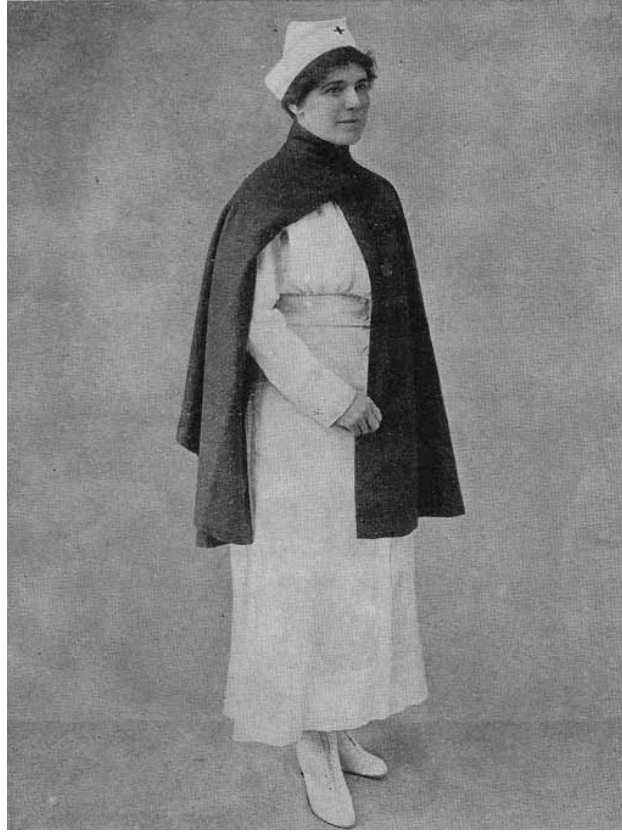


Figure 3.8
Red Cross Nurse, From *Red Cross Magazine*, August 1918



Figure 3.9
Aimee Semple McPherson in uniform, circa 1924
Image Courtesy of the Foursquare Church



Figure 3.10
Aimee Semple McPherson, circa 1933
Image Courtesy of the Foursquare Church



Figure 3.11
Aimee Semple McPherson, 1923
Image Courtesy of the Foursquare Church



Figure 3.12
Aimee Semple McPherson, 1933
Image Courtesy of the Foursquare Gospel



Figure 3.13
Aimee Semple McPherson as Rebecca
Image Courtesy of the Foursquare Gospel



Figure 3.14, 5.9
Aimee Semple McPherson as a Southern Belle
in the illustrated sermon "Slavery Days," circa 1926
Image Courtesy of the Foursquare Gospel



Figure 3.15
Aimee Semple McPherson as a Dutch girl
in her sermon, "The Leak in the Dike," circa 1935
Image Courtesy of the Foursquare Gospel



Figure 3.16
Aimee Semple McPherson as a Police Officer, circa 1924
Image Courtesy of the Foursquare Gospel



Figure 3.17
Aimee Semple McPherson as a Farm Girl
Image Courtesy of the Foursquare Gospel



Figure 3.18
Mary Pickford in *Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm*, 1918
Public Domain



Figure 3.19
May McAvoy in *Ben-Hur: A Tale of Christ*, 1925
Public Domain

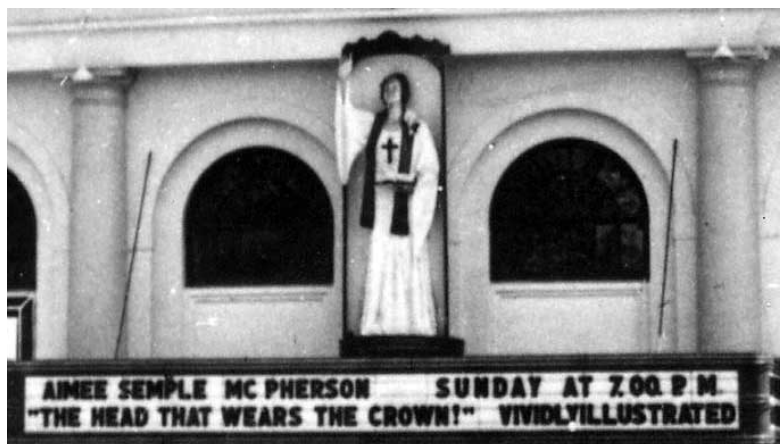


Figure 3.20, 4.11
Angelus Temple Marquee, circa 1930
Image Courtesy of the Foursquare Church

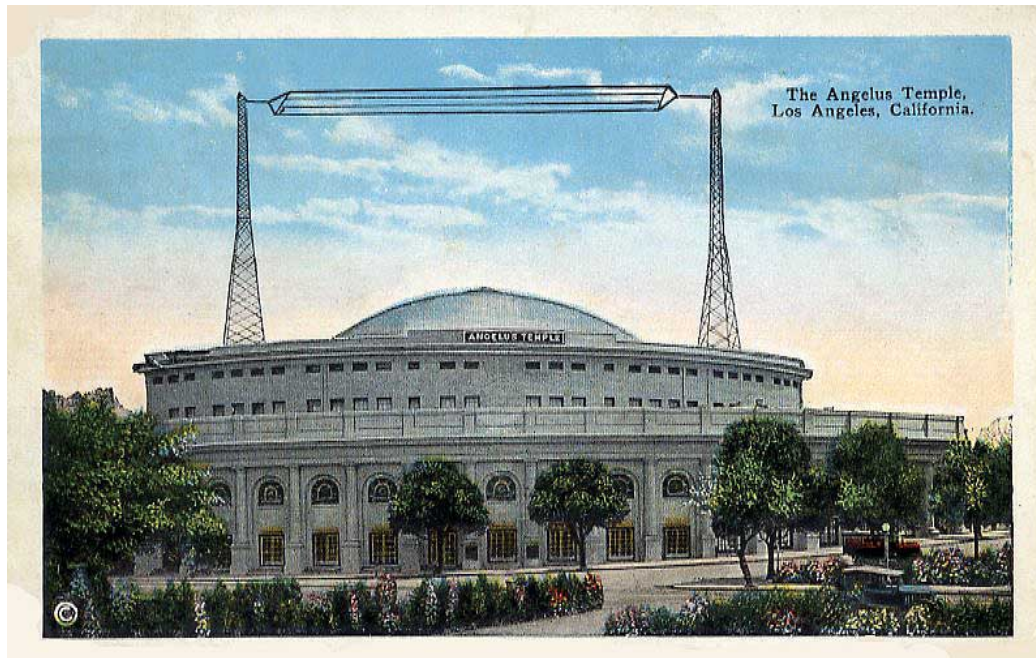


Figure 3.21, 4.6
Angelus Temple Postcard, 1924
Image Courtesy of the Foursquare Church



Figure 3.22

The Evening Independent October 8, 1926

Original Caption: This picture, taken during the hearing of Aimee Semple McPherson, Los Angeles evangelist, on charges of conspiring to produce false evidence, shows the evangelist and her counsel grouped about their table... No. 2 is Mrs. McPherson herself, her eyes raised as if in prayer.

Image Courtesy of the Foursquare Church



Figure 3.23
Mary Philbin as Christine Daaé in *Phantom of the Opera*, 1925



Figure 3.24
Betty Blythe as Nanette Roland in *Nomads of the North*, 1920
Public Domain



Figure 3.25

The Morning Leader, October 12, 1926

Original caption: *Aimee demonstrates how (1) her fingers were burned by a cigar wielded by one of her abductors (2) the kidnapers swathed her in blankets (3) she was: then tied up and (4) she managed to escape before struggling across the desert to safety.*

Image Courtesy of the Foursquare Church

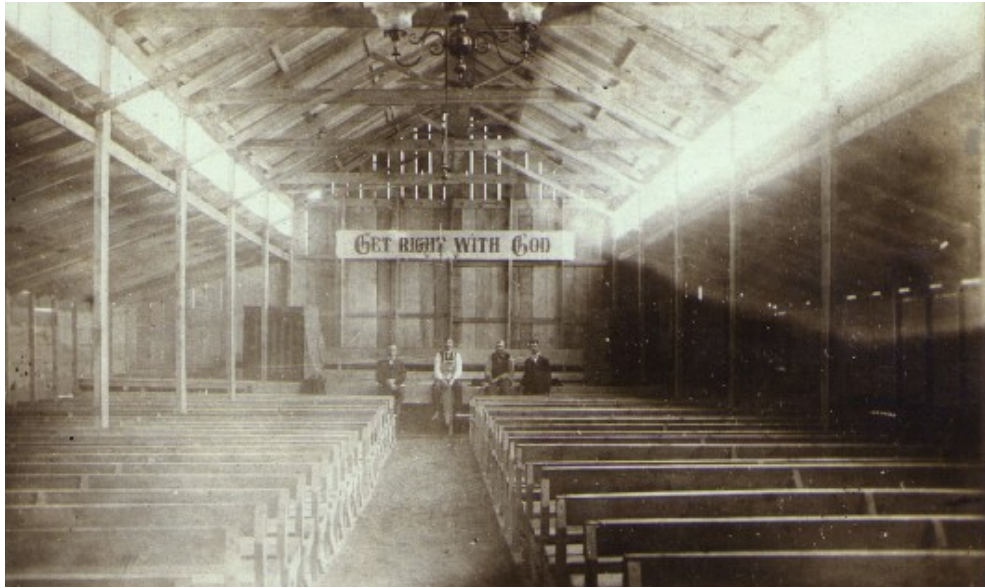


Figure 4.1
Elmore, Minnesota Tabernacle, 1908
Unidentified Figures Seated on the Tabernacle Platform and Standing at the Altar
Public Domain



Figure 4.2
The Maria Woodworth-Etter Tabernacle, circa 1900
Image in the Public Domain



Figure 4.3
The Maria Woodworth-Etter Tabernacle, circa 1920
Woodworth-Etter Stands in the Background (right-hand side),



Figure 4.4



Figure 4.5

McPherson Ministering in Holiness Fashion during Her Tabernacle days, circa 1918
Images Courtesy of the Foursquare Church



Figure 4.7
Angelus Temple Interior, circa 1930
Image Courtesy of the Foursquare Church



Figure 4.8
Close-up of the Jesus Mural Above the Proscenium
Jesus Is in the Center, Surrounded by Trumpeting Angels
Image Courtesy of the Foursquare Church



Figure 4.9

Close-up of the Temple's Final Stained Glass Scene of Jesus' Ministry.
McPherson Is Depicted in the Bottom Left Corner.
Image Courtesy of the Foursquare Church

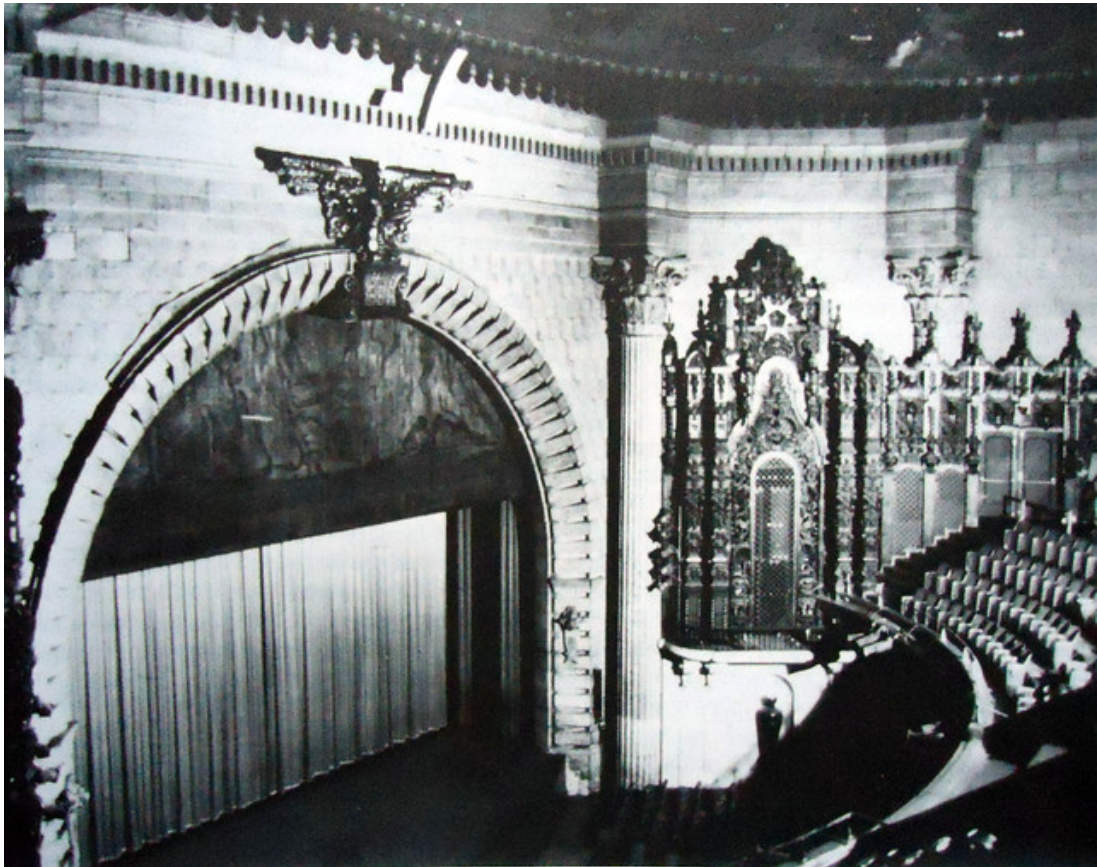


Figure 4.10
Grauman's Million Dollar Theatre, 1918
Image in the Public Domain



Figure 5.1
McPherson and the Twelve Virgins (Two More Than in Matthew 25:1-13), 1933
Image Courtesy of the Foursquare Church



Figure 5.2
The Rose of Sharon, circa 1929
Image Courtesy of the Foursquare Church



Figure 5.3
Vilma Banky and Rudolf Valentino
The Son of the Sheik, 1926



Figure 5.4
Aimee Semple McPherson
Cavalcade of Christianity, 1931



Figure 5.5
Mary Pickford, 1929



Figure 5.6
McPherson, circa 1931



Figure 5.7
Mary Pickford in *Coquette*, 1929



Figure 5.8
McPherson, *The Rose of Sharon*, 1926

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