

Zelma and Beulah Argue: Sisters in the Canadian Pentecostal Movement, 1920-1990

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In April 1925, *The Pentecostal Testimony* reported on the Argue sisters' American Midwest tour, citing a "wonderful meeting," and "prais[ing] God for this great meeting."¹ This paper traces the lives of Zelma Argue and Beulah Argue Smith, who traveled widely in evangelistic crusades in Canada and the United States. Zelma, better known in Pentecostal circles today,² remained single; Beulah married a well-known Canadian Pentecostal minister and had four children. Based on the sisters' work as portrayed in *The Pentecostal Testimony* (the national denominational magazine of the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada) 1920-1990, my paper considers the gendered aspects of the Argue sisters' ministries, how their lives reflected themes in the larger story of North American Pentecostal women during the first half of the 1900s.

Zelma Argue, born in 1900 in North Dakota, was the eldest daughter of Andrew Harvey (A.H.) and Eva Phillips Argue. Beulah was born six years later, after the family's move to Winnipeg, where they played a major role in the Canadian Pentecostal movement. In 1939, on the death of their mother, the *PT* made it clear that the entire Argue family was heavily involved in ministry; they were:

her husband, A.H. Argue, widely known evangelist and Bible expositor, Zelma; who has traveled with her father in recent years as an evangelist; Wilbur, who is engaged in business; Beulah, wife of Bannerman Smith, Pastor of the Ottawa Assembly of the Pentecostal

Assemblies of Canada; Eva, wife of Fulton Robinson, Regina; Watson, Pastor of Calvary Temple, Winnipeg, Man., and Elwin, well-known young Canadian evangelist.³

Making these two women particularly interesting is their working context. Since the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada (PAOC) decided to ordain women only in 1984, what caused these sisters to be so advanced? How were their very public ministry roles legitimized? How were their lives and ministries shaped by gendered roles and considerations? This paper argues that family ties and the gendered nature of their roles as daughter, sister, wife, and mother afforded them these opportunities.

Historiography of Canadian Pentecostal Women

The literature on Canadian women in the church has grown significantly in recent years. In 1992 Ruth Compton Brouwer lamented the lack of attention paid to religion in English-Canadian women's history;⁴ recently the gap in the literature has lessened, since scholars have published a variety of works on women in the holiness movement, overseas missionary work, and the Salvation Army.⁵ While Brouwer argued over fifteen years ago that religion was the unacknowledged quarantine in English-Canadian women's history, I suggest that the growing literature of women in the Christian church indicates neglect of charismatic and Pentecostal movements. Although American scholarship has begun to emerge, there is very little Canadian scholarship on Pentecostals generally, and less on Canadian Pentecostal women.⁶

While reference to Canadian Pentecostalism is found in broader studies of evangelicalism,⁷ very little exists on the gendered aspects of Pentecostal experience. This lack of attention was recently highlighted by American researcher David Roebuck's call for historians to explore that neglected past.⁸ Roebuck suggested that "scholarly biographical work" on Pentecostal women was especially needed; I suggest that the biographies of the Argue sisters are a good beginning place.

Zelma and Beulah Argue are just two of many Canadian women working in ministry throughout North America early in the Pentecostal movement. My search in the PAOC archives in Mississauga, Ontario, revealed the names of approximately thirty such women.⁹ Among those identified, it seems that marital status did not deter women from ministry, but did affect the roles that women played at various stages of their lives:

single women tended to be evangelists and missionaries; young married women traveled with their husbands, but after children arrived, couples usually settled into pastorates with the wives serving alongside their husbands; married couples sometimes went to the foreign mission field as well, to work alongside the numerous single women. Exceptions to this pattern existed, however, while some aspects of the Argue sisters' experiences seem typical, others defy the usual pattern.

The one role seemingly closed to women was the administration of church affairs. Scholars have explained this lack of involvement as a sexist, exclusionary measure by men seeking to maintain power over church governance. Indeed, as the Pentecostal movement became more institutionalized, this tendency seemed to strengthen. Sociologists have noted its similarity to Max Weber's model; he argued that the religion of the underprivileged tends to give women more equality, continuing until a religious movement becomes more of an established church.¹⁰ American scholars Charles H. Barfoot and Gerald T. Sheppard tested the model's viability for American Pentecostalism, finding that it assists in explaining ways in which women have been excluded.¹¹ One feminist theological scholar, Pamela Holmes, applied a similar analysis to the Canadian Pentecostal churches, arguing that the PAOC denomination follows the same pattern. Holmes cites numerous women denied recognition of their effective ministries, despite the Pentecostal principle of gender equality in spiritual matters. Using the historical record of PAOC Convention business meetings, Holmes traces how discriminatory decisions were institutionalized.¹²

Gender History as a Paradigm for Early Pentecostal Women's Work

Studies on institutional powers being concentrated in the hands of the male sex as the Pentecostal movement evolved into an institutionalized church help to explain the contemporary experiences of discrimination against women, but fail to clarify the early experiences of women like the Argue sisters who performed many ministry activities, achieving a remarkable degree of authority. Theological studies of Pentecostal belief systems have offered explanations for women's centrality in the early movement, pointing to two key teachings – the imminent return of Christ and the outpouring of the Spirit on both sexes – to explain why Pentecostals welcomed women in ministry more than other denominations in the early 1900s. This paper focuses on the Argue sisters' work as Pentecostal

evangelists and their acceptance in roles that gave them a remarkable degree of influence.

Gender history is a useful approach in understanding the experiences of early Pentecostal women in Canada since it considers male/female relationships: how the sexes cooperate and compete to reinforce/challenge existing roles and how power relations operate between the sexes and within each sex. As Joy Parr and Mark Rosenfeld explained in their 1996 book *Gender and History in Canada*, “Gender is a term feminist theorists developed to explain how being male or female is not simply the result of biology but is socially constructed and reconstituted . . . Gender identities – masculinity and femininity – acquire meaning in relation to one another.”¹³ Women’s roles within Canadian Pentecostalism have obviously been negotiated continuously, as the controversies over their rightful place in the church attest. A gendered approach to the early women of Canadian Pentecost such as the Argue sisters is more than a recovery mission with the goal of including women in the story – it explores women’s cooperation with men to fulfill their sense of God’s calling.

More than thirty years ago Natalie Davis, a women’s history pioneer, pointed out the futility of attempting to understand women’s experiences in isolation from those of men: “. . . we should not be working only on the subjected sex any more than a historian of class can focus entirely on peasants.”¹⁴ Concurring, this paper studies the Argue sisters by placing them in the web of relationships they occupied in their familial and Pentecostal circles. Understanding their work and how they functioned in relation to the men in their lives (both their family members and other men with whom they worked), necessitates exploration. Relationships among women are also important to gender historians; some attention is therefore given Mrs. Argue, their mother, and to other female evangelists, their role models.

As Joy Parr has argued, gender history “entails an inherent instability in identities – that being simultaneously a worker, a Baptist, and a father, one is never solely or systematically any of these.”¹⁵ In the case of the Argue daughters, they were not simply evangelists, but also musicians and writers, sisters and daughters, and, in Beulah’s case, wife and mother. The sisters adopted many roles, never occupying only one at any given time. Placing these women into their complex web of family and ministry relationships both clarifies and complicates explanations for the freedom they enjoyed in their ministry lives.

A.H. Argue: Promoting His Daughters' Ministry

As the daughters of A.H. Argue, Zelma and Beulah were well connected to influential people in Canadian Pentecostal circles. Thomas Miller explains that Argue was widely respected in the early Canadian movement, not only by his own children, but by Pentecostals across North America.¹⁶ Moreover, the admiration between father and daughters was mutual, as A.H. commended all his children to the Pentecostal assemblies across the continent. Some evidence of the father's encouraging his children in their ministries is seen in his assisting Zelma's pursuit of the credentials leading to her ordination. Long before ordination was available to Canadian Pentecostal women through the PAOC, Argue encouraged his daughter to seek it in the United States through the Assemblies of God. Zelma must have found A.H.'s endorsement personally affirming, but such support meant that he also recommended her to the larger church body. More than the case of a proud father promoting his child, this was a case of a highly respected Canadian church father promoting her to the wider body of believers.

This proud father's insistence that his daughter should attempt ordination was also, however, a smart business move. A.H. knew that after ordination, Zelma was entitled to half-price railway fares in the United States and Canada.¹⁷ Zelma's American birthplace may have worked in her favour to expedite her ordination and cross-border travel – the road was less smooth for her younger sister. Preaching in Chicago in the summer of 1927, Beulah referred to the difficulties she initially encountered crossing the US border. Her difficulties might have resulted from her youth or insufficient paperwork to explain her trip, but she noted that after obtaining some form of photo identification for \$20, her border crossing was eased.¹⁸ These glimpses into the practical considerations the Argue sisters faced affirm James Opp's conclusion that by 1920 the Argue family was "in the process of transforming themselves into professional evangelists."¹⁹

When A.H. endorsed his daughters' ministry work it meant more than a father proudly promoting his children, or cleverly economizing on travel costs. Having worked with some prominent female evangelists, he believed fully that God sometimes calls women into full-time ministry. Argue's first encounter with such a woman occurred when he worked with American healing evangelist Maria Woodworth-Etter between 1913 and 1916, after the family's move to California. Both Zelma Argue and her

brother Watson were deeply affected by Woodworth-Etter's children's meetings, referring to them as life-changing.²⁰ Back in Canada, the Argue family hosted Aimee Semple McPherson during her Winnipeg crusade in March 1920.²¹ Later that year the Argues assisted in McPherson's meetings in Montreal, leading the afternoon sessions.²² This was obviously a close association. One source suggests Zelma Argue's ability in the Montreal crusade led McPherson to try persuading the young woman to leave her father's ministry and join with her.²³ However, A.H. also recognized in Zelma what McPherson saw: a capable young woman with good stage presence, a potential asset to his ministry. Because he was no stranger to the idea of women evangelists, having worked with at least two famous ones by the time he launched his ministry with Zelma, A.H. encouraged his daughter to stay with him.

Eva Argue: Ailing Mother and Absent Partner

Indeed, in his own work A.H. had need of his daughter's help. Although he freely endorsed female evangelists, for health reasons his wife Eva did not join him in traveling on his crusades. In a tribute to Eva after her death, Zelma revealed that her mother had suffered from several health problems: "In 1925, at the conclusion of Dr. Price's great campaign [in Winnipeg], in which she had been a faithful altar worker, she suffered a collapse in health."²⁴ This problem, added to the fact that she was raising six children during her husband's busiest traveling years, meant that Eva did not play the role of travel companion and co-worker. Being unable to travel with her husband must have been a disappointment: she had grown up Methodist, later working with the Salvation Army in Winnipeg. Both of those church traditions gave prominent place to women in ministry, and Eva would have been very familiar with the ideas of women on the platform and assisting their husbands.²⁵

As Zelma noted about her mother, "unable herself to go to the front of the battle, she helped others to go. Unable to be with her husband on the field, she sent her children. 'Go! Hold up his hands,' she would say."²⁶ In obedience to her mother's wishes, Zelma and her brother Watson worked at their father's side. Here again gender history provides a useful tool to analyze how the Argue family's ministry operated: this is an example of power exercised within the family. Joan Wallach Scott points out that "gender is a primary way of signifying relationships of power,"²⁷ but it is important to remember that these power relationships are not only about

power between the sexes, but also power relationships among same-sex persons. Gender historians explore how hierarchies of power operate; and in this case, even from her home and sick bed Eva Argue exercised power over her children, urging them to do the work of the ministry in her absence. A.H. Argue's traveling with his son and his daughter seemed to be a fulfillment of the Joel prophecy about sons and daughters prophesying in the last days. From the first issues of the *PT* published in 1920, references to the Argue evangelistic trio abound.

Although Eva Argue was not physically present on those preaching tours, she nevertheless had an influence. Jean Miller Schmidt, writing about Methodist preachers' wives, cites Leonard I. Sweet, who

identified four distinct models of that role from the Protestant Reformation to the twentieth century: the Companion, who 'held up her husband's hands in his sacred calling'; the Sacrificer, who 'clasped her hands in pious resignation' and 'hindered him not in his work' by staying out of his way and raising her family on her own'; the Assistant, who 'became her husband's right-arm, sharing many pastoral responsibilities and functioning as an extension of his ministry'; and the Partner, who 'ministered with both her own hands' developing a 'ministry alongside her husband.'²⁸

Sweet suggested that "every minister's wife probably developed her own unique strategy," and that for many women, these models "often coexisted and intermingled with older roles."²⁹ From our knowledge of the Argues' experiences, it seems that Eva mainly occupied the role of "sacrificer," remaining at home to raise the other children and tend to her health. At the same time, she actively prayed for her husband and children, suggesting something of the "companion" model even in her absence.³⁰

Eva's children, particularly Zelma, adopted the roles of "assistant" and "partner" to their father in the work of the ministry. Zelma was the one who "ministered with both her own hands" and eventually developed "a ministry alongside," though in this case, it was beside her father, not a husband. For a gender historian, it is interesting to see how the roles of wife and daughter blended in Zelma. In Eva's absence, Zelma became very much her father's assistant and partner, bringing a feminine presence to the evangelistic meetings.

The Argue Sisters' Evangelistic Team

In 1925, a series of crises led to a major change in the Argue family's evangelistic crusades. The Calvary Temple in Winnipeg – home church and base for their traveling ministry – had recently experienced a change of leadership and Zelma's brother, Watson, was named as the senior pastor, with A.H. Argue serving as his associate.³¹ In addition, after a successful series of meetings with Charles S. Price as their guest at the Winnipeg church, Eva Argue's health collapsed; travel for the famous evangelistic trio was seriously curtailed. The situation's solution led to a new configuration: while Watson stayed in Winnipeg pastoring the church, A.H. assisted him, staying close to his wife during her recuperation. Zelma was free to travel but needed a companion, and the family decided to launch Beulah, only 19 years of age. The 1925 report of the sisters' meetings in Indiana, cited at this paper's beginning, is the first published account of the two sisters as a team; it is significant to note that those meetings were held in the spring after Beulah's school term at the Bible College ended.³²

The period of Zelma and Beulah's shared ministry as traveling evangelists was relatively short, lasting only from 1925 to 1928; it was concentrated in the spring and summer. The partnership was further limited by the fact that Beulah was a full-time student unable to travel during the school year; it finally ended when she accepted a marriage proposal. Yet the sisters held highly successful campaigns in several major centers in the US, including Chicago and Los Angeles. Their work produced rave reviews from the pastors they worked with, particularly in western Canada. From Alberta, for instance came this report:

The Argue sisters have just come to open a campaign there [Lethbridge] and we are expecting to hear of a great time of refreshing in Lethbridge . . . When we arrived home again the great campaign with the Argue sisters was in full swing. It turned out to be a great meeting. The interest grew, and the crowds came until our large hall was packed clear out on the street and many turned away.³³

The tour continued throughout the summer of 1926, with positive reports multiplying. In August, this appeared in the *PT*: "We ran into the swells of the revival waves left by the Argue Sisters [in Lethbridge], who had just concluded a campaign and had returned to Edmonton for a second short campaign, and I am sure there was a welcome awaiting them there.

God Bless them. 'I commend unto thee Zelma and Beulah.'"³⁴ This travel pattern, beginning after Beulah's school year ended each spring, was repeated up to 1928. In May of that year, the sisters planned a campaign in Saskatchewan that was much anticipated.³⁵ Beulah remained on in that province afterward, conducting a series of meetings independently in Herschel, and in Saskatoon during the month of June 1928 before her marriage.³⁶

The Argue sisters were highly esteemed not because of age or experience, but because of their youth. They offer a prime example of Pentecostal women occupying two roles at once: being young and being female. Pentecostal theology offers room for gender equality in the scripture from Joel: in the last days, sons and daughters will prophecy. Zelma referred to this passage: "Yet there is more. Away back in the days of Joel . . . it was foreseen and foreordained that upon young men and young women, even upon children, the Lord would pour out of his spirit in those last days."³⁷

The legitimacy of allowing women, even young women, to adopt a leadership role was shored up by the eschatological sense of urgency that early Pentecostals took from their conviction that they were indeed living in "the last days," that Christ's return was imminent; this helped legitimize the young Argue evangelists.³⁸ Pentecostal leaders appealed to the scripture about the "fields being white unto harvest" and that one should "pray the Lord of the harvest send out workers." If women were willing to work, responding to God's calling, then logically they should be welcomed into the evangelistic field to help with the harvest of souls.

Zelma Argue: Evangelist and Writer

As the Argue brothers and sisters began choosing their life partners, the family's evangelistic team dynamic changed again. After Beulah's marriage to C.B. Smith, Zelma did some solo campaigns in Moose Jaw in the winter of 1929; Watson traveled as a guest evangelist to the Smiths' church in Saskatoon.³⁹ Watson, working more and more with the Canadian Bible College based in Winnipeg, was conducting campaigns throughout the West. When he married in June 1930, it was clear that his days of traveling with Zelma were over.⁴⁰ There are reports of Zelma traveling alone for a campaign in Carberry, Manitoba, in 1931,⁴¹ she also filled in at a convention in Saskatoon when the scheduled speaker was ill. Reporting on the meeting afterward, the pastor (her brother-in-law) praised

Zelma's performance: "Sister Argue did not spare herself in helping those who were seeking as she remained in the prayer room until the small hours of the morning praying and encouraging hungry hearts."⁴²

With two of her siblings and previous traveling companions now married and settled into new partnerships, Zelma resumed her partnership with her father over the next few years on campaigns that took them to San Diego during the winter of 1931, on tour through southern Ontario in the spring of 1932, and then through western Canada the following year. For the next few years, frequent reports of their campaigns and camp meetings filled the *PT*'s pages. Their travels took them across Canada and often into the United States as well, with reports from Kansas City, Missouri, and Ebenezer, New York, in the spring of 1934.⁴³

The frenetic pace at which the father-daughter team traveled is well documented in the *PT*. In February 1936, news was published about various evangelists; the entry about A.H. Argue revealed that "The Argues are wintering in Florida and doing evangelistic work in that state."⁴⁴ While this was obviously a much more comfortable climate than Winnipeg's in the winter, the Florida location was chosen only partly for rest. Eva Argue's health had improved to the point where she could winter in the south; from there, A.H. and Zelma continued their evangelistic work. After that winter in Florida, the Argues spent time in various locations across the United States, including a series of meetings in California where the family had maintained contacts from their days with Maria Woodworth-Etter and Aimee Semple McPherson. This helps explain Zelma's ties to that state and her eventually taking up a pastorate there.

Zelma was also concentrating on another kind of work during the winter of 1936: writing. Since the launch of the *PT* in 1920, she had been a regular contributor, but now she was also publishing her work in book form. In February 1936, her book *Garments of Strength*, was released; eighteen months later, the *PT* was advertising three additional titles: *Strenuous Days*, *Prevailing Prayer*, and *The Beauty of the Cross*. In October 1937, the *PT* described her writings as "a devotional series with readings for everyday in the month. In this way, their value never wears out."⁴⁵ Her writing was called so popular that "Miss Argue's books sell themselves."⁴⁶ The *PT* even launched a subscription campaign using her books as an incentive: "it is a good time to subscribe now and thus take advantage of receiving one of Miss Argue's books ABSOLUTELY FREE."⁴⁷

Even with her busy schedule, Zelma Argue was indeed a prolific

writer. Shearer claims that, with almost 200 articles published in American Pentecostal periodicals and most of those simultaneously published in the Canadian *PT*, “[Zelma Argue] wrote more articles for the *Pentecostal Evangel* than anyone except C.M. Ward.”⁴⁸ Her publications regularly appeared not only in the Canadian *PT*, but in sister American publications as well, especially *The Latter Rain Evangel*, and *The Pentecostal Evangel*.

Focused on her life as an evangelist, Zelma did not marry. Her mother died in 1939 at the relatively young age of sixty four, while her father lived until 1959, reaching the age of ninety.⁴⁹ Zelma partnered with another woman, Jeanette Jones, to pastor the Trinity Gospel Tabernacle in Los Angeles, California, from 1948 to 1957. After her resignation, she travelled on crusades for another seven years, then taking her retirement in 1964 supported by a pension from the Assemblies of God.⁵⁰ While technically she did not play the role of evangelist’s or pastor’s wife, while travelling with her father and her brother, Zelma Argue filled the role of helpmeet while simultaneously establishing her own individual ministry.

Beulah Argue Smith: Wife and Mother, Minister and Musician

In contrast to Zelma, Beulah did marry; that marriage explains in part why her traveling ministry with Zelma was so short-lived. Beulah’s husband, Rev. C.B. Smith, was an evangelist, pastor, and administrator for the PAOC denomination; they met while studying in Winnipeg. Together the Smiths took up pastorates in Saskatchewan, Ontario, and British Columbia before settling in Peterborough, Ontario, where C.B. assumed the presidency of the PAOC Bible College, a post he still held at his death. Given those biographical details, one might predict that Beulah’s life, particularly after her marriage, would have been very conventional, typical of a woman in the second half of the twentieth century, where women married to church leaders enacted the roles of supporting and promoting their husbands’ careers. Beulah Argue Smith’s married life and ministry career, however, defy such stereotypical predictions.

C.B. Smith was ordained just a few weeks after the wedding in 1928. The newlyweds had a busy summer: the *PT* reported that “On August 19th Evangelist C.B. and Beulah M. Smith came to [Woodstock, ON to] give us a three weeks’ campaign. At this writing, two weeks of the campaign have passed and God has been richly blessing their ministry.”⁵¹ In the same issue: “Brother and Sister Smith are going to Convention in Montreal, and then to Saskatoon, Sask., to take the pastorate there.”⁵² The

following year, the February 1929 *PT* reported, “The Assembly in Saskatoon is making splendid progress under the leadership of Brother and Sister C.B. Smith. They are looking forward to an evangelistic meeting with Brother A. Watson Argue, next February.”⁵³ Here again, family ties were evident. The Smiths seemed destined for a conventional life in the ministry, having landed a pastoral job early in their marriage.

It is therefore somewhat surprising to read that two years later Beulah was traveling once again conducting evangelistic meetings – and doing so independently. From Carman, Manitoba, Pastor H. Wesley O’Brien comments: “We praise God for a good report of the work here. In a recent campaign of three weeks, beginning January 18th, with Mrs. C.B. Smith of Saskatoon as Evangelist, many were saved, some healed and the saints built up.”⁵⁴ That same spring, another report from Saskatoon reminded readers that although Beulah sometimes traveled alone, the Smiths’ marriage was solid and they were true partners in ministry. The April 1941 *PT* included a “Report from Saskatchewan”: “Brother and Sister C.B. Smith of Saskatoon are believing for greater things in their Assembly than ever before. The young people’s [sic] work is very encouraging.”⁵⁵

As encouraging as pastoral work was for the couple, they felt called to evangelism; at the end of summer 1931, they resigned from the church in Saskatoon “to take up work in other fields.”⁵⁶ That other field was evangelism, something very familiar to Beulah Argue Smith. For the next two years, the Smiths followed an itinerant path to various locations, holding evangelistic campaigns. In December 1931, Pastor Atter from Westmeath, Ontario, reported that “We thank God for another visitation of Pentecostal power at Westmeath. Evangelists C.B and Beulah Smith . . . gave forth the old time Pentecostal message in the power and demonstration of the Spirit, bringing great conviction and stirring the whole community.”⁵⁷ In January, reports from Windsor and Wallaceburg echoed similar successes; one recounted that during the Smith meetings, “several professed salvation, much prejudice was broken down with outsiders, and the saints were much encouraged.”⁵⁸

The Smiths attended the graduation ceremonies of the Pentecostal Bible College in Toronto in May 1932, and in June it was reported that they had just concluded a series of meetings in Woodstock, Ontario, where they had ministered four years earlier shortly after their wedding: “The work has gradually been going forward in Woodstock, and the results of these meetings will prove a blessing.”⁵⁹ The Smiths also spent time in the

fall of 1932 in Galt, Ontario, attending the opening of a new Pentecostal Temple building and then remaining for three weeks of meetings. One outcome of these meetings was reported to be a greater acceptance of Pentecostalism by other denominations – the Smiths were credited with creating that acceptance. The *PT* noted that “Like many other places, Galt had suffered on account of the prejudice in the hearts of the city people toward the Pentecostal Movement but, praise God, through Brother and Sister Smith’s ministry, the ice was broken through and several souls were saved.”⁶⁰

After two years of traveling to various locations to hold crusades of differing lengths, the Smiths abandoned their itinerant lifestyle for the permanency of a pastoral charge once again. The May 1933 *PT* announced that “Rev. C.B. Smith has accepted the Pastorate of the Ottawa Assembly and is taking charge of the work there immediately.”⁶¹ Not surprisingly this news of permanency was soon followed by news of a pending baby. On 10 July 1934, Beulah gave birth to a son, George Campbell Smith, who would eventually follow in his father’s footsteps.⁶² With the young family settled into the leadership of a congregation in a large urban centre, it seemed inevitable that Beulah’s days as a traveling evangelist were over. That, however, was not the case.

Before her baby had his first birthday, Beulah was back on the road. As surprising as it is to find her doing this as a married woman and new mother, it is even more so to realize that she was doing so independently, not as her husband’s “helper.” The May 1935 *PT* reported that “Bethel Tabernacle, Toronto, expects to have sister Beulah Smith, of Ottawa, with them for a campaign shortly.”⁶³ These solo travels are reminiscent of Aimee Semple McPherson’s pattern, with one important difference: McPherson did not maintain a long-term marriage commitment.

Beulah’s ministry life was complex. In these travels, she neither lived in her father’s shadow nor teamed up with him as Zelma did. Yet neither was her traveling ministry always done in partnership with her husband at this stage. She was frequently listed as the featured evangelist for campaigns in churches and at summer camps; whether her husband participated or not is unclear. It seems that usually he did not, his absence due to the heavy demands made on the pastor of a large church, and his commitments to the administrative work of the denomination.

Looking a little deeper, though, one detects the gendered aspects of Beulah’s ministry work. She was not advocating an abdication of traditional female roles; instead, she embraced those roles, but included

more non-traditional forays into the world of preaching and evangelism. Beginning the editorship of a children's page at the *PT* in August 1937, for example, she was still described primarily as a wife:

This month we welcome to our staff of editorial writers Mrs. C.B. Smith of Ottawa, Ont. Mrs. Smith is well known throughout Canada. As a member of the Argue family Mrs. Smith traveled many years in evangelistic work across the continent. Now the wife of one of our busiest pastors Mrs. Smith has kindly consented to edit each month the column OUR BOYS AND GIRLS."⁶⁴

Doubtless, in addition to Beulah's family ties, her gendered status as a mother made her seem particularly suited for this work.⁶⁵

Beulah continued this editorial work on the children's page for the next three years, nurturing young believers in their faith and entertaining them with stories, puzzles, and various features. On the announcement in the 1 May 1940 *PT* that she was leaving the children's page, the journal reinforced the fact that Smith was occupying multiple roles: "I am sure that you will all be sorry to learn that Mrs. Beulah Argue Smith, on account of her busy life as secretary, evangelist, preacher and mother finds it impossible to continue as editor of this page."⁶⁶ Further reinforcing the nurturing aspect of the editorial role, the editor wrote, "Another kind understanding mother will be looking after your interests through this page"; children were asked to send their letters to a Toronto address on Danforth Avenue.

In fact the Smiths were moving to that same Toronto address to manage the pastorate of the Danforth Gospel Temple, but Beulah could no longer continue as editor. It is not surprising that this busy woman might drop one of her many commitments; indeed, with competing demands of family and ministry responsibilities in a new city, this was almost predictable. Here again, however, Beulah Smith was not stopping her ministry work to concentrate more single-mindedly on her family commitments; with the move to Toronto came a whole new set of opportunities. Toronto was the site of the new Ontario Bible School, the Pentecostal training facility for the Eastern District of the PAOC; in addition to his new church, C.B. Smith took on the responsibility of President of the fledging school from 1940 to 1944. Beulah also joined the teaching staff and on 15 April 1941, the *PT* announced her new position; the caption under her photograph read: "Mrs. C.B. Smith under appointment to staff of Ontario Bible School for next term." The same caption

announced that “pastors, workers and friends will gather from city and country at Evangel Temple, Toronto on April 24th for a great final closing rally for the [school] year.” One assumes that Beulah would have attended that occasion, although four weeks after that event, she gave birth to her second son, David;⁶⁷ at that time, many women even gave up their jobs as their due dates neared.⁶⁸ Smith’s new appointment as the school’s music teacher would have to be balanced with the demands of her infant son, who was not yet six months when the fall 1941 term began. Two years later, David’s brother Robert, who would continue in the family tradition of ministry, was born.⁶⁹ Beulah Argue Smith’s life was clearly an example of what gender historians have noted about concurrent and overlapping roles: not only was she the daughter of a well known evangelist, the wife of a well known pastor and college administrator, and the mother of a growing young family – Beulah Argue Smith was simultaneously a Pentecostal evangelist and a college instructor.

In 1944 C.B. Smith was promoted to the highest office in the PAOC when he became General Superintendent for Canada, occupying this post for eight years while also editing the *PT*. In 1952 the Smith family moved to Victoria, BC, to pastor the Glad Tidings Tabernacle. Five years later they returned to Ontario when C.B. was asked to become president of the PAOC Bible College, which had relocated from Toronto to Peterborough under the name of Eastern Pentecostal Bible College.⁷⁰ By this time, the four Smith children were mostly grown: Robert, the youngest at fifteen, was still at home; David was seventeen, and would soon begin his studies at Carleton University in Ottawa.⁷¹ Again Beulah accepted a post to instruct at the College, teaching music to a variety of church workers and assuming the title Director of Music.

Only three years after their move, C.B. Smith was killed in a tragic car accident. Tributes to the much loved pastor, administrator, and family man poured in.⁷² A building dedicated to his memory was constructed on the campus of the Eastern Pentecostal Bible College; in the spring of 1965, Beulah Argue Smith cut the ribbon officially opening the facility. The C.B. Smith Memorial Building bears a plaque that simply states: “Dedicated to the Glory of God and in Loving Memory of Rev. C.B. Smith President of Our College 1940-1944 [and] 1958-1961.”⁷³

As a widow Beulah Argue Smith, popular and influential, remained on the College staff, busy with her music students, who testify to her popularity and impact.⁷⁴ As Director of Music, Smith led the school choirs and “many of her former students who are in the ministry today vividly

recall her leading the student body in rousing versions of ‘The Word of God’ and ‘The Hallelujah Chorus’ at countless graduation exercises.⁷⁵ She also hosted annual “Schools of Missions” on the campus in summer, when missionaries returning from the field met with pastors and missions promoters for instruction and fellowship.⁷⁶ Smith continued her work at the College until the 1970s when she moved to a new retirement facility for Pentecostal workers in Toronto, Shepherd’s Lodge. After her death early in 1990, her obituary in the *PT* reported that in addition to her ministry accomplishments, she “was a devoted wife, mother, sister, grandmother and great-grandmother.”⁷⁷

Conclusion

Zelma and Beulah Argue were highly regarded as powerful and influential women during their lifetimes; their legacy is commemorated and celebrated among Canadian Pentecostals. Between 1984 and 1994, articles appeared in the *PT* calling attention to these “pioneers of the faith.” That veneration reminded readers that “since the inception of the PAOC we have had some great women who were pioneers, missionaries, evangelists, pastors, teachers, and active pastors’ wives.”⁷⁸

Reflecting on the lives of such women, it is clear that gender history can help to explain how and why these early women made their contributions. Placing the Argue sisters into the complex web of their family ties and ministry connections is an important first step toward understanding. One might argue that the Argue sisters were exceptional because their male relatives gave them legitimacy. However, while their father’s or husband’s endorsements were important, they serve only as a partial explanation for such successful ministries. These sisters were much influenced by women as well: Eva Argue played a central role in the lives of her daughters, as did Maria Woodworth-Etter and Aimee Semple McPherson.

Daughter, sister, wife, mother, preacher, evangelist, musician, teacher and writer – each Argue sister occupied many or all of these roles throughout her life. Zelma accompanied her father on his ministry, filling the role usually occupied by a wife and bringing a feminine presence to his crusades, while Beulah chose the more traditional roles of marriage and motherhood, but continued her involvement in evangelistic crusades, writing, and teaching; both women defied the stereotypical pattern. Gender history, with its attention to the context of their relationships and the

complexity of simultaneously playing several different roles, helps to explain not only how these women's ministries were legitimized, but also why their legacies are still celebrated today.

Endnotes

1. *The Pentecostal Testimony*, April 1925, 6 (hereafter cited as *PT*).
2. See Sheryl Shearer, "Zelma Argue: Handmaiden of the Lord," *A/G Heritage* (Spring 2002): 18-23.
3. *PT*, 15 May 1939, 12.
4. Ruth Compton Brouwer, "Transcending the Unacknowledged Quarantine: Putting Religion into English-Canadian Women's History," *Journal of Canadian Studies* 27, no. 3 (1992): 47-61.
5. Marilyn Whiteley, *Canadian Methodist Women, 1766-1925: Marys, Marthas* (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier Press, 2005); Jean Schmidt, *Grace Sufficient: A History of Women in American Methodism, 1760-1939* (Abingdon Press, 1996); Ruth Compton Brouwer, *New Women for God: Canadian Presbyterian Women and India Missions, 1876-1914* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990); Rosemary R. Gagan, *A Sensitive Independence: Canadian Methodist Women Missionaries in Canada and the Orient 1881-1925* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's Press, 1992); and Lynne Marks, *Revivals and Roller Rinks: Religion, Leisure and Identity in Late-Nineteenth-Century Small-Town Ontario* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996).
6. Edith L. Blumhofer, "Canada's Gift to the Sawdust Trail: The Canadian Face of Aimee Semple McPherson," in *Aspects of the Canadian Evangelical Experience*, ed. G.A. Rawlyk (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's Press, 1997), 387-402; *Restoring the Faith: The Assemblies of God, Pentecostalism and American Culture* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1993); and "Women in American Pentecostalism," *Pneuma* 17, no. 1 (Spring 1995): 19-20.
7. John Stackhouse, *Canadian Evangelicalism in the Twentieth Century* (Toronto: University Press, 1993); Mark Noll et al., eds., *Evangelicalism: Comparative Perspectives on Popular Protestantism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994); Michael Wilkinson, *The Spirit Said Go: Pentecostal Immigrants in Canada* (New York: Peter Lang, 2006); and Michael Wilkinson, ed., *Canadian Pentecostalism: Transition and Transformation* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's Press, 2009).

8. David Roebuck, "Pentecostal Women in Ministry: A Review of Selected Documents," *Perspectives in Religious Studies* 16, no. 1 (2006): 29-44.
9. My preliminary research at the PAOC Archives in Mississauga in September 2007 uncovered thirty Canadian women. Of these women, fourteen served as overseas missionaries, twelve were pastors and/or pastors' wives, and ten were evangelists.
10. Max Weber, *The Sociology of Religion* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1963).
11. Charles H. Barfoot and Gerald T. Sheppard, "Prophetic vs. Priestly Religion: the Changing Role of Women Clergy in Classical Pentecostal Churches," *Review of Religious Research* 22, no. 1 (1980): 2-17.
12. Pamela M.S. Holmes, "Ministering Women in the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada: A Canadian Pentecostal Feminist Exploration," in *Canadian Pentecostalism*, 179-194.
13. Joy Parr and Mark Rosenfeld, *Gender and History in Canada* (Toronto: Copp Clark, 1996), 1.
14. Natalie Davis cited in Joan Wallach Scott, *Gender and the Politics of History* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1988), 29.
15. Joy Parr, "Gender History and Historical Practice," *Canadian Historical Review* 76, no. 3 (1995): 354-76.
16. Thomas William Miller, "The Significance of A.H. Argue for Pentecostal Historiography," *Pneuma* 8 (1986): 145. See also Douglas Rudd, *When the Spirit Came Upon Them: Highlights from the Early Years of the Pentecostal Movement in Canada* (Mississauga, ON: Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada, 2002), 34-41.
17. Shearer, "Zelma Argue," 19 and 23, note 11.
18. Beulah Argue, *The Latter Rain Evangel*, August 1927, 9.
19. James Opp, *The Lord for the Body: Religion, Medicine, & Protestant Faith Healing in Canada, 1880-1930* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's Press, 2005), 150.
20. Rudd, *When the Spirit Came Upon Them*, 34-41. See also Shearer, "Zelma Argue," 18; and Wayne Warner, *Maria Woodworth-Etter: For Such a Time as This Her Healing and Evangelistic Ministry* (Gainesville, FL: Bridge-Logos, 2004), 183, 188, 196 note 5, 278, and 351.

21. "Gifts to Evangelist," *Manitoba Free Press, Winnipeg*, 6 March 1920, 3; "Mrs. McPherson Concludes Revival Campaign in City," *Manitoba Free Press, Winnipeg*, 8 March 1920, 3; and "Recent Evangelistic Campaign," *Manitoba Free Press, Winnipeg*, 15 March 1920, 6.
22. Edith L. Blumhofer, *Aimee Semple McPherson: Everybody's Sister* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993); and Janice Dicken, "Take Up Thy Bed and Walk: Aimee Semple McPherson and Faith-Healing," *Canadian Bulletin of Medical History* 17, no. 1-2 (2000):137-53.
23. Edith Blumhofer, "Zelma E. Argue," in *Pentecost in my Soul: Explorations in the Meaning of Pentecostal Experience in the Assemblies of God* (Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 1989), 156; cited by Shearer, "Zelma Argue," 19.
24. *PT*, 15 May 1939, 12.
25. Jean Miller Schmidt, *Grace Sufficient: A History of American Methodism, 1760-1939* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1999); and Leonard I. Sweet, *The Minister's Wife: Her Role in Nineteenth-Century American Evangelicalism* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1983).
26. *PT* (15 May 1939, 12.
27. Scott, *Gender and the Politics of History*, 42.
28. Leonard I. Sweet, *The Minister's Wife*, 113-14; cited in Jean Miller Schmidt, *Grace Sufficient* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1999), 3.
29. Schmidt, *Grace Sufficient*, 3.
30. *PT*, 1 April 1941, 19.
31. *PT*, January 1925, 7.
32. *PT*, March 1926, 12.
33. *PT*, July 1926, 9.
34. *PT*, August 1926, 4.
35. *PT*, April 1928, 3.
36. *PT*, June 1928, 1, 19.
37. *PT*, December 1920, 3.
38. Barfoot and Sheppard, "Prophetic vs. Priestly Religion," 9; and Roebuck, "Pentecostal Women in Ministry," 35-37.

39. *PT*, January 1929, 19; *PT*, February 1929, 16, 17; and *PT*, March 1929, 19.
40. *PT*, July 1930, 20.
41. *PT*, February 1931, 2.
42. *PT*, September 1931, 2.
43. *PT*, May 1934, 12; and *PT*, June 1934, 9.
44. *PT*, February 1936, 2.
45. *PT*, October 1937, 26.
46. *PT*, October 1937, 26.
47. *PT*, October 1937, 26.
48. Frederick A. Muster and Mel Gram, "Obituary of Zelma Argue," *Christian Life Center* (29 January 1980); cited in Shearer, "Zelma Argue," 21. A search for "Zelma Argue" in the online digitized periodicals at www.ifphc.org reveals 202 items.
49. *PT*, May 15, 1939, 12; and *PT*, March 1959, 7, 15, 26-27.
50. Argue, "Memories of Fifty Years Ago," *Pentecostal Evangel*, 22 April 1956, 6; cited in Shearer, "Zelma Argue," 20.
51. *PT*, September 1928, 11.
52. *PT*, September 1928, 11.
53. *PT*, February 1929, 17.
54. *PT*, March 1931, 16.
55. *PT*, April 1931, 7.
56. *PT*, August 1931, 2.
57. *PT*, December 1931, 2.
58. *PT*, January 1932, 17.
59. *PT*, June 1932, 2.
60. *PT*, December 1932, 13.
61. *PT*, May 1933, 2.
62. *PT*, September 1934, 12.

63. *PT*, May 1935, 14.
64. *PT*, August 1937, 17.
65. *PT*, August 1937, 17.
66. *PT*, 1 May 1940, 15.
67. Beulah's son, born 16 May 1941, the Honorable David P. Smith, went on to have an illustrious career as an active member of the Liberal Party of Canada, serving as a member of the Canadian Senate, after being appointed by Jean Chretien in 2002.
68. Wendy Mitchinson, *Giving Birth in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002).
69. Rev. Robert Smith is Senior Pastor of the London Gospel Temple, a PAOC church in London, Ontario. See his biography at www.lgt.org.
70. *PT*, March 1961, 10, 33.
71. *PT*, September 1963, 28-29.
72. *PT*, March 1962, 11, 33, and 34.
73. *PT*, May 1965, 1.
74. *PT*, October 1991, 21.
75. *PT*, Mar 1990, 38.
76. *PT*, November 1963, 19.
77. *PT*, March 1990, 38-39.
78. See for example, *PT*, July 1984); and *PT*, December 1984, 29.

