



Unexpected Saint | Amanda Berry Smith 1837-1915

From AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY: THE STORY OF THE LORD'S DEALINGS WITH MRS. AMANDA SMITH THE COLORED EVANGELIST CONTAINING AN ACCOUNT OF HER LIFE WORK OF FAITH, AND HER TRAVELS IN AMERICA, ENGLAND, IRELAND, SCOTLAND, INDIA AND AFRICA, AS AN INDEPENDENT MISSIONARY. (1893)

I was born at Long Green, Maryland, in 1837. My mother & father lived on adjoining farms....[My father] was a strong man, with an excellent constitution, & God wonderfully helped him in his struggle. After he had finished paying for himself, the next was to buy my mother & us children. There were thirteen children in all, of whom only three girls are now living.... I have often heard my mother say that it was to the prayers & mighty faith of my grandmother that we owed our freedom. She often prayed & believed that God would open a way so that her grandchildren might be free... She had often tried & proved God & found God to be a present help in trouble. And so...the Lord did provide, & my father was permitted to purchase our freedom.

In 1855 (age 18) I was very ill...My father said, "Amanda, my child, the doctors say you will die. Now you must pray." I seemed to go into a trance or vision & I saw on the foot of my bed a most beautiful angel with wings spread, looking be in the face; it said, "Go back, go back, go back." Then, it seemed, I went to a great Camp Meeting and there seemed to be thousands of people, and I was to preach.... I was on this platform with a large Bible opened up and...O, how I preached...When I came out of [the vision] I was decidedly better....I made up my mind to pray & lead a Christian life. I thought God had spared me for a purpose.... (p42-3)

While I lived in York Street I was very sick and could not walk [far] so I went in to a nearby church that Sunday. I sat in the gallery. The people were so kind; one brother handed me a book and asked me to come again. I thank God for that spirit that was in Green Street those days, even to colored people....I did not sit upstairs, but O, how tired I was when I got into the church. I leaned my head forward and prayed God to give me strength....Then came the text: "*And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.*" I wanted to shout Glory to Jesus! But Satan said, "Now, if you make a noise they will put you out." I was the only colored person there and I had a very keen sense of propriety; I had been taught so, and Satan knew it...

"Lord, what shall I do?" and a voice seemed to whisper in my left ear (for Satan stood at my right): "Pray for strength to stand up." I took hold of the pew in front of me and trembling from head to foot I stood up, but held on to the pew...They struck the last verse of the hymn, "*Oh! Bear my longing heart to Him, Who bled and died for me. Whose blood now cleanseth from all sin, And gives me victory.*" And when they sang these words, O what a wave of glory swept over my soul! I shouted glory to Jesus....I don't know just how I looked, but I felt so wonderfully strange, yet I felt glorious. One of the good official brethren at the door said, as I was passing out, "Well, auntie, how did you like that sermon?" but I could not speak; if I had, I should have shouted, but I simply nodded my head. Just as I put my foot on the top step I seemed to feel a hand, the touch of which I cannot describe. It seemed to press me gently on the top of my head, and I felt something part and roll down and cover me like a great cloak! I felt it distinctly; it was done in a moment, and O what a mighty peace and power took possession of me! (p75-79)

[After the service] I started up Green Street....Just ahead of me were three of the leading sisters in the church. I was afraid of them. They were rather the ones who made you feel that wisdom dwelt with them... As I drew near, I saw them say something to each other, and they looked very dignified. The Devil...shouted after me, "You will not tell them you are sanctified." "No," I said, "I will say nothing to them," but when I got up to them I seemed to have special power in my right arm and I was swinging it around, like the boys do sometimes! I don't know why, but O I felt mighty, as I came near those sisters. They said, "Well, Smith, where have you been this morning?" "The Lord," I said, "has sanctified my soul." And they were speechless! I said

no more, but passed on, swinging my arm! I suppose the people thought I was wild, and I was, for God had set me on fire! "O," I thought, "if there was a platform around the world I would be willing to get on it and walk and tell everybody of this sanctifying power of God!"...

Somehow I always had a fear of white people—that is, I was not afraid of them in the sense of doing me harm, or anything of that kind— but a kind of fear because they were white, and were there, and I was black and was here! But that morning on Green Street, as I stood on my feet trembling, I heard these words distinctly. They seemed to come from the northeast corner of the church, slowly, but clearly: *"There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female, for ye are all one in Christ Jesus."* (Galatians 3:28.) I never understood that text before. But now the Holy Ghost had made it clear to me. And as I looked at white people that I had always seemed to be afraid of, now they looked so small. The great mountain had become a mole-hill. *"Therefore, if the Son shall make you free, then are you free, indeed."* All praise to my victorious Christ! (p.79)

One day I was busy with my work and thinking and communing with Jesus, for I found out that it was not necessary to be a nun or be isolated away off in some deep retirement to have communion with Jesus; but, though your hands are employed in doing your daily business, it is no bar to the soul's communion with Jesus. Many times over my wash-tub and ironing table, and while making my bed and sweeping my house and washing my dishes I have had some of the richest blessings. Oh, how glad I am to know this, and how many mothers' hearts I have cheered when I told them that the blessing of sanctification did not mean isolation from all the natural and legitimate duties of life, as some seem to think. Not at all. It means God in you, supplying all your needs according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus; our need of grace and patience and long suffering and forbearance, for we have to learn how not only to bear, but also to forbear with infirmities of ourselves and others as well.

I began to examine my work, my life, every day, and I could see nothing. Then I said, "Lord, help me to understand what Thou meanest. I want to hear Thee speak."...I was sitting with my eyes closed in silent prayer to God, and after [the preacher] had been preaching about ten minutes, as I opened my eyes, just over his head I seemed to see a beautiful star, and as I looked at it, it seemed to form into the shape of a large white tulip; and I said, "Lord, is that what you want me to see? If so, what else?" And then I leaned back and closed my eyes. Just then I saw a large letter "G," and I said: "Lord, do you want me to read in Genesis, or in Galatians? Lord, what does this mean?" Just then I saw the letter "O." I said, "Why, that means go." And I said "What else?" A voice distinctly said to me "Go preach." And I said, "Lord, help me and I will."



I often say to people that I have a right to shout more than some folks; I have been bought twice, and set free twice, and so I feel I have a good right to shout. Hallelujah! (p22)

During the Sunday service Brother Cooper...said, "There is a lady here, Mrs. Amanda Smith" (he said, in a half sarcastic & half joking way), "Mrs. Smith is from New York; she says the Lord sent her;" with a kind of toss of the head, which indicated that he did not much believe it. Oh, my heart fell down, and I said, "Oh! Lord, help. Give me the message."...I trembled from head to foot.... Brother Holland called me up to exhort. As I sat in the pulpit beside him, he saw I was frightened. He leaned over and said, "Now, my child, you needn't be afraid. Lean on the Lord. He will help you." And God did help me. There was a large congregation; every part of the house was packed. I stood up trembling. The cold chills ran over me. My heart seemed to stand still. Oh, it was a night. But the Lord gave me great liberty in speaking. After I had talked a little while the cold chills stopped, my heart began to beat naturally and all fear was gone, and I seemed to lose sight of everybody and everything but my responsibility to God and my duty to the people. The Holy Ghost fell on the people & we had a wonderful time. Souls were convicted & some converted that night....