

**Aimee Semple McPherson. Everybody's Sister
by Edith L. Blumhofer.
William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company,
Grand Rapids, Mich. 1993. Softcover, 431pp.**

Aimee Semple McPherson (1890-1944), born and raised near Ingersoll, Ontario, once widowed and twice divorced, was a remarkable, complex and controversial woman, with flair and a lively imagination.

Aimee was born into a Methodist and Salvation Army family. Following her move to the United States after World War I, she became one of the most dynamic and influential evangelists of the twentieth century. She was more interested in religious experience than correctness of doctrine. She made people feel good, cared for and important. She adopted marketing techniques and popular entertainment to draw crowds, and pioneered in religious broadcasting. Aimee's audiences came for religion and entertainment, "and they were rewarded with a generous dose of both." Her biographer notes that in many ways Aimee was a forerunner of the user-friendly gospel of Norman Vincent Peale's positive thinking and Robert Schuller's "media extravaganzas blending the Bible, patriotism, and the stage."

Wherever Aimee went she retold her personal biography. She wrote her own rules. The Pauline texts on female preachers were set aside. She regarded the latter as a "sign of the times." Her later years were marred by scandal, controversy over her allegedly having been kidnapped, and her painful falling out with her mother and daughter.

Edith Blumhofer, associate professor of history and director of the Institute for the Study of American Evangelicals at Wheaton College, gives an excellent description of Aimee's Canadian roots in protestant Ontario, her Salvation Army background and influence of Pentecostalism.

Since Aimee's impact upon the evangelical culture is still strongly felt and experienced today, I recommend Blumhofer's carefully researched and well written biography. It will give the reader a better understanding of today's bewildering North American religious scene.

Johan D. Tangelder