

of oppression designed to contain the personal freedom encouraged by the new urban commercial landscape. These “highly choreographed social rituals” (242) may have showcased moral restoration and women’s spiritual power, she argues, but implicit in the structured discourse these leaders employed were much darker ambitions—preserving white power, denying female freedom, and sustaining middle-class economic dominance. Significantly, Joiner’s featured characters are rarely explicit about such hegemonic ambitions. Consequently, her theoretical supports are essential in sustaining the coherence of an argument that depends heavily on the implied meanings and purposes that she finds in evangelical texts.

This is a well-crafted study that will particularly please those scholars who share Joiner’s analytical approach and deep social commitments. Her final chapter is a somewhat distracting cautionary note that links her historical subjects to the nation’s current crop of evangelical leaders. The book can stand on its own merits as a welcome addition to the scholarship on early twentieth-century revivalism without direct assaults on the agendas of Trent Lott and James Dobson or the portrayal of contemporary evangelicals as “bunkered” in the “prophylactic” security of “personal devotion and family rituals” (235–236).

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Aimee Semple McPherson and the Resurrection of Christian America. By **Matthew Avery Sutton**. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2007. xii + 358 pp. \$26.95 cloth.

Matthew Sutton makes a compelling case that the flamboyant founder of the Foursquare Gospel originated the fusion of fundamentalism, militant nationalism, and media-savvy evangelicalism that Billy Graham and his followers in the New Christian Right smoothed out and perpetuated. Aimee Semple McPherson’s aggressively modern version of Old Time Religion swept into people’s hearts with the aid of ingenious costumes and stagecraft, daring ventures in radio, film, and aviation, and old-fashioned sentimentality. Weathering misfortunes largely of her own making, she achieved greatest success when she harnessed her talent for self-dramatization to the larger mission of restoring America’s identity as a Christian nation. Revealing her importance in the larger history of religion in America, Sutton shows how McPherson’s revival of the Puritan idea of a national covenant forged the

coalescence of conservative evangelicalism and right-wing politics that continues to distinguish American culture to this day.

Earlier biographies by Edith L. Blumhofer—*Aimee Semple McPherson: Everybody's Sister* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1993)—and Daniel Mark Epstein—*Sister Aimee: The Life of Aimee Semple McPherson* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1993)—dwelt extensively on McPherson's early life, which Sutton summarizes briefly. Emphasizing her cultural prominence in later years, he goes beyond these earlier biographies in exploring the ethos of heightened sexuality that inflected her feminism and permeated her preaching, reputation, and life. He chronicles McPherson's developing identification with the glamour of Hollywood and calls attention to the disparity between her pentecostal embrace of everyone and her racist and red-baiting Christian patriotism.

As the title indicates, the book combines biography with cultural history. Like Harry S. Stout's *The Divine Dramatist: George Whitefield and the Rise of Modern Evangelicalism* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1991), Sutton's work highlights the role played by a charismatic individual in embodying and thereby galvanizing a religious movement. Similarities between Whitefield and McPherson come into view in the course of Sutton's book; both evangelists were accomplished actors who exploited new media and seized on new modes of self-dramatization to promote Christian sanctity. Both contributed significantly to the development of political conceptions of American destiny.

Sutton writes for a wide audience. *Aimee Semple McPherson and the Resurrection of Christian America* is not only a book that historians will want on their shelves. It is also an informative, well-paced, and sexually interesting narrative that undergraduates will like.

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Ireland's Magdalen Laundries and the Nation's Architecture of Containment. By **James M. Smith**. Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame University Press, 2007. xx + 276 pp. \$28.00 paper.

Recently in Ireland, a number of books and articles, television interviews, and well-publicized documentaries and movies have removed the veil of secrecy from a respected and honored institution, Roman Catholic sisterhoods. Throughout the English-speaking world, convents have performed valuable