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.

Amanda Porterfield
Florida State University

doi:10.1017/S0009640708001364

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

services to society in the areas of education, nursing, and caring for the poor and outcasts, especially the orphan and the so-called "fallen woman." Beginning in the eighteenth century, Irish nuns operated laundries to shelter women of dubious sexual character, namely, prostitutes and unmarried mothers. A strictly regulated routine centered on hard labor, prayer, and harsh discipline, and work in these laundries supplied the convents with needed funds. Named Magdalenes to conjure up the traditional image of the sinner, Mary Magdalene, their task of washing soiled clothing and linen symbolized a spiritual rebirth, and these laundries continued to function with the support of the Catholic Church, the government, and society until late in the twentieth century. James M. Smith's thought-provoking study of the twentieth-century convent laundries sheds light on the secret inner workings of these institutions and the women condemned to a life of punishment at these establishments.

Smith, an associate professor of English and Irish Studies at Boston College, examines ten convent laundries that operated between 1922 and 1996, when the last institution shut its doors. He clearly describes the relationship between the laundries and the policies of Ireland after its independence in 1922, and pays special attention to the recent plays, movies, documentaries, and monuments that brought these Magdalen laundries into the public arena. Smith's book "challenges the nation—including church, state, and society—to acknowledge its complicity in Ireland's Magdalen scandal and to respond by providing redress for victims and survivors alike" (xiii). The memories of the inhabitants of these laundries must be preserved, he believes, and their place in Irish history must not be forgotten.

Smith's introduction sets the stage for his story with an analysis of the 1931 Carrigan Report, which established "an official state attitude toward 'sexual immorality' and the subsequent legislation in authorizing the nation's containment culture" (2). He objectively explores the close relationship between the Catholic Church and the new Irish state in creating a moral climate that punished women for sexual transgressions. The men involved in an illicit tryst or a rape, however, did not suffer the same indignations as the female victims. The author is critical of the Report and the role of the church and state in fostering a culture in which the Magdalen laundries could exist. The next section of the book, "The Magdalen Asylum and History: Mining the Archive," looks at development of the laundries in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In post-famine Ireland, the laundries served as a vehicle to rehabilitate "fallen women" and to ease their way back into society, but in the twentieth century, these asylums became "more punitive in nature and certainly more secretive" (42) and departed from their original purpose. They now provided the state with an apparatus to deal with problem women and children, which the author calls "the nation's architecture of containment."

Both church and state were responsible for this shift in the mission of the Magdalen laundries.

The last section of the book shows the importance of drama, documentaries, survivor testimonies, film, and public monuments and memorials in rescuing the stories of the laundries from a national amnesia since the archives and documents of the convents have not been open to researchers. Smith excels in this section of this book. His assessment of Patricia Burke Brogan's plays, *Eclipsed* (1992) and *Stained Glass at Samhain* (2002), and other visual representations of laundry life such as the documentaries *Washing Away the Stain* (1993), *Sex in a Cold Climate* (1998), *Les Blanchisseuses de Magdalen* (1998), and a 1999 segment of *60 Minutes* show the power of stage and film. Peter Mullan's 2002 film, *The Magdalene Sisters*, is a graphic portrayal of alleged abuses in a convent laundry, and Smith's lengthy analysis of the film serves as a call for the Irish society to acknowledge the existence of the laundries and the country's debt to those who worked and died within the convent walls. He ends this section with a short examination, complete with photographs, of four public memorials, the Magdalen Memorial Bench, the Glasnevin Cemetery Magdalen plot, Diane Fenster's photo installation *Secrets of the Magdalen Laundries* (2000), and Gerard Mannix Flynn's extallation *"Call Me by My Name": Requiem for Remains Unknown, 1889–1987* and the role they play in acknowledging the harsh realities of Ireland's Magdalen laundries.

This is a provocative work that will force people to come to terms with the abuses long hidden in Ireland's past. The author excels when he describes the political climate that followed Ireland's independence, especially the events surrounding the Carrigan Report, and the importance of memory and storytelling that works of drama, cinema, and art play in the healing process. Smith does shy away from the harsh realities of the laundries and the cruel punishment the women endured, but he does not allow his presentation to stray from the evidence. The book is based on solid research, complete with an extensive bibliography, and footnotes containing valuable information that would interrupt the flow of the text. The photographs give life to Smith's words, and the appendix supplies valuable statistics. At times, he tends to repeat his arguments, and he frequently uses the same words or phrases, but this repetition does not detract from this scholarly and provocative book. The American Catholic Church is currently struggling with a sexual abuse crisis, and in his recent visit to the United States, Pope Benedict XVI asked for forgiveness. Smith's book studies another scandal, and he also believes that openness and the acknowledgement of past errors is a step toward reconciliation.

Rene Kollar
St. Vincent Archabbey