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Altered Landscapes: Christianity in America 1935-1985 (Book Review)

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Catechism. Is it possible that Noll, who is otherwise an extremely careful scholar, confused the Belgic Confession with the Canons of Dort, which belongs to the seventeenth century along with the Westminster Confession? The omission of the Belgic Confession is a major oversight, for no other Reformed symbol of the sixteenth century (or the seventeenth) so closely captures the spirit and breadth of the concerns of Calvin's Institutes.

It seems to me that if there was one Reformed symbol from the sixteenth century that one would certainly want to include in such a collection, it would be de Brés Confession. No other Reformed document is as close to the cutting edge of the Reformation. And it is most certainly more historically and theologically significant than Zwingli's Sixty-Seven Articles or the Genevan Confession.

Confusing the Calvinist movement with the anarchistic Anabaptists, Philip II, the devout and fanatical Roman Catholic king of Spain, sent his Grand Inquisitor, the Duke of Alva to the Lowlands in order to return it to the Roman Catholic fold. The number of Calvinist martyrs produced by the Duke's mid-sixteenth century reign of terror exceeded those of all

Altered Landscapes: Christianity in America 1935-1985, by David W. Lotz (ed.) (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans) 1989. 376 pages. Reviewed by Michael Williams, Assistant Professor of Theology.

An eighty-six year old farmer goes by on an Independence Day float with all of his children, grandchildren, and great grandchildren in tow, some of the sons and grandsons driving the different tractors and farm machinery the family farm has collected over the past half century or more. Seeing the now antique tractors, combines, and bailers, one cannot help but consider the changes that great-grandfather must have witnessed during his lifetime. That kind of change is common to us. To turn Alvin Toffler on his head, we are no longer shocked by the future. We have been acclimated to technological change. Laptop computers, multi-channel cable TV, and anti-lock brakes notwithstanding, however, we really think that we live our lives, and understand those lives, pretty much as we always did. Most certainly, we think that we believe and worship just like we always have, just like great-grandfather did.

There have been no Ecumenical Councils during the last half century. The twentieth century has not seen any major ecclesiastical realignments. There have been no new Reformations. No major denominations have been born. The confessional and denominational map is still pretty much the same as it was fifty years ago. The Southern Baptists are still in the South; and the

other Protestants killed during the Reformation period, and probably exceeded the number of all martyrs of the primitive church under Roman rule. De Brés, who penned the Belgic Confession as a prisoner in a Spanish jail, wrote to define the Calvinists in distinction from the feared and detested Anabaptists, and thus defend Calvinists against the charge of treason. Yet his Confession also sets out the hope that beats in the Calvinist faith in the clear, unhurried, and unqualified terms of a man who is ready to become a martyr for the cause of Christ. In 1567, six years after writing the Confession, de Brés was hanged by the Spanish for administering the Eucharist to Reformed congregations.

Noll's omission of the Belgic Confession is understandable in a way; Reformed people generally tend to slight de Brés most precious gift to the Reformed tradition, this crown jewel of Reformed confessions. We send our kids to catechism, and sometimes still we sit on the porch and debate TULIP over coffee, but we let the Confession lie quietly in the CRC Psalter. It begins on page 817 in the new gray Psalter, page 2 in the back of the blue Psalter. Pick it up and read it as a supplement to Noll's otherwise useful survey of Reformation era confessions.

South remains Southern Baptist. Lutherans still enjoy the cold Minnesota Februarys. And Grand Rapids, Michigan, is still half Roman Catholic, half Baptist, and half Reformed. Does all this mean that we haven't changed? No. The change in confessional America has not been the sudden or drastic change that we usually think of as making up the stuff of history. On the contrary, it has been slow, gradual, subtle, glacial, but no less historic. The great shifts in American religion have largely been non-event-centered. They have been changes in attitude, confessional commitment, theological technique, and lifestyle.

In a series of twenty-one articles written in tribute to Robert T. Handy, the contributors to this volume chart those changes and note the continuities. How has the mass media, the cold war, the rise and fall of labor unions, upward social and economic mobility, and the demise of the American frontier affected American Christians, their church going habits, and their self-identity? What sense do we make of the transmutation of values that has transformed the modernist culture-Protestant into a critic of the American way of life, and the fundamentalist separatist into the new worldly Christian? The American church of the middle to late twentieth century has experienced the rise of black-

church power, the Born Again movement, the death of triumphalism in foreign missions, liberal ecclesiastical decline, the burgeoning of the Pentecostal church, the maturing of feminism, conservative Protestants seeking a renewal of ritual and liturgy, the Hispanicization of the Roman Catholic Church, the Secular City, the visibility of cults and the occult, the televangelist, and much more. And none of it came about under the auspices of Bishop X or Council Y.

Lotz has collected an excellent array of scholars, and each writes in the area he or she knows best. Leonard Sweet opens with an essay on modernization. George Marsden writes on the evangelical realignment and resurgence after the debacles of the 20s and 30s. James White contributes an article on trends in worship within Protestantism. William Hutchison writes on missions. Gabriel Fackre provides an insightful summary of the recent history of theology in America. A piece by Ed-

The Old Testament Speaks: A Complete Survey of Old Testament History and Literature, fourth edition, by Samuel J. Schultz (New York: Harper & Row) 1990. 426 pages, hardback, \$24.95. Reviewed by Michael Williams, Assistant Professor of Theology.

Schultz's book has been around for thirty years now, and has become something of a traditional introductory textbook in Old Testament in many Bible Colleges. The fourth edition differs from the third only in an updating of the bibliographies and footnotes, and in a slight revision of its treatment of the Poetical Books and the Minor Prophets.

As the subtitle suggests, the book introduces the Old Testament and surveys Old Testament history. For history, this is just the sort of book you would want in your home or church library as a reference work. Schultz generally does a good job on that score. Where the book fails, however, and fails badly, is in introducing the Old Testament. I will point out just representative failings in that area.

First, Schultz makes no use of, nor does he refer to, critical studies in the Old Testament (outside of a few footnote references). Important thinkers like Gerhard von Rad and Walter Eichrodt are ignored. This says something about fundamentalist and evangelical insularity from the real world of biblical studies. Even if one disagrees with the presuppositions and methodologies of the critical tradition, simple honesty and reality requires one to treat questions of text and form criticism.

Second, the book is skimpy in too many areas. Such crucially important areas as the covenant and the law are compartmentalized into a few short pages, never to return again or inform the rest of the work.

win Gaustad on the status of the Bible within Protestantism is included. Kosuke Koyama provides a sobering reflection on the American ecclesiastical and confessional experience from a Third World perspective. Lotz himself provides the essay on historiographical changes in the last half century.

The book is organized into three sections. Part One surveys ecclesiastical changes brought about by Jewish-Christian dialogue, ecumenical movements, racial, ethnic and sex role awareness, a grudging acceptance of pluralism, and the like. Part Two examines trends in theological education and changing strategies in Christian education. Part Three discusses the relationship between religion and American culture.

Altered Landscapes not only charts the changes, but also seeks to identify the continuing patterns of American confessional life. This is not a "light" book, but it is an enlightening one.

Schultz deals with the Psalms in four pages, and hardly at all with the phenomenon of prophetism in Israel.

Third, the bibliographies at the end of each chapter are almost useless. Schultz's own dispensationalist leanings are most evident here. There are a few decent bibliographic entries, but generally they range from the obscure to the obsolete.

Fourth, the book offers no perspective on the thought of Israel. This makes the book very bland to read. It is almost as if Schultz attempts to be so broadly evangelical that he goes out of his way to be antitheological. This general lack of perspective diminishes the value of the book as an Old Testament history as well. What Schultz has produced is neither a true history nor an introduction, but merely a chronicle. He does not reflect upon the meaning of events or institutions, historically or theologically. A Baconian mind-set assumes that those things are simply perspicuous.

If you are looking for only a reference work that gets the chronicle straight and tells you something about the characters of the story, you may find this book useful. If you can spend a few dollars more, however, pick up R. K. Harrison's *Old Testament Times*, and his *Introduction to the Old Testament* instead. Everything Schultz does, these books do better, and they have none of Schultz's failings.