

to Lang, eventually undermined the movement's fragile political consensus in St. Louis, hastening the demise of African American working-class influence on social reform.

Lang's book challenges much of our conventional wisdom about twentieth-century African American politics and gender and provides an alternative to the interpretation of American reform and labor in other midwestern cities offered by Richard Pierce's *Polite Protest* (2005). What is most striking to this reviewer, however, is the similarity between the racial politics Lang and Pierce describe in both cities, where white and black political elites historically maintained a tenuous interracial civility at the expense of racial justice. To Lang's credit, however, he finds more

evidence of grassroots labor activism, even in Indianapolis, where he identifies African American participation in the National Negro Labor Council's 1953 boycott of Sears, Roebuck and Company to obtain "clerical positions, mainly for black women" (p. 90).

Lang's monograph is a tour-de-force, richly deserving of the praise heaped upon it by scholars such as Peniel Joseph and Vincent Franklin. It is a must read for any scholar of modern African American urban history, the civil rights and black power movements, and African American political activism.

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God-Fearing and Free *A Spiritual History of America's Cold War* By Jason W. Stevens

(Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2010. Pp. xiii, 434. Notes, index. \$39.95.)

Recent years have revealed a growing interest in the religious and spiritual culture of the United States in the early Cold War years. In *Original Sin and Everyday Protestants: The Theology of Reinhold Niebuhr, Billy Graham, and Paul Tillich in an Age of Anxiety* (2009), Andrew Finstuen approached the decade from a predominantly theological perspective; Steve Miller, in *Billy Graham and the Rise of the Republican South* (2009), shifted the focus more into the realm of southern

realpolitik; and now Jason Stevens links the intellectual, the religious, and the cultural realms in the shaping of what he calls the "spiritual history of America's Cold War."

Two related arguments frame *God-Fearing and Free*: that Americans' self-perception as God's chosen people gave way to the more pessimistic assumption that they were also subject to his judgment; and that a new focus on original sin, fear, and mortality replaced the theological

modernism, optimism, and innocence that marked the pre-totalitarian decades. In this new countermodern mindset, exemplified by the Protestant fundamentalist revival of the late 1940s, Stevens sees the matrix for the rise of the religious right, whose formation he traces back to the early years of the Cold War. Others have argued this case before, but not in the cultural depth that Stevens offers. Most importantly, Stevens invites us to reconsider the modern boundaries between the sacred and the secular. By analyzing what he calls "a wide selection of narratives and cultural forms," including revivalism and theology, psychoanalysis and confessional biography, film noir and fiction, Gothic romances and sentimental melodrama, he shows how religious symbols and ideas traveled through the cultural and intellectual realms, secularizing religion in the process.

From a religious historian's perspective, the latter is the most stimulating aspect of Stevens's work. Writing of neo-evangelical revivalism in the 1950s, he convincingly describes the sacralization of Western ideology by revivalists such as Graham. In a chapter on McCarthyism, he turns his focus to the Catholic senator's self-assigned theological mandate. With the same rigor, he traces the religious symbol and image of lost innocence, the yearning for the reversal of the Fall, and the liberation from original sin in film and fiction. In reverse, he shows the secular pressure on the religious realm when he analyzes the

transformation of American evangelicalism through its embrace of consumer culture and the astonishing liaison between Protestant clergy and psychoanalysis.

With the force of a cultural study, Stevens invites us to reconsider what constitutes either "left" or "right wing" and to rethink the key figures who formed the American spiritual character of the 1950s and 1960s. He links disparate cultural actors—from Graham to Lionel Trilling, from Reinhold Niebuhr to James Baldwin—in a narrative of lost innocence and original sin. The complexity of his work, while an intellectual accomplishment, proves challenging for the reader. Stevens does not link his observations to the obvious—neither nuclear threat nor communist fear features particularly prominently in his work. Hence, his narrative sometimes seems to evolve and to circulate in a self-defined and sometimes inaccessible intellectual realm.

Despite this criticism, it is fair to say that Stevens has indeed produced the first study of this period that successfully blurs the boundaries between religious, intellectual, political, and cultural history. The constant interplay between Cold War politics, spiritual yearning, religious fears, and popular culture paints the 1950s in darker colors than the pastel wall paint of suburban living rooms. In doing so, this compelling and challenging narrative provides a completely new way to look at American society in the 1950s.

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Not Yet a Placeless Land
Tracking an Evolving American Geography
 By Wilbur Zelinsky

(Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2011. Pp. xvii, 356. Notes, references, index. \$28.95.)

Three cheers for Wilbur Zelinsky's monumental work *Not Yet a Placeless Land*. Even though the devoted regionalist in me would prefer the title *Never a Placeless Land*, this book is a magnificent achievement that definitively answers a question that haunts every student of the American scene: Is our cultural landscape becoming more unified or diversified, more seamless or various over time? The standard response has been quite simple: the landscape is becoming everywhere the same. Americans, it seems obvious, have always been leveling the land and bulldozing nature into a smooth expanse of look-alike freeways and interchangeable cities. No one has expressed this machine-in-the-garden assumption more cleverly than Daniel Boorstin, who in highlighting the American compulsion "to level times and places" declared simply that "the uniqueness of modern America would prove to be its ability to erase uniqueness" (*The Americans: The Democratic Experience*, 1973).

For Zelinsky, to his lasting credit, the story is far more nuanced and paradoxical. Throughout this important book, he brilliantly illuminates how Americans are gripped by contradictory impulses: to erase uniqueness at the same time that we crave it; to flatten the land at the same time that we yearn for uneven places of belonging. Labeling these opposing forces "the mashing vs. the sorting of America," Zelinsky analyzes the roots of this perplexing paradox more thoroughly than any scholar past or present. He carefully weighs the myriad manifestations of convergence and divergence in American history and also compares American spatial uniformity and diversity to that of other nations and cultures. This is an epic task, and Zelinsky accomplishes it and reaches a compelling conclusion with amazing grace, objectivity, and a lifetime of wisdom and empirical evidence at his disposal.

Covering a vast array of landscape items, Zelinsky's argument moves from the tangible world of count-