

Mark R. Amstutz, *Evangelicals and American Foreign Policy*, Oxford University Press, 2014. 260 pp. \$29.95. ISBN: 9780199987634.

In *Evangelicals and American Foreign Policy* Mark Amstutz provides an overview of the ways in which evangelicals in the United States have been involved in foreign affairs as well as a normative account for how their work in this area might be strengthened. The paradigm highlighted (and generally praised) throughout the book is that of neo-evangelicalism: a movement of theologically conservative Protestants who rejected fundamentalist isolationism in the mid-twentieth century in order to engage with politics and culture. In Amstutz's view, neo-evangelicals (such as Carl F. H. Henry, the magazine *Christianity Today*, and the National Association of Evangelicals, or NAE) represent a brand of faith in line with historical evangelicalism's nineteenth-century efforts to minister to broader society. In regards to the historical roots of their foreign affairs engagement, Amstutz identifies overseas missions as the original mode by which evangelicals began to influence geopolitical conversations. Foreign missionaries were "the first American internationalists" (66) who laid the foundation for Christian and secular conceptions of global humanitarianism and civil society.

Several chapters of the book deal with specific foreign policy issues of particular significance to US evangelicals, such as global poverty, Israel, immigration, and the war on terror. Amstutz registers several praises and concerns with the manner in which evangelicals engaged these issues. For example, he salutes evangelicals for their important role in the push for US assistance in the HIV/AIDS pandemic in Africa but criticizes what he sees as a naïve sense of empathy for undocumented immigrants and terrorist detainees among some evangelicals. The criticisms largely fall at the feet of more progressive evangelical thinkers (such as Ron Sider and David Gushee) and the more recent public statements made by the NAE, all of which are, according to Amstutz, unwilling to enter into the difficult work of balancing compassionate concerns with the complications of statecraft. Evangelicals must not ignore the demands of the rule of law upon illegal aliens and the financial burden they place on the US (180–1), or the fact that "limited coercive interrogation" of terrorists may be justified when community safety is threatened (186).

In the final chapter of the book, "Toward a More Effective Evangelical Global Engagement," Amstutz articulates an international vision for evangelicals that balances competing claims of justice and humanitarianism, and the broader tension between worldly engagement with what he sees as the primarily spiritual task of the church. Drawing upon sources such as neo-evangelical Carl F. H. Henry and Christian realist Reinhold Niebuhr, he calls on evangelicals to engage in international politics through identification of general moral principles but to reject the temptation (that Amstutz identifies as the pitfall of the Protestant mainline) to "tell the government what to do" (199). Quoting Paul Ramsey, Amstutz contends

that “in politics the church is only a theoretician” and that blunt statements (such as the NAE’s on torture) “call into question the moral authority of the church itself because these political initiatives were often regarded as simplistic, divisive, and unrepresentative of their member’s views” (199).

A strength of this book is its historical account of evangelical influence in US foreign policy, particularly its linkage of the development of US geopolitics with the Christian missionary enterprise. For those interested in missions, Amstutz helpfully reminds us that Christian work abroad can never be understood without political dynamics in mind. Missionaries (even those of Anabaptist persuasion) must be aware of the ways in which they represent (often unconsciously) their homeland’s cultural and political interests on the international scene, for better or worse. Likewise, those concerned primarily with foreign policy must come to terms with the fact that their enterprise has never been a purely secular matter. Missionaries were historically instrumental in developing the global consciousness of Americans and have been an important lobbying influence in US foreign policy.

Though most Anabaptists (and some evangelicals) will disagree with the more pious version of a Christian realist political theology that Amstutz proffers, his views are worth consideration if for no other reason than their ubiquity among the culturally competent and politically astute evangelicals that have taken up residence in the halls of U.S. power in the last half-century. Theological differences aside though, a weakness in the method and scope of this book is that Amstutz focuses most of his criticism of evangelical geopolitical work on progressive evangelical figureheads and the formal statements of evangelical groups, while neglecting close analysis of the actual beliefs and profound influence of the more typically conservative evangelical laity. This is most glaring in his discussions of evangelical views on immigration, nuclear war, and torture (his more nuanced discussion of the varieties of evangelical support for Israel being the exception). I wish Amstutz would have spent more time discussing in depth the foreign policy views that most evangelicals actually hold (such as their general support of torture of terrorist detainees, a point he even concedes), keeping in mind how allegedly credulous statements by more progressive evangelicals perhaps serve as an important corrective to the uncritical nationalism that has characterized much of evangelicalism in the US during the twentieth century. We get little discussion of the evangelical support of both laity and leaders for the second Iraq War or their general acquiescence to practices of “enhanced interrogation.” And though progressive evangelical formal statements are labeled as naïve, Amstutz neglects the more pervasive geopolitical ignorance at work in evangelical international efforts like the hugely popular Kony 2012 viral internet phenomenon.

Another limitation of the book is Amstutz’s restriction of the focus of the book to the work and thought of *United States* evangelicals. There is little consideration of the way that evangelicals outside of the U.S. have viewed, benefitted from, or been

victimized by the foreign policy of this country. For example, how have Christians in Mexico interpreted US evangelical support for border control, or what is the character of Iraqi Christian understandings of US military involvement in their country? This obviously could be a result of the confines of space and scope. But perhaps it is a subtle reminder of how US evangelicals easily forget their ecclesial ties to brothers and sisters abroad due to enmeshment with their national identity or demands on the home front. One wonders what effect remembrance of these ties would have on US evangelicals, and how it might temper their nationalism or change the way they relate to other international communities for the better.

AARON GRIFFITH, *a member of Durham Mennonite Church and a doctoral student in American religious history at Duke Divinity School, Durham, NC.*

Kwok Pui-lan, *Globalization, Gender, and Peacebuilding: The Future of Interfaith Dialogue*, Paulist Press, 2012. 102 pp. \$9.95. ISBN: 9780809147724.

In this compact study, Kwok Pui-lan, William F. Cole Professor of Christian Theology and Spirituality at the Episcopal Divinity School, offers an outline for a proposal for how to think about and practice interfaith dialogue in a globalized world in which violent conflicts are often constructed in religious terms. Originally presented as lectures at the University of Notre Dame, the chapters have a conversational quality, and footnotes are kept to a minimum. Some readers might be frustrated that Kwok gestures at some complicated matters (such as the implications of current debates within the religious studies field about how the modern category of religion has its roots within liberal Christian theology) while leaving them underdeveloped. However, Kwok's presentation has the salutary effect of being accessible to the non-specialist reader.

Kwok's direct, uncomplicated style arguably connects with one of her key claims, namely, that "interfaith dialogue must not be confined to narrow academic circles and among the elites if it is going to have a wider impact on faith communities and society" (3). Kwok in particular underscores a point made by Ursula King that "feminism is a missing dimension of interfaith dialogue" (31), noting how many academic and official, institutional forms of interfaith dialogue have excluded women's voices. Kwok correctly notes the dangers of some Western feminist approaches contributing to Islamophobia by portraying Islam in essentialist terms as anti-feminist, and cites Harvard scholar Leila Ahmed's work on women and Islam as a resource for countering such simplistic appraisals. Kwok's argument could have been extended and deepened by considering what implications the work of a scholar like Saba Mahmood (in *The Politics of Piety: The Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject*) has for thinking about the implications of feminism for interfaith dialogue, specifically, the implications of Mahmood's argument that the women's mosque