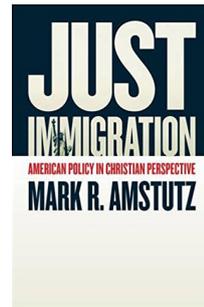


## Book Review

Mark R. Amstutz.

*Just Immigration: American Policy in Christian Perspective*  
Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2017.  
pb, pp. xvi, 224, \$21.25, £21.99. ISBN 978-0-8028-7484-9

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As the founder of the Political Science department at Wheaton College, Mark R. Amstutz has become a significant voice in the dialogue on international affairs and political morality. A glance at his body of work testifies of his passion for educating the reader in ethical approaches to international relations and American foreign policy. He has authored books such as: *Evangelicals and American Foreign Policy* (2014), *The Healing of the Nations* (2015), and *International Ethics* (2013, 4th ed.)

In *Just Immigration: American Policy in Christian Perspective* the author is challenged by the recurring questions regarding the church's activism on behalf of a just immigration system. He asks, "Why do they believe the immigration system is unjust?" Amstutz also wonders "why do they [the churches] overwhelmingly support a more liberal policy, including amnesty for those who have entered the country unlawfully?" These questions guided the author through several years of bibliographic and field research seeking to understand how Christian perspectives help to structure the analysis of international migration. Amstutz' goal is to describe and assess the United States immigration system from a Christian perspective. Amstutz is concerned with the church's lack of knowledge of immigration policy and the reactionary stance taken because of this unawareness. Examining the

contributions of Roman Catholic, Mainline Protestant, and Evangelical churches the author assesses how those contributions are applied to the "ongoing debate about immigration reform."

*Just Immigration* begins with a succinct introduction to the United States immigration system, its history, and effects. Christian ethics and immigration are introduced against the backdrop of cosmopolitanism and communitarianism. The first half of Amstutz work (Chapters 1 through 4) exhibits meticulous research, providing detailed analysis of US immigration policy and the challenges it faces. A system that faces the American people's differing perspective and understanding of immigration. Amstutz provides the reader with clear examples of the US immigration system's strength and weakness. He introduces it as a generous system, that gives priority to family ties and inclusiveness, while also paying close attention to those victim of violence and abuse in their own nations. Nevertheless, Amstutz sees a system unable to regulate its generosity and that loses control when prioritizing family ties; he also exposes a system with a poor ability to control and track those who overstay their visas as well as those who seek employment while in the country illegally.

In the second half of *Just Immigration* (chapter 5 through 9) Amstutz deals with the different ways in which the Roman Catholic, Mainline Protestants, and Evangelical churches have addressed immigration. Throughout

these chapters he examines and assesses the contributions and shortcomings of the various Christian groups. Amstutz is seriously critical of the Catholic church's approach to the current immigration crisis in the United States. By solely advocating for the immigrant, and pointing out a nation's responsibility to welcome them, he explains, the Catholic church simplifies a very complex issue and neglects its duty to moral education. Amstutz also sees Evangelical churches making the same mistake. While developing a strong biblical argument for a more liberal and flexible immigration policy, Evangelicals fail to address the moral dilemmas presented by the citizens' moral claims vis-à-vis immigrants'. Mainline Protestant churches, according to Amstutz seem to have understood the role of the church in the immigration debate better than the other major groups. Mainline Protestants have developed more careful and useful studies that focus directly on moral education, avoiding the usual arguments used to promote social justice. Unfortunately, because of their lack of influence in American society their efforts have gone almost unnoticed.

Amstutz methodically develops his argument, arriving at the conclusion proposed from the beginning, that the Christian church, although able and with the responsibility to participate in public policy development, must not forget its most important contribution will be that of moral education. Unfortunately, Amstutz does not provide the reader with enough scriptural depth to support such strong and thought-provoking claim. The biblical approach provided is dependent on each Christian tradition's understanding of Scripture. However, as he introduces his methodology the reader becomes aware the author is not interested in developing a "Theology of immigration," but rather in examining the

biblical perspectives of the different Christian traditions. His discussion on "Christian ethics, the Bible, and immigration" (chapter 5) suffers from a noticeable absence of Old and New Testament ethics scholars' voices (Joel Green, Christopher Wright, John Goldingay, Cyril Rodd, Richard Burridge). Amstutz is able to remain focused on examining the different Christian traditions perspectives, without making any claims of his own, yet appealing to a few of the leading experts in the field of Old and New Testament ethics would have provided a more solid scriptural foundation for his argument.

*Just Immigration* serves as an eye-catching title for those interested in the subject. Nevertheless, Amstutz' work is not just another book offering an answer to the current immigration crisis, nor is it an attempt to provide an exhaustive biblical reference on Christian ethics and immigration. Exquisitely researched but not tedious to read, *Just Immigration* serves as a "stop" sign in the debate; it educates the reader on immigration policy and Christian ethics and approaches, thus providing a much-needed clear perspective of what the Christian church has done and what, according to Amstutz, its most important contribution should be, that of moral education.