In summary, MacMullen's book is thought-provoking but unconvincing. Even if it were convincing, however, what it proposes in the way of government regulation of religious schools is so radical it has no chance of being adopted in this country — at least not for many, many years.

***Public Pulpits: Methodists and Mainline Churches in the Moral Argument of Public Life*. By Steven M. Tipton. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2007. xvi + 556 pp. $35.00 cloth, $35.00 paper**

doi:10.1017/S175504830999040X

Ryan G. Spurrier
Duke University

How can mainline Protestant churches effectively advocate on issues such as faith-based initiatives, the war in Iraq, and growing economic division in America? Steven Tipton explores this question at length in *Public Pulpits*. In addition, Tipton explores how the diverse mainline churches and their advocacy offices in Washington, D.C., are forced to compete within an American polity increasingly crowded by para-church and non-religious moral advocacy groups that focus on single issues, and in which conservative religious groups and politicians frequently use religious imagery, at times under the guise of speaking for all Christians.

As Tipton explains in Part I of his book, the debate over how mainline churches should respond to political and social issues is not framed strictly as a dichotomy between mainline and conservative religious groups, but within the mainline denominations themselves. Focusing primarily on the United Methodist Church (UMC), the largest and most diverse mainline denomination in the United States, Tipton explores different views of the church's role that are held within the UMC by conservatives, who feel the UMC's General Board of Church and Society and General Conference have irresponsibly debased themselves by ignoring members' beliefs, and liberals, who support an increase in education and enactment of social principles even if it costs membership, arguing that the prophetic and conciliar nature of the church will not always allow the church to follow the majority of its members.

In particular, Tipton outlines Charles W. Keysor's Good News Movement of scriptural renewal, the more political Institute on Religion and Democracy (IRD) founded by David Jessup and Richard Penn Kemble, and the ways the UMC has countered and defended itself and its actions against these groups. The ties linking the IRD to politically conservative advocacy and labor groups that cast doubt on the religious *versus* political aims of the IRD are presented in light of the IRD's shift from publicizing UMC aid to programs in countries run by totalitarian regimes to engaging in conservative culture wars at home.

In Part II, Tipton explores how mainline advocacy groups, Washington offices, and the National Council of Churches (NCC) historically have interacted — and how they can cooperate more effectively in the future. Interfaith Action for Economic Justice, National IMPACT, their merger into Interfaith Impact for Justice and Peace, and the Interfaith Alliance are presented as case studies. Tipton shows that when these ecumenical groups address issues not previously addressed by mainline offices, such as world hunger and countering the Religious Right's apparent claim to speak for all Christians, these groups can work symbiotically with mainline offices. However, when the groups' work becomes more diverse in terms of issues addressed and begins to overlap with the charges of the mainline Washington offices, tensions rise.

Similarly, Tipton shows that the NCC can work most effectively with mainline churches through coalition building among member denominations around single issues, as has been the case since 2000 under the leadership of Bob Edgar. Edgar's style poses a stark contrast to the NCC's old practice of speaking for and ahead of member denominations as evinced by Joan Brown Campbell's leadership during the 1994 healthcare reform debate.

Underlying these themes is the message that the relative proportions of grassroots mobilization and Washington lobbying and advocacy depend upon the openness of the U.S. President to mainline churches, with advocacy increasing with access to the White House. However, to be most successful, Tipton argues in his conclusion, mainline churches need to engage simultaneously in all of these activities and also focus on educating their members to approach issues theologically. Since mainline denominations are among the most diverse voluntary institutions in the United States, and likely the only ones to challenge their wealthier members beyond self-interest, the mainline church must be a place of continuing education and argumentation over social and moral issues as the church defends the whole of society. As Tipton concludes his

work, "Like republican self-government, in fact, [the Church] offers us the sometimes uplifting, sometimes tragically troubling, and often downright uncomfortable practices of a moral community in which we cannot escape or exclude the strangers who are our true colleagues and biblical neighbors. Let us engage them in argument as well as in love" (423).

Tipton's writing style ensures that each chapter can stand-alone so that *Public Pulpits* could serve as a good historical reference. This fact does create some thematic and factual redundancy when reading the entire work, but, more importantly, it allows the reader to quickly refresh previous background information when returning to the book as a reference. The introduction provides a solid discourse on the social and moral issues facing mainline denominations, as well as a quick explanation of how the ideals of a civic republic and liberal democracy, and other ambiguities, shape the American religious climate. The introduction prepares a reader unversed in the historical dynamics of politics and religion for the remainder of the text. In the appendix, Tipton explains mysticism, sects, and the UMC both in the terms of Ernst Troeltsch's ecclesiology and modern-day examples. In so doing, Tipton gives final insight as to how Methodists in particular, and mainline churches more general, should respond to conservative groups in the moral argument of public life.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S175504830999040X Published online by Cambridge University Press