

God and Global Order

The Power of Religion in American Foreign Policy

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with Robert Joustra
editors

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Introduction

Naming Religion Truthfully

Jonathan Chaplin with Robert Joustra

The rejection of religion . . . seems to be inscribed in the genetic code of the discipline of IR.

Over the past generation international relations scholars have devoted great time and effort and have achieved impressive successes in explaining how and whether states attain various goods for their citizens, including security, sometimes conquest, economic growth, sometimes great wealth, human rights, sometimes high levels of justice, environmental purity, and a world in which they can freely express themselves. . . . But people across the globe seek other ends, too: to worship and submit to their God, to protect and defend their mosques, temples, shrines, synagogues, and churches, to convert others to their faith, to reside in a realm governed by *sharia*, to live under a government that promotes morality in many spheres of society, to draw on their faith to extend civil rights to minorities and women, and to practice forgiveness and reconciliation. . . . Is it any surprise that such ends spill into the realm of international politics?

This book argues that American foreign policy must more fully acknowledge the power of religious faith in international relations if it is to be credible and effective in the turbulent century that lies ahead. The book shows how a proper reckoning with the presence and power of faith can not only illuminate U.S. foreign policy and enhance its contribution to the promotion of global peace and justice, but perhaps even help it avoid mistakes arising from indifference to religion which have marked U.S. interventions in contexts as varied as Iraq, Afghanistan, Iran, Israel and Palestine, the U.S.S.R. and Russia, the Balkans and Vietnam. Given the unchallenged global preeminence of the United States and the widespread, if overblown, foreign perception that under the leadership of President George W. Bush the United States once again saw itself as heading a religiously charged mission,¹ such a reckoning is now of truly critical significance for the future of global order. Ignorance about the power of faith in global affairs could carry (further) disastrous consequences both for the United States and the entire world. Such ignorance will foreclose intelligent discussion of whether the United States in the century ahead opts to be “with or against the world,” as James W. Skillen has put it,² and will leave the United States more rather than less exposed to threats to its security. It remains to be seen whether the new direction in foreign policy announced by President Obama will be guided by deeper insight on the role of faith than has been evident in previous administrations. The presence of motifs during his inaugural speech suggesting what might be termed a liberal progressivist version of American civil religion—as potentially hazardous in its own way as a conservative nationalist version—makes this a question of even greater interest and import.³

RETURNING RELIGION FROM EXILE

Written from a Christian perspective—a term to be explained shortly—this book presents a range of insights on the far-reaching role that faiths, both religious and secular, have played and might play in shaping U.S. responses to crucial contemporary global developments.⁴ It is intended to serve at least three distinct audiences: first, the many actors in U.S. foreign policy at home and abroad who see themselves as guided in some way by Christian faith; second, scholars in International Relations⁵ curious about what a religion-sensitive—indeed, “Christian”—perspective in the field might look like; third, practitioners and scholars from other faith perspectives, and those who think they have none, on the role of faith in international affairs. While its claims will likely provoke disagreement

from some representatives of all these categories, its editors hope that it will enable any reader to reflect more critically and self-consciously on the global influence of faith. If so, it thereby will have contributed to the overcoming of what Edward Luttwak has bluntly called “a learned repugnance to contend intellectually with all that is religion”;⁶ or, as Thomas F. Farr more graphically puts it, “the extreme reluctance to get too deeply into a religion’s guts.”⁷

Recognizing the factual reality of religion does not, of course, amount to an acceptance of its legitimacy as a guiding orientation either in the polity or the academy. There is no lack of analysis today of the role of religious faith as an *empirical* phenomenon, and the contents of this book reinforce the call for governments and other international and national actors to attend to this role if they are to pursue coherent and successful strategies. However, the book also argues that greater attention must now be given to *normative* perspectives (and the explanatory approaches flowing from them), notably those of the leading public religions themselves. “Outsider” evaluations of the role of religion need to be complemented by “the view from inside” if the complex phenomenon of faith is to be properly grasped and responded to.

The book joins the conversation about America’s role in the world at two related levels. First, it adds a distinctive voice to the swelling chorus of commentators in the discipline of International Relations who are urging us to take stock of the global resurgence of public religion.⁸ When Samuel P. Huntington’s “clash of civilizations” thesis made its arresting intervention into the debate over the future of post–Cold War global order in 1993, it was one of the first attempts to argue that religion and culture should be taken seriously as formative elements of U.S. foreign policy.⁹ Huntington’s account has since been subjected to searching critical scrutiny, yet there is no doubt that it helped stimulate an upsurge of scholarly interest in the role of religion in International Relations.¹⁰ A recent volume published by Palgrave Macmillan announced that religion has now “returned from exile.”¹¹ That a leading publisher should judge it worthwhile to launch an entire series on “Culture and Religion in International Relations”—in which the aforementioned volume appears—indicates the beginnings of a sea change in scholarly perceptions of religion. Another contributor to this series (and to this book), Scott Thomas, observes a “global resurgence of religion” triggering nothing less than a “transformation of international relations.”¹²

A particularly thoughtful contribution—no doubt partly since its preparation straddled the events of September 11, 2001—is *The Sacred*

and the Sovereign: Religion and International Politics.¹³ In 2000, when the contributors met to consult on what was already emerging as a pressing topic, they could never have imagined that within months they would have to revisit and rethink key elements of their theses. What had begun as a project to bring much-needed attention to the issue of religion in global politics quickly became an important contribution for policymakers in crisis.

A strikingly ambitious attempt at a comprehensive treatment of the theme is Eric O. Hanson's *Religion and Politics in the International System Today*.¹⁴ Utilizing theories of globalization and drawing examples from every region of the world, Hanson proposes a "new paradigm" for understanding how religion is, on the one hand, a causative factor in its own right in international relations (and not a mere dependent variable), and, on the other, always deeply and closely interwoven with "material" factors familiar to International Relations scholars. Hanson argues that the explanatory power of studies of global economic, military, and communications systems is seriously incomplete unless it integrates the specific religious factors at work at many levels. The methodological implications of his work are noted below.

Religion is not only being analyzed in macro-studies like those of Huntington, Thomas, and Hanson. It is also being explored as a decisive factor in field-specific investigations. For example, scholars are recognizing the need to take cognizance of the religious factor in the "hard" field of security studies. In *Religion and Security: The New Nexus in International Relations*,¹⁵ Robert Seiple and Dennis Hoover show that—as Hoover puts it in the introduction—when talking about security, "religion gets real" (underlining Farr's observation that religion can no longer be dismissed as "mere sociology"¹⁶). In addition to fresh political, economic, and sociological perspectives, Hoover argues, we also need fresh religious—even *theological*—perspectives, on which to build new paradigms of peace, stability, and security.¹⁷

The religious factor is also returning to the agenda of the history of foreign relations after protracted neglect (analyzed in Andrew Preston's chapter). Malcolm Magee, for example, has traced faith-based influences on American foreign policy back through Woodrow Wilson's religiously inspired diplomacy. In *What the World Should Be*, Magee probes beneath generations of secularist diplomatic history to interrogate where, why, and how Wilson's Presbyterianism shaped his presidency. William Inboden's outstanding study of the powerful religious motivations behind the Cold War policies of Truman, Dulles, Eisenhower, and others—*Religion and*

American Foreign Policy, 1945–1960—argues a parallel point about the postwar period.¹⁸

The cumulative argument of these and other recent works is compelling: as a third title in Palgrave’s “Culture and Religion in International Relations” series puts it, it is time to “bring religion back into international relations.”¹⁹

One of the most exciting additions to this new genre, Elizabeth Shakman Hurd’s remarkable *The Politics of Secularism in International Relations*,²⁰ develops the radical proposal that the very discipline is itself sustained by a parochial and contestable faith perspective—“secularism.”²¹ “Secularism,” she asserts, “is located on the spectrum of theological politics.”²² If this is so, she argues, then it is not a matter of bringing some extraneous factor into what would otherwise be a faith-free zone of neutral, rational scholarship, but of discerning the powerful yet unrecognized faith orientations already internally shaping the foundations of the discipline and then confronting the implications of those orientations for the conduct of international relations. We return to her argument below.

The second level at which this book enters the conversation about America’s global role is the debate about the practice of diplomacy. The book seeks to supply additional ammunition for the arguments of those foreign policy theorists and practitioners who are urging diplomats to reckon with the potential power of faith—for good and ill—in international affairs. In her book *The Mighty and the Almighty: Reflections on Power, God, and World Affairs*,²³ Madeleine Albright confesses her regret at having adopted, while ambassador to the United Nations and secretary of state, the resolutely secularist approach to foreign policy she had imbibed from former doyens of the foreign policy discipline such as Morgenthau, Kennan, and Acheson. Having absorbed their modernist disdain toward the seventeenth-century wars of religion, a possibility from which the modern liberal state was thought to have liberated us once and for all, she now admitted that “since the terror attacks of 9/11, I have come to realize that it may have been I who was stuck in an earlier time.”²⁴

Ironically, the year Albright first assumed a foreign policy office, 1993, was the year in which the first path-breaking study of the unavoidable role of religion in foreign policy appeared: *Religion, the Missing Dimension of Statecraft*, edited by Douglas Johnson and Cynthia Sampson.²⁵ That book argued that religion was not only a powerful fuel for hostility and conflict but could also be a potential force for good: it could be harnessed by suitably alert and creative diplomats for purposes of international (and intra-national) peacemaking and reconciliation.²⁶ A decade later,

Douglas Johnson produced a sequel demonstrating in further detail how this could work concretely in specific conflict situations across the globe and laying out theoretical foundations for the practice of what he called “faith-based diplomacy.”²⁷

These innovative studies show that official U.S. anxiety at the resurgence of global religion is misplaced. As Thomas F. Farr puts it: “The United States should not see global desecularization in strictly defensive terms; it is as much an opportunity as a threat. Rather than being inimical to the advance of freedom, as many secularists assume, religious ideas and actors can buttress and expand ordered liberty.”²⁸

Importantly, Johnson argues that while faith-based diplomacy should “trump realpolitik,” it cannot serve as a complete alternative to more conventional diplomacy.²⁹ Yet both his volumes make clear that even the standard fare of diplomatic initiatives proceeding from Foggy Bottom could benefit substantially from greater attention to the role of faith in many conflict situations. The injunction has been taken up most recently in several studies of specific aspects of U.S. foreign policy, ranging well beyond the category of conflict-zones addressed by Johnson. Some have sought to analyze the empirical influence of faith-based pressure groups on the formation of U.S. foreign policy. For example, Elliot Abrams’ edited volume *The Influence of Faith* focuses on how religion and faith groups have shaped the foreign policy process and how those same policies have in turn exercised a feedback effect on the character of American religion itself.³⁰

Useful though such studies are, they often remain within the standard conceptual frameworks for analyzing the domestic policy process. Others take in a wider panorama. Walter Russell Mead, for example, notes the resurgence of Evangelical influence on foreign policy but places it in broader historical perspective and argues that Evangelical goals are in any case badly misunderstood by the secular media and academia.³¹ Another example is *God and Caesar in China: Policy Implications of Church-State Tensions*,³² edited by Jason Kindopp and Carol Hamrin, which makes clear how a constructive and effective U.S. engagement with a globally ascendant nation such as China cannot afford to remain ignorant about internal religious developments in the country.

Other works, such as Andrew Bacevich and Elizabeth Prodromou’s “God is Not Neutral: Religion and U.S. Foreign Policy after 9/11,”³³ seek to uncover the relationship between the personal piety of a powerful chief executive—George W. Bush—and neoconservative policy alignments.³⁴ They show that the explicitly religious tone of executive

language has sometimes served to obfuscate as much as it has clarified the role of religion in foreign policy. The president's personal faith orientation is important, but an analysis of even very strong personal piety in holders of high office does not at all exhaust the manner in which religion is enlisted in American foreign policy. The structural impact of an administration's (mis)understanding of religion is more important than the personal beliefs of its chief executive. Thomas F. Farr's *World of Faith and Freedom* (which elaborates the thesis of his chapter in our volume) explores the role of religion in relation to a policy where one might have been forgiven for thinking it would already be well understood: U.S. international religious freedom policy.³⁵

The proposal that American diplomacy draw on religious resources has not, of course, gone without challenge. The exchanges recorded in *Liberty and Power*, one of the Pew Forum Dialogues on Religion and Public Life, include both powerful defenses of the legitimacy and efficacy of utilizing such resources and continuing anxiety about and opposition to doing so.³⁶ For example, Michael Walzer, worried that faith can so easily turn dogmatic and so override necessary moral imperatives in foreign policy, asserts straightforwardly, "A faith-based foreign policy would be a bad idea."³⁷ Other participants, while acutely aware of the perils of appealing to religion to justify particular policy stances, demonstrate that such anxieties are less well founded when the complex relationships between religious faith, morality, and foreign policy outputs are appropriately spelled out.

CHALLENGING SECULARIST ASSUMPTIONS

Responding to such debates, this book poses questions to four common secularist assumptions currently obstructing a proper acknowledgment of the role of religion in U.S. foreign policy: first, that public life in modernizing societies will undergo inevitable secularization; second, that only premodern, traditional cultures have "faith," while modernized cultures have emancipated themselves from it; third, that religion is but a dependent variable requiring explanation in other terms; and fourth—and most provocatively—that "people of faith," whether scholars or practitioners, should keep their faith perspectives out of sight, indeed even out of mind, when analyzing or engaging with global politics.³⁸

The first assumption is the prediction of the inevitable secularization of public life wherever "modernization" leaves its footprint.³⁹ This assumption has been convincingly challenged by leading sociologists of

religion such as José Casanova and Peter Berger.⁴⁰ The thesis holds that the influence of religious faith will progressively retreat from public life as modernization relentlessly erodes public confidence—both in religious faith as a reliable source of knowledge for managing public life and in the standing of religious organizations to provide normative guidance for the public realm. But it is now clear that, while there is abundant evidence of advanced secularization in Western societies, the causal connection with modernization or with religious decline is no longer so clear. This is not only the case in the United States, which has been recognized by secularization theorists as “exceptional” in being the most modernized Western society while also being the most religious and the most prone to allow religious influence in the public realm. Even in Europe, now acknowledged as the true “exception” to the persistence of religion in the modern world, social scientists have disclosed both hitherto unnoticed religious influences on public life alongside advanced secularization and the return of public religion, especially in the form of a more assertive Islam and a resurgent (mainly conservative) Christianity.⁴¹ Beyond the West, perhaps the most telling and momentous instance of the resurgence of public religion was the Iranian Revolution of 1979, occurring in the most modernized society of the Middle East apart from Israel.⁴² But no less important than the rise of political Islam is the astonishing growth of new forms of politically active conservative Protestant Christianity in Africa, Asia, and Latin America.⁴³ The most recent in-depth studies of this development—the four volumes in the series “Evangelical Christianity and Democracy in the Global South”—lend additional weight to Philip Jenkins’ suggestion that we may be about to witness the emergence of “the next Christendom.”⁴⁴

The critique of secularization theory is also reinforced by the argument for the existence of “multiple modernities.”⁴⁵ This idea suggests that modernity and Westernization are not identical and that there are a variety of cultural modes through which “modernity” might be expressed. Citing the effect such a concept might have on foreign policy, Scott Thomas asserts that we can no longer “make the same assumptions about culture and religion for all societies, communities, or states in international relations.”⁴⁶

The second secularist assumption that this book questions is that only premodern, traditional cultures are infused with “faith,” while the public cultures of modernity are not. Challenging this is more controversial since it problematizes the deep cultural conviction that modernized public realms have cast off what was thought to be the historical obscurantism

and oppressiveness of religious faith and are now governed principally by a liberating, universal critical rationality. While the critique of secularization theory has emerged from sociologists working within mainstream modernist empirical methodologies, the critique of modernist rationalism tends to draw more on postmodern thought. Elizabeth Shakman Hurd is one of the most original contributors within the field of International Relations to this line of critique. Drawing on the work of Talal Asad, William Connolly, and others, she argues that the default secularist mindset underlying the discipline is itself a form of “theological politics.” But the academic discipline is only a reflection of a much deeper, though hidden, assumption lodged deep in the political culture of modernity, namely that modernization has replaced the “theological politics” typical of premodern traditional cultures in the West and beyond and embraced a secular political order premised exclusively on universal reason and science. On the contrary, Hurd shows, the secularism of modernity is itself a contingent historical construction disclosing a contestable epistemological and ontological stance. Putting the point more explicitly than Hurd, it could even be ventured that secular modernism displays the characteristic features of a particular religious faith.⁴⁷

This claim finds ample support in Charles Taylor’s *A Secular Age*. Taylor shows that how we define religion becomes all-important for how we evaluate the emergence of secularism, and specifically the secularist Westphalian consensus shaping Western politics. Taylor distinguishes three forms of secularism. The first two are familiar: the secularization of public space, and the decline of religious belief or practice. The third refers to the cultural presuppositions which make secular modernism plausible: “new conditions of belief,” creating “a new shape to the experience which prompts to and is defined by belief” and “a new context in which all search and questioning about the moral and spiritual must proceed.”⁴⁸ The appearance of such an all-encompassing cosmological matrix leads Taylor to conclude that the commingling of secularity and modernism is a distinct phenomenon of the developed West, one which establishes particular preconditions for what constitutes belief, religion, and secularism.

It is worth noting here that the claim that secular modernity itself is founded on faith-like commitments does not imply that the modern jurisdictional separation of church and state must be put fundamentally into question. José Casanova argues that modernity does indeed necessarily presuppose such an institutional differentiation, but he holds that this is entirely compatible with religious influences operating vigorously

within public life: differentiation does not imply either the privatization of faith or the secularization of politics.⁴⁹ But this raises the question of what exactly the desecularization of politics means. It is helpful to refer here to Hurd's distinction between two variants of modern secularism: a French- or Turkish-style "laicism" that not only defends the differentiation of church and state but also seeks the complete extirpation of religious influences from public life, and a "Judeo-Christian secularism" which, while also upholding church-state differentiation, insists that this very differentiation is a unique achievement of Judeo-Christian civilization, one which cannot be replicated elsewhere.⁵⁰ The latter—represented by Samuel Huntington and Bernard Lewis—is "expressed in international relations in the idea that the secular West has a monopoly over the proper relationship between religion and politics."⁵¹

Huntington's famous clash of civilizations thesis predicates religion as the most formative civilizational influence. Religion is the central integrating force that holds a civilization's identity together. On this view multiculturalism carries an inherent danger: as Huntington puts it, "multiculturalism at home threatens the United States and the West" just as "universalism abroad threatens the West and the World. Both deny the uniqueness of Western culture."⁵² Bernard Lewis is equally explicit about the Judeo-Christian foundations of church-state separation:

Separation of church and state was derided in the past by Muslims when they said it was a Christian remedy for a Christian disease. It doesn't apply to us or to our world. Lately, I think some of them are beginning to reconsider that, and to concede that perhaps they may have caught a Christian disease and would therefore be well advised to try a Christian remedy.⁵³

At this point, the question naturally arises whether a book like this, which entertains the thought of a "Christian perspective" on international relations, is necessarily committed to "Judeo-Christian secularism." We are confident that all contributors would reject what Hurd calls "laicism." But no assumption is made that all of them support what she terms "Judeo-Christian secularism," even though some chapters contain evidence and argumentation that lend support to some version of it. Certainly all contributors accept the broad principles of a clear distinction between jurisdictions of church and state, and extensive religious freedom.⁵⁴ But it is worth noting that this is compatible with a wide range of views on precisely what the positive public role of religion should be in a context

of institutional differentiation. Apart from a position of strong general support for such a role, the book adopts no party line on that question.

The third secularist assumption challenged by this book is that religion is but a dependent variable requiring explanation in terms of explanatory factors currently accepted in mainstream International Relations. It is being increasingly acknowledged that to proceed as if “religion” were just one more empirical phenomenon readily susceptible to analysis within existing “modernist” theoretical constructs and research methodologies is wrong-headed. Hatzopoulos and Petito claim that “the global resurgence of religion confronts IR theory with a theoretical challenge comparable to that raised by the end of the Cold War, or the emergence of globalization.” The need is “to emancipate IR from its own theoretical captivities.”⁵⁵ Such captivities have produced a blindness to religion as an independent variable and thereby have generated reductionist or otherwise lopsided or shortsighted explanations of international processes or events.

An initial step in this necessary cognitive emancipation is the recognition that the “Westphalian” privatized conception of religion is itself an “invention” of secular modernist social science rather than an objective description of the way things are.⁵⁶ As Thomas shows, the way is then open to contemplate religion as a profoundly formative, diverse, and constantly evolving factor within human societies and in relations between them; to explore the multiple ways in which it interacts, at many levels and via many actors, with factors such as economic and technological conditions, social and cultural identity formation or state power maintenance; and to embrace new methodologies for interpreting it correctly.⁵⁷ Recognizing religion—naming it truthfully—will make International Relations more productive (perhaps even more predictive) as a richer conceptual apparatus alerts practitioners to a much wider range of relevant empirical data. Hanson’s “new paradigm”—an integrated framework relating a sophisticated grasp of religion’s diverse contents and contexts to four autonomous global systems (political, economic, military, and communication)—is probably the most advanced articulation of the fertile possibilities lying ahead, when (as Farr puts it) religion’s “guts” are examined up close.⁵⁸

The final secularist assumption under critical scrutiny in this book is that “people of faith,” whether scholars or practitioners, should keep their faith perspectives out of sight—indeed even out of mind—when analyzing or engaging with global politics. The book entertains the possibility of a different account of “religious faith” than that prevalent in diplomatic discourse or International Relations. The dominant view

conceives of religious faith as an individually held set of private, subjective, nonverifiable or subrational beliefs in some sort of supernatural deity, beliefs which may properly guide personal conduct but which lack any standing in the public realm and so cannot inform or direct either the conduct or the analysis of international relations. The dominant view is not necessarily hostile to religious faith but it does regard it as irrelevant to political affairs. Max Stackhouse suggests an obvious explanation:

Some social scientists . . . reject the very idea that religion could be an important actor in social history, because it is not important in their lives or disciplines, and they cannot imagine how deeply it influences others or the presuppositions of the historic disciplines and society as a whole, even if they acknowledge how it is influenced by other factors. But it is an intellectual fault of major proportions.⁵⁹

This book proceeds from a very different conception of religious faith (though not every contributor explicitly endorses the following account). Over against the dominant view just described, it envisages an account (a “naming”) of “faith” as a more or less comprehensive, communally held and dynamic belief set and action-orientation consciously or unconsciously influencing many areas of human life, including political action at any level.⁶⁰ So understood, faith would be recognized as powerfully operative (for good or ill) in the thought and action of individuals and communities—both academic and political—even when it goes unrecognized or is suppressed by its adherents.⁶¹

From within the Christian tradition, such a view might be grounded in an Augustinian understanding of religion as an encompassing spiritual orientation—a highest love—at work not only in every human being but also in every political community. Indeed, Augustine proposed to classify political communities not according to the nature of their regimes but according to the content of their love. But other theoretical foundations for a wider, nonprivatized view of religion—Christian, non-Christian, or postmodern—might also be available (though not all might be equally illuminating for International Relations).⁶² Acknowledging this diversity is not to cede the debate about religion in international relations to radical deconstructionists who view any striving for universal explanations as little more than an epistemological land-grab. On the contrary, as Hatzopolous and Petito put it, “genuine universality requires a thick conception of the presence of religion in world affairs.”⁶³

On such a basis, it becomes more plausible to regard “secularism” as itself operating functionally as a “faith” in parallel ways to what are traditionally understood as “religions”—though this will continue to be resisted by many. **Both religion as traditionally understood and “secularism”** must be acknowledged as species of comprehensive “faith” perspectives. Religion must be “named truthfully” in both senses.

The acknowledgment that perspectives in International Relations might presuppose some contested faith commitments is not to imply that scholars will be importing some alien, extraneous factor into academic practice. On the view being envisaged, such commitments are already active whether we recognize them or not. Scholarship is not a faith-free zone of neutral, rational understanding; it is shaped by contestable standpoints depending on commitments that cannot be conclusively validated by appealing to some supposed universally available and agreed upon canons of objective rationality. This does not mean such commitments are irrational or subrational.⁶⁴ It means that they inhabit the territory of prerational, fiduciary conviction. Faith commitments of some sort are necessary presuppositions of reasoned scholarship rather than an alternative to it. If so, then a necessary and neglected task in International Relations is to discern the powerful yet currently unrecognized faith orientation(s) already internally shaping the foundations of the discipline. Hurd demonstrates how an inability to acknowledge the contested character of the discipline’s secularist commitments actually leads to bad social science: it generates defective empirical analyses of contemporary global developments and so hampers the discipline’s predictive capacities.

Hanson notes that ignorance about the nature, persistence, and power of faith can also lead to bad policy: “Ignoring religion or reducing it to politics, economics, military action, or media influence leads to grievous errors in world affairs.”⁶⁵ It is worth remarking here that such errors have been committed by a wide range of regimes, most drastically by Communist or Fascist governments, themselves driven by militantly ideological atheist faiths, bent on driving traditional religious communities out of existence, but just as pervasively by European colonial governments in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. But various chapters in this book demonstrate that far-reaching misjudgments about the persistence and power of religious faith have also been evident in postwar U.S. policy toward radical Islamism, Israel, Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan, and Russia.

Acknowledging the formative power of faith commitments in International Relations would certainly imply a significant reevaluation of the discipline’s capacity to generate universally valid social-scientific

findings, but would not suggest any kind of retreat into intellectual tribalism. The academic anxieties about “faith-based scholarship” that Andrew Preston quite correctly identifies in his chapter on diplomatic history are not groundless. Observing that many leading historians of American religion happen to be religious themselves, he records the consequent professional worry that studying religious history will lapse into “partisanship and advocacy.” “Religion is thus mistakenly seen not as a topic or a theory, but as an agenda.”

It is important to emphasize, therefore, that what this book envisages as a “Christian perspective” in the field implies committed, but not tribal or self-serving, scholarship. It does not imply, for example, that Christian scholars will study religion to the exclusion of other causal factors (thereby reproducing just another reductionism), or that the faith commitments of the scholar, or the scholarly theories or interpretations shaped by them, are purely subjective assertions beyond rational critical scrutiny in the public forum and immune to widely available and verifiable documentary and quantitative evidence. What this book is calling a “Christian perspective” in International Relations is subject to no less demanding procedures of scholarly validation than the dominant “secularist perspective” identified by Hurd as the founding assumption of the modern discipline. Whether, like Hurd, we characterize all such worldviews as placed on a spectrum of *theological* politics or echo Kubálková’s call for a new international political *theology* is not the main point.⁶⁶ The point is simply to encourage honest intellectual self-disclosure: if all theorists are conditioned at some level and to some degree by underlying worldviews which they must take on faith, it can only assist mutual understanding to make these worldviews explicit.⁶⁷ Hanson quite legitimately insists that the project he is engaged in “remains political science, not theology or spirituality.”⁶⁸ Most readers of this book will certainly recognize the bulk of its contents as “political science,” even in chapters containing explicit theological references. Yet the conceptual structure of Hanson’s book evidently reflects (to the editors, at least) not only his outsider understanding of religion as an explanatory factor but also his insider appreciation of religion as an existential reality. His book suggests that a religiously informed approach to International Relations is not only a matter of bringing normative principles derived from faith to bear on the empirical reality of international relations but also a matter of reframing the apparatus of explanatory concepts by which sense is made of that empirical reality.

In the light of the foregoing, rather than pretending to a standpoint of illusory religious neutrality, this book proposes that insights guided by the tradition of Christian political thought can both be epistemologically permissible within International Relations and highly relevant for the practice of diplomacy today. It holds out the prospect of not only “faith-based diplomacy” but also “faith-based International Relations.”⁶⁹

The faith perspective of the book may at times appear to some readers rather “thin,” to use the term by which Paul Marshall describes the Christian perspective of his own chapter. Skeptical readers may find themselves asking whether a “Christian” perspective makes any discernible difference at all to the treatment of the topic at hand. As noted, it is not assumed that every contributor fully embraces the notion of faith-based scholarship as sketched above, and not all of them refer to it. The book’s Christian perspective comes out somewhat more “thickly” in the chapters by James Skillen, Daniel Philpott, John Bernbaum, and Daryl Charles, each of which allude to specifically Christian (“theological”) political themes. But the same perspective is often tacitly at work in helping set the priorities and frame the approaches of several other chapters.

The project of developing a “Christian perspective on International Relations” is an ambitious enterprise, and this book’s claims regarding its own contribution to the advancement of such a project are appropriately modest. Scott Thomas in chapter 9 and the editors in the conclusion reflect on what this and other attempts at such a project might tell us about the feasibility, design of, and prospects for “faith-based International Relations.”⁷⁰

GUIDE TO THE CHAPTERS

From different angles, the chapters in this book pose a variety of explicit or implicit questions to the four default secularist assumptions discussed above. They aim to help correct such assumptions by disclosing the causative roles and the explanatory and normative potentials of faith in a series of specific historical processes or contemporary contexts which are generating particular challenges to the concrete practice and academic study of U.S. foreign policy. While making no pretence at comprehensiveness, the book presents eight complementary studies, each shedding a much-needed beam of light on one or another dimension of these challenges.

The following provisional classification of the multiple distinct ways in which faith might potentially relate to U.S. foreign policy may help the

reader locate the detailed work of the following chapters against a larger canvas. The chapters where each theme is more fully engaged are noted in parentheses.

- Faith shapes American perceptions of its own history and its role in the world (“manifest destiny”) (1, 4).
- Faith shapes American perceptions of the contemporary world (“all nations desire freedom”; “communism must be contained”; “a balance of power must be maintained”) (2, 3, 5).
- Faith shapes the phenomena to which American foreign policy relates (e.g., Zionism as a key influence on Israeli strategic objectives) (3, 4).
- Faith shapes American perceptions of how foreign policy should be conducted (“diplomacy is a secular practice”; “we need to get more believers running the Pentagon”) (1).
- U.S. foreign policy practitioners take account of the role of faith in their diplomatic efforts (i.e., they recognize the phenomenon of “faith-based diplomacy” and support it where appropriate) (2, 7, 8).
- U.S. foreign policy practitioners draw on their own particular faith perspectives in their conduct of diplomacy (i.e., they practice “faith-based diplomacy” from personal religious conviction) (6, 7, 8).
- Faith shapes foreign perceptions of the United States (“vanguard of freedom”; “Great Satan”; “uncivilized”) (3, 5).
- Faith shapes foreign perceptions of how foreign policy/international relations should be conducted (“diplomacy is a secular practice”; “Islamic nations must win back territory lost to the infidel”) (5).
- Faith shapes scholarly perceptions of international relations and foreign policy (i.e., through the medium of dominant paradigms such as realism, liberalism, globalism, which themselves rest upon unarticulated faith positions) (1, 2).
- International relations/foreign policy scholars acknowledge the phenomenon of faith in the objects of their study (e.g., by analyzing the phenomena of “public religion,” “political Islam,” “faith-based diplomacy,” etc.) (all).
- International relations/foreign policy scholars consciously work out of a particular faith perspective (i.e., they practice “faith-based International Relations”) (4, 6, 7, 8).

The contents of the book address or reflect one or more of these specific types of influence. Part 1, "Taking Religion Seriously," lays out the central argument for reckoning seriously with religion in the understanding and practice of U.S. foreign policy. Its four chapters do so from complementary angles. The first chapter explores the persisting neglect of religion in the writing of the history of American foreign relations. Andrew Preston documents the way in which diplomatic historians have "utilized religion much as a diner would use a menu, selecting specific items that bring immediate but passing fulfillment," thereby failing to reckon with religion as a causative force deserving of historical explanation in its own terms. He expresses skepticism toward the methodological nervousness of many historians about attempting to identify causal connections between tangible historical outcomes and something as "diffuse, unwieldy and imprecise" as religion. Since diplomatic historians already increasingly employ "supposedly amorphous" explanatory categories such as gender and culture, there is no reason to single religion out as uniquely resistant to causal explanation. Indeed, religious notions have in fact already been tacitly at work within the new social and cultural history of American foreign relations. The field is now open to employ such notions more extensively and self-consciously. Using the techniques of the social historian, Preston suggests, "It will not be difficult for diplomatic historians to dust for the theological fingerprints on many episodes of U.S. foreign relations."

The focus of the next two chapters is on American myopia regarding the irreducibly religious nature of the forces the United States finds itself contending with abroad. In chapter 2, Thomas F. Farr explores U.S. policy on the international promotion of religious freedom as a particularly telling case study of how, even in this supposedly religion-sensitive policy track, American diplomacy has failed to grapple adequately with the full reality of religion as a context for, constraint on, and objective of foreign policy. Even here, religion has not been recognized as having any independent causative force on the political contexts in which religious freedom is being fought for around the world. The result has been the development of damaging blind spots,⁷¹ contributing to unexpected policy failures or missed opportunities, even in settings where, as in Afghanistan, defending religious freedom has been a declared priority of the administration. The chapter proposes a comprehensive rethinking of international religious freedom (IRF) policy as if religion really counted. American IRF policy, Farr argues, must move beyond mere "humanitarianism," and also beyond regarding religion merely as a

matter of “culture.” A fully integrated approach is required, calling for change at multiple points: to the operative understandings of religion and freedom, to strategic decision making and Congressional action, to the conduct of policy, and to diplomatic training and staffing.⁷²

In chapter 3, Paul Marshall addresses the greatest current global religious challenge to the United States: expansionist radical Islam. He argues that unless the essentially religious motivation behind radical global Islam is correctly identified, rather than explained away as caused by social, economic, or political factors, U.S. foreign policy will be misinformed, and thereby disabled, in its efforts to combat the threat it poses. The chapter aims to clarify the nature and goals of expansionist radical Islam, especially its terrorist wing. It explores the worldview, especially the understanding of history, held by expansionist Islamic radicals. Their central grievance, continually expressed, is the collapse of the Islamic world in the face of Christendom, a collapse explained by Muslims’ apostasy from Islam and which can be reversed only by returning to their version of Islam. Many members of the U.S. foreign policy community, however, persist in reading radical Islamic movements through a dated Enlightenment lens that produces a narrative largely shaped by misleading categories of first world/third world, globalization, ethnicity, U.S. foreign policy, and Middle Eastern nationalism. To the degree that U.S. views of the nature and goals of radical Islam are shaped by these categories, American actors are consistently misinformed about the nature of the conflicts they face.⁷³ The chapter operates on the assumption that people’s religious beliefs motivate at least in part what they do, that such beliefs are part of the explanation for their actions, and that if present conflicts are to be properly understood, these beliefs must be taken seriously. It does not assume that one needs to be a Christian to believe these things, but it does presume that Christians think their own beliefs have some causative force in their lives and so are more open to thinking the same about others than is the average secularist.

In chapter 4, James W. Skillen offers a further case study of how religion shapes the objects of U.S. foreign policy, but adds a new dimension by disclosing the religious beliefs that shape America’s own perceptions of these objects. It casts new light on how American Middle East policy actually reflects divergent faith-driven attitudes toward Israel, all of them explicable as variants of “Zionism.”⁷⁴ The thesis of the chapter is that three different but related Zionisms function as religiously deep ideologies regarding the relation of the United States to the modern state of Israel and that these Zionisms are both biblically and politically

problematic. The first of the three modern forms of Zionism appears in America's identification of itself as God's new Israel, destined to lead the way to democracy, freedom, prosperity, and peace for the whole world. A second form of modern Zionism arose among European Jews in the nineteenth century and had an enormous influence in defining and directing the modern state of Israel. The third mode of Zionism is Christian Zionism, which interprets the Bible as prophesying a return of Jews to Israel as one of the last developments in history before Christ returns to earth to bring history to a close. All three Zionisms reach back to the earliest biblical texts that tell of God's electing of Israel as his chosen people and their inheriting of the promised land. Then, depending on their interpretations of the Bible, the three Zionisms morph into forms of new-Israelitism, presenting broad historical, political-religious metanarratives. The chapter also reveals, and critiques against a biblical theology, the roots of one of these forms of Zionism in America's own perception of itself as a "chosen nation" with a religious mission. It shows that, from a different Christian point of view, the three Zionisms misinterpret the Bible and lead to the advocacy of foreign and defense policies that can be highly unjust.

Part 2, "Enlisting Religion Diplomatically," presents four diverse case studies illustrating how a fuller grasp of the way faith perspectives shape the context and motivations of U.S. foreign policy will enable more effective and more responsible policymaking. The theme of this part is already anticipated in the discussion of religious freedom policy in chapter 2 but is articulated here in more detail. The case studies in this part engage with four of the major global reference points of U.S. foreign policy: Europe, Russia, humanitarian intervention, and post-conflict situations.

In chapter 5, Thomas Albert Howard approaches U.S.-Europe relations from a novel historical perspective. He brings to light influential but typically unrecognized religious dynamics informing and sustaining negative contemporary European perceptions of the United States. More specifically, the chapter examines historical reasons that might predispose Europeans, at least Western Europeans, to look at American religious life with great skepticism and condescension. It argues that students of European anti-Americanism often concentrate on political, economic, and social differences that divide the two continents, when in fact a substrate of prior cultural and religious factors should also be taken into consideration. It also argues that the accretion of perceptions of difference in the cultural-religious sphere creates a prism of interpretation that informs judgments about numerous contemporary issues. The essay draws material from a number of influential nineteenth- and early twentieth-century

European thinkers (including Jacob Burckhardt, Alexis de Tocqueville, Philip Schaff, Frances Trollope, August Comte, Hegel, Marx, and Heidegger) who sought to “explain” the United States to European audiences. The essay concludes with the observation that policy shifts alone will not necessarily ameliorate long-standing currents of anti-Americanism abroad; much deeper factors of cultural perception and divergence also must be understood and addressed if such an attitude is to be moderated. American policy toward Europe should take more account of these submerged, religiously informed European (mis)perceptions, and work to correct them where it can.

In chapter 6, John Bernbaum addresses one of the multiple entry points for U.S. policy toward Russia, one where religious factors will turn out to play a formative role. He considers a momentous strategic mistake in U.S. policy toward Russia: its failure to recognize the far-reaching role of moral, cultural, and religious factors in the collapse of the Soviet Union and in subsequent efforts toward post-Soviet reconstruction. The chapter charts the studied indifference to religion that marked standard foreign policy analyses of the U.S.S.R. prior to 1989—analyses contributing to a serious misdiagnosis of the U.S.S.R.’s future prospects. It then reports on how this misdiagnosis continued to shape U.S. policy after 1989, issuing in a narrow preoccupation with political and economic factors to the neglect of the crucial role of cultural factors and institutions in laying necessary foundations for post-Soviet reconstruction. The chapter proposes that religious institutions and faith-based NGOs are uniquely well placed to perform a vital role in helping nurture the moral and cultural preconditions for successful democratization and economic development. The argument is that if the United States wants to contribute effectively to sustainable reform in Russia, it should fundamentally review how its diplomatic efforts engage with religion and religious organizations. Core religious principles of humility, mercy, and justice are invoked as guides for future U.S. policy. If the United States wants to assist sustainable reform in Russia, it should review carefully how it might lend support to faith-based NGOs.

In chapter 7, J. Daryl Charles explores a critical challenge that, absent a lurch back into isolationism,⁷⁵ will increasingly confront U.S. foreign policy in the immediate future: the ethics of humanitarian intervention in a post-Cold War era. Undergirding this discussion are two assumptions in the contemporary context. First, the geopolitical challenges since 1990 increase rather than diminish the necessity of morally qualifying coercive force, insofar as intervention that falls short of formal war may

well require the assistance of military force to safeguard, accompany, or monitor the requirements of justice in unjust or oppressive international contexts. Second, the fact that the United States and Western societies are characterized by a “post-consensus” cultural climate makes it inordinately difficult to make moral judgments of any kind, much less to identify and counter social-political evil in the sphere of international relations. The discussion of humanitarian intervention in this chapter is anchored in classic just-war moral reasoning, which, while principally nurtured in the Christian moral tradition, represents a consensual, time-tested tradition of moral reflection on the qualification of coercive force that transcends both the cultural moment and diversity of cultures. Following a discussion of contemporary geopolitical as well as moral challenges that confront us, the essay surveys more recent developments in both the long-standing political debate regarding intervention over against sovereignty and the humanitarian debate concerning requisite strategies of intervention before drawing conclusions pertinent to responsible statecraft. To intervene or not to intervene? This should always be a difficult question, given (a) the need to morally qualify the use of intervening force, (b) the bewildering variety of contemporary geopolitical crises, and (c) the fact that domestic brutality, civil war, genocide, political tyranny, enslavement, and religious/ethnic persecution are part of the world in which we live. The chapter argues that the task before us, in crafting wise policy, is neither to be “interventionist” nor “noninterventionist”; rather, it is to discriminate morally so that we might engage in *ius ad interventionem* when and where human need and our shared humanity call for it. The moral rationale of intervention, as Grotius observed, is that if the wrong being inflicted on a population is obvious, wholly unwarranted, and patently unjust, then the right to redress cannot be precluded.

In chapter 8, Daniel Philpott presents an explicitly Christian ethic of peacebuilding inspired by the notion of reconciliation as a possible model for a post-Cold War U.S. foreign policy capable of contributing more effectively to situations of post-conflict transition.⁷⁶ Since the end of the Cold War, U.S. foreign policy has encountered its thorniest troubles in its efforts to build peace in societies sundered by conflict—a dilemma far more difficult than military victory itself. Yet Christian ethicists, including just-war theorists, have offered no systematic ethic for how to address past political evils in order to establish a more just future regime. Holding promise for such an ethic is a concept that comes from the crux of the Christian tradition and now resurfaces in political transitions and their

surrounding conversations all over the globe: reconciliation. The chapter seeks to outline the central features of an ethic of reconciliation and offers some insights for its application to U.S. foreign policy. Theologically, though it echoes the just-war tradition in drawing from natural law, its central source is the Christian notion of God's own atoning action, from which it derives a restorative ethic whose key virtue is mercy, classically understood as the will to assist one in grief or distress. It is then translated into six practices for political orders: acknowledgment, reparations, restorative punishment, apology, forgiveness, and building just institutions. What results is a conception of justice that includes but exceeds traditional concerns of justice like accountability and the restoration of human rights. Were it incorporated into American foreign policy, reconciliation would result in a far more restorative approach toward countries whose political future America tries to influence and would encourage greater cooperation between the U.S. government and other organizations who themselves proffer a restorative approach.

In his response, "Reading Religion Rightly" (chapter 9), Scott Thomas seeks to situate the contributions of the preceding chapters within two broader contexts. The first is that of the notable changes underway in International Relations as a result of the "return of religion" within the discipline. Thomas itemizes five significant achievements resulting from this return, but also sounds an epistemologically skeptical note regarding the continuing limitations of the supposed new "knowledge" of religion now available. The second context is explicitly theological. Thomas revisits the neglected radical Christian critique of contemporary Western civilization propounded half a century ago by the leading figure in the English School of International Relations, Martin Wight. Thomas reviews Wight's disturbing, countercultural analysis of the secularized modern West as the "apostasy of Christendom" and asks whether it has any lessons to teach scholars and practitioners today. If modern Western nation-states are the outcome of religious "apostasy," can Christians in these fields simply pursue business as usual?

In the conclusion, we identify two distinctive contributions emerging from the preceding chapters: first, their summons to scholars and practitioners in international relations and foreign policy to come to grips with what we call the "pastness," the "thickness," and the "potency" of religion; and second, the pointers in these chapters toward what a "Christian perspective" in these fields might look like.