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**Andrew Preston. *Sword of the Spirit, Shield of Faith: Religion in American War and Diplomacy.*** New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2012. ISBN: 978-1-4000-4323-1 (hardcover, \$37.50).

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Introduction by Andrew J. Rotter, Colgate University

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The appearance of Andrew Preston's *Sword of the Spirit, Shield of Faith*, in all its 600-plus pages of (text) splendor, is cause for celebration, as I think all four of the following reviews suggest. The reviewers find different things to admire in the book. For Bruce Kuklick, it is "the vast archive of material" that future historians "must confront." Malcolm Magee writes that the book "catches the complexity and nuance of American religion in a way that more determinative approaches fail to do." Elizabeth Edwards Spalding praises *Sword of the Spirit's* scope and ambition and argues that Preston "convincingly demonstrates that [religion] is an essential piece which has often been missed in telling the story" of U.S. foreign relations, and Ira Chernus, whose enthusiasm for the book extends even to what he regards as its deficiencies, credits Preston for his mastery of two major fields of history, for his ability to write a "highly readable narrative," and perhaps most of all for his having written a deep and serious study of the subject that is likely to inspire historians to explore in depth some of the many issues he raises.

All generally acknowledge that Preston is doing something new here. Religious historians have tended to ignore U.S. foreign relations. Foreign relations historians, for whom I can more confidently speak, have returned the favor, as Preston notes; religion has been a third rail for students of American wars and diplomacy. Preston has speculated elsewhere as to why this has been so. First, the subject of religion might seem to foreign relations specialists to be "too partisan or controversial," especially given the uses to which evangelical Christians have sometimes put U.S. history. Second, secular historians—which is to say most of us, including Preston—have been reluctant to assume a conjuncture between the sacred and the secular, or the evidently mystical and rational, for fear either of losing our empirical grounding or of getting accused of mixing together two things that secular Americans profess stoutly to believe must remain separate. Finally, there is "empirical and methodological difficulty" in writing about the ways in which religion might have influenced U.S. policy in war and peace. How does one do research in archives that do not contain files marked, for example: "President Taft: Religion"? More pointedly, how can one know when a profession of religious belief determined, or even affected, a complicated foreign policy initiative? There are no statistics concerning the impact of policymakers' religious beliefs: one can count tons of steel or cotton exported, or votes in the Senate, but not the fervor of a man's faith.<sup>1</sup>

The argument of *Sword of the Spirit* is not perhaps entirely new. As Preston acknowledges, a handful of scholars have ventured into the thicket at the junction between religious and foreign relations history, and some have emerged having survived the excursion. Leo Ribuffo has been there longest, but he has been joined in recent years by others. These might be divided roughly into case studiers and synthesizers. In the first category are historians who have written on the religious beliefs of eminent American policymakers (Malcolm Magee on Woodrow Wilson, Elizabeth Edwards Spalding on Harry S. Truman, Ira

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<sup>1</sup> Andrew Preston, "Bridging the Gap between the Sacred and Secular in the History of American Foreign Relations," *Diplomatic History* 30 (November 2006): 783-812.

Chernus on Dwight Eisenhower, Gary Scott Smith on a number of presidents) and those who have explored religious aspects of U.S. relations with a nation or region—Seth Jacobs on Vietnam during the 1950s and early 1960s, Melani McAlister on the Middle East, and Andrew Rotter on South Asia during the Cold War. Among the synthesizers are Walter McDougall, William Inboden, and Ernest Tuveson. All have contributed something to the discussion. None, as Kuklick notes, has written the full narrative of U.S. foreign relations history with respect to religion. If not quite the only alpha, then, *Sword of the Spirit* is unquestionably the omega of such scholarship.<sup>2</sup>

The good questions and criticisms made by the four reviewers are Preston's to address, not mine. I will make one exception, for Bruce Kuklick's concerns go to the heart of Preston's enterprise, and thus invite wider consideration. Kuklick argues that *Sword of the Spirit* lacks "interpretive comment." Without interest in ideology, without recourse to the work of Karl Marx and Max Weber, Preston, says Kulick, cannot demonstrate that religion had a "causal role" in the formation of U.S. "statecraft."<sup>3</sup> It is the case, as Preston shows throughout his book, that advocates and opponents of U.S. expansion—nationalists and social reformers and isolationists and unapologetic imperialists alike—used religious rhetoric and devised faith-based justifications for their divergent positions. If nearly everyone who contributed to the discourse of U.S. foreign relations was Christian, and said so, and if people expressed a diversity of views about U.S. foreign relations, to what extent is religion a meaningful, parsimonious explanation for any foreign policy decision or war in particular?

There are several answers to that, either implicit or (often) explicit in the book. Leave aside the possibility that Preston and Kuklick have different units of analysis, Preston's being the full fabric of U.S. foreign relations (not policies, and thus not only governmental) and Kuklick's "statecraft," in which government involvement is assumed. Start instead with

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<sup>2</sup> Leo P. Ribuffo, *The Old Christian Right: The Protestant Far Right from the Great Depression to the Cold War* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1983); idem, "Religion in the History of U.S. Foreign Policy," in Elliott Abrams, ed., *The Influence of Faith: Religious Groups and U.S. Foreign Policy* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2001), 1-27; Malcolm Magee, *What the World Should Be: Woodrow Wilson and the Crafting of a Faith-Based Foreign Policy* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2008); Elizabeth Edwards Spalding, *The First Cold Warrior: Harry Truman, Containment, and the Remaking of Liberal Internationalism* (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 2006); Ira Chernus, *General Eisenhower: Ideology and Rhetoric* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2002); Gary Scott Smith, *Faith and the Presidency: From George Washington to George W. Bush* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006); Seth Jacobs, *America's Miracle Man in Vietnam: Ngo Dinh Diem, Religion, Race, and U.S. Intervention in Southeast Asia, 1950-1957* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004); Melani McAlister, *Epic Encounters: Culture, Media, and U.S. Interests in the Middle East since 1945*, rev. edition (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005); Andrew J. Rotter, *Comrades at Odds: The United States and India, 1947-1964* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2000); Walter A. McDougall, *Promised Land, Crusader State: The American Encounter with the World since 1776* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1997); William Inboden, *Religion and American Foreign Policy, 1945-1960: The Soul of Containment* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008); Ernest Lee Tuveson, *Redeemer Nation: The Idea of America's Millennial Role* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968).

<sup>3</sup> Kuklick claims that Weber does not appear in the index and that Marx is cited only once. Actually, Weber is mentioned, and while there is only one entry for Marx there are six entries for Marxism.

Spalding's point that Christianity was fundamental to the formation of American nationalism, which in turn "fostered a powerful sense of internationalism." Ambition, arrogance, the desire to do good, the desire to conquer or convert others—these were at bottom religious impulses, and if not unique then nevertheless peculiar to Americans. Second, Preston's analysis requires that we take language seriously, in this case religious language. It was hard not just for Preston and his Yale seminar students, in the days after 9/11, to hear the talk of crusade and jihad; it was hard for all of us, I think. This language was viscerally, emotionally, how the conflict was represented, and it made war scarily easier to contemplate. Preston avoids jargon, but other commentators would say that this language of religious extremes *naturalized* conflict. I am not suggesting, nor I think is Preston, that we must assume that men and women are being "truthful" when they claim the influence of religion, and we need not, and cannot, demand a litmus test of the sincerity or authenticity of their claims. Yet I would not go as far as Ira Chernus, who urges us to avoid assuming anything at all about the inner lives of our subjects. There is an honorable history in the discipline of connecting word to deed, sensibility to behavior; historians may not all be interested in psychology, but it is surely interested in them. Moreover, it strikes me that, if one's subject claims, as William McKinley, Woodrow Wilson, and Franklin Roosevelt did, that he was prompted to act by the word of his God or the dictates of his faith, it would be condescending to dismiss his claim out of hand. After all, if McKinley had said aloud that he wanted the Philippines for entrée to the China market, Kuklick would presumably treat this as an utterance of rare candor rather than as a smokescreen released to obscure what he really had in mind.

There is one more answer to Kuklick's criticism. Preston argues that religion could matter more in the development of a U.S. foreign relations doctrine because between 1815 and 1941 Americans were untroubled by existential doubts about their security. Thus, he writes, "the religious impulse... had little to block its path to the White House, Foggy Bottom, and Capitol Hill" (11). That is an interesting argument. I would put things somewhat differently: Americans developed a strategic culture that included a powerful religious element, for all the reasons Preston says. While Kuklick longs for Marx and Weber in Preston's bibliography, I would have liked to see some Clifford Geertz (whom Chernus cites). Religion seems to me one very strong and supple filament in the web of meaning that constituted American strategic culture. Its rhetorical persistence is no smokescreen but an honest expression of something that has mattered to U.S. policymakers down through the centuries. It was, of course, the dominant strand in the culture-driven worldviews of missionaries, clergy, and theologians. When these people spoke and wrote and proposed and *acted* in the world, they did so in part, sometimes in good part, because of their religious beliefs. I find it impossible to think otherwise after reading Andrew Preston's superb book.

### **Participants:**

**Andrew J. Rotter** is Charles A. Dana Professor in the Department of History, Colgate University. He is author of *Comrades at Odds: The United States and India, 1947-1964* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2000, and most recently, of *Hiroshima: The World's Bomb*

(Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2008). He is currently at work on a project concerning British India, the American Philippines, and the five senses.

**Ira Chernus** is Professor of Religious Studies at the University of Colorado at Boulder. He is author of *Apocalypse Management: Eisenhower and the Discourse of National Insecurity*, *Monsters to Destroy: The Neoconservative War on Terror and Sin*, and *American Nonviolence: The History of an Idea*, among other works. He is currently working on a book on the foreign policy discourse of Franklin D. Roosevelt. He blogs at [www.MythicAmerica.us](http://www.MythicAmerica.us), and his "MythicAmerica: Essays" are online at <http://mythicamerica.wordpress.com>.

**Bruce Kuklick**, a historian at the University of Pennsylvania, is co-authoring with Emmanuel Gerard a study of the assassination of Patrice Lumumba in the Congo in 1961.

**Malcolm Magee** has a Ph.D. in the history of international relations. He is a Visiting Faculty Member in the Department of History and Religious Studies at Michigan State University. He is the Director of The Institute for the Study of Christianity and Culture. His fields include international relations history, American religious history, progressive era politics and 19th century political and religious thought. He has written, *What the World Should Be: Woodrow Wilson and the Crafting of a Faith Based Foreign Policy* (Baylor University Press, 2008). Currently he is working on religion and the Great War and a novel.

**Elizabeth Spalding** is Associate Professor of Government at Claremont McKenna College, where she teaches U.S. foreign policy and American government and directs CMC's Washington Program. The author of *The First Cold Warrior: Harry Truman, Containment, and the Remaking of Liberal Internationalism*, she has contributed to several volumes on the presidency and U.S. foreign policy and written for the *Wilson Quarterly*, *Comparative Political Studies*, *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, and the *Claremont Review of Books*. Her current research interests include the war on terrorism, the beginnings and endings of the Cold War, religion and U.S. foreign policy, and the Wilsonian influence on modern American foreign policy. Her PhD in government and foreign affairs is from the University of Virginia.

Even before I opened this book, I knew it was something special. A book on the history of U.S. foreign affairs praised in advance by two outstanding historians of American religion (Randall Balmer and Mark Noll) and a world-famous journalistic authority on religion (Karen Armstrong)?<sup>1</sup> Nothing like this has ever appeared before. My hopes were high, and I was not disappointed. The author has read and absorbed a vast amount of primary sources and scholarly literature. He has thought deeply and intelligently about a broad range of issues, and he has synthesized his findings in stimulating ways.

The scope is immense; the book can serve as a useful introduction to both the history of religion and the history of foreign affairs in the United States from colonial times to the present. To have mastered either field is an impressive achievement. To have mastered both and intertwined them so seamlessly in such a graceful narrative is far more impressive. This would be a praiseworthy book if it were the capstone of a scholar's long career. Coming from the hand of such a relatively young scholar, it is nothing short of amazing.

One of the virtues of this book is its smooth, unified, and thus highly-readable narrative, which will make it appealing for many students and general readers as well as scholars to learn more about the role of religion in U.S. foreign affairs. To tell such an inviting story, though, Preston must understandably omit discussion of the many and sometimes bitter scholarly controversies surrounding issues on which he offers his own single judgment. Thus, as in any unified narrative, we get an authorial voice that sounds omniscient and creates the impression of unitary truth. (Perhaps that's appropriate in a history so saturated with references to the Bible.)

This is the typical path for any new field of scholarship study. After a number of specialized studies someone with great talent and energy comes along and creates the first synthesis, which inevitably invites criticism and dispute, leading to a richer second round of specialized studies. Preston's book offers us an immensely valuable springboard and reservoir of raw material for the critical give-and-take need to make any field of study grow and flourish. I hope that he, and many others, will continue the process with books and articles that weigh the merits of competing viewpoints on any given issue and offer detailed arguments for supporting one view above others.

The highest praise I can offer this book is that it raised so many questions in my mind that deserve further study. Here I can list just a few examples:

In the colonial era, what role did religion play apart from times of war, which are Preston's focus. For example, how did religion interpret and spur expansion into 'the wilderness'?

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<sup>1</sup> [http://www.amazon.com/Sword-Spirit-Shield-Faith-Diplomacy/dp/1400043239/ref=sr\\_1\\_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1344266746&sr=1-1](http://www.amazon.com/Sword-Spirit-Shield-Faith-Diplomacy/dp/1400043239/ref=sr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1344266746&sr=1-1). The Armstrong and Noll endorsements appear on the back cover of the book.

How did religious interpretations create ambivalence about ‘wilderness’ and the native people who lived there, and what were the effects of that ambivalence? In particular, how did apocalypticism offer a model that could legitimate destruction of the ‘wild’ people while validating wilderness as a place of moral purity, a Kingdom of God on earth?

In nineteenth-century nationalist discourse, were Calvinist notions of predestination as central as Preston suggests? Was predestination virtually synonymous with providentialism, as he also sometimes suggests? Or, as Calvinist theology lost influence, did providentialism take on meanings independent of any strictly Calvinist context?

Can the claims of humanitarian motives, heard from supporters of the war against Spain in 1898, be taken at face value, as Preston seems to do? Or were those motives mixed with, perhaps overridden by, economic motives?

In 1917, did so many liberals support war mainly from religious idealism, as Preston suggests, or did other factors play a central role -- perhaps, for example, peer pressure and a fear of appearing unpatriotic, which Jane Addams vividly recalled in her memories of that time.<sup>2</sup> Did the idealism of pro-war liberals turn into an absolutism that led them away from rational compromise toward insistence on an apocalyptic kind of total victory? What was the role of apocalypticism in the World War I discourse of Wilson and others, when they preached that victory would bring a utopian world without war, while defeat would spell the end of civilization?

In summarizing the 1930s, Preston tends to fuse together the different stages in the development of views on war and peace. These need to be clarified because change happened so fast in latter half of that decade. A closer look might reveal whether the humanitarian intervention tradition played as central a role as Preston claims in moving so many people from a firmly pro-peace stance to a willingness to consider intervention in the Second World War. And how can we know whether religious language really played a decisive role in this shift?

What role did economic globalism and ideologies of “free trade” play in shaping the FDR administration’s foreign policies? How did those factors interact with religious and other factors in the growing public support for FDR’s policies? Is there a synthesis of religious and economic views here that goes back to the Founding Fathers’ embrace of Physiocratic ideas?

At the end of World War II, was American public support for the United Nations driven primarily by religiously-based hope for a better world? Or was it, as Robert Divine argued

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<sup>2</sup> Jane Addams, “Personal Reactions During War,” in Staughton and Alice Lynds, eds., *Nonviolence in America* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1995).

long ago,<sup>3</sup> driven primarily by desire for an institution that would keep the United States safe from war and less entangled in foreign affairs in the future?

Preston has little to say about apocalypticism until the Cold War era (and perhaps not enough even there). How might the Cold War era look different if we viewed it as a direct descendant of the apocalyptic traditions so evident in earlier eras?

How can we best explain the rise of a more conservative and politicized religion in the late 1970s? Was religion really the crucial variable? Or was it the questioning of nationalistic narratives sparked largely by the failure of the American project in Vietnam, along with the many other challenges to tradition that marked the late 1960s? Were the turn to conservative religion and the resurgence of cold war fervor largely ways to create a sense of cultural continuity in the face of such challenges?

The U.S.-led invasion of Iraq in 1991 was “intensely controversial,” Preston writes, “especially among religious groups” (606). As evidence he cites the Catholic and the National Council of Churches urging George H.W. Bush to seek a peaceful solution. But there was actually little public protest at the time. Should critical gestures from the leadership of big national clergy groups be accepted as evidence of widespread controversy? Didn’t lay religious people support the invasion as strongly as the non-religious?

The last question raises an issue that recurs throughout the book. Preston occasionally points out that clergy have tended to be more liberal and peace-oriented than the laity, especially in the twentieth century. But he also tends to focus on clergy and, especially in treating the twentieth century, on clergy who were leaders of large organizations. Perhaps such a bias toward institutions is inevitable in writing history, since institutions leave palpable records for researchers, while the views of the laity at large are so difficult to pin down. But isn’t there a danger here that the impact of large religious organizations will be taken (or mistaken) as representing the impact of religion as a whole?

There are other issues running throughout the book that raise important questions. For example, what best explains the fundamentalists’ (and perhaps all Protestant evangelicals’) continuing penchant for isolationism? Is it their fear of state intervention in private religious life, as Preston seems to suggest (179, 288, 402- 403)? Or were other factors just as important, or perhaps more important? What role, for example, is played by a Bible-immersed culture’s tendency to view international relations through the lens of the biblical narrative: a single chosen people surrounded by a hostile world yet protected by the one omnipotent God who controls all of history? And how can scholars explain why the South, the region where fundamentalism has flourished most, has also tended away from isolationism. Does this suggest that economic factors may be more determinative than

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<sup>3</sup> Robert Divine, *Second Chance: The Triumph of Internationalism in America During World War II* (New York: Atheneum, 1971), 83.

religious ones in this issue? What other, non-religious, factors are involved in any given case?

This suggests another question about a large theme: Is there a direct causal link (as Preston suggests) between the North's post hoc interpretation of the Civil War as a humanitarian intervention really and later instances of state violence (211, 223, 231)? If so, how can we define that link most precisely? Moreover, though Preston emphasizes humanitarian intervention as liberals' motive for supporting the Spanish-American and World War I, by the time he reaches World War II ecumenism is moving toward center stage, and in the Cold War he portrays it as central. Did such a shift really take place? If so, why? Are humanitarianism and ecumenism directly connected? If so, how?

The respective roles of humanitarianism and ecumenism offer good examples of yet another set of questions that are raised throughout Preston's book, perhaps the most crucial of all: questions of methodology.

Preston argues that William McKinley and Woodrow Wilson both had sincere religious faith and beliefs, which were the mainspring of their decisions to go to war; they hoped to serve the interests of humanity. He also tells us that many religious people endorsed those decisions for the same genuine, faith-based humanitarian reasons. The methodological issue here is about the question of sincerity.

There is a time-honored tradition, and an understandable temptation, to make claims about historical actors' religious experiences, inner attitudes, and 'real' beliefs. Preston continues this tradition, telling us that a number of presidents and other policymakers were 'sincerely religious,' had a 'deep faith,' held 'genuine religious beliefs,' and the like. He often goes on to elucidate particular elements of that purportedly 'real' faith or belief.

Scholars of religion rarely make such claims or use such language any more. The main reason, I think, is that religious studies wants to be respected as a fully valid academic enterprise. Therefore, like any other academic discipline, it must restrict itself to logically persuasive arguments based on empirical evidence. When it comes to experience, personal attitude, or 'real' belief, it is in principle not possible to gather empirical evidence. We have no access to brains or central nervous systems -- nor to minds or souls, for those who find such terms meaningful -- where experiences, attitudes, and 'real' beliefs presumably exist. We have access only to the words people utter and write, the actions they perform, and the historical contexts in which these occurred. So we must restrict ourselves to that kind of evidence. Historians of foreign affairs are surely bound by the same methodological stricture.

If the temptation to make claims about historical actors' religious experiences, attitudes, and 'real beliefs' proves irresistible, we should at least make it clear to the reader that we are offering nothing but educated guesswork. Given the bias that inevitably creeps into such guesses in the realm of religion, we should tell the reader as much as we know about our own biases at the outset. And we should recognize that our best guesses can never be verified nor falsified. So we will always be open to the philosophers' charge that our

utterances are ultimately meaningless. From the viewpoint of a scholar of religion, it hardly makes sense for historians to argue about such issues.

We should also be aware of the implications of such unprovable claims. For many readers, they will give an air of legitimacy (however intentionally or unintentionally) to the policies enacted by the supposedly pious leaders. The same claims will lead other readers to criticize the policies of purportedly pious leaders because they apparently violated the separation of church and state. In both cases, it will be harder for readers to assess the policies independent of the overtones created by claims of sincere religious faith.

Those claims may also reinforce the widely-used but rather contentious and confused notion of an American 'civil religion.' Preston offers his own definition of the term but then uses it sparingly in his text. Yet any reference to American "civil religion" almost inevitably (though often unintentionally) carries tendentious ideological baggage, in light of the history of that term and the dominant role of Robert Bellah in that history. Indeed I have argued elsewhere<sup>4</sup> that the confusion and ideological bias inherent in the term should lead us to abandon it altogether.

Claims about the supposed sincere faith of American presidents and other leaders work in quite the opposite direction. The idea of an American 'civil religion' bolstered by leaders' genuine religious piety is inevitably politically loaded; it will be especially dear to today's conservatives. And they will be happy to learn that, in Preston's telling, the 1960s were an aberrant time when presidents had little if any 'genuine faith' -- precisely what many conservatives would expect, since they remember the '60s as a time when the religious underpinnings of the nation were severely threatened by secular humanism.

Given all these caveats, it is my view that we will be better historians if we avoid all claims about inner experiences, attitudes, and beliefs, and restrict ourselves to claims that can be verified by the words and actions that our research reveals.

I would also offer a word of caution about another large methodological question: To what extent, and in what ways, do religious factors cause historical events and processes at all? In some cases, Preston makes it seem that religion is indeed the primary causal engine of specific historical episodes: for example, the war with Mexico (chapter 8), the war with Spain (157, 212), Wilson's post-World War I peace plan (280), Harry Truman's embrace of cold war ideology (412) and support for Zionism (439). This is understandable and perhaps appropriate. He is making a plea for the serious study of a hitherto neglected dimension of history; naturally he puts the spotlight almost entirely on that dimension.

Yet this can too easily leave the reader with a misleading impression about the causal power of religion. Occasionally Preston recognizes that pitfall and offers the reader a warning that non-religious factors were certainly involved too. His penultimate sentence

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<sup>4</sup> Ira Chernus, "Civil Religion," in Phillip Goff, ed. *The Blackwell Companion to Religion in America* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell Publishing, 2010).

asserts that religion “may not always determine the direction of policy” (613). Historians may wonder whether there is a single important case where religion did determine policy. But Preston’s cautionary notes are often so brief that they fail to erase the impression of the primacy of religion. So, for example, after a lengthy discussion of the impact of the Great Awakening and other eighteenth- century religious currents on the American Revolution, he relegates to a footnote (627) the all-important point that this is a matter of long-standing controversy among historians of the Revolution. Perhaps unintentionally, this can easily leave the reader assuming that the religious factors were as all-important as the most fervent adherents of that position claim.

Of course the question of religion’s role in causing the Revolution, or any other historical happening, will never be resolved, since there is no objective truth about it to be ascertained. Still, these are debates worth continuing, because every new take on an issue can shed new light on, or bring out new interpretations of many aspects of the era, including some that may seem at first glance to have nothing to do with religion.

Yet there is just as much value -- perhaps more value -- in an alternative approach that that elides debates about causation and claims only that religious factors and other factors are interwoven in the tapestry of history, but that there is no way to assign primacy to one set of causes above others. So, for example, it may be more accurate to say that religious ecumenism was correlated with liberal internationalism -- that devotees of ecumenism had an elective affinity for internationalism -- and to explain in detail why that was (and perhaps still is) so, while refraining from making any causal claims for ecumenism. It may be more precise to say that some people are likely, for psychological and cultural reasons, to pursue cooperative approaches in every aspect of their lives; those who are involved in both religion and foreign affairs will naturally become both ecumenists and internationalists, but neither of those paths is the ‘cause’ of the other. If we put the focus on correlation, the central question becomes not ‘What role did religion play?’ but ‘How did religious factors interact with other factors in an individual or a group’s life?’

This methodological approach raises a concomitant question: How can the methodologies of academic religious studies interact most fruitfully with the methodologies of the discipline of history -- in this case, the history of U.S. foreign affairs? This is the question that has driven much of my own work. The answer that works best for me is to think of religion not in any institutional or conventionally-defined way, but as the anthropologist Clifford Geertz defined the term.

Geertz exercised such great influence over the study of religion because he offered a flexible model of religion that can be adapted to such a wide variety of phenomena. In Geertz’ definition, whenever we look at the taken-for-granted fundamentals of an individual or a group’s worldview and ethos, the mutually reinforcing interplay between the two, and the acting out of that interplay in cultural performance, we are looking at religion.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Clifford Geertz, “Religion as a Cultural System,” in Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1977).

Some scholars, myself included, call the words used to express worldview and ethos 'myths.' I use the term with some trepidation because in religious studies *myth* is such a contentious term, used in so many different ways that some scholars have abandoned it altogether. But I can find no better word to sum up the emotionally powerful ways an individual or a group expresses its most basic, taken-for-granted assumptions. Myth is what 'everyone knows' and is therefore not subject to interrogation, much less debate. It is rather the foundation for debate, the set of premises shared by all sides.

In the Geertzian sense, words that seem to be about politics or economics or anything else can be just as mythic as words about God or faith or spiritual life. Thus myth serves as a useful methodological lens or tool for seeing the interplay of all kinds of correlated factors working at their deepest, because least visible, level.

Preston writes that religion "has provided a shared language with which all Americans can negotiate the terms of their engagement with the rest of the world" (606). He might well have made this the main thesis of the book, since it's a claim he is making implicitly on nearly every page. Stated so starkly, though, it can be misleading. Language provided by religion has normally been widely shared and policy-relevant only when it has been combined with, and deployed in the broader context of, other language drawn from other realms of life. That process of combination and that broader context have created the mythic dimension of foreign affairs, which is, more accurately, the shared language of foreign affairs. Myth holds a crucial key to understanding the history of foreign affairs, a key that religious language alone usually cannot provide. If religious language has sometimes been the key factor, that must be established on a case-by-case basis, not assumed a priori -- yet another question for further research that is bound to yield stimulating results.

Let me offer an example of how this mythic approach can illuminate foreign policy, drawn from my work on the Dwight Eisenhower and George W. Bush administrations.

In his discussion of the late 1970s, Preston quotes a Moral Majority official who acknowledged that the "communist threat" was a perception; like all myth, its truth had no necessary relation to empirical reality: "Now whether it was real or not, it was perceived as real by fundamentalist people. We felt a threat. We really had a fortress mentality" (579). The neoconservatives who emerged in that era, but had their strongest influence on policy in the Bush administration, shared the same fortress mentality. So did the earliest American cold warriors. The 'national security state' was founded on, and required by, this premise of constant insecurity; it might better be called the 'national insecurity state.'

An underlying premise of this myth was stated explicitly in NSC-68: The world had to move toward some kind of order, on somebody's terms<sup>6</sup>; any part of the world not under a liberal

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<sup>6</sup> NSC-68, 4/14/50, in Ernest R. May, ed., *American Cold War Strategy: Interpreting NSC 68* (Boston: Bedford Books of St. Martin's Press, 1993), 52.

capitalist order would inevitably be ordered by the communists. But the deepest assumption remained only implied in that text: Human impulses, if unchecked, would inevitably create chaos in society. That was why some kind of order, on somebody's terms, had to be imposed. Containing communism was thus ultimately a means to a higher kind of containment: holding back the chaotic forces of human nature.

Although this is perfectly consistent with Reinhold Niebuhr's Christian realism, Preston is right to say that Niebuhr was not the father of all the early cold warriors (426). Their distrust of human desire could be traced back to much earlier Christian sources. But it could be traced equally to the secular Enlightenment writings, both republican and liberal, that shaped so much of the discourse of the Founding Fathers.

Preston correctly summarizes the concomitant premise of the dominant American cold warriors' myth: "In order to feel secure," they "had to create an international environment in which they could feel at home . . . to expand, as widely as possible, America's own political and economic system." This, Preston claims, was in some way "natural" (479). Yet it was only natural within their particular mythic framework. One great virtue of the mythic approach is its ability to denaturalize words and policies that are so widely assumed to be natural.

Why did the national insecurity state require expansion of the American way of life? Dwight Eisenhower's words offer a clear insight into the answer. The most basic foundation of his discourse, personal as well as political, was a moral dualism: Good people choose to restrain their selfish impulses and bad people do not; voluntary restraint is what makes the good people good.<sup>7</sup> He treated that virtue as the essence of religion as well as of democracy, capitalism, and the American way of life -- all of which he treated as equally essential values. This was the foundation of his mythic worldview, from which flowed all of his words and political policies, whether they deal with foreign affairs, religion, or anything else.

Thus when Eisenhower praised religion as the heart of American life and the mainspring of his foreign policy, he was merely speaking tautologically. Having studied thousands of pages of words by and about Eisenhower, from the perspective of a historian of religions, I feel confident in at least one conclusion: There is no persuasive evidence that any particular religious institution, movement, or theology had a significant impact on his political words and policies. (And of course the 'sincerity' of his faith must remain unknown.)

In framing foreign policy, Eisenhower started from the premise that the world was divided into areas where voluntary self-restraint was allowed and areas where it was not. The worst thing about communism, from this viewpoint, was the external restraint imposed by the state, which deprived people under communist rule of the most basic freedom of all:

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<sup>7</sup> Ira Chernus, *General Eisenhower: Ideology and Rhetoric* (East Lansing, MI: Michigan State University Press, 2002).

the freedom to restrain ones' own desires. Anywhere that American-style democratic capitalism did not prevail, communism would inevitably be busy destroying freedom.

The ultimate goal of all foreign policy was to prevent communists from depriving Americans of their freedom to restrain themselves. Protecting that freedom and protecting freedom of religion as well as political freedom and free enterprise were all synonymous in Eisenhower's mythic vision. The highest national priority was to defend "a whole way of life," he told his National Security Council.<sup>8</sup> But the only way he could imagine achieving this security was to expand the realm of voluntary self-control (as he wrote explicitly in a diary entry in the late 1940s)<sup>9</sup>.

All of Eisenhower's foreign policies can be understood as cultural performances, ways to act out his particular version of the dominant American cold war myth. The same can be said of all other cold war presidents as well as George W. Bush. All shaped their discourse and policies around the fundamentals of this cold war myth, although each had his own particular version of it. Some expressed their allegiance to their myth in religious terms, some did not. The myth was the foundation. Use of religious language was a secondary matter.

Of course there were other mythic visions alive in the U.S. since the late 1940s, leading to other policy prescriptions. These, too, were supported by some of their proponents in religious language and others in strictly secular language. Again, the myths, not their religious expression, were basic.

The mythic approach I have sketched here has the advantage of making more of the data on foreign policy amenable to study by scholars of religion and the methods of religious studies. But scholars of religion can certainly also enrich our understanding of the history of foreign affairs by looking at conventional and institutional religion, as Preston does. The two approaches are complementary, not contradictory. Each can yield data and insights that would enrich the other.

In the end, Preston's book will show its greatest value by persuading historians of U.S. foreign affairs and scholars of religion that they must start sharing their various methods and insights with each other -- most often through disagreement, perhaps, but that is always the way scholarship grows. Preston has shown us virtually every important point about which we should begin disagreeing. Ultimately, I hope his book will persuade some scholars to do what he has done so impressively: to join the two disciplines in the same

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<sup>8</sup> Memorandum of Discussion, National Security Council, 5/19/53, in *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1952-1954*, 2.1: 519. See the discussions in Ira Chernus, *Apocalypse Management: Eisenhower and the Discourse of National Insecurity* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2008), 18-24, and John Lewis Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment: A Critical Appraisal of Postwar American National Security Policy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), 135.

<sup>9</sup> Eisenhower diary entry, 3/8/47, in Robert H. Ferrell, ed., *The Eisenhower Diaries*, (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1981), 140.

person, so that we will have scholars trained in the history of both U.S. foreign affairs and religion. In this age of interdisciplinary study, why should we settle for anything less?

Review by Bruce Kuklick, University of Pennsylvania

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This big new book of over six hundred pages of text covers four hundred years of American history, though the twentieth century occupies two-thirds of the volume. The period from 1600 to 1900 gets the same coverage as the period of the Cold War, 1945-1992, some two hundred 200 pages each.

One could argue that the proportions should be reversed since faith was a more important factor in human life in the earlier epoch than in the later. But Preston more than adequately treats the early modern era, and establishes that right from the start the Euro-Americans worked for the sanctification of space in the New World, and engaged in holy warfare. In the colonial period the naturalization of religious ideas, blending with the sacralization of the state, led naturally to the Christian republicanism that dominated the Revolutionary War. The same impulses came to define the mix of democratic and Protestant self-righteousness that has bewilderingly merged the crusade with cautious realism in American international affairs since the late eighteenth century.

One could also argue that the balance in the book does show that the author's interest lies mainly in diplomacy and not in Protestantism. The intensely Christian land had less of a recognizable foreign policy from 1600 to 1900, and the bulk of the author's effort, in the twentieth century, concerns America as a great power. Preston's exertions are foremost in his area of expertise in global politics and the Cold War. Here we have an argument. The author is not altogether comfortable as a religious historian. He tells us that Christianity is "an innately pacifistic religion" (33), and "inherently a matter of individual conscience" (74). If these propositions were true, Preston could not have written this book. He mixes up predestination with providential deism (148). The author finally really doesn't cotton on to the basic ideas of Reformed Protestantism. He finds Calvinists who think original sin can be "transcended" (124); and at one point invents a questionable new concept, "optimistic Calvinism" (424).

Yet Preston is comprehensively encyclopedic over the entire span of years. He has mastered the secondary literature, and seen an astonishing array of archival sources. He writes with articulate clarity, and is thankfully not given to the jargon that scholarship often employs when analyzing believers.

The strength of the volume is that it is a compendium about piety and world politics in American life. The author has put together what amounts to a vast archive of material that anyone interested in issues of religion and foreign affairs must confront.

*Sword of the Spirit, Shield of Faith* takes up the preacherly outlooks of all sorts of Americans who were at one time or another concerned with relations 'overseas,' and canvasses the opinions of most major politicians. He examines various Protestant denominational spokesmen of course, and groups like the YMCA and missionaries through the centuries. But also Jews, Roman Catholics, African Americans, eccentric members of the theological left. Preston examines the spiritual response to a series of crises from King Philip's War, to

the reaction of the colonies to England's conflicts with France, to the Barbary War, and then on to the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. *Sword of the Spirit, Shield of Faith* devotes special attention to dramas that explicitly involve the holy. In the recent past, for example, these include the troubles of Soviet Jewry, and the revolution of Iran's Shiites.

While Preston does not actually put the topic front and center, he looks again and again at the way sermonizing has accompanied the making of foreign strategy. His discussions describe the many different instances in which statesmen have justified decision-making in terms of faith; or how diplomats have alluded to notions of the clergy when enunciating policy. The narrative often appraises the authenticity of leaders in elaborating on their usually Protestant world view, or estimates how pervasive creedal imagery has been in the presentation of political options. If you want to get information about 'religion in American war and diplomacy,' without a doubt, this is your book. It will be an irreplaceable source for a long time.

What thoughtful readers will not find in *Sword of the Spirit, Shield of Faith* is any assessment of the causal role of religion in American statecraft.

Take my favorite example, which Preston surveys in detail: William McKinley's resolve to colonize the Philippines. The President asserted that he did not know what to do, and so he prayed for guidance, and somehow God gave it to him. Preston notes that many historians have dismissed McKinley's account, but the author himself argues that the President was sincere if misguided. What are we to make of this? Does Preston think that sincerity is enough? Does recounting McKinley's story give us an adequate elucidation of his choice? Why was he misguided? I don't imagine Preston means that God really did speak to McKinley *and* wrongly guided him. Does Preston think that God did instruct the President? Again what was going on?

If I were accused of criticizing this book for being under-theorized, I would be most unhappy. At the same time, the problem is not that Preston is a pluralist in his understanding of the competing roles of visions and interests. Rather the book does not take up this sort of question at all. There is no construal of the function of belief. As Preston knows, since he has read them carefully, religious historians have long since pointed out the constellation of commitments defining the behavior of America – its missionary sense of fortune. We are not clearing new ground when we talk about the influence of a civil religion in America; and older generations of historians saw this assemblage of allegiances at work in the expansion of the nation. Scholars have made this obvious from Albert K. Weinberg's *Manifest Destiny* (1935), to Ernest Lee Tuveson's, *Redeemer Nation* (1968) and Conrad Cherry's, *God's New Israel* (1971), to Walter McDougall's *Promised Land, Crusader State* (1997).<sup>1</sup> The problem is not the existence of dispositional sensibilities to which

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<sup>1</sup> Albert K. Weinberg, *Manifest Destiny : A Study of Nationalist Expansion in American History* (The Johns Hopkins Press, 1935); Ernest Lee Tuveson, *Redeemer Nation: The Idea of America's Millennial Role* (University of Chicago Press, 1968); Conrad Cherry, *God's New Israel: Religious Interpretations of American Destiny* (Prentice Hall, 1971); Walter McDougall, *Promised Land, Crusader State: The American Encounter with the World Since 1776* (Houghton Mifflin, 1997)

secular terms inadequately refer, but the part these sensibilities play in the explanation of conduct. There is not a single case in which *Sword of the Spirit, Shield of Faith* tries to unravel the connection of 'ideological' variables to others. Karl Marx gets one trivial mention in the index; Max Weber is not cited.

Does the variation in mystical responses to matters of war and peace tell us that religion is just hot-air, which can be used to legitimate anything? Does the ubiquitousness of speech about the divine in every negotiating predicament tell us something fundamental about the nature of the American polity going into battle? Every nation has recourse to such non-empirical warrants when faced with subjects of life and death. How does this illuminate what may be a basic religious dimension to political life? These are the sorts of key questions that, systematically, Preston does not address.

The troubling weakness of the book for me is not really what *Sword of the Spirit, Shield of Faith* offers up as interpretative comment, but that the text is not really interested in interpretative comment. Preston's triumphs in locating and citing primary sources and in showing the ubiquity of religious reasoning make the questions he does not ask all the more weighty.

Andrew Preston's masterful examination of the role that faith plays in American international relations is a critical addition to the understanding of the history of American foreign policy. The strength of *The Sword of the Spirit, The Shield of Faith* is that it catches the complexity and nuance of American religion in a way that more doctrinaire approaches fail to do.

Preston has given us a vast body of evidence proving the exceptional role that American religion has played in international politics. While other nations have had religious motivation for political action, none has had the specific, sustained and ingrained version of Christianity that developed in the U.S. from its incubation in the colonial period until the present. Certainly Europe had particular events and moments that religion prompted; the crusades, the wars around the Reformation, and the English Civil War, but they were organized around specific religious beliefs and fought between people who held those beliefs. They were in a true sense religious wars. Preston is not arguing that the U.S. waged religious war but instead that religion so permeates the fabric of American politics that it gives diplomatic action a religious hue. In the United States the religious impulse was not as doctrinally specific to a particular kind of Christianity as that which caused the religious wars in Europe. Yet though it was less specific, it was stronger, as it sprang from a shared religious view about how the world should work and what kind of international policies a nation should have. This consensus formed a religious foundation for U.S. national diplomacy. Preston shows us how that kind of religion created an intellectual pattern of idealism and a unique approach to foreign policy even when the specific doctrines of religion were absent.

The introduction is critical to understanding the entire volume and well worth the price of the book on its own. Two paragraphs in the introduction, which are not new ideas in themselves, when coupled with this argument create a new way of looking at this subject. The first is on page ten where Preston applies the idea of "free security" proposed by C. Van Woodward in *The Age of Reinterpretation*, a talk delivered in 1960.<sup>1</sup> Preston, however, develops a greater nuance than Woodward did. In an endnote he acknowledges that historians contest the idea of free security since it was dependent upon the British Navy and Britain's benevolence toward the United States. Britain, however, for most of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was the biggest potential rival to the United States. Despite this Preston argues that this fact is unimportant to his thesis since in practice there were no wars between the U.S. and Britain after 1815. (618, n. 7) He also notes that American policymakers did not fear a British invasion and that interests between the two countries often coincided. Because of this the United States could develop as a nation and to create a foreign policy of "almost pure choice." (10) This again makes the U.S. unique when comparing it to the policies that European nations, with whom the United States would eventually compete, were forced to pursue. Preston and Woodward argue that the

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<sup>1</sup> C. Van Woodward, *The Age of Reinterpretation*, American Historical Association, 1961.

geographic distance, two large oceans and comparatively peaceful borders with weak neighbors to the north and south, allowed a specific form of religion and republicanism to flourish. This in itself is not a new argument regarding foreign policy but the implications of this when applied to the development of religion in the U.S. and its subsequent influence on policymakers is new.

Add to this the second paragraph on page eleven where he notes that whether historians contest the ideas of free security or pure choice in foreign policy, the fact remains that in this period of separateness the United States developed a society that was as pure a Protestant Reformation society as existed anywhere in the world (with the possible exception of Geneva). The implications of this argument are clear. As Michael Waltzer pointed out in the *Revolution of the Saints*, the particular kind of Protestantism that first arrived in the English colonies was radical.<sup>2</sup> While the Puritanism of the New England colonies did not stay pure and narrow and while it eventually had to compete with other forms of Protestantism and the ideas of the Enlightenment (and eventually Roman Catholicism, Judaism and other religious traditions), it produced a society that had developed patterns of thinking and behaving that were deeply ingrained in the Protestant Reformation tradition. Henry May in his book *The Enlightenment in America* discussed a similar theme when describing the religious America that developed following the intellectual struggle between American Protestantism and the ideas of the Enlightenment.<sup>3</sup> May argues that by 1800, a battered version of uniquely American Protestantism emerged. In tying these two ideas together, Preston forms a new synthesis that makes his argument about religion and religious influence in American foreign policy effective.

After noting this synthesis, Preston describes an America that developed a foreign policy largely outside any forced interactions with European nations. This freedom in action and intellectual development is critical to the book. Public intellectual development in the United States contained a large religious component. Thus a radical form of protestant idealism grew and acted as a conscience on the makers of U.S. foreign policy. Even if policymakers felt differently they could not ignore this aspect of American social thought. Though U.S. foreign policy has never been purely idealistic, it nevertheless has always had this idealistic religious conscience.

The themes woven into Preston's tapestry are that religion acts as a source of morality to policymakers, that this religious moral conscience interacted with the liberty that sprang from an imperfect but nevertheless enduring democratic republicanism. To this is added the idea of progress grounded in a religious notion of the coming kingdom of God (a Postmillennial pattern of thinking). Finally there developed a strong national civil religion that gave American nationalism a religious tone. While the term civil religion as it is used has been developed more recently, the idea is helpful for looking at the kind of

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<sup>2</sup> Walzer, Michael, *The Revolution of the Saints*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1965.

<sup>3</sup> May, Henry F., *The Enlightenment In America*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1976.

developments that took place at the founding of the nation.<sup>4</sup> Policy makers working in this society with a politically active religion, developed a rhetoric of ideological purity that the public wanted to hear when they waged war or conducted diplomacy.

The book will no doubt prove to be controversial to many historians for whom the idea that religion has any deep effect on policymakers is difficult to accept. Of particular interest to some will be Preston's discussion of religion at the time of the founding and during the early years of the republic. This has been the burned over wasteland of the highly partisan culture wars for the last two decades. An intellectual scorched earth policy has been pitting those who want to prove that the founders wanted a "Christian" nation against those who want to prove that this notion would appall the founders.<sup>5</sup> Preston manages to bypass that fight and find green grass in the charred wasteland. He does this without avoiding the clear implications of the evidence. The influence of Protestant Christianity on the development of the United States is simply incontestable. It is also a very complex and nuanced influence. Preston understands that when he speaks of the paradox of "a nation founded and built upon religious tolerance and pluralism that has been inordinately shaped by a strongly Protestant identity." (11) No matter what the founders thought, the culture of the nation would retain the religious patterns of thinking despite the specific doctrinal beliefs of the policymakers. In fact, the nation developed a shared consensus on what those ideas were. While the specific doctrinal beliefs of the competing religious groups could not have accomplished this society could find unity in the common civil religion of the national republic. The strength of this book is that by adding nuance to the sharp edges of the argument, the argument becomes stronger and more compelling.

The book uses the metaphor of the crusade to distinguish American forays into the international system from the Spanish American War to the present. Preston creates a durable linkage between internal religious changes and external international actions. Particularly important to US policy are two important and often misunderstood religious developments: the social gospel and Postmillennialism. While historians do sometimes note the connection between the social gospel at home and the idealistic impulse in forays abroad, they often overlook the more awkward doctrine of Postmillennialism which permeated the American religious landscape from the time of the Great Awakening until after the First World War. This was the most popular approach to the idea of the millennium among American Christians in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries as people began to think of ways to make the world better. It included the idea that the church could bring about change and usher in the golden age, that people could bring the world to a place where it could be enough like heaven that it would usher in the millennium. Many

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<sup>4</sup> Bellah, Robert N., *Civil Religion in America*, *Dædalus*, Journal of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, "Religion in America," Winter 1967, Vol. 96, No. 1, pp. 1-21.

<sup>5</sup> With the rise of the "Religious Right" and the growing culture wars over religion in the U.S., this topic gets obscured by intensely partisan political debate. These debates are typified on one side by Authors such as David Barton; *Original Intent: The Courts, the Constitution and Religion*, Wall Builder Press, 5<sup>th</sup> Edition, 2008. On the other side of the argument are books such as Chris Rodda; *Liars For Jesus: The Religious Right's Alternate Version of American History, Volume 1*, BookSurge Publishing, 2006.

American progressives and revivalists believed that they were helping to bring the millennium on earth. This idea became part of the secular progressive landscape and shows up in Edward Bellamy's highly popular book *Looking Backward*.<sup>6</sup> These progressives, who were informed by a Postmillennial intellectual foundation, worked to end child labor, get the right of women to vote and generally make the world better. While the hopeful theology of the Postmillennialists faded, the trappings of that hope remained in some strands of American diplomacy. The close companion to Postmillennialism is the social gospel. Together they produced a progressive way of thinking among intellectuals and policymakers. Preston points out that in foreign policy, religious Americans tended to be aggressively progressive. That is the result, in part, of theological ideas that allowed the religious conscience of the nation to follow the same progressive patterns that the secular political establishment was pursuing.

The book covers the history of American foreign relations right up to the present. It does a good job throughout and has several points at which it soars. The 'William McKinley to Woodrow Wilson period' is particularly strong. Preston is also particularly good on the founding and early periods of US international history. There is new material in the Lincoln section and I learned things I was unfamiliar with regarding Franklin D. Roosevelt and the consensus that developed at the time of the Cold War. Chapter Eleven on Judaism is a fine addition to the scholarship of religion and American international political action.

This book is admirable on so many fronts. Any quarrels I have with the book are unfair to Preston. They involve quarrels with authors whom he quotes as background, and of whom I am critical. I would nuance Walter LaFeber's *New Empire* thesis more than it was here, and I find Kristin Hoganson's *Fighting for American Manhood* deeply flawed regarding the evidence used for its coverage of the Spanish American war period.<sup>7</sup> Both appear as background noise in the book. They are not central to Preston's argument, however, so they need not be discussed in this review.

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<sup>6</sup> Bellamy, Edward, *Looking Backward, 2000-1887*. Boston: Houghton, Mifflin & Co., 1889.

<sup>7</sup> LaFeber, Walter, *The New Empire: An Interpretation of American Expansion 1860-1898*, Cornell University Press, 1998. Hoganson, Kristin L., *Fighting For American Manhood: How gender Politics Provoked the Spanish-American and Philippine-American Wars*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 2000.

Andrew Preston takes religion seriously. His ambitious volume, *Sword of the Spirit, Shield of Faith: Religion in American War and Diplomacy*, illuminates a subject that, in scholarly circles, relatively few either address or regard as important. Rather than inconclusively wondering whether religion influences U.S. foreign relations, Preston carefully shows at length how it has actually done so. The result is an impressive and interesting work of scholarship.

At the outset of the book, Preston explains that he deliberately uses the broad term 'foreign relations,' rather than the narrow term 'foreign policy,' because he aims to explain the development of Americans' engagement--including efforts made by the U.S. government, private citizens, political movements, missionaries and their sponsoring organizations, and NGOs--with the wider world (6). With a first-rate section exploring the colonial period, he starts his narrative before America became a nation, and his thoughtful examination of Abraham Lincoln's civil religion effectively ties the Founding period to the modern era. Over half the book, appropriately, concentrates on the modern era, which Preston dates from William McKinley's presidency and the United States' announcement of itself as a world power in 1898 through its actions in Cuba and the Philippines. Preston understands that religious faith has sometimes been more significant, and sometimes less so, in America's history. While not proclaiming religion to be the sole factor that will elucidate all U.S. foreign relations, he convincingly demonstrates that it is an essential piece which has often been missed in telling the story.

In order to cover such a large topic, Preston has necessarily written a sweeping book. Yet, in this case, breadth is a virtue. Preston could easily have added another hundred or more pages of details, but his narrative would have suffered. For the few times that the reader wishes for less summary and touring through time and more analysis and specifics, the overall story remains fascinating and includes all the necessary particulars. In a singular tour de force, Preston combines history, politics, and religion in order to convey a nearly comprehensive sense of America's place in and connections with the world.

Preston's most compelling theme is that religious faith helped create American nationalism and, at the same time, fostered a powerful sense of internationalism. While it may be an exaggeration to say that religious Americans have always perceived themselves as citizens of the world, Preston is spot-on in arguing that faith broadened many Americans' perspectives and encouraged them to be concerned with the entire world. Throughout his narrative, he shows that this broadened perspective was true not only of missionaries and others working in the trenches at home and abroad but also of presidents and other high-level political leaders. Although this expanded perspective did not prevent some from adopting or expressing what would be considered by today's popular standards as feelings of political or cultural superiority, it resulted in a religious mindset that was "geographically limitless" (4) and applied--often to good effect--to political challenges and problems both domestically and internationally. The United States, as a result, was and is different from other countries when practicing its internationalism.

The core of that difference--and what has informed American internationalism over time--is the American understanding of nationalism. Preston fleshes out the political influences that many scholars refer to--in particular, Baron de Montesquieu and John Locke--with a reflection on John Milton's religious contributions. George Washington, John Adams, and Thomas Jefferson all cited Milton to support their political views, while Patriot clergy advanced Miltonic ideas about Christian republicanism (95). Liberty and virtue were bound together in this view and helped shape both the country and its foreign relations: "Americans believed that a state's internal character influenced its external behavior. In other words, nations that were corrupt within would behave rapaciously toward other nations" (95-96). In this sense, by intertwining politics and religion, the United States was neither continental nor realist. While also not continental, Great Britain had become tyrannical and corrupt. The American Founders vowed never to forget that their country and its people had to be grounded in both liberty and virtue. In foreign relations, this meant that the United States would apply power according to principles and consider the regime types of governments to be central to world politics.

In general, Preston shines when evaluating the modern period and players in U.S. foreign relations. His treatment of Elihu Root and Alfred T. Mahan, the latter of whom is often presented as a flat geostrategist, helps clarify how Theodore Roosevelt's worldview was rooted in the same Social Gospel ideology as his domestic politics (208-10). Baptist minister and anti-war German-American Walter Rauschenbusch, who, for all intents and purposes, was the father of the Social Gospel movement, receives special attention, which is both constructive and unusual in a narrative foreign policy synthesis. Many political scientists and historians analyze theologian and IR theorist Reinhold Niebuhr starting with the interwar period or World War II, but Preston weaves Niebuhr throughout his work and, as background, notes what a young Niebuhr had to say about his fellow German-Americans during World War I (244). And in a book that, in terms of number of pages, focuses on Protestant Americans, Preston effectively includes the role and influence of Jews and Roman Catholics in the history of U.S. foreign relations.

Given how much Preston gets right, only a couple of points need to be raised for purposes of discussion. First, Preston calls Woodrow Wilson a liberal internationalist or an ecumenical internationalist with a religious creed. For Preston, "Wilsonianism was essentially an expression of Christian reformism, of the global application of progressive Christianity, not because of a conscious vision but simply because Wilson could not escape who he was." (280) This sells Wilson short. It seems difficult, if not impossible, to separate the Wilsonian creed from its status as the progenitor of progressive internationalism, a point that Wilson himself understood. The chief reason he would not yield, either to America's allies or to the U.S. Senate, was his conviction that his politics, theology, and policies were not only interconnected but also progressively linked. Although Wilson brought the United States into the First World War against Germany and Kaiser Wilhelm II's imperialism, he had readily absorbed the German philosophical approach to politics and history. Indeed, a conscious, intellectual vision can be traced through his academic training at Johns Hopkins, his teaching at and presidency of Princeton, and his pre-presidential writings that bespeaks early progressivism. Theology certainly tinged his

rhetoric and politics throughout his career, but Wilson's positions were animated primarily and ultimately by his deep commitment to the intellectual movement of progressivism.

Second, Preston credits George F. Kennan with "almost single-handedly" establishing the foundations of America's Cold War foreign policy (422). Although Kennan popularized the term containment, a strong argument can be made that his Long Telegram of 1946 and other significant writings, including the X article of 1947, captured some of what other officials were saying at the time and contributed to the formulation of containment but did not originate containment as a strategic approach. More curious is that Preston presents Kennan as a diplomat whose religious faith deeply influenced his time in government (424-25). The evidence that Preston cites is largely from the 1950s and 1960s, after Kennan's most significant service in the State Department. Until later in his life, Kennan was very private about his personal beliefs, including religious faith. From his papers, diaries, books and articles, and the recently published authorized biography by John Gaddis, it seems logical to conclude that Kennan was too busy in the 1930s and 1940s to write down how his faith did or did not shape his politics. What do we know for sure? Kennan invited Niebuhr (as well as Hans Morgenthau, Robert Oppenheimer, John McCloy, and others) to consult with his Policy Planning Staff at the State Department in the mid-1940s. When Kennan commented about his faith and politics in the 1960s, he oddly mentioned Sigmund Freud as the best modern interpreter of John Calvin (425). And in the latter part of his life, Kennan elaborated on his private thoughts about faith and ethics in *Around the Cragged Hill: A Personal and Political Philosophy*, which he presented as a "turning of the eyes to a number of things that interest me as an individual," including the Primary Cause (not God), his admiration for Christ, and the problem of religious faith.<sup>1</sup> With Kennan, it seems that his evolving doubts, as much as or more than a constant faith, shaped his statesmanship.

Preston draws on my research and writing as a starting point for his examination of Harry S. Truman, crediting me as one of two authors who have seriously delved into Truman's religious faith and its influence on his foreign policy. I would like to repay the compliment to Preston when it comes to Franklin D. Roosevelt. Preston's careful research on Roosevelt adds a dimension to the man and his politics that few consider. His take helps explain how FDR was able to connect--clearly and simply--on common religious ground with his fellow Americans, even though his privileged background and high political position could have set him apart from nearly all of them. "Not since Abraham Lincoln had a president embodied America's civil religion so naturally," notes Preston, adding that the Episcopal church's strong ethos of noblesse oblige was part of FDR's character (315). But since Roosevelt was not overly intellectual in his faith, he neither alienated others nor came off as pretentious. FDR considered himself to be "very Low Church," and all of his inaugural addresses as well as many of his radio fireside chats and other important foreign policy speeches were filled with biblical rhetoric and religious imagery (317-18). Preston aptly attributes much of Roosevelt's success to the talent of "wearing his theology lightly but holding his faith closely," especially in rhetoric but also in U.S. foreign relations before and during World War II (317).

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<sup>1</sup> See *Around the Cragged Hill*, 13 and 37-51.

Along with the dominant voices in pop culture, experts in the academy and mass media define themselves, overwhelmingly, as secular. As a result, many lack substantive knowledge in matters of faith. Yet these analysts and critics are called upon to comment on the subject, and they tend either not to take religion seriously or to view faith as peculiar or outdated. Whether talking about the Democratic Party's Jimmy Carter in the 1970s or the GOP's George W. Bush in the 2000s, many scholars and journalists were (and are) simply perplexed. Andrew Preston dispels confusion by taking seriously religion's presence in U.S. foreign relations. Specialists and interested lay readers alike will benefit from this excellent and important work.

Author's Response by Andrew Preston, Cambridge University

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Having one's book be the subject of an H-Diplo Roundtable Review has quickly become a professional honor, and I am delighted to have received it here. It's also a stimulating intellectual exercise, and the reviews above are no exception. And so I'm grateful for Tom Maddux for commissioning the reviews, to Andrew Rotter for his perceptive introduction, and to Ira Chernus, Bruce Kuklick, Malcolm Magee, and Elizabeth Edwards Spalding for their incisive and stimulating analyses, constructive criticisms, and—not least—the indefatigable energy it surely required to review such a long book in such a relatively short amount of time.

The reviewers all raise probing and insightful questions, sometimes on particular topics—Spalding on George Kennan, for example, or Magee on the late nineteenth century; Chernus single-handedly raises so many intelligent questions on so many different subjects that it would likely take another large book to give them proper credit and provide sufficient answers—and sometimes on much broader methodological or theoretical issues. In the interests of time and space (this response is long enough), and in the hope that these reviews will contribute to an ongoing dialogue not only between the reviewers and me but among foreign relations historians at large, I'll concentrate here on the broader issues.

*Sword of the Spirit, Shield of Faith* is a long book, as Rotter and the four reviewers all note, and I'm conscious of the burdens that places on readers. And yet I never meant for this book to be definitive or exclusive. Chernus notes that “as in any unified narrative, we get an authorial voice that sounds omniscient and creates the impression of unitary truth.” It's a fair point, but that was certainly not my intention, particularly on a topic as fraught with methodological and interpretive (and, under the surface, political) difficulties as religion.

Nor does religion offer a magic bullet or missing link that allows us totally to reinterpret American foreign relations history writ large. I have taken some criticism here, and will surely do so elsewhere, for concentrating on religion to the exclusion of other factors. So, to take but one example from the reviews, when Chernus wonders what “role economic globalism and ideologies of ‘free trade’ play[ed] in shaping the FDR administration's foreign policies,” I can only point to the book's actual purpose: to investigate a history of religion's influence in foreign relations. This doesn't mean that there weren't other factors, of course. I've chosen to focus on one particular factor, religion, that I believe has been relatively neglected in the historiography (it should be said that as historians, the four reviewers are exceptions to this rule, as is Rotter), but that doesn't mean I believe other factors were irrelevant or less important. As I took pains to point out in the book's introduction, “Readers should remember that this is not a new master narrative of U.S. foreign policy but a new version that aims to complement and enrich existing interpretations without necessarily replacing them” (4). I have tried, briefly, to acknowledge other factors where relevant, but to have added a full treatment of economics, or national security, geostrategy, race, gender, etc., where they did not intersect with religion, would have meant writing a totally different book, and an even longer one at that.

Instead, my aim in putting together such a broad synthesis was not only to offer my own interpretation of American diplomatic history, but also to provide a sounding board for future research. It's my hope that *Sword of the Spirit, Shield of Faith* will act as either a spur to those who want to build on my findings or a foil for those who want to complicate or refute them. I intended it to be the beginning of a journey rather than its end.

Yet as always, readers want more. Kuklick, for example, notes that my chronological scope is too narrow, or at least too focused on the post-1898 period. He observes that "One could argue that the proportions should be reversed since faith was a more important factor in human life in the earlier epoch than in the later," which is undoubtedly true of American religious history but totally untrue for American diplomatic history. As its subtitle indicates, *Sword of the Spirit, Shield of Faith* is an examination of *Religion in American War and Diplomacy*, not war and diplomacy's impact on American religion. My primary concern is with the history of American foreign relations and how religion influenced it, not the other way around (that's another book altogether). I explain my decision to focus mostly on the modern period in a paragraph in the introduction (5), which is accompanied by a note (618n2) that mentions George C. Herring's recent diplomatic history synthesis *From Colony to Superpower*, which also focuses predominantly on the modern period, as a model. Perhaps this is the wrong model and I've struck the wrong chronological balance—though I doubt many foreign relations historians would agree—but it was neither incidental nor accidental. Had I written a history of war and diplomacy in American religion, then I would have redressed the balance more in favor of the pre-1865 period. But I didn't write that book.

Kuklick then goes on to note that my "exertions are foremost in [my] area of expertise in global politics and the Cold War"—which is certainly true, although not by much; the Cold War occupies eight chapters out of twenty-nine—and that I'm "not altogether comfortable as a religious historian." His evidence of such discomfort, however, is inapposite, inaccurate, and taken completely out of context. For example, he finds himself startled that I called Christianity "an innately pacifistic religion" (33), though that particular passage is within a paragraph about the early Christians in the fourth century, who did believe Christianity is pacifistic, and St. Augustine's worry that the new faith could be wiped out if it didn't fight back. Of course the history of Christianity isn't one of peace, and of course Christian doctrine is practiced at the art of warfare—how could I possibly have written this book otherwise? My passing, frankly anodyne comment about the pacifism of Christianity in the context of religious thought in late antiquity is actually a rather conventional and unoriginal one, a standard refrain in any discussion of the emergence of just war theory, and I'm surprised Kuklick found it so controversial.

Another of Kuklick's examples concerns my statement that Christianity is "inherently a matter of individual conscience" (74). This is all Kuklick quotes, but here is the full sentence, written in the context of late eighteenth-century debates about the enshrinement of religious liberty through the separation of church from state: "Given that religion, especially Christianity, is inherently a matter of individual conscience, it was natural that this [the spread of individualist evangelicalism following the Revolution and the First Amendment's "establishment" and "free exercise" clauses] would have political

ramifications.” Once again, I find myself puzzled by Kuklick’s puzzlement. As I’ll discuss in more detail below in relation to Ira Chernus’s perceptive methodological and theoretical critique, whether one believes in a religion or not is indeed inherently a personal matter (a point Chernus makes with regard to the methodological impossibility of “proving” what anyone believes). Naturally, religions can be coercive; naturally, individual religions are culturally and social constructed (as psychologists, sociologists, anthropologists, philosophers, and theologians have shown us for over a century, an intellectual torch passed generationally from William James and Max Weber to Carl Jung to Peter Berger and Wilfred Cantwell Smith to Charles Taylor and Robert Bellah). But no matter how culturally, politically, or socially hegemonic and coercive they are, religious authorities cannot induce belief; it is essentially individualistic, whether it means a belief in Christ or a belief in animist spirits. Behavior can be induced or coerced, but not necessarily belief itself. But even more, in Christian (and especially Protestant) tradition, the sanctity of individual conscience is central to believers’ self-conception. This is debatable, but that’s another point: it’s debatable; it’s not as if I came up with the fundamental link between Christianity and conscience, especially for American political thought, and it was as relevant for John Rawls in the late twentieth century as it was for James Madison two centuries before. It might be misguided (though if it is I’m in good company), but for anyone who’s familiar with basic theology, religious sociology, or political theory, it’s not exactly a bolt from the blue.

Many of Kuklick’s other examples of my scholarly discomfort with religion are also misguided. To take another, nowhere on page 148 do I confuse Calvinist predestination with providential deism. Nor do I describe James K. Polk as a “providential deist” (because he was not), and his use of the deist phrase “all-wise Creator” does not mean that he was actually a deist. It was a turn of phrase, commonplace in early and antebellum America, that a pious but theologically imprecise man such as Polk would use reflexively. I could go on similarly about Kuklick’s other “examples,” which are wrenched out of their narrative and analytical context in an equally clumsy manner.

This brings me to Kuklick’s major criticism, and it allows me to address Chernus’s extended analysis of religious-studies methodology and theory and Rotter’s comments about the same. Kuklick claims that my book is under-theorized and under-argued. He might be right in this, though it’s interesting to note that every single other review of the book, both praiseworthy and critical, have reached the opposite conclusion: that it is *over-argued*, and that it attributes much *too much* causal influence to religion.<sup>1</sup> Over-argumentation is the crux of Chernus’s review, and while it’s a legitimate concern I also feel, as does Rotter, that it’s misplaced. Kuklick wishes I had theorized religion by reference to Karl Marx and Max Weber, though I can only protest that many if not most (I would say nearly all) works of American religious history (as opposed to religious anthropology, sociology, etc.) don’t

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<sup>1</sup> For example, see, respectively, Richard H. Immerman’s review in the *San Francisco Chronicle*, March 4, 2012; and Allen C. Guelzo, “Faith and Foreign Policy,” *National Review*, April 30, 2012.

spend any time on a theoretical exegesis either.<sup>2</sup> In fact, if I may borrow Kuklick's own words from his review above and cite two books he certainly knows very well, I see that in a distinguished history of the theological origins of American philosophy, Max Weber gets one trivial mention in the index (despite the obvious relevance of his disenchantment and secularization theses); Karl Marx is not cited.<sup>3</sup> I also note that a recent synthesis of American history that is even subtitled *One Nation Under God* similarly ignores theory about religion: Karl Marx gets three trivial mentions in the index; Max Weber is not cited.<sup>4</sup>

Still, despite its commonality among historians, I think Kuklick, Chernus, and Rotter are absolutely right to point to my under-theorization of religion. And I acknowledge that this was probably a mistake. I wish I had included more theory in the text and notes; I did not for editorial rather than intellectual reasons. If I had, my lodestar would certainly not be Marx. Instead, I would have much more Emile Durkheim, Berger, Robert Wuthnow, Clifford Geertz—and, yes, Weber. In fact, despite my not mentioning him, and despite our very different methodologies and research questions, Geertz deeply informed the writing of *Sword of the Spirit, Shield of Faith*. But here, despite the erudition, acuity, and graciousness of Chernus's review—which I will assign to my students and recommend to my colleagues

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<sup>2</sup> For a small but representative selection of recent examples from the past decade, see Mark A. Noll, *America's God: From Jonathan Edwards to Abraham Lincoln* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002); Patricia U. Bonomi, *Under the Cope of Heaven: Religion, Society, and Politics in Colonial America*, rev. ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003); Frank Lambert, *The Founding Fathers and the Place of Religion in America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003); George M. Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards: A Life* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003); Peter R. D'Agostino, *Rome in America: Transnational Catholic Ideology from the Risorgimento to Fascism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004); Seth Jacobs, *America's Miracle Man in Vietnam: Ngo Dinh Diem, Religion, Race, and U.S. Intervention in Southeast Asia, 1950–1957* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004); Leigh E. Schmidt, *Restless Souls: The Making of American Spirituality* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2005); Matthew Avery Sutton, *Aimee Semple McPherson and the Resurrection of Christian America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007); Katherine Carté Engel, *Religion and Profit: Moravians in Early America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008); William Inboden, *Religion and American Foreign Policy, 1945–1960: The Soul of Containment* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008); Frank Lambert, *Religion in American Politics: A Short History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008); Bethany Moreton, *To Serve God and Wal-Mart: The Making of Christian Free Enterprise* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009); Darren Dochuk, *From Bible Belt to Sunbelt: Plain-Folk Religion, Grassroots Politics, and the Rise of Evangelical Conservatism* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2010); David Sehat, *The Myth of American Religious Freedom* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011); and Kevin M. Schultz, *Tri-Faith America: How Catholics and Jews Held Postwar America to Its Protestant Promise* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011). All of the above are major works in some aspect of American religious history that do not have a theoretical or methodological exegesis and, aside from passing references to Weber, Tocqueville, et al, do not invoke major scholars of religious studies as opposed to religious history. Most notably, what they all have in common is their genre and the specialty of their authors: they are all works of religious history, not social science, and are all written by historians. See also the references in notes 3 and 4, below.

<sup>3</sup> Bruce Kuklick, *Churchmen and Philosophers: From Jonathan Edwards to John Dewey* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985).

<sup>4</sup> Bruce Kuklick, *A Political History of the USA: One Nation Under God* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).

who are interested in the study of religion—we'll have to agree to disagree on the issue of causation and the nature of belief.

Geertz had a rather unorthodox—and, to my mind, somewhat unsatisfying—definition of religion because it omitted any notion of the supernatural.<sup>5</sup> The reason was clear: to Geertz, religion was culture—or, as the title of one of his most famous essays put it, he saw “religion as a cultural system”<sup>6</sup>—and in this sense the supernatural isn't a necessary precondition for religion.<sup>7</sup> Chernus explains, by way of Geertz among others, that because we can never prove, demonstrate, corroborate, or even know what people actually, really believed—in the inner recesses of their consciences and consciousness—there is no point in postulating what they believed; and from there, Chernus goes on to argue that because it is impossible to make such postulations, it is impossible to draw causal links between thought and behavior or between ethereal belief and corporeal action. I think Chernus would agree that the sticking point here is motivation: can religious views motivate human beings to make certain decisions or do certain things?

On this issue, however, Geertz is an odd authority to invoke, for his work was steeped in religion's role as a causal phenomenon that could motivate humans to do certain things and act in certain ways under certain conditions. “Religion is sociologically interesting not because...it describes the social order,” he wrote, “but because, like environment, political power, wealth, jural obligation, personal affection, and a sense of beauty, it shapes it.”<sup>8</sup> As Rotter points out, here in his roundtable introduction and before in his book on American-South Asian relations, Geertz's theory of “webs of significance” is indicative of a more

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<sup>5</sup> Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), p. 90.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 87-125.

<sup>7</sup> And assumes more of the character of Chernus's myths, or Michael Burleigh's “political religions.” For the latter, see Michael Burleigh, *Sacred Causes: Religion and Politics From the European Dictators to Al Qaeda* (London: HarperCollins, 2006). On a different but related note, I find myself in rare agreement with Kuklick that my use of the concept of civil religion isn't all that controversial. Chernus identifies it with Robert Bellah, even though there's a much older tradition, going back two centuries to Rousseau, that uses civil religion in a non-normative and more neutral way. (I explain this, and acknowledge the potential controversies, in p. 619n11.) The automatic equation of civil religion with Bellah's normative use of the term in the late 1960s—or with Martin Marty's or David Tracy's similarly normative notions of “public theology”—is a curiously American phenomenon that I don't think exists outside the United States. For the normative use of “civil religion” that Chernus rightly critiques, see Robert N. Bellah, “Civil Religion in America,” *Daedalus* 96 (Winter 1967), pp. 1-21; Martin E. Marty, “Two Kinds of Two Kinds of Civil Religion,” in *American Civil Religion*, ed. Russell E. Richey and Donald G. Jones (New York: Harper & Row, 1974), pp. 139-157; Martin E. Marty, “Reinhold Niebuhr: Public Theology and the American Experience,” *Journal of Religion* 54 (October 1974), pp. 332-359; and David Tracy, *The Analogical Imagination: Christian Theology and the Culture of Pluralism* (New York: Crossroad, 1981). As a left-of-center, secular Canadian who teaches American history in Great Britain, I think I can honestly claim to have no dog in this fight.

<sup>8</sup> Geertz, *Interpretation of Cultures*, p. 119.

expansive and less constrained view of causation.<sup>9</sup> Geertz acknowledged the difficult but “hardly unimportant” questions of establishing “whether this or that religious assertion is true, this or that religious experience genuine, or whether true religious assertions and genuine religious experiences are possible at all.” But, he continued, these questions should not prevent us from applying them to explanations of human behavior, be they social, cultural, or political:

the importance of religion lies in its capacity to serve, for an individual or for a group, as a source of general, yet distinctive, conceptions of the world, the self, and the relations between them, on the one hand—its model *of* aspect—and of rooted, no less distinctive “mental” dispositions—its model *for* aspect—on the other. ...Religious concepts spread beyond their specifically metaphysical contexts to provide a framework of general ideas in terms of which a wide range of experience—intellectual, emotional, moral—can be given meaningful form.<sup>10</sup>

Although we cannot establish what a person “really” believed in the past (or believes in the present), or whether those beliefs are “true,” if that person expressed religious beliefs and lived to some extent by their tenets, it is extremely likely, and at the very least plausible, that religion would also to some extent have informed their behavior.

Religious beliefs, Geertz continued, “are also a template. They do not merely interpret social and psychological processes in cosmic terms...but they shape them.” Embedded within religious doctrines are “a recommended attitude toward life, a recurring mood, *and a persisting set of motivations.*”<sup>11</sup> He then brought home the possibility of (carefully) linking belief to motivation and activity:

The tracing of the social and psychological role of religion is thus not so much a matter of finding correlations between specific ritual acts and specific secular social ties—*though these correlations do, of course, exist and are very worth continued investigation*, especially if we can contrive something novel about them. More, it is a matter of understanding how it is that men’s notions, however implicit, of the “really real” and the dispositions these notions include in them, color their sense of the reasonable, the practical, the humane, and the moral.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Andrew J. Rotter, *Comrades at Odds: The United States and India, 1947-1964* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2000).

<sup>10</sup> Geertz, *Interpretation of Cultures*, p. 123; see also p. 93. Emphasis in original.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 124. Emphasis added.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.* Emphasis added.

We don't actually need to know, then, what someone "really" believed (and as Chernus points out, we'll never know). Instead, we should measure what they said and did. We should look for manifestations of professed belief—what José Casanova, one of the most important critics of secularization theory and analysts of religion and globalization, calls "discursive reality"—and for consistencies and inconsistencies between belief and deed, and then hypothesize from there. As Casanova has recently explained, "I am not claiming that people today everywhere are either more or less religious than they may have been in the past. ...I am claiming only that religion as a discursive reality...has become an undisputable global fact."<sup>13</sup>

Kuklick once recognized both the difficulty and the potential of assessing religion and ideas, and of their relationship to behavior, in his powerful and rather wonderful synthetic history of certain currents in American philosophy.<sup>14</sup> Indeed, without an acceptance that religion—or at least what we can *observe* about religion—can illuminate questions of human motivation and highlight causation, Geertz himself could not have written his anthropological studies of the people of Indonesia;<sup>15</sup> nor could Kuklick have been an intellectual historian.

As a scholar, of religion or anything else, I obviously do not match Geertz's standards; few of us do, or ever will. But it seems to me that his analysis quoted above describes precisely what I've tried to do in *Sword of the Spirit, Shield of Faith*. As a historian, I've attempted to put forward Chernus's "logically persuasive arguments based on empirical evidence." Perhaps my book's arguments remain unpersuasive, but I stand by their logicity and their basis in empirical evidence.

Chernus argues that historians of religion—and, it seems, only of religion—should "at least make it clear to the reader that we are offering nothing but educated guesswork." I must confess, I'm not quite sure what to make of this statement, but two basic objections immediately arise:

First, isn't that what *all* historians do? You don't have to be a Hayden White or a Guy Debord to appreciate that every work of history is a mere representation of the past. I'm sure he doesn't intend them to be, but Chernus's methodological assertions have the positivist ring of a Leopold von Ranke or a Geoffrey Elton, as if the historian's duty is simply "to report the facts" and "write history as it really was," and nothing more. Towering figures in their day, Ranke and Elton are out of fashion for a reason, and we study them now as founders, who long ago lost their relevance, of a professional discipline that has

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<sup>13</sup> José Casanova, "Rethinking Public Religions," in *Rethinking Religion and World Affairs*, ed. Timothy Samuel Shah, Alfred Stepan, and Monica Duffy Toft (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), p. 27. See also José Casanova, *Public Religions in the Modern World* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994).

<sup>14</sup> See Kuklick, *Churchmen and Philosophers*, esp. 254-256.

<sup>15</sup> By way of example, see especially Clifford Geertz, *The Religion of Java* (Glencoe, IL: Free Press, 1960).

evolved dramatically. In this sense, we are all post-modernists now, which is why post-modernism has lost its cutting edge.

Second, I fail to see how religion is any different than economics, ideology, culture, race, gender, or any other category of analysis. Obviously there are key differences, and I'm certainly not lumping them together and pretending they're all the same. What I mean is: no analysis is definitive, and no single category of analysis can allow us to reach total consensus on (almost) any historical question. As I have pointed out elsewhere, you can give two eminent, experienced, brilliant scholars of similar professional experience the exact same primary evidence and the exact same knowledge of the secondary literature—my example was Mel Leffler and John Gaddis and the origins of the Cold War—and they could still come to radically different, even mutually exclusive, conclusions.<sup>16</sup> If religion cannot answer these questions definitively, neither can strategy, politics, economics, etc. For example, I can't "prove" what John Foster Dulles "really" believed, despite mountains of "empirical evidence" that allow me to make "logically persuasive arguments." But no scholar can "prove" why Dulles did what he did—on anything. How is Dulles's conservatism or internationalism or legalese or strategic mind any different than his religious beliefs? All Chernus can go on is the documentary and secondary record—and his own instincts and training as a historian. He cannot "prove," or even demonstrate, the authenticity or causal force of Dulles's political ideology or geopolitical views or economic ideas any more than I can his religious beliefs. They all belong to an interior world that Dulles—and only Dulles—ever knew fully. If Chernus's methodology were to be followed, the study of history would be devoid of culture and would become either a bleak world of Rankean reproductions or become exclusively reliant on material forces. There would be no place for culture, ideology, or gender any less than there would be for religion.

Let me use the example of Dulles a bit more to illustrate what I mean. In the book, I devote a lot of space to him (384-409, 450-464). I make a lot of small arguments along the way, but I essentially make one big claim that I think is important: Dulles's worldview was shaped by his religion, as many historians have long claimed, but that it was first and foremost shaped by his deep and sustained involvement in the ecumenical movement. How do I "prove" that Dulles was a devoted ecumenist? Aside from reading thousands upon thousands of his own words, and those of his contemporaries (both published and unpublished), I deduced that a Wall Street lawyer would not have given up his lucrative practice at the height of his earning powers for six full years to do something he wasn't devoted to or thought was unimportant. That's not proof, I know—but, combined with a massive primary-source record, it certainly does stand the test of plausibility. Did Dulles's ecumenism "cause" him to do specific things? Well, I can't "prove" this definitively either—even though Dulles himself said that it did—because I can't enter into his mind. But I feel confident in my conclusions: after all, why else would a conservative and a Republican like Dulles favor—unlike the vast majority of other conservatives and Republicans—secular, international applications of ecumenical ideology? Against the ideological currents of his

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<sup>16</sup> Andrew Preston, "Bridging the Gap between Church and State in the History of American Foreign Relations," *Diplomatic History* 30 (November 2006), pp. 791-792.

political companions, Dulles not only favored but personally played an important role in contributing to the building of the United Nations, NATO, and the European Community—at the very same time he used the very same principles to help build the Federal Council of Churches and the World Council of Churches. Chernus, or at least my reading of him, would have us believe that this was all a coincidence, or incidental. And to me, that’s neither logical nor persuasive, and it’s not at all consistent with the available empirical evidence. I could be wrong, of course, and religion must stand with other explanations (e.g., Dulles’s international legal training, political ideology, diplomatic forebears, etc.); but surely the argument I’ve made is worth considering, debating, and either supporting or refuting on the same grounds as if I’d claimed that Dulles was motivated by his views on political economy, ideas, or ideology (all of which are ultimately as unknowable as his religious beliefs)?

Kuklick feels the same as Chernus, and he cites my use of William McKinley as his “favorite example.” That’s good, because it’s also one of my favorite examples, and it’s why I feature it so prominently in the book. Kuklick breezily summarizes two paragraphs (156) of my 15-page analysis of McKinley and the notion of progressive imperialism in the Philippines (155-159, 223-232). He summarizes three things: McKinley’s invocation of God in making his decision to take the Philippines; almost all historians’ dismissal of that invocation as an insincere cover for other motives; and my contention that McKinley was sincere. Kuklick then asks, “What are we to make of this? Does Preston think that sincerity is enough? Does recounting McKinley’s story give us an adequate elucidation of his choice?” Apparently Kuklick didn’t read the other 13 pages: perhaps my analysis is flat wrong, even wrongheaded, but I certainly answer his questions (in sum, my answers are: a lot; no; largely yes). After the two paragraphs Kuklick summarized, I go on at some length (but especially on 157-159, 231-232) to argue that McKinley’s invocation of God was an expression of progressive Christian imperialism, or what we might call “Social Gospel imperialism,” the same ideology of spreading the white race’s supposed Christian and civilized benevolence to supposedly benighted peoples in the rest of the world. It is the language of paternalistic Christian uplift, and I found it strange that historians had mostly ignored this aspect of McKinley’s worldview. Everything we know about McKinley’s religious beliefs, which almost every other historian of imperialism has ignored—his statements and actual behavior from boyhood to the White House, and everything in between—is consistent with the ideology of “benevolent” Christian imperialism. (I make the same argument about nineteenth-century American missionaries on 130-134, 175-197.) Perhaps my argument is flawed. But to say, as Kuklick does, that my only claim about McKinley is that he was sincere in his faith and that claims about sincerity are not enough is to have missed my argument completely.

Many psychologists, philosophers, and social scientists have begun to abandon rational choice theory and embrace the emotions in explaining human behavior.<sup>17</sup> Over the past twenty years, diplomatic historians have been tremendous innovators in applying cultural-

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<sup>17</sup> For a recent and splendidly readable summary of much of the latest research, see Jonathan Haidt, *The Righteous Mind: Why Good People Are Divided by Politics and Religion* (New York: Pantheon, 2012).

history theories, methodologies, and categories of analysis to the study of foreign policy. More recently, a few have directly, and rather brilliantly, tackled the emotions and the even the five senses themselves.<sup>18</sup> The argument, which goes back to David Hume, is that while the emotions—shaped by religion, culture, etc.—sometimes provoke an individual to make a specific and direct decision, they more often and more importantly shape an individual's worldview and the context in which decisions are made. Dulles applied ecumenist theories of conflict resolution to geopolitics because those were the ideas he knew best; McKinley applied Christian uplift to the Philippines for the same reason. Again, maybe I'm wrong—but surely the connections I'm drawing are possible to make. If they're not, then there's no point whatsoever in using religion to analyze international history (or any kind of history). That's a frightening thought, because it will leave important mental maps from the past undiscovered and unused.

I'll leave the last word to Geertz, who seems to be an authority on whom we can all agree. He made a strong case for the approach I'm defending, and put it better than I ever could have:

A motivation is a persisting tendency, a chronic inclination to perform certain sorts of acts and experience certain sorts of feeling in certain forms of situations... Motives are thus neither acts (that is, intentional behaviors) nor feelings, but liabilities to perform particular classes of act or have particular classes of feeling. And when we say that a man is religious, that is, motivated by religion, this is at least part—though only part—of what we mean.<sup>19</sup>

Amen.

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<sup>18</sup> See, for example, Andrew J. Rotter, "Empires of the Senses: How Seeing, Hearing, Smelling, Tasting, and Touching Shaped Imperial Encounters," *Diplomatic History* 35 (January 2011), pp. 3–19; Barbara Keys, "Henry Kissinger: The Emotional Statesman," *Diplomatic History* 35 (September 2011), pp. 587–609; and Frank Costigliola, *Roosevelt's Lost Alliances: How Personal Politics Helped Start the Cold War* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012).

<sup>19</sup> Geertz, *Interpretation of Cultures*, pp. 96–97.