Sword of the Spirit, Shield of Faith: Religion in American War and Diplomacy

Andrew Preston
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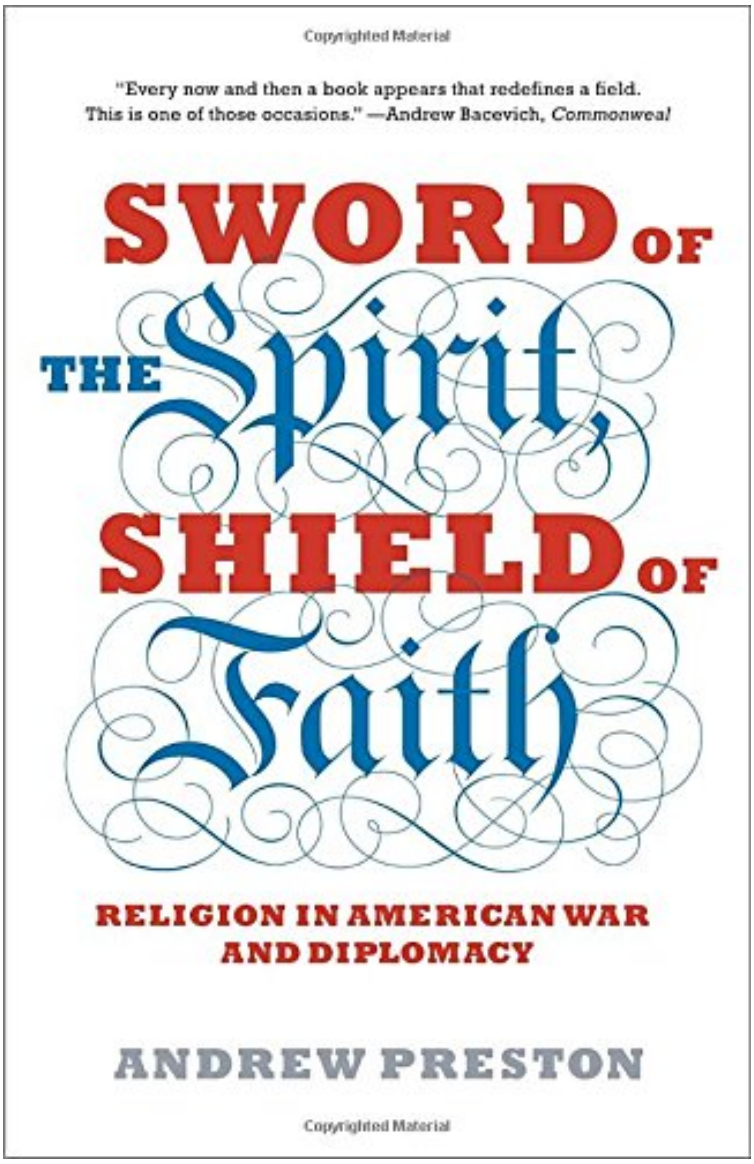

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Andrew Preston : Sword of the Spirit, Shield of Faith: Religion in American War and Diplomacy before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Sword of the Spirit, Shield of Faith: Religion in American War and Diplomacy:

6 of 6 people found the following review helpful. A very engaging, worthwhile bookBy Jeffrey P. SkosnikI bought the

Kindle version of this Book and found the Kindle format to be great for this kind of academic writing. The book itself would make great reading in any format.As I read the book, I found myself largely agreeing with what the author has to say on his subject matter except for the three points below:1. American ExceptionalismThe beliefs that Preston alleges as support for American Exceptionalism are by no means unique to America. These beliefs may in fact be the basis on which some Americans consider themselves to be exceptional, but Preston should at least have mentioned that Americans are not in fact exceptional in virtue of believing that they are God's chosen people. More than one war has been fought between nations who have declared themselves exceptional on such grounds.2. The Role of Religious Conviction in American Foreign Policy Decision MakingIn his discussion of how religious beliefs affect American foreign policy decisions, I think Preston needed to make a distinction between the religious beliefs which motivated American leaders to make their foreign policy decisions in a certain way and the religious beliefs which they may have used to sell those decisions to their fellow Americans. It is not enough to say, as Preston does, that these leaders are part of the same culture as the people to whom they must justify their decisions. To judge from the popular sermons of the day, some Founding Fathers appear to have been better educated and more in tune with "the Age of the Enlightenment" than many of their fellow Americans and in consequence were often much more sceptical of the claims of traditional religion than many of their fellow Americans. Some, or even all, of the religious imagery contained in America's founding documents may have been put there to secure popular support and may not shed any light on the thought behind the documents or even the intended meaning of the documents.3. The Declaration of IndependencePreston's discussion of the Declaration of Independence appears (to me) to explain the document in the cultural context of modern thought rather than the cultural context of the times. Missing from his discussion is an analysis of how, for example, Enlightenment views on the social contract and the divine right of kings might have conditioned the meaning of certain key points in the Declaration of Independence as those points would have been understood by Enlightened Americans at the time.My three points are, of course, debatable. Suffice it to say that this book, read as an exposition of American religious/political thought over the centuries, is exceptional in the breath of its coverage and its engaging style.0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. An excellent history and analysis of how religion has influenced America's ...By RancyAn excellent history and analysis of how religion has influenced America's outlook on the rest of the work and our foreign policy. Sword/Shield focuses mostly on Christianity, which is only natural, since the vast majority of citizens claim or at least partially claim affiliation with some form of Christianity. Other traditions do get mentioned but it's mostly Christianity or Judeo/Christianity that comprises the text. Intelligent and clear, Sword/Spirit is well worth a read.0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. As a former History major I have read many books ...By Christian MowlesAs a former History major I have read many books on American History, and was blown away by the quality and freshness of this book. Preston takes a unique look at Religion and the role it has played in American Diplomacy. The insights offered show a deep level of research and shine a light on a topic often avoided in "polite company," religion.

Winner of the Charles Taylor Prize for Literary Non-FictionFinalist for the Cundhill Prize in HistoryA richly detailed, profoundly engrossing story of how religion has influenced American foreign relations, told through the stories of the men and womenfrom presidents to preacherswho have plotted the countrys course in the world. Ever since John Winthrop argued that the Puritans new home would be a city upon a hill, Americans role in the world has been shaped by their belief that God has something special in mind for them. But this is a story that historians have mostly ignored. Now, in the first authoritative work on the subject, Andrew Preston explores the major strains of religious fervorliberal and conservative, pacifist and militant, internationalist and isolationistthat framed American thinking on international issues from the earliest colonial wars to the twenty-first century. He arrives at some startling conclusions, among them: Abraham Lincolns use of religion in the Civil War became the model for subsequent wars of humanitarian intervention; nineteenth-century Protestant missionaries made up the first NGO to advance a global human rights agenda; religious liberty was the centerpiece of Franklin Roosevelts strategy to bring the United States into World War II. From George Washington to George W. Bush, from the Puritans to the present, from the colonial wars to the Cold War, religion has been one of Americas most powerful sources of ideas about the wider world. When, just days after 9/11, George W. Bush described America as a prayerful nation, a nation that prays to an almighty God for protection and for peace, or when Barack Obama spoke of balancing the just war and the imperatives of a just peace in his Nobel Peace Prize acceptance speech, they were echoing four hundred years of religious rhetoric. Preston traces this echo back to its source. Sword of the Spirit, Shield of Faith is an unprecedented achievement: no one has yet attempted such a bold synthesis of American history. It is also a remarkable work of balance and fair-mindedness about one of the most fraught subjects in America.

Neither pedantic nor superficial. [Preston] is the rare scholar who can educate a non-academic audience in the complexity of an important subject. Preston cuts through a confusion that often surrounds America foreign policy, by laying bare the unusual moral history behind it, a history that begins with the Puritans and proceeds in the grooves illuminated in this beautifully written book. Michael Kimmage, The New RepublicA unified field theory of American

foreign relations capturing the play of personality and politics, passion and hypocrisyall written with a style that further distinguishes [Preston] in a domain as deficient in literary grace as in candour. . . . Preston excels in portraits of the people at the heart of the matter, from the Puritans to Barack Obama. No governments here in faceless generality, no US in absolving abstract, but rather the frame and temper of human beings in all their force and frailty. History as biography, his work achieves the most elusive of biographical renderingwhat did they really think about the nature of man and the universe, and how successfully, as Bierce would put it, did they adapt faith to the sins of policy. This is no simplistic case for religion as single cause. Prestons genius is to find the blending with all the other, frequently contradictory strains. Roger Morris, The Globe and Mail[A] monumental study. . . . This book solidifies Prestons reputation as one of the foremost young scholars working in the great tradition of historical interpretation of war, diplomacy, and peace. . . Preston describes how Americas religion has been far more intimately intertwined with its statecraft and foreign policy than is generally understood. . . . This is not the new master narrative of America, but it is close enough. Charles Hill, The Wilson QuarterlyFascinating. . . . As a comprehensive survey, the book opens up pathways for others to explore. Margaret Quamme, The Columbus DispatchEncyclopedic. . . . [Preston] leaves no religious stone unturned . . . I hunger for more. Richard I. Immerman, San Francisco ChronicleWhat is most astonishing is not this or that episode but rather the ubiquity of religious influence on Americas international relations, an ubiquity that Preston complains has for far too long been hidden by the secularist bias of academic historians. A much-needed corrective to that bias. Bryce Christensen, Booklist (starred review)Andrew Preston has written a remarkably comprehensive and uncommonly wise history about one of the most critical elements in the making of American foreign policy. It is a landmark work of scholarship about religion and politics and a pleasure to read.Michael Kazin, author of American DreamersAndrew Preston demonstrates that one of the keys to understanding American foreign policy lies at the interstices of religion and diplomacy. This is a most impressive book, not only for scope of the author's research but also for his judicious conclusions. Randall Balmer, author of God in the White House[M]arvelously readable. . . . A sharp, clear, deeply researched examination of the consistent application of the founding religious principles to American foreign policy. Kirkus s (starred review)Reading this book is a thrilling intellectual adventure: it challenges received ideas at the same time as it throws light on buried, troubling perplexities and changes the way we view not only the United States but the rest of the world. Erudite, balanced and respectful, it could not be more timely and should be required reading for policy-makers, concerned citizens, atheists and religious alike. Karen Armstrong, author A History of God There have been a number of good books on particular aspects of religion and American foreign policy. But no one before Andrew Preston has written such a thoroughly researched, consistently insightful, and ideologically balanced general history of this timely, important, but strangely under-studied subject. This splendid book makes a major contribution in its own right, but also opens up an entire field for much-needed further study. Mark Noll, author of Americas GodIn this landmark work, Andrew Preston sheds light on a critical element of the American experience: the role of religion in our relationship to the world. Faith is one of the most influential factors in our national life, and Prestons excellent book gives religion its due as a force that shapes who we are, what wars we fight, and which causes we make our own. Jon Meacham, author of American LionThis extraordinarily important book explores the relatively unknown link between religion and U.S. foreign policy. The author, a historian at Cambridge University, shows that religion has influenced the nation's foreign policies from the intermittent wars with the Barbary pirates in the 1790s to President Obama's Cairo speech in 2009. . . . Preston's work is exhaustive . . . in the opinion of this reviewer, [it] deserves a prize for historical scholarship and writing. Al Menendez, Voice of ReasonEvery now and then a book appears that redefines a field.This is one of those occasions. Andrew J. Bacevich, CommonwealAbout the AuthorAndrew Prestonteaches American history and international relations history at Cambridge University, where he is a fellow of Clare College. Before Cambridge, he taught history and international studies at Yale University. He has also taught at universities in Canada and Switzerland, and has been a fellow at the Cold War Studies Program at the London School of Economics. He is the author of The War Council: McGeorge Bundy, the NSC, and Vietnam.Excerpt. Reprinted by permission. IntroductionSword of the Spirit, Shield of Faith was written under the assumption that religion played an important role in shaping American perceptions of the world and in contributing to domestic debates on how the United States should engage with other nations. It is an exploration not of whether religion influenced U.S. foreign relations, but how. It is a logical assumption: few would argue that religion has not played a consistently important role in American life, for better or worse.This last qualifierfor better or worseis important, for this book also operates under the assumption that religion is just like any other historical topic. It is not my desire, and certainly not my intention, to make a case either for or against a role for religion in public life. Readers will of course use the material in this book to support their own beliefs that religion is either a productive or a pernicious force in American foreign relations. Partisans on both sides of the acrimonious debate over religions place in the public squareand increasingly over the nature of religion itselfwill find plenty of evidence to back up their competing claims. But such quarrels are not my concern. Religion provokes intense emotions, and no historian is free of bias. Nonetheless, I have sought to treat my subject as objectively as possible.Doing so has meant recognizing that there was not one religious influence upon American foreign relations, but many: nationalist but also internationalist, exceptionalist but also cosmopolitan,

nativist but also tolerant, militant but also pacifist. The religious influence was neither monolithic nor consensual but a product of intense dialogue, debate, and controversy. Nor did it always push U.S. foreign policy in the same direction. It is a fascinatingly complex story, but its very complexity makes its unraveling all the more important and worthwhile.BUT WHY FOCUS on religion at all? Why does it matter to American diplomatic history? Aside from the personal faith of individual policymakers, religion has been integral to American politics and culture, and to Americas sense of itself, and thus also to the products of politics and culture, such as foreign policy. More specifically, religion has had an almost uniquely intimate relationship with American war and diplomacy. In times of war, religious liberals and conservatives, militants and pacifists, have all called upon God to sanctify their cause, and all have viewed America as Gods chosen land. As a result, U.S. foreign policy has often acquired the tenor of a moral crusade.Moreover, the religious mindset was geographically limitless; those who possessed it were concerned not only with their community, state, or country, but the entire world. As immigrants, generations of American Christians, Jews, and Muslims thought of themselves as members of a transnational faith that transcended national boundaries. They kept in regular contact with coreligionists overseas and followed the political affairs in foreign countries that affected these spiritual kinfolk. They sought to spread the gospel to people who had never heard of Christ and endured incredible hardship in doing so. They were more likely to live and travel abroad and more likely to have a foreign correspondent. Unlike most of their fellow citizens, then, religious Americans inherently thought of themselves as citizens of the world. They paid closer attention to foreign affairs and were more likely to allow international developments to affect their political views. Thus while religious faith helped create an American nationalism, it also fostered a powerful sense of internationalism.Since the late sixteenth century, long before the United States existed, religion has played an important role in shaping Americans perceptions of the wider world. In both popular debates about American engagement with the world and the foreign policies that have emerged from these debates, religion has been a major factor. The religious influenceindeed, religious faith itselfhas not always been strong or consistent. But though it has ebbed and flowed, it has always been there.This seems to be a basic pointreligion matters, and always hasyet it is an important one to make because it has been so neglected in explaining the history of American war and diplomacy. Historians have emphasized a wide array of factors, from traditional concerns such as economics, national security, and military strategy, to newer theories based on race, gender, culture, and postmodernism. All are important grounds for inquiry, and all have yielded a rich understanding of the American past. Yet until very recently, religion was seen as a mystifying sideshow, an irrational impulse born of a paranoid style that clouded the realist assumptions of high diplomacy. Even after diplomatic historys cultural turnan exciting development over the past two decades that has pushed scholars to incorporate race, class, and gender into the American diplomatic traditionand its international turn, which portrays the United States as a nation among nations, religion remains peripheral or nonexistent. This is true for otherwise superb overviews of U.S. foreign policy that purport to examine American ideals, style, ideology, mission, Wilsonian idealism, core values, even why America fightsnormative topics, in other words, that are ideally suited to religious ideas and values and incomplete without them. In fact, until very recently religion was sidelined in most fields of modern American history. Be it the history of politics, immigration, or civil rights, religious faith was pushed to the margins when it made any appearance at all. It seemed that only historians of American religion took religion seriously, an absurd situation when one considers the prevalence and importance of religion in American life.Sword of the Spirit, Shield of Faith aims to help fill this gap in our understanding of how Americans have engaged the wider world. It presents a new survey of the history of American foreign relations, told predominantly through a religious lens. Readers should remember that this is not a new master narrative of U.S. foreign policy but a new perspective that aims to complement and enrich existing interpretations without necessarily replacing them. I have begun my story at the onset of Englands settlement of North America in the late sixteenth century and ended it with a brief look at the presidencies of George W. Bush and Barack Obama in the early twenty-first. My chronological scope should not be taken as an argument for the essential continuity of an unchanging history, yet there has been continuity: time and again, many of the same themes appear and reappear down the years.Many of these themescultural habits that informed the making of policyoriginated in the colonial period and then crystallized in later years. To say that this book is an examination of U.S. foreign policy is to elide the fact that our story begins before there was a United States that could even have a foreign policy. But the colonial era was crucial, a period in which many of the premises of an American worldview were established and developed. To begin in 1776 or 1783 or 1789, then, is to join the story after it has already begun. Many other syntheses of U.S. foreign relations do precisely this, and while they have much to offer they miss much that is vital in the formative years. Ignoring the colonial period in an otherwise comprehensive overview assumes that habits and ideas began anew with the creation of the United States of America, when we know that this was impossible.Yet while the earliest eras of American history matter greatly, they do not, in the history of American foreign policy or international relations more generally, matter nearly as much as more recent periods. Of the four centuries since Europeans crossed the Atlantic to settle the eastern shore of North America, it was only in the last hundred years that America became a great power of truly world historical importance. As late as the 1880s, the United States was little more than a minnow in the diplomatic ocean; from then on, it grew steadily to become one of the largest whales the world has ever seen. For this reason, I pay more attention

to the period since the United States announced itself on the global stage by routing Spain in the war of 1898. Not coincidentally, this also marked the period when American religion became more pluralistic, more complicated, and more diffuse.To uncover the habits and ideas that gave shape to Americas interac- tions with the wider world, I focus not only on the traditional aspects of diplomatic historyelites in closed rooms conducting national security policy in secretbut also on the popular pressures brought to bear upon diplomats and policymakers. This book is a study of how religion shaped Americas engagement with the wider world, including the overseas efforts of private citizens, missionaries, and other nongovernmental organizations, in addition to the use of diplomatic and military power. It is not just about U.S. foreign policy, then, but U.S. foreign relations. The distinction is critical: the former term examines only the formulation and execution of actual government policy, while the latter includes policy but also a wider array of American interactions with the world, from missionaries to voluntarist and philanthropic initiatives to corporate and economic interests. The only way to capture the richness of the religious influenceand to find it where it would otherwise remain hiddenis to blend high and low versions of history, from the top-down perspective of policymaking elites to the bottom-up view of religious Americans who do not make policy themselves but influence it collectively, through political pressure and activism abroad. As the historian Akira Iriye sensibly observes, to understand American diplomacy, one must know something about American culture. Thus while Sword of the Spirit, Shield of Faith is predominantly a work of religious and diplomatic history, it is also, where relevant, an exercise in cultural, intellectual, and social history. Similarly, this is also why I pay attention to domestic developments that at first glance may not seem to have a clear link to foreign affairs. As I explain later in this Introduction, politics is central because it formed a bridge between popular religion and elite policy.Readers should always bear in mind that while this is a history of the influence of religion, I do not argue that religion was the only factor in the history of American foreign relations. It was but one among many. Sometimes it was a critically important factor; other times, it played a relatively minor role. I have focused on religion not because it offers a unified theory or single-cause explanation of U.S. foreign policy but because it is a missing link, a vital but unrecognized, even undiscovered, part of the story. And in discovering it, I hope, we will reach a fuller, more complete understanding of the role America has played in the world.CHANGE OVER TIME. The past is a foreign country. These are perhaps the first rules of history, imparted as a warning to those naive enough to search the past for lessons for our world today. But though we know that history is not linear, that it does not remain the same, and that it does not necessarily march forward to progress and enlightenment, we can also sometimes allow fear of what scholars call presentism to blind us to continuity over time. For as we shall see throughout this book, while the religious influence on American foreign relations changed dramatically, it also retained core features developed early on. Many of the themes that animate my narrative have been remarkably durable, not merely over decades but down through the centuries.First and foremost, religion acted as the conscience of American foreign relations. U.S. foreign policy itself has never really been idealistic, and certainly not altruistic. But policymaking elites often had to pursue foreign policy initiatives under an idealistic banner because of popular religious pressures that were themselves idealistic. They had to merge the moralism and progressivism of religion with the normally realist mindset of international politics. Thus the U.S. government was often led to pursue a normative foreign policyof human rights promotion, of democracy promotion, of humanitarian intervention, and so forthby religious pressures emanating from below.Americans, largely but of course not exclusively acting upon a religious impulse, pushed their government not only to be a citizen of the world, but to be a model citizen. As St. Paul instructed the Ephesians, sometimes this meant brandishing the sword of the Spirit. In the American context, this has often meant waging war in the name of God, or at least in the name of serving him and fulfilling his will. This is familiar rhetoric in the history of American exceptionalism: the stuff of providence, manifest destiny, a New Jerusalem, and a shining city upon a hill. But St. Paul told the Ephesians they must also carry the shield of faith. And just as often in American historyin fact, as we shall see, probably more oftenthis has led to the promotion of peace: Christian pacifism, anti-interventionism, anti-imperialism, and internationalism.The tendency to wield both the sword of the spirit and the shield of faith created an idealistic synthesis, as governments, faced with a crisis or war, found themselves buffeted by lobbying from highly moralistic, values-driven Americans. Due in part to this dynamic, when American governments have gone to war, they have felt the overwhelming need to do so in the name of protecting universal values and human rights or bringing progress to areas of the world suffering under poverty and tyranny. While historians have concentrated heavily on the sword of the Spirit, they have mostly ignored the less-sensationalistic shield of faith of pacifism and antiwar movements.But why would policymaking elites even care? Why would they listen to the churches and synagogues, especially if they themselves were conditioned to pursue the secular national interest? There are three important reasons why it was impossible for policymakers to ignore religion. The first is intuitively straightforward: religion mattered to individuals, and many of these individuals became policymakers, either as politicians or as diplomats. This is so simple that it is easy to ignore or dismiss, and diplomatic historians have done so countless times. It has been easytoo easyto discount the public piety of a William McKinley or a Franklin Roosevelt or a John Foster Dulles as cynical window dressing that obscures the real political or strategic motives behind their foreign policies. It has been easy because historians have done so without first understanding the religious biographies of policymakers and appreciating the religious context in which they developed. Their portrayals of these and other

figures are not so much inaccurate as incomplete, and thus inadequate. Much of my task is therefore dedicated to recovering the lost dimensions and exposing the hidden depths of the individuals who made U.S. foreign policy.The other two reasons why policymaking elites had to care about the religious influence are both more structural in nature. Second is the nature of American politics. Since 1783, the United States has been a democracyan imperfect and incomplete democracy, to be sure, given the lack of voting rights for women, the monstrously immoral institution of slavery, and the genocidal treatment of Native Americans, to mention only the most obvious limitations, but a democracy nonetheless. By the 1820s, all white male Americans could vote, an unprecedented extension of the franchise. (By contrast, in Great Britain, the other leading practitioner of mass democracy, not only were most white males denied a vote, many parts of the countryincluding major cities such as Manchesterwere not even represented in Parliament.) Mass democracy in America meant that political elitesand by extension, diplomatic elitescould not ignore the will of the people. They might not always like it, or agree with it, or even listen to it, but they could not simply ignore it. Thus even when leaders wanted to ignore popular opinion and pursue their own policy, they had to make allowances for and adjustments to sentiment from below. To do otherwise was to risk political suicide.For its part, religion in America has always been popular, widely adhered to in one form or another by the vast majority of its people. There is little reason to reject the conclusions of Alexis de Tocquevilles Democracy in America, published in 1835 but still relevant today. Of the American people, he noted that some profess Christian dogmas because they believe them, others because they are afraid of not looking like they believe them. Christianity therefore reigns without obstacles, on the admission of all. Ever since, religion has remained an important part of the language of politics. Just as important, religion in America has also been popular in the sense that it is of the people; thanks to the First Amendment and widespread religious pluralism, the church has been disconnected from the state and thus beholden only to its members. From that basis, religion provided the source and ideas for many popular movements in American history, most obviously revivals and awakenings but also Populism, Progressivism, civil rights, and voluntarism. The political implications are so clear that they sometimes go unnoticed: religion has been vital to American politics because so many Americans have believed in it and believed further that religion should be applied to politics and policy, including international politics and foreign policy.Where popular religion and elite diplomacy met, then, was in politics. Religious communities were highly devoted and motivated, but they themselves usually lacked political power. When they sought to influence foreign policy, they did so by pressuring their elected representatives. To apply such pressure, they used the tools at their disposal: newspapers, magazines, journals, radio and television, letters, pamphlets, and petitions. And at this, they were extremely effective. For their part, policymakers often worked the system from their end. When seeking support for a given policy, they wanted to speak to large bodies of people, such as religious communities. In addition to speeches, which were usually assured wide media coverage, elites used the same means of communication as the churches. A large number of Americans were (and still are) members of a religious grouping, be it a denomination, church, synagogue, or mosque. Like any large, cohesive grouping, they represent political power that can be mobilized to support or oppose a given policy. It was this latent power that elites wanted to tap into, and because religion had captured the hearts and minds of many if not most Americans, politicians had to pay them attention. Religious communities and elites spoke to each other in a continual effort to try to convince one another of what should be done in U.S. foreign policy. The religious influence, then, was the product of this continual dialogue. It was at heart a political process.This leads us to our third explanation, also structural, of why religion has mattered so much to the conduct of American foreign relations: free security. Simply by Americas very position in the international system between 1815 and 1941, Americans were allowed to develop a foreign policy of almost pure choice, free from the atavistic fears of physical security that have motivated other countries. Not coincidentally, this was the period in which the United States first became a great power, and then the worlds preeminent power. To the east and west lay vast oceans, conveniently controlled by the one power, Britain, that was to some extent temperamentally and politically sympathetic to American dominance of the Western Hemisphere. To both the north and south lay relatively weak neighbors in Canada and Mexico; in the rest of the Western Hemisphere, no other nation could pose even a theoretical threat to Americas physical safety. As analysts of free security have noted, the absence of threat enabled Americans to devise foreign policies almost as they pleased. This was a truly unique condition in the history of geopolitics. For example, the foreign policies of France and Russia, Japan and China, were determined largely by what their neighbors and rivals were doing. In the case of smaller and more vulnerable nations, such as Poland, foreign policy was determined entirely by what its rivals were planning. But even the great powers had to act within the constraints imposed by others. British foreign policy was thus formulated not only in London, but also in Berlin, Paris, Istanbul, and Tokyo. These systemic constraints would soon enmesh and entangle Washington, but not until over a century of foreign policymaking habits had been formed. Echoes of its enduring influence continue to be heard today.In an atmosphere of almost pure choice, concerns about self-defense and fears of invasion and occupation were absent not only from the general American worldview but also from U.S. foreign policymaking. But a nation needs a foreign policyeven the most insular countries have to think about the wider world, and the United States has certainly never been insular. The freedom to choose enabled other factors, based not on physical danger but ideals and values, to influence foreign policy decisions. Americans worried little about threats from the world as it actually

was, but dreamed about how the world should really be. Free security also allowed democracyand by extension, religionto play an inordinate role in shaping Americas response to the world, for leaders could not suppress the popular will in the name of a clear and present danger. The religious impulseever-present, morally driven, highly activist, indefatigable, politically connected, deeply concerned with the wider worldhad little to block its path to the White House, Foggy Bottom, and Capitol Hill.THERE ARE ALSO other continuities in the history of religions influence on American war and diplomacy. If religious Americans acted as the moral conscience and progressive imagination of U.S. foreign policy, which ideas gave shape to the conscience and the imagination? In turn, which ideas and values motivated religious Americans? Such questions cannot be answered easily because they did in fact greatly change over time. Still, there are some major watchwords that have persisted and interacted throughout most of American history, broad themes that the reader should bear in mind and that are thus worth introducing here: morality, liberty, progress, and nationalism.All, to some extent, were products of Americas peculiar religious heritage. Crucially, colonial America was established as a Reformation society, founded by Protestant radicals who took refuge from the religious wars and economic crises of Europe (and came mostly from the British Isles, Holland, Germany, and France). Unlike all other Reformation societies, the American colonies never underwent a counterreformation. They never confronted a backlash, and thus never had to accommodate themselves to an alternative worldview in the name of domestic and international peace. From there, many of the American colonies developed as Reformation Protestant societies. When they came together in 1776 to become an independent nation, they did so as a Reformation Protestant nation; they did not necessarily intend to establish a religious republic, but they could not escape the cultural trappings of their Protestant inheritance. Even as the United States became more religiously and culturally pluralistic, new peoples and their faiths had to adapt to a political culture that was overwhelmingly Protestant. Not unusually for American history, this has produced something of a paradox: a nation founded and built upon religious tolerance and pluralism that has been inordinately shaped by a strongly exceptionalist Protestant identity. This milieu nurtured the themes that animate this book.If our first theme is religion as a source of morality, and from it, religion as a source of a moral foreign policy, our second theme is liberty. Produced by an intense combination of republicanism and Protestantism, a strong libertarian ethos pervaded U.S. foreign policy. This was expressed variously as isolationism, unilateralism, and suspicion of international organizations such as the United Nations. A large number of Americans showed a consistent aversion to centers of concentrated power, be they political or religious. Concentrated powerwielded by a monarch, despot, or small ruling cliquewas by its very nature unrepresentative and undemocratic. It was assumed to be inherently hostile to American values and democracy, and thus a threat even if it could not strike directly at the United States. Here again, religion served as both a diagnosis and a cure, for it could identify hostile concentrations of power and then be wielded against them. The democratic peacethe idea that democracies go to war reluctantly, as a last resort, and do not go to war against one anotheris an example of such thinking in action. Religion was vital to the democratic peace, for freedom of conscience was believed to be the foundation of democracy, and religion was assumed to be the source of conscience. A threat to freedom of religion was thus a threat to freedom of conscienceand, eventually, a threat to American democracy itself.Crucially, the sanctity of liberty was also shaped by the separation of church and state. The establishment and free exercise clauses of the First Amendment that enshrined the legal separation of church and state produced a thriving but almost completely deregulated marketplace of faith. This allowed American religion to flourish, because it protected the church from the worldly compromises and interference of the state. While the separation of church and state was enacted to protect politics from religion, it was also deemed just as vital to protect religion from politics. By keeping the government out of religion, the First Amendment created competition among inherently equal, nonfavored denominations, which in turn pushed American religion to be innovative and entrepreneurial. This encouraged nonconformist and eccentric sects to invent and reinvent themselves, from evangelicalism to Mormonism to Pentecostalism, as they responded to the wishes of their adherents. It also allowed for the gradual and relatively peaceful absorption of Catholics and Jews in an overwhelmingly Protestant nation. The result of the separation of church and state was the growth of highly autonomous religious communities that harbored an innate hostility to government regulation. In foreign policy terms, the separationist mindset has led to suspicion and outright hostility not only toward concentrated power, but also international organizations and other forums for multilateral diplomacy. Isolationism and unilateralism, then, can in large part trace their origins and continued vibrancy to the power of religious ideas.Next is progress. Protestant Americans associated their faith with the hallmarks of material progresstechnological innovation, industrialization, trade, commerce, financebecause they believed that free religion allowed for free economics, just as it allowed for free politics. Released from the interference of the state and an established church, Americans, it was assumed, were able to behave more or less as they thought best, within reason. This, they believed, enabled them to create economic prosperity as well as political liberty. Indeed, the two were assumed to be inseparable. (Perhaps not surprisingly, Americans also believed in Max Webers theory of a thrifty, industrious, and dedicated Protestant work ethic long before he was around to devise it.)But to religious Americans, progress meant something more than just economic prosperity. It also meant the general improvement of society, which of course included material advancement but was not limited to it. In this view, progress meant the creation and perfection of a society that respected the dignity of the

individual, that cared for its poor and indolent in addition to rewarding its creators of wealth, and that sought to improve living conditions for all. It aimed, in other words, to balance personal freedom with social obligation and individual rights with group rights. At home, this faith-based progressive mindset led to campaigns against slavery, poor working conditions, alcohol, prostitution, and other vices. Abroad, it led to a mission to reform the worldthough sometimes this was actually implemented at the barrel of a gun. On matters of foreign policy, religious Americans were rarely static and conservative; most often, they were aggressively progressive, at times even radical. The progressivist impulse was complicated and could lead to the adoption of seemingly contradictory policies. Within a few decades of the nineteenth century, for example, religious Americans were at the forefront in calling for the end of white supremacy at home but the spread of it abroad: first for the abolition of slavery in the South, then for the imposition of an empire overseas. Or consider the role of missionaries, who were simultaneously some of the earliest advocates of universal human rights but also practitioners of cultural imperialism. Yet whether they were missionaries, abolitionists, or imperialists, they all sincerely believed themselves to be motivated by the purest, most progressive of motives.Our final theme is nationalism, and its attendant civil religion. Religion has for centuries been an incubator of national pride, and not just Americas. But in American history, the relationship between faith and patriotism has been especially close and durable. Protestant exceptionalism helped breed American exceptionalism and led to a consistent belief in America as a chosen nation and in Americans as a chosen people. The implications this held for foreign relations are obvious. Under nationalisms spell, Americans believed themselves to be responding to a higher calling, to be executing Gods plan, to be fulfilling his providence. As Gods chosen nation, the United States was bound to do right. This belief underpinned U.S. intervention and imperialism in North America and around the world, a story historians have often told and one that animates this book. But many religious Americans, including the most devout, also used national exceptionalism as a spur to charity and peace. If they elevated America onto a spiritual plane, they did it not to convert others but to hold the nation to a higher moral standard. While nationalistic exceptionalism supported wars, it also damned them in the name of a powerfully dogmatic and equally patriotic pacifism.Nationalism, especially the belief in America as a chosen nation, has been sustained by an American civil religion. Politics, like religion, is a ritualistic activity, and both use ritual and ceremony as a means to codify social relations. In a highly religious nation like the United States, it has been relatively easy to blend the beliefs in God and country into a single, cohesive ideology. For a long timeuntil the early twentieth centurythis American civil religion was grounded in political institutions and civic values. Its purpose was to sanctify the virtues of American democracy by linking them to the higher virtues of Christianity. But as the nation became more pluralisticthat is, less Protestantcivil religion became more inclusive, its mission more ecumenical, its meaning grounded more in people than institutions. It ceased to be Protestant and instead became Judeo-Christian, a term rarely used before the twentieth century. This Judeo-Christian civil religion celebrated religious liberty not only as a source of political freedom, but also as a source of tolerance.There is no official hierarchy in the American civil religion, but as the nations head of state as well as its chief executiveand, not irrelevant for our purposes, its commander-in-chiefthe president has acted as its de facto pope. Since George Washington, the president has been the interpreter of the rites, symbols, and meanings of the civil religion, with someparticularly Abraham Lincoln, Franklin Roosevelt, and Harry Trumansignificantly recasting it under the pressure of war. Moreover, presidents were instrumental in applying the civil religion to foreign policy. As such, they and their religious rhetoric feature prominently throughout our story here.Next to each religion is a political opinion that is joined to it by affinity, observed Tocqueville. Allow the human mind to follow its tendency and it will regulate political society and the divine city in a uniform manner; it will seek, if I dare say it, to harmonize the earth with Heaven. This, he concluded, was precisely what had happened in America, where both free politics and free religion thrived together, in tandem. A consequence, explored in the pages that follow, was a powerfully enduring religious influence on the conduct of American war and diplomacy, enabled above all by the centrality of religion to American politics and political thought. Whether it meant wielding the sword of the spirit, the shield of faith, or both, Americas foreign relations have always been, to some extent, rooted in religion.