dependency; it might embrace same-sex relationships; it might include as well the elderly living in relationships of mutual love, care, and vulnerability. Parties in such relationships are moved to extend themselves by reason of emotional commitment, spiritual fulfillment, or psychological satisfaction. Intimate care for others, after all, is an essential attribute of our humanity, and it is right that the state should support and superintend such relationships.

In other work, I have defended, despite my own misgivings, an affirmative role for the state in marriage. I have always seen the choice as one between state support for traditional marriage or the libertarian ideal of self-regulating relationships, policed primarily by private associations. Metz challenges that Sophie’s choice, arguing persuasively, that there is another approach. I will certainly give her case the serious reflection it deserves.

Charles J. Reid, Jr.
University of St. Thomas, St. Paul, Minnesota
doi:10.1093/jcs/csq099


This is a volume that is very important for those engaged in the study of international relations, but it promises more than it delivers. It calls for the development of a Christian International Relations, without strongly specifying what that singular entity might comprise and exclude. It is a clarion call for the connection of fields that have been treated as diverse in the academy though seen as deeply interconnected in the (post-9/11) policy worlds of religion/faith and politics/international relations.

The keystone is the Introduction, which is titled “Naming Religion Truthfully.” Chaplin and Joustra challenge those who are specialists in international relations with the charge that the field is dominated by secularism and that those within the field do not recognize that secularism is itself a faith. International relations scholarship, as a field of secularism, needs to be challenged by Christian scholars, and they need to work for a growing desecularization, which would be both positive for scholarship and liberating. “Recognizing religion—naming it truthfully—will make International Relations more productive (perhaps even more predictive) as a richer
conceptual apparatus alerts practitioners to a much wider range of relevant empirical data” (p. 11). The demand is that scholars should not, as I and many others have done, “simply” examine faith group influences in the international realm but should establish a Christian perspective in international relations. “Scholarship is not a faith-free zone of neutral, rational understanding” (p. 13). It is hard to imagine a more thorough challenge to the way in which international relations scholarship is established in the English-speaking world, unless, of course, the challenge to create a Christian International Relations was to be matched with the demand to create, say, an Islamic International Relations.

I do not take this challenge lightly; nor, I suspect, would many in the academy. But what I would want is the challenge to be more direct: what would “a” Christian International Relations look like? This is not explicated in the book, and many will see that as a disappointment. This should be a challenge situated rather differently. It has taken fifteen or so years to get to the point where a faith-shaped international relations could be discussed; rather than see the glass as half empty—no detail on what the Christian International Relations looks like—it should be seen as half full: the challenge to create such a body of thought is not well and truly made.

The volume seeks to achieve three connected goals. The first, as already outlined, is to set the challenge of creating a Christian International Relations. The second is to understand how religion actually impacts the United States in foreign policy terms. One chapter injects religion into the history of America’s foreign relations; another shows that even in a “religious” area of foreign policy (the promotion of religious freedom), American diplomacy has operated largely outside a frame constructed in and through faith. Another argues that America’s struggle with “radical Islam” has been wrongly framed through a focus on material factors rather than on the power of faith itself. And, another looks at forms of Zionism as ideology in America’s relations with Israel. This goal is to take religion seriously in international affairs. The third goal is about “enlisting religion diplomatically.” U.S. policy making will be more effective and responsible with the centering of faith perspectives. Four case studies illustrate the point: Europe, Russia, humanitarian intervention, and postconflict situations, with an ethic of reconciliation. There are then in effect two conclusions about the “return of religion” in international relations and what that might mean and then a call to understand the “pastness, thickness and potency” of religion and an outline of the bare bones of a Christian International Relations.
There is a tremendous depth of scholarship in the volume. Critics might want to see “religion” problematized in places—is it always, in the international realm, a force for the good? It is also a very U.S.-centered book, which at many places bemoans the failure/absence of U.S. religious (presumably, Christian?) agency. There is a tendency to conflate “faith” and “Christianity”—perhaps this occurs more in the mind of the reader—but how the goals impact non-Christian faiths in America and abroad is an important and underdeveloped theme. However, it is the call for a Christian International Relations that is the main focus of the book. At the beginning and end of the volume—where goal one is addressed—the reader is directly challenged. If one takes a particular (Christian) faith perspective, one might also feel liberated, indeed inspired. If not, if one sits in the mainstream of international relations—defined here as being in all the different schools of thought of the discipline—then one is connected by the accusation that our scholarship is constructed through a faith, and that in secularism. It is a challenge, and one deliberately set out; and, hopefully, one that will be taken up on all “sides.”

Stuart Croft
University of Warwick
Coventry, United Kingdom
doi:10.1093/jcs/csr015


Professor GhaneaBassiri has written a sweeping history of Islam in America that both eclectically and effectively draws upon an impressively diverse range of sources in telling a nearly five-hundred-year history that has only recently begun to receive attention. From those of Islamic faith who were enslaved and brought to America to the urban legend that President Barack Obama is himself a Muslim, GhaneaBassiri touches upon every major historical episode in the establishment of Islam in America and the challenges Muslims face in the United States today.

This history is often told through the use of vignettes detailing influential Muslim individuals, ranging from the slave era all the