Pragmatism, Religion, and John Foster Dulles's Embrace of Christian Internationalism in the 1930s[*]

In October 1942, the Federal Council of Churches' (FCC) Commission to Study the Bases of a Just and Durable Peace produced a pamphlet containing fourteen articles supporting the case for religion playing a greater part in any post-war international system.[1] The lead article was penned by John Foster Dulles—one-time member of the U.S. delegation to the Paris Peace Conference, partner in the prestigious Sullivan & Cromwell law firm, future secretary of state under Dwight D. Eisenhower, and the head of the FCC Commission since 1940. Though most of Dulles's essay called on the American people to embrace religion more readily, it also featured a section that equated the acceptance of religion with the capacity to counter the threat posed by a series of transnational forces. The trauma and exhaustion of the First World War, Dulles wrote, had led to the creation of a "spiritual vacuum" and caused the gap in men's hearts and minds to be filled by "new faiths": Russian Communism, German

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[1] David Hollinger, *After Cloven Tongues of Fire: Protestant Liberalism in Modern American History* (Princeton, NJ, 2013), 56-82.

Nazism, and Japanese militarism. America could not just sit back and allow this to happen; the country needed to mobilize and to find a way of impelling its people to commit to the global cause. "New faiths will [again] arise to attack us and in the long run we will succumb," Dulles wrote. "The impact of the dynamic upon the static—while it may be resisted in detail—will ultimately destroy that which it attacks."[2]

Dulles's argument fused his evolving engagement with Christian ecumenism with the central lesson he had derived from a period spent studying with Henri Bergson at the Sorbonne. Bergson had persuaded Dulles that the world was in a constant state of flux and that any attempts to constrain it would fail.[3] Dulles might have been advocating religion as a positive force in international relations, but he was doing so as part of a much longer intellectual process that stretched back to his formative years and that, in the 1930s, had focused on issues such as the danger posed by emerging nations in a world-system designed

[2] John Foster Dulles, "The American People need now to be Imbued with a Righteous Faith," in *A Righteous Faith for a Just and Durable Peace*, October 1942, Box 2, Federal Council of the Churches of Christ USA Collected Records, Swarthmore College Peace Collection, Swarthmore, Pennsylvania.

[3] Dulles's time with Bergson is a highly important, if under-developed, element in his life story. See: Richard Immerman, *Empire for Liberty: A History of American Imperialism from Benjamin Franklin to Paul Wolfowitz* (Princeton, NJ, 2010), 167. On Bergson, A.E. Pilkington, *Bergson and his Influence: A Reassessment* (New York, 1976); G. W. Barnard, *Living Consciousness: The Metaphysical Vision of Henri Bergson* (Albany, NY, 2011)

to be static, the capacity of false deities driven by nationalist ambitions to transcend borders, and the need to find an alternative that could combat these processes.

It is an insight that provides a useful starting point for rethinking Dulles's engagement with Christian ecumenism. While scholars have long-recognized that religion came to play an important part in Dulles's worldview—particularly following his attendance at the Oxford World Ecumenical Conference in 1937—they have disagreed over the exact nature of this engagement.[4] Mark Toulouse has seen substantial "discontinuities" between the Dulles of the 1930s and that who served as secretary of state under Dwight Eisenhower, a transition that he explains as being a product of significant shifts in Dulles's religious outlook that took him from being an adherent of "prophetic realism" to one of "priestly nationalism."[5] Andrew

[4] This, of course, sits within the rapidly expanding field of scholarship that now focuses on the relationship between foreign relations and religion. See, for example: Andrew Preston, *Sword of the Spirit, Shield of Faith: Religion in American War and Diplomacy* (New York, 2012); idem, Bridging the Gap between the Sacred and the Secular in the History of American Foreign Relations," *Diplomatic History,* Volume 30, No 5 (November 2006), 783–812; William Inboden, *Religion and American Foreign Policy, 1945-1960: The Soul of Containment* (New York, 2008); Andrew Rotter, "Christians, Muslims, and Hindus: Religion and U.S.—South Asian Relations, 1947-1964," *Diplomatic History,* Volume 24, No 3 (September 2000); Sarah Miller-Davenport, "'Their Blood Shall not be Shed in Vain': American Evangelical Missionaries and the Search for God and Country in Post-World War II Asia," *Journal of American History,* Volume 99, No 4 (March 2013), 1109-32.

[5] Mark Toulouse, *The Transformation of John Foster Dulles: From Prophet of Realism to Priest of Nationalism* (Mercer, 1985), xiv-xxix

Preston and William Inboden, by contrast, have argued for continuity in Dulles's engagement with religion. Inboden suggests that Dulles's positions did alter, but that this was more of an "evolution" than a "conversion" and can be best understood by his changing professional circumstances. Preston adopts a similar stance and notes that religion remained at the heart of his worldview. The later Dulles, he argues, simply took these earlier positions to their "logical extremes."[6] Michael Thompson's study disputes the idea of Dulles ever being a sincere exponent of ecumenism and, instead, argues that he "'Americanized' ecumenical internationalism" for political and pragmatic purposes.[7] Ronald Pruessen has portrayed Dulles as playing a major role in the ecumenist movement that took shape in the late 1930s and after. However, he also sees this as being more of a "*stylistic* change". Dulles, he argues, was still trying to solve the same problems; he was just doing so in a different guise than before and was still inclined to see the solution to challenges facing the world in economic terms.[8] Richard Immerman, finally, adopts a different stance—one that helps to open up the space to understand Dulles more fully. Rather than suggesting that Dulles's engagement with religion at Oxford came to define his entire approach to international matters, Immerman

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[6] Inboden, *Religion and American Foreign Policy*..., 226-56; Preston, *Sword of the Spirit*..., 384-409, 450-64

[7] Michael Thompson, *For God and Globe: Christian Internationalism in the United States, 1919-1945* (Ithaca, NY, 2015), 167-89, see in particular, 170-2

[8] Emphasis in original. Ronald Pruessen, *John Foster Dulles: The Road to Power* (New York, 1982), 203-7, 216-17

suggests that Dulles's experiences serving on behalf of the religious community drove him to create the sort of world in which Christian principles could flourish while recognizing that, in the short-term, this would need to be achieved by pursuing what he refers to as an "Empire of Security".[9]

As these disagreements suggest, scholars have disagreed over the exact nature of Dulles's engagement with religion and the way that it affected his thinking. In particular, they have found it difficult to explain the abundant contradictions that were a major part of Dulles's character—an advocate of ecumenism and critic of the nation-state yet a strident believer in American exceptionalism; a vocal spokesperson against portraying other nations as problems or "devil nations" but who would do precisely that during the Cold War; and the figure most heavily associated with the policy of Massive Retaliation in the 1950s yet who believed that nuclear weapons were morally troubling.[10] Indeed, Dulles has often defied simple categorization. It is a point highlighted by Ronald Pruessen in his comprehensive study of Dulles's early life. Dulles, he argued, was a brilliant thinker and highly perceptive when it came to identifying major problems, but he was much less adept at solving them and was too often "focused on rather narrow programs as likely solutions to fundamental problems." "What Dulles's behavior before 1952 suggests in the end," Pruessen writes, "is something that might be called 'intellectual brinkmanship.' He went to the edge of an

[9] Immerman, *Empire for Liberty*..., 173-8

[10] For good accounts of Dulles's contradictions, Preston, *Sword of the Spirit*..., 455-62; Immerman, *Empire for Liberty*..., 172-3

understanding of some of the profound problems of the twentieth-century world—and then either stopped or turned back."[11]

The present article will seek to bridge the divide between these various interpretations by focusing on the way that Dulles's engagement with religion intersected with a much larger and consistently evolving worldview that was primarily geared toward creating a sustainable system of international "peace".[12] More specifically, it will argue that the key to understanding Dulles's engagement with religion is to draw out his engagement with the working methods and ideals of American Pragmatism. Though he was by no means an unquestioning adherent of the philosophy shaped by C.S. Peirce, William James, John Dewey and Jane Addams, among others, he did have a long-standing commitment to some of its core principles: the idea that beneficial change could be achieved through an individual's actions and beliefs; that progress could be secured by adopting a trial-and-error approach to problem-solving; and that sweeping ideological positions should, if possible, be avoided.[13] Several

[11] Pruessen, *Road to Power...*, 500-8

[12] William Mulligan, *The Great War for Peace* (New Haven, CT, 2014), 4

[13] On Pragmatism and its place in American history, David Hollinger, "The Problem of Pragmatism in American History," *Journal of American History* Volume 67, No 1 (June 1980), 88-107; Bruce Kuklick, *The Rise of American Philosophy: Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1870-1930* (New Haven, CT, 1977); Christopher Hookaway, *The Pragmatic Maxim: Essays on Peirce and Pragmatism* (New York, 2012); Cheryl Misak, *The American Pragmatists: The Oxford History of Philosophy* (Oxford, UK, 2013); Alan Malchowski (eds), *The Cambridge Companion to Pragmatism* (New York, 2013); Deborah Whitehead, *William James,*

existing works on Dulles have referenced some of these features, but bringing them together, under the banner of Pragmatism, helps us to get a much sharper sense of Dulles's thinking.[14]

This is particularly true of his engagement with religion in the 1930s. The Oxford Conference, as we shall see, was part of a much longer process. From 1935 onwards, Dulles painstakingly sought to determine how long-term peace could become a reality. As he did so he utilized the working methods of Pragmatism, and when he came to consider the question of religion he was prone to do so by using highly similar phrases to those deployed by William James in his own writings on the subject. At the same time, he was also influenced by a transnational network of other likeminded figures. While Oxford was the most obvious example of this, he was also part of a larger discussion taking place between those like British observers Arnold Toynbee, Lionel Curtis, and Lord Lothian, and, in the United States, figures such as Reinhold Niebuhr and Clarence Streit.

When Dulles came to embrace religion in the late 1930s, then, it was because he had come to believe that it could serve to motivate people to embrace the prospect of peace. It is a

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Pragmatism, and American Culture (Bloomington, IL, 2015). On the application of Pragmatism to contemporary politics and foreign relations, David Milne, "Pragmatism or What? The Future of U.S. Foreign Policy," *International Affairs*, Volume 88, No 5 (November 2012), 935-51; James Kloppenberg, *Reading Obama: Dreams, Hope, and the American Political Tradition* (Princeton, NJ, 2011)

[14] See, for instance, the relevant passages in Immerman, *Empire for Liberty*..., 167-79; Inboden, *Religion and American Foreign Policy*..., 229; Thompson, *For God and Globe*..., 187-9.

point echoed by his son, Avery, who noted in an oral history interview that his father was concerned with Christianity "from the standpoint of its practical fruits" and due to his belief that it could do "something in world affairs which nothing else was able to do."[15] Religion, Dulles believed, could serve as a transnational force that could help to capture peoples' hearts and minds, to move them away from their dangerous faith in the nation-state, and toward accepting the idea that an effective world-system would require global compromise and cooperation.

When Pragmatism is used to describe foreign relations it is typically in a reductive way—in the sense that someone is realistic and prioritizes results over entrenched beliefs. As James Kloppenberg has argued, there is a world of difference between "such vulgar pragmatism" and a more philosophical approach that "embraces uncertainty, provisionality, and the continuous testing of hypotheses through experimentation."[16]

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[15] Avery Dulles Oral History, Reel 1, John Foster Dulles Oral History Project, Seeley G. Mudd Library, Princeton University, Princeton, New Jersey (hereafter SMLP); Richard Immerman, *John Foster Dulles: Piety, Pragmatism, and Power in U.S. Foreign Policy* (Wilmington, 1999), 14-18

[16] Kloppenberg, *Reading Obama*..., xii-xiii. A number of recent studies have highlighted the important role that Pragmatism played in the presidencies of Theodore Roosevelt, Woodrow Wilson and Franklin Roosevelt, James Kloppenberg, "James's *Pragmatism* and American Culture, 1907-2007," in John Stuhr (eds), *100 Years of Pragmatism: William James's Revolutionary Philosophy* (Bloomington: IN, 2008), 7-40; Trygve Throntveit, *Power without Victory: Woodrow Wilson & The American Internationalist Experiment* (Chicago, *forthcoming* 2016); Alan Brinkley, *The End of Reform: New Deal Liberalism in Recession*

Dulles's most direct engagement with Pragmatism came during his undergraduate studies at Princeton University where he majored in Philosophy. Though Princeton was hardly a hotbed of Pragmatism—other institutions, chiefly Harvard, Chicago and Columbia, were far more prominent in this respect—it was nevertheless a topic that Dulles focused on at several points during his undergraduate studies and that saw him engage with the ideas of William James.[17] In one essay, for instance, Dulles pondered whether it was possible to believe something that was not known to be true. Oftentimes, he wrote, "we make our world of reality harmonize with our beliefs and do not discard the beliefs because they fail to harmonize with what we have believed before."[18] In making the point Dulles quoted James approvingly; it was also a point that James had dwelt on in the "Will to Believe". "I live,"

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and War (New York, 1995), 8-11; Ira Katznelson, *Fear Itself: The New Deal and the Origins of our Time* (New York, 2013), 120-1; David Kennedy, *Freedom from Fear: The American People in Depression and War, 1929-1945* (New York, 1999), 377. Importantly, Pragmatism could also serve to reinforce conservative ideals. See: Shamoon Zamir, *Dark Voices: W.E.B. Du Bois and American Thought, 1888-1903* (Chicago, 1995), 39-42; Seth Vannatta, *Conservatism and Pragmatism: In Law, Politics, and Ethics* (Basingstoke, 2014).

[17] Bruce Kucklick, *A History of Philosophy in America, 1720-2000* (New York, 2001), 95-199

[18] "The Theory of Judgement," Undergraduate Essay by John Foster Dulles, Princeton University, undated 1907, Box 279, Dulles Papers, SMLP

James wrote, "by the practical faith that we must go on experiencing and thinking over our experience, for only thus can our opinions grow more true."[19]

Dulles, however, was not an unquestioning adherent of James. In his senior thesis he adopted a tough and critical approach, outlining what he saw as being Pragmatism's flaws.[20] His major complaint was that Pragmatism seemed to advocate constant change irrespective of whether it led to improvements. But, he continued, this could be overcome "if the pragmatist holds that in shaping reality some plan is followed, if the successive editions of reality form a progress, not a mere change."[21] For Dulles, then, there was a need for Pragmatism to be seen as working toward a logical end—changing the world to improve it and admitting that belief had to go hand-in-hand in with reason in seeking to solve pressing problems and understand the human condition.[22]

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[19] William James, *The Will to Believe and other Essays in Popular Philosophy* (New York, 1912, first published in 1896) Project Gutenberg E-Book http://www.gutenberg.org/files/26659/26659-h/26659-h.htm#P1 (July 20 2015), paragraph 15 (hereafter James, *Will to Believe*...); Robert Fuller, "'The Will to Believe': A Centennial Reflection," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, Volume 64, No 3 (Autumn 1996), 633-50

[20] Townsend Hoopes, *The Devil and John Foster Dulles* (Boston, MA, 1973), 20

[21] John Foster Dulles Senior thesis on Pragmatism, Princeton University 1908, 16-17, Box 279, Dulles Papers, SMLP

[22]Emphasis in original. Ibid, 39-40

From his engagement with Pragmatism at Princeton—an engagement that would remain his most direct intellectual interaction with the works of James—Dulles retained an adherence to the philosophy's working methods. The most important of these would be the twin-ideas that the world was in a constant state of flux, and that the way to combat this was not by imposing fixed systems of governance, but through trial and error and moving toward a more flexible model.[23] Furthermore, he also embraced the Pragmatist's idea that it was within an individual's capacity to effect positive change through their actions.[24]

After leaving Princeton and training as a lawyer, Dulles secured a post with the prominent New York law firm Sullivan and Cromwell, and, through family connections in Woodrow Wilson's State Department, a place as a junior member of the U.S. delegation to the Versailles Peace Conference. Much of his time in France was spent working on the issue of reparations, but he also witnessed the difficulties that Wilson had in securing international

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[23] On these aspects of Dulles's thought, Immerman, *Piety, Pragmatism and Power*..., 4-5; Erdmann, *Building the Kingdom of God on Earth: The Churches' Contribution to Marshal Public Support for World Order and Peace, 1919-1945* (Eugene, Oregon, 2005), 116-8

[24] David Hollinger, "The Problem of Pragmatism"..., 98-99; Louis Menand, *The Metaphysical Club*: *A Story of Ideas in America* (New York, 2001), xi-xii

acceptance of his peace plan due to the absence of something that would persuade nations to think beyond their own interests.[25]

For most of the 1920s Dulles, like most Republicans, bought into the concept of a sustainable world order shaped by economic prosperity.[26] Greater financial interconnectedness and trade, Dulles believed, if coupled with an open-minded approach to legal treaties, war debts, and reparations would lead to widespread prosperity and peace.[27] Yet he was also prone to outbursts about structural economic problems that he saw as being caused by excessive government oversight.[28]

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[25] Adam Tooze, *The Deluge: The Great War and the Remaking of the Global Order* (London, 2014), 333-50; John Milton Cooper, *Breaking the Heart of the World: Woodrow Wilson and the Fight for the League of Nations* (New York, 2001)

[26] George Herring, *From Colony to Superpower: U.S. Foreign Relations since 1776* (New York, 2008), 445-50; Thompson, *A Sense of Power*..., 111-8; Thomas J. Knock, *To End all Wars: Woodrow Wilson and the Quest for a New World Order* (Princeton, NJ, 1995)

[27] Daniel Gorman, *The Emergence of International Society in the 1920s* (New York, 2012); Patrick Cohrs, *The Unfinished Peace after World War I: America, Britain and the Stabilisation of Europe, 1919-1932* (New York, 2006); Tooze, *The Deluge*...

[28] Pruessen, *The Road to Power*...,76-105; Immerman, *Empire for Liberty*..., 170-1; Melvyn Leffler, "American Policy Making and European Stability, 1921-1933," *Pacific Historical Review*, Volume 46, No 2 (May 1977), 207-28; Frank Costigliola, *Awkward Dominion:*

He was greatly concerned about the economic legacies of the war—the substantial war debts accrued by the Allies and the reparation payments that had been imposed on Germany.[29] When France and Belgium occupied the Rhineland in 1923 following Germany's failure to meet these payments, Dulles travelled to Europe in order to help broker a solution.[30] His approach when doing so was to avoid sweeping solutions and encourage the respective leaders to reach a compromise.[31]

The importance of this fairly minor intervention in European politics is that when faced with particular problems—in this case the difficulties in persuading competing nations to compromise over financial and political matters—he reflexively reached for Pragmatist working methods. He avoided emotive and dogmatic positions, sought to find a way of

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American Political, Economic, and Cultural Relations with Europe, 1919-1933 (Ithaca, NY, 1984), 104-10

[29] For his thoughts on the war debts, John Foster Dulles, "The Alliance Debts," *Foreign Affairs* (September 1922), 116-32

[30] Mark Mazower, *Dark Continent: Europe's Twentieth Century* (London, 1999), 106-17; Tooze, *The Deluge*..., 452-61; George Herring, *From Colony to Superpower: U.S. Foreign Relations since 1776* (New York, 2008), 456-60; Patricia Clavin, *Securing the World Economy: The Reinvention of the League of Nations, 1920-1946* (Oxford, 2013), 22-34

[31] Memorandum of Conversation between John Foster Dulles and Belgian Prime Minister, July 19 1923, Box 279, Dulles Papers, SMLP; see also, Memoranda of Conversations during visit to Europe by John Foster Dulles, July 2-25 1923, Box 279, Dulles Papers, SMLP

bringing the different parties together through trial and error, and set out his view that by compromising all the interested parties could achieve their aims. He would work in much the same way when the onset of the Great Depression compelled him to think more expansively about international order.

From his position working on Wall St., Dulles observed the way that a series of financial panics and partial recoveries coalesced into something larger and more ruinous.[32] It led him to reflect far more widely on the problem of peace. He would retain his belief in the United States, but he would also reach back to the lessons of his formative years and the experiences of Versailles in a more concerted fashion than previously. The result was a period of detailed reflection and thought—slowly developing his ideas, probing and questioning, receiving feedback, and piecing together a new approach that could combat the dangerous tensions that had emerged in the wake of the global economic collapse.

The 1920s were an era that saw broad support for pacifism, particularly among mainline Christian churches, with many people seeing armed conflict as "unthinkable" in the aftermath of the Great War.[33] Indeed, many of Dulles's contemporaries were themselves drawn to pacifistic ideals. Dulles's own view, though, was that it was presently futile to try and outlaw conflict. Previous attempts had failed, he argued, because efforts such as the League of Nations or the Kellogg-Briand Pact had focused on preserving the status quo rather

[32] Tooze, *The Deluge*..., 487-507; Costigliola, *Awkward Dominion*..., 218-20

[33] Preston, *Sword of the Spirit*..., 298; Leilah Danielson, *American Gandhi: A.J. Muste and the History of Radicalism in the Twentieth Century* (Philadelphia, 2014)

than providing for change.[34] In a piece for the *Christian Science Monitor* in 1928 Dulles noted that the recently signed Kellogg-Briand pact was severely limited. "So long as the public sentiment of the world is what it is," Dulles wrote, "no treaty can make future war wholly impossible."[35]

A series of early efforts to help salve the consequences of the financial crash—a call for a League of Nations committee that would encourage cooperation in international financial disputes; an attempt to broker deals between a series of American banks and the Reichsbank in Berlin—collapsed as a result of nations putting their own interests first. Dulles also decried Franklin Roosevelt's sabotage of an economic conference in London as being typical of a dangerous global emphasis on national self-interest.[36]

Dulles was not alone in seeing the rise of nationalism as being deeply problematic; he began to be influenced in important ways by his intersections with other likeminded

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[34] Pruessen, *Road to Power*..., 160-1.

[35] John Foster Dulles Article for the *Christian Science Monitor*, August 17 1928, Box 280, Dulles Papers, SMLP

[36] Pruessen, *Road to Peace*...,146-50; Clavin, *Securing the World Economy*..., 121-8; Herring, *From Colony to Superpower*..., 493-5; Elliot Rosen, *Roosevelt, the Great Depression, and the Economics of Recovery* (Charlottesville, VA, 2005), 23-56; Angus Burgin, *The Great Persuasion: Reinventing Free Markets since the Great Depression* (Cambridge, MA, 2012), 12-55.

observers.[37] Though his career before this point had seen him interact sporadically with heads of state and politicians, his audience had essentially been confined to that available to a Wall St lawyer. But he was extremely well-connected. Editors of major journals welcomed submissions from him; he had numerous contacts in the U.S. and in Europe; and he would publish his first book, *War, Peace or Change*, to some success in 1939 and emerge as a key figure in the burgeoning ecumenical movement.

The prominent British historian, Arnold Toynbee, the inaugural holder of the Stevenson Chair in international history at the LSE, and author of the twelve-volume account, *A Study of History*, was a vital figure on this front. Toynbee was highly pessimistic about the West's chances of survival and believed that the desires of rising nations needed to be met if

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[37] On earlier efforts to think imaginatively about the problems inherent in the post-war system of peace, led by figures such as John Dewey and Sherwood Eddy, see Molly Cochran, "Dewey as an International Thinker," in Molly Cochran (eds), *The Cambridge Companion to Dewey* (New York, 2010), 309-36; Michael Thompson, "Sherwood Eddy, the Missionary Enterprise, and the Rise of Christian Internationalism in 1920s America," *Modern Intellectual History*, Volume 12, No 1 (April 2015), 65-93; Daniel Gorman, "Ecumenical Internationalism: Willoughby Dickinson, the League of Nations and the World Alliance for Promoting International Friendship through the Churches," *Journal of Contemporary History*, Volume 45, No 1 (January 2010), 51-73. For other figures engaged with the issue of peace in the 1930s, Sean Malloy, *Atomic Tragedy: Henry L. Stimson and the Decision to use the Bomb Against Japan* (Ithaca, NY, 2008), 30-7; Christopher McKnight Nichols, *Promise and Peril: America at the Dawn of a Global Age* (Cambridge, MA, 2011), 312-20; E.H. Carr, *The Twenty Years Crisis, 1919-1939* New Edition (Basingstoke, 2001)

war was to be avoided.[38] While he saw religion as having the potential to serve as a constructive force on this front, he was unsure whether his own faith—Christianity, which he had recently rediscovered—had sufficient prominence to achieve this due to its increasing marginalization.[39] With Islam, Buddhism and Confucianism believed to be going the same way, Toynbee suggested Hinduism and Soviet Communism as the likely alternatives. At this stage, he was inclined more toward the latter as he did not believe that "Western society, even its dotage, will worship divinities with six arms and legs."[40]

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[38] Ian Hall, "Time of Troubles: Arnold Toynbee's Twentieth Century," *International Affairs*, Volume 90, No 1 (January 2014), 23-36, but especially 27-8; William McNeill, *Arnold J. Toynbee: A Life* (Oxford, 1989); Mark Mazower, "An International Civilization? Empire, Internationalism, and the Crisis of the Mid-Twentieth Century," *International Affairs*, Volume 82, No 3 (May 2006), 563-4; David Stevenson, "Learning from the Past: The Relevance of International History," *International Affairs*, Volume 90, No 1 (January 2014), 5-22; Luca G. Castellin, "Arnold J. Toynbee's Quest for a New World Order: A Survey," *The European Legacy*, Volume 20, No 6 (2015), 619-35; Richard Overy, *The Morbid Age: Britain and the Crisis of Civilization, 1919-1939* (London, 2010), 42-4

[39] Hall, "Time of Troubles"..., 33-4

[40] Address by Arnold Toynbee at Chatham House, "Historical Parallels to Current Historical Problems," April 20 1931, *International Affairs*, Volume 10, No 4 (July 1931), 477-92; similar trends were apparent in the U.S., too, at this time: Jonathan Herzog, *The Spiritual-Industrial Complex: America's Religious Battle against Communism in the Early Cold War* (New York, 2011), 39-61

Toynbee's chief concern was the rise of nationalism. It was a point he outlined starkly in a note for a roundtable discussion on the "Disintegration of the Modern World Order" that he chaired in the summer of 1932. The growing prominence of nationalism—or tribalism—Toynbee argued was a direct cause of the worsening international situation and was attacking democracy. The solution was, thus, a fairly simple one: "The world must either get rid of democracy, which is impossible, or it must get rid of tribalism."[41] What was needed, then, was an international system that provided some mechanism by which nationalism could be tempered and human agency could be empowered (a sentiment that Toynbee, like Dulles, had drawn from studying the work of Bergson).[42] Absent this, as he wrote in an essay published in 1936, the desire of emergent nations to challenge those at the top would inevitably lead to war. "Collective security without peaceful change," he wrote, "would be like a boiler without a safety-valve. In preventing perpetual escapes of steam it would merely be boiling up for a final shattering explosion."[43]

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[41] Transcript of Institute of Politics Roundtable on the "Disintegration of Modern World Order," August 3 1932, Box 3, Arnold Toynbee Papers, Bodleian Library, Oxford University

[42] Hall, "Time of Troubles"..., 29.

[43] Arnold Toynbee, "Peaceful Change or War? The Next Stage in the International Crisis," *International Affairs*, Volume 15, No 1 (January-February 1936), 26-56; Hall, "Time of Trouble"..., 30-2

Toynbee's assessments contained two elements—the problem of factoring change into an essentially static world and the role that religion might play in shaping international society—that would prove important in Dulles's attempts to tackle the problem of peace. But it would take over two years for his ideas on this front to come together. His first serious attempt came soon after the Nazis' rise to power in Germany, Japan's aggressive incursions into Chinese territory, and Italy's invasion of Abyssinia. In an essay published in the *Atlantic Monthly* in October 1935, Dulles took issue with the way that the world's major nations had responded to these events and accused them of seeking to prevent any transferral of power. The leaders of the great powers, Dulles wrote, had resorted to the "time-honored expedient of postulating a 'personal devil'." The real cause of present tensions, Dulles charged, lay in the "inevitability of change" and the fact that the present system sought to repress this. Irresistible forces were being "temporarily dammed up" and would eventually break through with "violence."[44]

Seeking to persuade other nations to heed this warning, he acknowledged, was sure to be difficult. "Those whose lives fall in pleasant places contemplate with equanimity an indefinite continuation of their present state," he wrote. But Germany, Japan and Italy were not "inherently warlike or bloodthirsty"; they simply felt that their potential was being stymied within the present framework. Consequently, there was a need for those presently supportive of the status quo to accept steady modifications, and for those pressing for change to submit to those taking place gradually rather than immediately. "Patience," he wrote, "is indispensible to peace" and national leaders must prove willing to forego "opportunities to

[44] John Foster Dulles, "The Road to Peace," *Atlantic Monthly* (October 1935), Reel 3, Dulles Papers, SMLP; Pruessen, *The Road to Power...*, 161-8

take all the credit and shift all the blame." Still, this would take time. "Many years must elapse before the hearts and minds of men are so changed that self-restraint and self-sacrifice can be relied upon to assure orderly evolution within the society of nations."[45]

This first attempt to tackle the problems of the 1930s did not offer much in terms of a concrete solution. Certain principles and ideals were clearly apparent—greater economic fluidity, increased international cooperation, the need for major powers to relinquish their stranglehold on power—but there was little sense, yet, as to how they might be translated into a workable model. Furthermore, as a number of correspondents who read the piece told him afterwards, there was a need for something that could persuade self-interested nations to accept his arguments. The president of Rutgers University, for example, wrote to Dulles and noted that the piece had left him "a little discouraged" due to the fact that he doubted "if the nations of the world will be willing to take an intelligence compromising attitude toward other nations...in time to forestall the next war."[46]

As his thinking developed, therefore, it was increasingly aimed at defining a model that could transcend borders and cultivate a world opinion more receptive to ceding national

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[45] Dulles, "Road to Peace"…; in his support of Article XIX of the League of Nations, Dulles demonstrated his affinity with Oliver Wendell Holmes' view that the law was not fixed and was liable to evolve. Menand, *The Metaphysical Club*..., 340-7

[46] Letter from Robert Clethier to Foster Dulles, September 25 1935, Reel 3, Dulles Papers, SMLP; Letter from Harlan Stone to Foster Dulles, October 4 1935, Reel 3, Dulles Papers, SMLP; Letter from Foster Dulles to Clifford Stone, October 2 1935, Reel 3, Dulles Papers, SMLP; "The World is Not Static," *Washington Post*, October 1 1935

interest to promote greater international cooperation. Dulles picked up on this in a speech at Princeton in 1936. Some of the key features from his earlier essay—particularly his view that "change is omnipresent and the status quo is never maintained"—remained unaltered. At the same time, Dulles also engaged much more closely with Woodrow Wilson's model than he had previously. Furthermore, elements of his engagement with Pragmatist thinking set out in his senior thesis—not least the fact that beliefs and emotions had to be married to logic and reason—were clearly evident. Understanding the nature of change, he suggested, had to combine reason with the nature of human desire that was far less predictable. All of us, he told his audience, "act primarily in response to appetites, habits, instincts, emotions and other non-rational stimuli... all indicative of the subjection of human action to forces other than pure reason." Violence and war could not be rationalized out of existence; the only solution was to "discover the restraining envelope" and "provide outlets such that the dynamic forces become peacefully diffused."[47]

Dulles was echoing both Bergson and Toynbee here. In particular, he was drawing on Bergson's firm belief that the universe was shaped by "never-ending change."[48] But, just as importantly, he was also echoing the view of James in the "Will to Believe" who had noted

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[47] "Peaceful Change within the Society of Nations", Address by John Foster Dulles, Princeton University, March 19 1936, Reel 3, Dulles Papers, SMLP

[48] Jimena Canales, *The Physicist and the Philosopher: Einstein, Bergson and the Debate that Changed our Understanding of Time* (Princeton, NJ, 2015), 21; Angela Hague, *Fiction, Intuition, and Creativity: Studies in Bronte, James, Woolf, and Lessing* (Washington, D.C., 2003), 14-5

that "we find our passional nature influencing us in our opinions."[49] This fusion of Pragmatist working methods and the influence of other interested observers led Dulles to call for Wilson's model to be re-evaluated.[50] Wilson's approach to international security, Dulles argued, had demonstrated the way that issues such as economics, colonialism and international law could be framed so as to ensure that they were not dominated by hidebound national self-interest. He had shown how national borders could be rendered unproblematic. This was undoubtedly a dramatic overstatement on Dulles's part; it portrayed Wilson's approach in a way that was barely believable. Nonetheless, it served a useful intellectual purpose for Dulles. "In a world where boundaries would thus cease to be barriers," he explained, "war would have no further legitimate place." And yet it was vital that this was not seen as a simple, sweeping model intended to promote peace through the League of Nations. Wilson's model could have worked, but only if the entire framework had been implemented. The League was the last of Wilson's fourteen points, he said, because its success was contingent upon the other thirteen being implemented. "The elimination of war was appropriate only as channels were otherwise provided for the peaceful diffusion of dynamic forces."[51]

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[49] James, "The Will to Believe"...

[50] "Wilson's Policy Called Surest Way to Peace," *New York Herald Tribune,* March 20 1936; "Wilson Formula for World Peace Declared Untried," *Christian Science Monitor*, March 20 1936; "Prevent War or Promote Peace?" *Syracuse Post Standard,* March 21 1936

[51] "Peaceful Change within the Society of Nations", Address by John Foster Dulles, Princeton University, March 19 1936, Reel 3, Dulles Papers, SMLP

Consequently, the goal was to create a "reasonably flexible world." Great impetus for this could come in the economic sphere where stable and interchangeable currencies needed to be re-established, tariffs and quotas rejected, and the international movement of people made easier. Politically, the situation was more difficult due to the unwillingness of nations to cede any real power. One way around this, Dulles nonetheless argued, was to ensure that treaties be open to renegotiation after a period of time. Another option was the greater use of "unwritten laws" such as those seen in the evolution of the British Empire into the Commonwealth. "If we establish reasonable freedom for the movement of goods, capital and people, boundary lines lose much of their significance," he summarized.[52]

However, while the speech evidenced clear signs of his thoughts evolving, it did not tackle the problem that Dulles's interlocutors had pinpointed following the publication of his essay in the *Atlantic Monthly*: how would it prove possible to compel other nations to agree? This model, Dulles conceded, would "not arouse enthusiasm as would a frontal attack on war" and would fail to "arouse the righteous fervor which comes only from hand to hand conflict with the forces of evil."[53]

Wilson had faced a similar problem: his model of peace had contained little, beyond the enthusiasm with which he was greeted when he arrived in Europe in 1918, to suggest that it could draw public opinion away from national self-interest. At one point, self-determination had seemed as if it could generate support for the Wilson vision of peace. Yet,

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[52] Ibid.

[53] Ibid.

while it proved initially popular in far-flung places like India, Korea and China, it soon fell out of favor when the barriers to its acceptance became clear.[54] Indeed, as Erez Manela has demonstrated, self-determination did not work as Wilson had intended. He had hoped it would capture the minds of people across the world—and across borders—and begin a gradual move toward decolonization; instead, his ideas prompted a swift drive for independence as the colonial powers' antipathy toward them took shape and led to a subsequent hardening of nationalist sentiments.[55]

This, Dulles suggested, had resulted in a similar outcome to the Kellogg-Briand pact: a system that had essentially reinforced the control of the world's major powers and suppressed people's desire for autonomy. "The mandatory powers," Dulles argued, had remained "absolute sovereigns" and the system had merely confirmed "the old concept of national domain."[56] Nevertheless, he was not entirely pessimistic; prudent actions by the

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[54] Erez Manela, *The Wilsonian Moment: Self-Determination and the International Origins of Anticolonial Nationalism* (New York, 2007); Trygve Throntveit, "The Fable of the Fourteen Points: Woodrow Wilson and National Self-Determination," *Diplomatic History*, Volume 35, No 3 (June 2011), 445-81; Emily Rosenberg, "World War I, Wilsonianism, and Challenges to U.S. Empire," *Diplomatic History*, Volume 38, No 4 (September 2014), 852-63; John Thompson, "Wilsonianism: The Dynamics of a Conflicted Concept," *International Affairs*, Volume 86, No 1 (January 2010), 27-48

[55] Manela, *The Wilsonian Moment*..., 4-13, 222-3

[56] Dulles, "Peaceful Change within the Society of Nations..."; for a powerful recent assessment that partly agrees with Dulles's assessment of the mandates system but that also

colonial powers could serve to alter the prevailing situation. If the British, for example, proved they were willing to cede control in certain areas then both former colonies and rising world powers would perceive that there was the prospect for change in the international system. When Supreme Court Justice Harlan Stone wrote to him after reading the speech and suggested that the British were in no way ready to give serious consideration to this, Dulles responded by noting that he believed that "there is a very substantial body of English opinion which favors something of the sort." There was also a precedent to support this contention: in 1932 Britain had freely withdrawn from Iraq, and proved willing to fight the League of Nations to push it through.[57]

By the end of 1936 Dulles was moving toward a model of what a functioning international system might look like. However, he was yet to define a system of peace that could capture peoples' hearts and minds and persuade them to renounce their adherence to the nation-state. Addressing this was vital if his vision was to have any hope of succeeding. It would be in the following year that his approach would take a large step forward—as his Pragmatist approach to problem solving combined with the influence of a transnational

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goes significantly beyond him in a series of important ways see Susan Pederson, *The Guardians: The League of Nations and the Crisis of Empire* (New York, 2015)

[57] Letter from Harlan Stone to Foster Dulles, April 3 1936; Letter from Foster Dulles to Harlan Stone, April 6 1936, Reel 3, Dulles Papers, SMLP; Susan Pederson, "Getting out of Iraq—in 1932: The League of Nations and the Road to Normative Statehood," *American Historical Review*, Volume 115, No. 4 (October 2010), 975-1000

network of like-minded observers to persuade Dulles that the answer to his conundrum could be found in Christian ecumenism.

The Oxford Conference came at an opportune time as, by 1937, Dulles, like many other similarly-minded observers, was growing alarmed at the rapid rise of pro-isolationist—or pro-neutralist—sentiment within the U.S.[58] It was a trend that Dulles found to be deeply worrisome. The desire to remain "aloof" from international events was only acceptable, he wrote in a piece for *The Nation*, if the goal was to bring about "the indefinite perpetuation of an existing status" and keep power in the hands of those already in possession of it. A sustainable international peace could only be secured, he wrote, "by realizing...a system which will strike a fair balance between the static and dynamic and afford the latter an adequate opportunity for peaceful expression."[59]

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[58] Brooke Blower, "From Isolationism to Neutrality: A New Framework for Understanding American Political Culture, 1919-1941," *Diplomatic History*, Volume 38, No 2 (April 2014), 345-76; Justus Doenecke, *From Isolation to War, 1931-1941* Third Edition (Wheeling, IL, 2013); Wayne Cole, *Roosevelt and the Isolationists, 1932-1945* (Lincoln, NE, 1983); John Thompson, *A Sense of Power: The Root's of America's Global Role* (Ithaca, NY, 2015), 132-66; Andrew Johnstone, *Against Immediate Evil: American Internationalists and the Four Freedoms on the Eve of World War Two* (Ithaca, NY, 2014).

[59] John Foster Dulles, "Collective Security v Isolation," *The Nation*, March 28 1938, Box 281, Dulles Papers, SMLP

The goal of Oxford was to respond to the dangers posed by Nazi Germany and the attempt by Adolf Hitler's government to ally the German state with Christian nationalism—a move that, to many, highlighted the way that God had been replaced by the state in the affections of mankind.[60] Dulles mixed with an array of important internationalist figures—from Joseph Oldham, Lionel Curtis, Alfred Zimmern, and Lord Lothian on the British side, to Reinhold Niebuhr, Henry Van Dusen, and Henry Sloane Coffin from the U.S., as well as a host of delegates from fifty four other countries. This multi-national cast of participants, however, only had a limited impact on the conference's focus. Though much would be said in Oxford about a global movement for peace, the conference was overwhelmingly influenced by "an Anglo-American alliance" (indeed, roughly half of the four hundred delegates hailed from Britain or the U.S.).[61] The transatlantic emphasis was nevertheless vital for Dulles. It

[60] For accounts of this movement prior to 1937 see Thompson, *For God and Globe...*, 93-120; Heather Warren, *Theologians of a New World Order: Reinhold Niebuhr and the Christian Realists, 1932-1948* (New York, 1997), 56-76; Mark Thomas Edwards, *The Right of the Protestant Left: God's Totalitarianism* (New York, 2012), 17-69. On the participants at Oxford and its aims, Thompson, *For God and Globe...*, 119-21; Edwin Ewart Aubrey, "The Oxford Conference, 1937," *The Journal of Religion*, Volume 17, No 4 (October 1937), 379-96; Graeme Smith, "Christian Totalitarianism: Joseph Oldham and Oxford 1937," *Political Theology* Volume 3, No 1 (2001), 32-46.

[61] Edwards, *The Right of the Protestant Left...*,72, 78-82; Preston, *Sword of the Spirit...*, 300-1

allowed him to see how a sweeping transnational idea like Christian ecumenism could be mobilized while remaining true to Western ideals.[62]

Consequently, Oxford provided the bridge between the revised version of Wilsonian internationalism and Dulles's search for something larger that could compel other nations to accede to his model. In that sense, it was less a spiritual reawakening and more an intellectual progression.[63] This does not, however, mean that Dulles was being cynical or insincere; religious belief and intellectual engagement with Pragmatism, as the case of James amply demonstrates, were hardly mutually exclusive.[64] Yet it is to argue that Dulles's embracement of religion took shape in a manner that owed more to Pragmatism than scripture. Dulles was very well-versed in his religion, after all, and it had featured prominently during his childhood growing up as the son of a liberal-minded Presbyterian minister in upstate New

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[62] Toulouse, *Transformation of John Foster Dulles*..., 50; Immerman, *Piety, Pragmatism and Power*..., 14-18; Preston, *Sword of the Spirit*..., 388-9; Thompson, *For God and Globe*...170

[63] Michael Guhin, *John Foster Dulles: A Statesman and his Times* (New York, 1972), 40; Raymond Platig, "John Foster Dulles: A Study of his Political and Moral Thought Prior to 1953 with Special Emphasis on International Relations," Unpublished PhD Dissertation (University of Chicago, 1957)

[64] And, indeed, the relationship between theology and American intellectual history is a vital aspect of recent studies in the larger field. Hollinger, *After Cloven Tongues of Fire*...; Samuel Moyn, *Christian Human Rights* (Philadelphia, 2015)

York.[65] His turn to it in 1937 was because it offered a logical step forward. If Christian ecumenism could be used to counter the dangerous drift toward deification of the state, and if by doing so other aspects of his model were embraced, the resultant period of improving relations could be seen as a direct consequence of religious belief.

The catalyst for Dulles's progression was the conference's working group on the Church and the World of Nations. Dulles's views figured prominently in the final report—unlike those of some of the other participants such as Lord Lothian—and it highlighted several areas that enabled Dulles to see how religion could persuade people in different nations to abandon nationalism.[66] The major problem, the report noted, was that the basis of the existing system—international law—had "not commanded general respect because it originates in a sphere remote from ordinary men and women and has not yet been brought into effective touch with their social consciousness."[67] The only viable answer was for nations to sacrifice individual sovereignty to a federal system or an organization like a revised League of Nations. Here, it was argued, the Christian Church could play a key role: "All law, international as well as national, must be based on a common ethos—that is, a

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[65] Preston, *Sword of the Spirit*..., 386-7

[66] On this, see, Thompson, *For God and Globe*..., 131-42; Warren, *Theologians of a New World Order*..., 56-75

[67] Report on the Universal Church and the World of Nations, in *The Churches Survey their Task: The Report of the Conference at Oxford, July 1937, on Church, Community and State* (London, 1937), 172

common foundation of moral convictions. To the creation of such a common foundation in moral conviction the Church as a supranational society with a profound sense of the historical realities, and of the worth of human personality, has a great contribution to make."[68]

Presently, the only ways that change could be brought about were through "voluntary action or by force"; there was no mechanism for information or views to be promulgated that advocated peaceful change. In order to address this problem, the report suggested, it was vital that the people be mobilized to put pressure on their respective governments and "make it clear that they are prepared to accept temporary sacrifices in order that a greater good may ultimately emerge."[69]

It was this focus on individual actions, a sense of sacrifice, and the idea that people could affect government actions that had the greatest impact on Dulles. He had referenced it during a radio address on NBC prior to his departure for Europe. To be a Christian, Dulles stated, had become meaningless. "For the individual to be enrolled as a Christian was not only respectable but advantageous...it seemed that Christians need no longer struggle or sacrifice...[and] no religion can survive as an effective influence unless it demands and receives sacrifice." This had led, in part, to the rise of new "religions" in countries like Italy, Germany and Russia where the State was now "deified". To counter this, Dulles told his listeners, people should be prepared to sacrifice national interest and "pride". "The immediate

[68] Ibid, 173-4

[69] Ibid, 173-4

task," he told them, "relates to fundamentals. It is to increase the intensity of Christian belief."[70]

He reaffirmed many of these points at greater length in an article written after Oxford and published in *Religion in Life*. He had gone to Oxford, Dulles wrote, because "it seemed to me that I might find there the answer to certain questions which perplexed me." More specifically, it had helped to reaffirm his faith that the churches could be utilized "to lift mankind from those morasses of which the underlying cause is usually moral decay." After World War One, he wrote, the basic features of Christianity had been ignored, and "the 'State' was personified, even deified, as the sole source of human salvation." Rectifying this, Dulles continued, had to be driven by mankind's willingness to take religion seriously—to see belief not as something easy and comforting, but as a wholehearted commitment requiring complete devotion. "It had become conventional and even socially and materially advantageous to become an enrolled Christian."[71]

To be sure, there was a degree of irony in evidence here as Dulles's own faith had lapsed for most of his adult life. But this is to overlook the way that Dulles came to conceive of religion. As he came to see the role that the Church might play in international affairs, Dulles was reaching back to his formative years and echoing William James. "May not

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[70] Address by John Foster Dulles for NBC Radio, May 20 1937, Box 289, Dulles Papers, SMLP; Preston, *Sword of the Spirit...*, 386-7; Warren, *Theologians of a New World Order...*, 78

[71] John Foster Dulles, "As seen by a Layman," *Religion in Life*, 1938, Reel 3, Dulles Papers, SMLP

religious optimism be too idyllic," James wrote in *Pragmatism*. "Must *all* be saved? Is *no* price to be paid in the work of salvation? Is the last word sweet?"[72] For Dulles, as for James, there was a sense that religion—if it was to have any utility—required a form of sacrifice. "I find myself willing to take the universe to be really dangerous and adventurous," James wrote, "...I am willing that there should be real losses and real losers...."[73] Embracing such principles also required sacrifice. It would do little good, after all, if Dulles gestured toward these principles without committing; people would soon see through it and it would jibe with the idea that you needed to live the change you wanted to see. Someone who did commit, James wrote, would be a "genuine pragmatist" and "willing to pay with his own person, if need be, for the realization of the ideals which he frames."[74] As he came to incorporate religion more fully into his thinking, therefore, Dulles was also compelled to embrace this and give himself the "will to believe".

Dulles was not the only key figure to come out of the Oxford Conference with a sharper sense of the role the church could play in the pursuit of peace. Reinhold Niebuhr, the prominent theologian and Professor of Divinity at the Union Theological Seminary, was a key participant at Oxford and the conference helped him to articulate what would become known

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[72] William James, *Pragmatism*…,114; Hollinger, *After Cloven Tongues of Fire...*, 132-3; Cushing Strout, "William James: 'Pessimism of the Intellect, Optimism of the Will'." *Modern Intellectual History*, Volume 2, No 2 (August 2005), 277-87, 280

[73] James, *Pragmatism...*, 114

[74] Ibid, 115

as Christian realism. Niebuhr had also been heavily influenced by William James on the issue of religion: he agreed that belief could be justified even in the absence of definitive proof, and that truth was something to be worked toward rather than an incontrovertible fact.[75] Yet Niebuhr took a very different course to Dulles. Increasingly, Niebuhr came to believe in the concept of original sin—that true evil exists in the world and is commonplace—and that it was not possible to eradicate this through enlightened policymaking.[76] This, in turn, led him to believe that in order to face up to this threat it would be necessary to renounce pacifism, embrace the "lesser evil", and be willing to go to war. At the same time, Niebuhr remained strongly opposed to the deployment of nationalism in seeking to destroy evil. A jingoistic war movement, he warned, would simply cast the United States and its allies in the same light as the Axis powers. War might need to be waged, but it should be done so judiciously and in a manner that avoided any sense of American exceptionalism.[77] Dulles, by contrast, continued

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[75] Richard Wightman Fox, *Reinhold Niebuhr: A Biography* (New York, 1985), 32

[76] On Niebuhr's embracement of original sin and the battle that took place with those vehemently opposed like John Dewey and Sidney Hook, Gary Dorrien, *The Making of American Liberal Theology: Idealism, Realism, and Modernity, 1900-1950 Volume II* (Louisville, KY, 2003), 435-522; Mark Grieff, *The Age of the Crisis of Man: Thought and Fiction in America, 1933-1973* (Princeton, NJ, 2015), 27-61; Christopher Phelps, *Young Sidney Hook: Marxist & Pragmatist* Revised Edition (Ann Arbor, MI, 2005), 210-25

[77] For good accounts of Niebuhr's views and importance, Preston, *Sword of the Spirit*..., 303-10; Thompson, *For God and Globe*..., 157-62; Campbell Craig, *Glimmer of a New Leviathan: Total War in the Realism of Niebuhr, Morgenthau, and Waltz* (New York, 2003), 32-53;Fox, *Reinhold Niebuhr*..., 142-93; William Inboden, "The Prophetic Conflict: Reinhold

to believe that it was possible to avoid war, rejected the idea of embracing lesser evil in order to combat Nazism and Fascism, and, most importantly, retained a very firm belief in the innate superiority of American values and ideals. There were points of convergence in their thought—both, for example, believed that religion could be used to mobilize society in ways that made it more likely to accept internationalism—but, for the most part, they pursued different paths with respect to religion's role in international affairs. One explanation for this is that they were coming at it from different ends of the political spectrum; whereas Dulles remained a right-leaning conservative, Niebuhr was far more at home on the left of American politics (while remaining critical of the left's fondness for idealism).[78]

Oxford's impact on Dulles became clear with the publication of his first book, *War, Peace or Change*, in 1939. War, Dulles wrote early on, would be extremely difficult to eradicate and could not be "accomplished by the stroke of a pen or by the wish of a heart. We cannot remove force and leave a vacuum." What was needed, Dulles wrote, was to "substitute force for some other procedures" and to define a solution that combined "ethical" and "political" features. Achieving this would be difficult; so far it had proven impossible to reconcile them in a manner that avoided the trenchancy of Fascism or Communism. His

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Niebuhr, Christian Realism, and World War II," *Diplomatic History*, Volume 38, No 1 (January 2014), 49-82; Daniel Rice, *Reinhold Niebuhr and His Circle of Influence* (New York, 2013), 1-13

[78] John Patrick Diggins, *Why Niebuhr Now?* (Chicago, IL, 2011); Mark Hulsether, *Building a Protestant Left: Christianity and Crisis Magazine, 1941-1993* (Knoxville, TN, 1999), 1-24; Preston, *Sword of the Spirit...*, 304

solution came in two parts: first, the "human spirit" had to be molded so "that desires tend to become reconcilable and harmonious", and second, a system had to be created that provided "some alternative to force as the way of determining which, of subsisting conflicting desires, shall prevail."[79]

He remained cautious about his plan's implementation. "We must be content with slow progress," he wrote, "and even this requires that intelligence rather than emotion should be our guide." Here, again, he returned to the dichotomy he had set out in his senior thesis, which had called for an approach that married aspects of Pragmatism with logic. This was crucial, he argued, for the task at hand was to revolutionize the relationship between the individual and the state, which presently had resulted in the latter's "extreme personification" and had led to a shutting off of trans-border cooperation. Fascism and Communism had shown how national borders could be "peacefully penetrated", but neither of them had yet managed to "transcend nationalism". Here, as with his statements on the transnational capacity of Wilson's model, there was a sense of hyperbole evident in Dulles's argument. Yet it was a stance that was also consistent with Dulles's neutrality at this time, his generally sympathetic stance toward Germany, and the argument he had made in 1936 that Italy's invasion of Abyssinia was understandable in light of the broader international situation.[80] His thoughts on these fronts led to a cautious conclusion: hope for the ethical solution would have

[79] John Foster Dulles, *War, Peace & Change* (London, 1939), 7-16

[80] Pruessen, *Road to Power*..., 181-5; Immerman, *Empire for Liberty*..., 175

to be tempered as the dominance of "personified states" ensured it would prove difficult to persuade nations to sacrifice their own interests.[81]

But what, in precise terms, was Dulles suggesting here? With respect to the "ethical principle" he outlined three key issues. First, the compulsion to see other nations as "devil-nations"—that is, nations that were believed to be the enemy incarnate (a recommendation not without irony given Dulles's view of the Soviet Union during the Cold War)—had to stop. Second, people had to stop seeing nation-states as replacement "deities" and a substitute for "some spiritual ideal which transcends national lines." Third, there needed to be a push for an international system that was open and encouraged equal opportunities. By adopting these measures, he wrote, "we may diminish the sense of dependence on one's own state as a necessary agency for combating the selfishness and arbitrariness of others." Religion would be vital here. People needed some form of spiritual allegiance to get them to look beyond the nation-state and conceive of something higher.[82]

With progress certain to be slow, some form of control would be necessary. However, Dulles argued, this could not be akin to the old model where the strongest nations had held the power and aspirant nations had seen their ambitions frustrated. Success would require a willingness to sacrifice immediate interests. A possible way forward, he suggested, was Article XIX of the League of Nations Covenant. In its call for treaties to be subject to renegotiation, it showed how international disputes could be settled without recourse to

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[81] Dulles, *War, Peace & Change*..., 100-6

[82] Ibid, 106-33, quotes from 133; Roswell Barnes Oral History, Reel 1, Dulles Oral History Project, SMLP

violence. Both the United States and the British Empire, Dulles wrote, had demonstrated in the past how "peaceful and non-disturbing evolution could occur in the world as a whole if we had fewer treaties, and if those which we had were less permanent and more conducive to the development of a flexible body of international practice which might ultimately become so grounded in the *mores* of the world community as to attain the status of law." Hence, a new organization, which addressed the flaws of the League, could be constructed, and provide a forum in which change could be managed through negotiation.[83]

Dulles was putting forward an approach that had evolved throughout the 1930s, in which he believed religion could play a key role in encouraging greater acceptance of his ideas. Furthermore, in keeping with Pragmatist principles, he was setting this out as an approach that could not, at this point, solve everything. To the contrary, it was a model that would test and probe, encourage through practical demonstration, and gradually evolve. At this time, Dulles wrote, it was not possible to "attain a solution which is perfect or final." Religious, humanitarian and peace organizations already existed, he argued, that could work effectively to start to "vitalize ideals which will transcend national lines". And while this could not be implemented immediately, moves to encourage this would, assuredly, lead to success in the future. "Only as progress is made", he concluded, "will it be possible more boldly and more surely to attack and solve the last international phase of the primitive problem of eliminating force as the solvent of conflicting desires."[84]

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[83] Ibid, 134-63

[84] Dulles, *War, Peace & Change*..., 169-70

By the time the book was published, Dulles had come to see religion—and, specifically, Christian ecumenism—as having a key part to play in developing a viable structure of peace. Yet he continued to adopt the working methods of Pragmatism. He did not see the ideas set out in his book as the final word on the issue; they moved things forward and evidenced signs of progress, but were partial steps toward something better. To that end, he continued to engage with ideas being put forward by other prominent figures.

Important examples of this are Lionel Curtis and Clarence Streit. The three of them, in fact, represented an important strand in Christian and internationalist thought which believed that a functioning internationalist system should embrace the idea of federalism (though this was not a universally held view and other groups differed markedly in their views).[85] While both ultimately advocated very different models to Dulles, their ideas nevertheless helped him to refine his views.

Curtis, a British academic and ardent supporter of the Commonwealth, was a prominent voice in calling for the Church to play a role in shaping international society. In his three-volume history of human civilization, *Civitas Dei*, Curtis called for a Christian Commonwealth: a community of nations, forsaking national sovereignty, and abiding by the word of God to foster peace, harmony and prosperity. The hope for mankind, he wrote in the third volume, was the creation of "a human society based on the laws of God, on the one

[85] For context on debates about federalism, Gerald Studdert-Kennedy, "Christianity, Statecraft, and Chatham House: Lionel Curtis and World Order," *Diplomacy and Statecraft*, Volume 6, No. 2 (June 1995), 470-89

abiding reality, the infinite duty of men to God, of one to another."[86] He outlined his thoughts more fully in an appearance before the Council on Foreign Relations in early 1939, in a session chaired by Dulles. In his talk, Curtis drew on his belief in federalized political systems and the power of religion to provide an answer as to what could be done to prevent the outbreak of war. "There will be no world peace," Curtis said, "until there is a World Commonwealth based on the principles of the Federalist Papers". "The world today," Curtis continued, "is obsessed by the idea of the national state. Perhaps tomorrow we shall find it possible to think that two or more states can merge into a World Commonwealth without losing their freedom." Herein, Curtis argued, lay the only real hope for avoiding war. Nations had to be persuaded to cede their own selfish interests and cooperate. In the discussion that followed, Curtis went further in identifying what sort of principles could guide this transnational partnership. When asked if the "Christian Church could start the ball rolling", Curtis responded enthusiastically. "I think that the Church would be an excellent agency. For by a World Commonwealth I mean the Sermon on the Mount translated into political terms."[87]

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[86] Lionel Curtis, *Civitas Dei* Revised one volume edition (London, 1950), 654-5; Andrea Bosco, "Lothian, Curtis, Kimber and the Federal Union Movement 1938-1940," *Journal of Contemporary History,* Volume 23, No 3 (June 1988), 465-502; Erdman, *Building the Kingdom of God...*

[87] Digest of Remarks by Lionel Curtis to the Council on Foreign Relations, January 9 1939, Box 438, Council on Foreign Relations Records Series 4: Meetings, SMLP

Curtis and Dulles knew one another and were heavily influenced by each other's ideas. In 1937 Curtis sent Dulles a copy of *Civitas Dei*. The book, Dulles wrote, was "exceedingly stimulating" and "had appreciably influenced my thinking." His son, Avery, meanwhile, noted that Curtis's work "had considerable influence on his [Foster's]" and that his father would have meetings with Curtis in which he would "sort of sit at his feet and listen to him as to a prophet."[88] The two men corresponded throughout 1939, sharing grievances over how their respective books were received and bemoaning the lack of understanding with respect to their core ideas.[89] And though Dulles would not articulate his vision of international order in the same way as Curtis, his interactions with him did help him to sharpen his own stance. A speech that Dulles gave in Hartford, Connecticut in October 1939 saw him directly pick up on several of Curtis's core ideas—in particular, the necessity of the Church playing a key role in international affairs and the lessons that could be derived from the Federalist Papers. Yet he also fused Curtis's ideas with a Jamesean sense of the benefits—and sacrifice—of belief. Mankind, Dulles stated, needed to embrace a more vital form of religion, one that shunned the easy symbolism of nationalism, and that called upon people to embrace the notion of sacrificing themselves to something larger than the nation-state. "I know that it is difficult to transfer devotion to that which is abstract and universal,"

[88] Letter from Foster Dulles to Lionel Curtis, November 4 1937, Reel 3, Dulles Papers, SMLP; Avery Dulles Oral History, Reel 1, John Foster Dulles Oral History Project, SMLP

[89] Letter from Lionel Curtis to John Foster Dulles, July 15 1939; Letter from Foster Dulles to Lionel Curtis, July 19 1939, Reel 4, Dulles Papers, SMLP

Dulles stated, "but I also know that mankind is paying a fearful price for its worship of false gods and that never before did the world so need a vital belief in a universal God."[90]

Similarly, both men were enthusiastic about the ideas of Clarence Streit, an ardent Atlanticist and another keen observer of the international system. What Streit did that Dulles and Curtis had not was to provide a blueprint for a federalized international government that would demonstrate how national sovereignty could be ceded for the greater good. Curtis enthusiastically referenced Streit's work, and both he and Dulles saw much to recommend in its ideas.[91] The answer to the dangers facing the world, Streit wrote, was for a "Union now of the democracies that the North Atlantic and a thousand other things already unite." The initial membership of such a group, he said, ought to comprise the United States, the British Commonwealth, and a number of prominent European democracies, all of whom shared similar traditions and customs and who, importantly, were committed to the notion of peace. Crisis, Streit suggested in agreement with Toynbee, Curtis, Dulles, Niebuhr and the participants at Oxford, had come about due the prevalence of selfish nationalism. As a result, it was not the dictators—Hitler, Mussolini, and Franco—that were to blame for the world's ills; contemporary problems were a consequence of "the refusal of the democracies to

[90] Address by John Foster Dulles to the Union Christian Convention, Hartford, Connecticut, October 11 1939, Reel 4, Dulles Papers, SMLP

[91] Lionel Curtis, "World Order," *International Affairs*, Volume 18, No 3 (May-June 1939), 301-20

renounce enough of their national sovereignty to let effective world law and order be set up."[92]

Though Dulles did not frame his own vision of peace in this way, there were clear similarities between their perceptions of the international situation and their belief that shared sovereignty was a prerequisite of any solution. After reading Streit's book, Dulles wrote to him and informed him that he had greatly enjoyed it. "Your basic philosophy," Dulles wrote, "is much the same that which I seek to express in my 'War, Peace and Change'." Streit's solution, though, jarred with Dulles's preferred working methods. Noting that Streit's model was "dramatic" and sweeping, Dulles explained that he would feel that "it was only practicable to proceed quite slowly in trying to develop a technique for extending our federal system." If Streit's model could be proven to work—if it could be successfully trialed with a country like Canada, say—then "it would be available for further accretions."[93] In a letter to Lord Lothian in 1940, meanwhile, Dulles criticized Streit's plan for its sweeping and reductive nature. World peace, he remarked, would not come from blandly imitating the American constitution. "That is, I think, the weakness of the Streit plan. It attempts to follow too woodenly our particular formula." Some form of progress was possible, Dulles continued, but it would have to be built on a "broader sense of responsibility" that "can be worked out

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[92] Clarence Streit, *Union Now: The Proposal for Inter-democracy Federal Union* Shorter Version (New York, 1940), 4-5, 9-13; Blower, "From Isolationism to Neutrality"...

[93] Letter from John Foster Dulles to Clarence Streit, January 23 1939, Reel 4, Dulles Papers, SMLP

only gradually and perhaps in the first instance as between nations which trust each other and have similar political institutions."[94]

Clearly, Dulles was still seeking to determine the exact nature of his own approach. There was a need, as he wrote to Senator William Borah in 1939, to apply his ideas more assiduously as his thinking had been "somewhat philosophical and abstract rather than in terms of the concrete problem of what our country should do at the present time."[95] As he did so, however, he would consistently refer back to the idea that any attempt to develop a new structure of peace should be pieced together gradually. As he wrote to Professor Quincy Wright, a pioneering political scientist at the University of Chicago, the approach he was thinking of was one that would result in the creation of a series of international arrangements, "none of which, however, would attempt at this stage to be world-wide in its scope, but each of which should preferably be 'open-ended' and capable of extension." If one organization—based upon shared financial and commercial interests, for example—proved to be a success it could be extended; if another—based on similarity of political institutions—proved less successful then it would be scaled back. Trial and error, patient problem solving, and a keen

[94] Letter from John Foster Dulles to Lord Lothian, January 3 1940, Reel 4, Dulles Papers, SMLP

[95] Letter from John Foster Dulles to Senator Borah, April 3 1939, Reel 4, Dulles Papers, SMLP

sense of the necessity of capturing the public mood would be the main building blocks of the Dulles model of peace.[96]

Dulles's appointment to lead the FCC Commission in 1940 provided the platform to pursue his vision in practice and to make the ideas he had been exploring throughout the 1930s more tangible.[97] In combination with leading church figures, and mindful of the political audience that the chairmanship of the Commission had given him, Dulles and his committee worked assiduously to craft a blueprint for a post-war peace. His efforts saw him translate the outcomes of Oxford into an approach that was fixed on mobilizing the power of the ecumenical movement in order to "legitimize American state-run internationalism".[98]

Dulles had always retained a strong belief in the necessity of American values and leadership being a key part of any viable international system. But the centrality of America to his proposed structure of peace grew as his professional circumstances began to change. Heading the FCC Commission gave him far greater prominence than had hitherto been the

[96] Letter from John Foster Dulles to Quincy Wright, December 19 1939, Reel 4, Dulles Papers, SMLP

[97] He was not, of course, the first person to wrestle with these issues and was part of a much longer tradition. See: Mark Mazower, *Governing the World: The History of an Idea* (London, 2012), 13-30; Duncan Bell, *The Idea of Greater Britain: Empire and the Future of World Order, 1860-1900* (Princeton, NJ, 2007)

[98] Preston, *Sword of the Spirit...*, 389-98; Thompson, *For God and Globe...*, 172

case; it was a shift that coincided with substantial shifts in the outlook of the Republican Party which made him an attractive figure for GOP politicians eager to take a more internationalist line. The Republicans, who had generally held to a more isolationist stance in foreign affairs since 1920, began to embrace internationalism following Wendell Wilkie's run for the presidency in 1940 and the publication of his *One World* three years later. Suddenly, internationalism appeared to be politically beneficial and necessary for leading Republicans. If the U.S. move away from the world in the 1920s was a contributory factor to the tensions that led to World War Two, Wilkie wrote in his 1943 book, then "a withdrawal from the problems and responsibilities of the world after this war would be sheer disaster."[99] Other Republicans, such as Governor of New York Thomas Dewey, were beginning to think in a similar vein. When Dewey announced that he would run against Franklin Roosevelt in the 1944 presidential election he chose Dulles to serve as a key foreign policy advisor (as he would again in 1948).[100] As Dulles moved closer to being in a position of power, his recommendations for a viable system of post-war peace were thus articulated more explicitly with reference to American leadership.

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[99] Wendell L. Wilkie, "One World" in *Preface to Peace: A Symposium* (New York, 1943), 145-6; Thompson, *For God and Globe*..., 179; Samuel Zipp, "When Wendell Wilkie went Visiting: Between Interdependency and Exceptionalism in the Public Feeling for One World," *American Literary History*, Volume 26, No 3 (Fall 2014), 484-510

[100] Thompson, *For God and Globe*..., 179-85; David Jordan, *FDR, Dewey, and the Election of 1944* (Bloomington, IN, 2011); Robert Divine, "The Cold War and the Election of 1948," *Journal of American History*, Volume 59, No 1 (January 1972), 90-110

Substantial changes in his professional circumstances, however, did not lead him to renounce the working methods that had long shaped his engagement with the problem of international peace. This was in spite of the fact that, in the years between 1945 and 1950, the emergence of the Cold War altered the international landscape dramatically. The model Dulles had developed through the 1930s had led to his appointment to head the FCC Commission; this, in turn, put him in a position whereby he could mobilize the voice of the Church to call for greater U.S. involvement in a sustainable post-war peace. His participation at the San Francisco Conference in 1945 to create the United Nations (UN) demonstrates the extent to which the Dulles Commission (as it came to be called) succeeded on this front. As Andrew Preston writes, "the publicity generated by the Commission of a Just and Durable Peace was an invaluable tool for educating both the public and elites about world order."[101]

Yet Dulles retained the Pragmatist's sense that this was not an end but rather a staging-post on the road to a more successful policy. In his second book, *War or Peace*, published in 1950 as he continued to grapple with the Cold War's impact, Dulles explained that the UN was not intended to serve as a world government or international policeman; rather, it was supposed to function as a forum that shaped world opinion, adjudicated in international disputes, and that brought the full force of the world's moral judgment to bear on aggressors. Its "primary task", Dulles wrote, "is to create the conditions which will make possible a more highly developed organization. That requires developing a consensus of moral judgment and stimulating it into becoming an effective influence in the world community."[102]

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[101] Preston, *Sword of the Spirit...*, 408; Thompson, *For God and Globe...*, 183-9

[102] John Foster Dulles, *War or Peace* (New York, 1950), 40

Reappraising Dulles's engagement with Christian internationalism in the 1930s in this way helps us to understand more fully this often misunderstood individual. While a great deal of scholarship has been produced on Dulles and his approach to international matters, historians have nevertheless struggled to truly understand him and to make sense of his very different approaches to the international system throughout his career.[103] By factoring his engagement with Pragmatism into our understanding of his thinking, however, we can identify a bridge between the different phases of Dulles's life. His embracement of Pragmatist working methods committed Dulles to a constant testing and re-evaluation of his thinking: it compelled him to reconceptualize his ideas and to embrace new approaches when his own circumstances changed or the international system was subject to major transitions. Accordingly, this led him to adopt new positions and new tactics, with each phase in his career initiating a broad reappraisal. While the ideas and models he pursued were subject to change, the underlying intellectual framework was not.

Viewing Dulles as an engaged intellectual figure with a long-standing commitment to the working methods of Pragmatism, moreover, provides a new way of conceiving of his inconsistencies and his foibles. For Dulles was both a committed exponent of the need for transnational forces in international affairs and a believer in American exceptionalism; he was both an advocate of the effectiveness of religion as a powerful force in foreign relations and a Pragmatist who eschewed dogma and sweeping solutions. In order to better understand Dulles and his importance in twentieth century U.S. foreign relations, therefore, it is

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[103] The sources cited in notes 5-10 exemplify this, but a good summary is provided in Inboden, *The Soul of Containment*..., 226-7

necessary to look more deeply into his intellectual development and influences and to draw out his engagement with Pragmatist principles and practices. As his son Avery later recollected, "I believe that the pragmatism of Bergson and James influenced his thinking, always—not in the sense of being a pragmatist without principles, but in the feeling that principles and practice had to be closely allied."[104]

[104] Avery Dulles Oral History, Reel 1, John Foster Dulles Oral History Project, SMLP