

Article

“Velvet Steel” Ministers for God and America: Eleanor Lansing Dulles and the Nineteenth-Century Legacy of Christianity and Nationalism

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Abstract: The political impact of Dr. Eleanor Lansing Dulles has not been assessed in her capacity as a power broker who brought her theological understandings to Cold War United States policy. The deep influence of both her brothers—Allen, Director of the Central Intelligence Agency, and John Foster, Secretary of State under Dwight D. Eisenhower—on global affairs and diplomacy has been the topic of myriad studies. Works draw extensively on family biography, noting that both “nature and nurture” brought religion to US foreign policy. Including Dr. Dulles in the analysis provides nuance and complexity to definitions of Christian nationalism and underscores the legacy of both missionaries and religious thought in US foreign relations during the early Cold War. Contextualizing religiosity through a study of gender and the Dulles family legacy of female missionaries into the Cold War narrative builds upon the existing literature of the Dulles family, religion, and Cold War diplomacy to challenge concepts such as Christian internationalism, Christian nationalism, and Left–Right binaries. Diplomacy is revealed as her form of Christian missionary work in the secular sphere. Eleanor Lansing Dulles became a missionary not for a religion, but for a nation.

Keywords: Christian nationalism; biography; gender; United States Cold War; Dulles



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1. The “Forgotten” Dulles

Historians of United States (US) foreign relations study the controversies surrounding the religious rhetoric coupled with the hard power exercised by the Dulles brothers, John Foster and Allen, Secretary of State and Central Intelligence Agency Director, respectively, under Dwight D. Eisenhower. Yet, the brothers had a sister, Eleanor Lansing, and she, too, was at the center of Cold War debates and used Christian religious rhetoric and theological positions to promote democracy, postwar reconstruction, and US policy in Europe’s hotspots. Debates abound about the Dulles brothers’ power in Eisenhower’s administration, from Foster’s influence on the performance of presidential religiosity to military operations, both covert and overt. Were the inclusion of “In God We Trust” on paper money, “Under God” in the pledge of allegiance, the start of pre-cabinet meeting prayer, and even Eisenhower’s late-life baptism seeded by the Dulles’s generational understanding of the inalienable link between religion and American politics? John Foster Dulles has been studied extensively as a force that brought religion to US foreign policy. As Mark Thomas Edwards argues, “Protestant ecumenism was a Christianizing force in geopolitics even as it itself was reshaped by the bipolar world climate” (Edwards 2019a). According to scholars, Foster’s “journey” from Christian internationalism to Christian nationalism led to his use of Christian Americanism to form policies that addressed postwar Soviet expansion (Edwards 2019b; Cécile and Bardon 2017). This era brought “one of the heydays of Christian internationalist enthusiasm in America—and the one that shaped our ongoing culture wars between “evangelical” conservatives and “godless” liberals” (Edwards 2019b). As an officer of the Rockefeller Foundation, Foster “recognized the urgency for the US to acquire moral, religious, and intellectual leadership in the emerging Cold War context”, and funded projects accordingly in the private sector (Preston 2012; Kirby 2003; Inboden 2008;

Thompson 2015; Morie n.d.). Eleanor shared a theological upbringing with her brothers that included religious practices steeped into the family ethos (Wilsey 2021; Hemphill 2011; Lepore 2013). Members of the Dulles family itself have grown tired of historians' questions about their most famous relatives. Eleanor herself wrote of John Foster, "Historians draw a rough shape of a craggy Dulles" (Dulles n.d.). When called with regards to the author's current project, Allen Dulles' daughter, Joan, responded, "If you want to talk about my father Allen, I'm not interested". However, upon learning of the author's interest in talking about Eleanor, she interrupted the ensuing silence with a force offered by people in their late 90's: "What took you so long?"¹

Eleanor was a career diplomat, rather than a temporary appointee like the men of the family: her brothers under Wilson and Eisenhower; her uncle Robert Lansing, Secretary of State under Wilson, for whom she was named; or her grandfather, John Foster, Secretary of State under Benjamin Harrison, for whom one brother had been named. By contrast, Eleanor made her mark during a protracted government career that spanned the administrations of Franklin D. Roosevelt, Harry Truman, Eisenhower, and John F. Kennedy. Her credentials, moreover, far outstrip those of her brothers. Although Allen and John Foster both went on to attain law degrees after graduating from Princeton, Eleanor, after graduating from Bryn Mawr, attended the London School of Economics and received her Ph.D. at Harvard in 1926. Her published books reach thirteen, more than those of the prolific two brothers combined. Although Allen first published his history of the Boer War as a child, the famed economist John Maynard Keynes called Eleanor's treatise on French monetary policy, written while she was in her thirties, "the best chronicle of post-war financial and monetary history which I have seen as yet for any country".² Like Foster, she worked alongside not-for-profit foundations, although without the name-brand exposure equivalent to his relationship with the Rockefeller Foundation. With the State Department, she served as economic attaché for Austria at Bretton Woods and served in Austria after World War II. In 1952, she was deployed to Berlin as head of the "Berlin Desk", where she became known as "The Mother of Berlin". In 1960, Eisenhower awarded her the rank of Minister.

Eleanor's legacy has been overlooked, and she has even been put at the margins as a "coincidental" power broker by historians, outside the Dulles family system. Historians describe her as merely a hostess who served poolside drinks to Eisenhower, her brothers, and numerous high-ranking European diplomats and military officers (Friedman 2013; Sichel 2016). Books on the family relegate her role to the sidelines (Kinzer 2013; Mosley 1978). Thus, her impact has not been assessed in her capacity as a power broker who brought a particular liberal and actionable moral theological understanding to US policy as both a Christian and a nationalist in an equation where one nineteenth–twentieth-century term plus another do not add up to their twenty-first-century descriptor.

Ideas of dignity, service, civilization, and freedom set in an international context had been infused in all the children, if absorbed differently. The question of her relationship to "Christian nationalism" is important "as a discursive site where politics and history meet—where assertions of identity and power are conjoined" (Edwards 2022; Anderson 1983). Here, the analysis of Eleanor Lansing Dulles follows political–religious personal and family biographies to "rethink the nature of public diplomacy" (Edwards 2019a). As noted by a historian of the social sciences, "By focusing on the great men who shaped theory in the social science disciplines, such accounts have neglected the contributions made by women working at the boundaries of disciplines and applying their work to public policy" (Dzuback 1993). Eleanor's relationship with Christianity and nationalism must be taken seriously. Eleanor was a Christian and, particularly in the Cold War, a nationalist. Yet, this does not make her a conservative Christian nationalist, a term that became more fitting in the twentieth century for her increasingly conservative brother, Foster.

Eleanor Dulles does seem to fit within the category of Christian nationalism alongside Foster in the broadest sense of Christian nationalism as "an ideology that idealizes and advocates a fusion of American life with a particular type of Christian identity and culture"

(Whitehead and Perry 2020). At present, pundits have identified Christian nationalism as “a fusion of American and Christian values, symbols and identity” to perpetuate the idea that, “God has destined America, like the biblical Israel, for a special role in history, and that it will receive divine blessing or judgment depending on its obedience” (Smith and Bharath 2022). This almost always overlaps with a conservative political agenda. Yet, it is in the historical particulars that Eleanor will not fit squarely into a historiography of Christian nationalism. Her family has been labelled “conservative”, and Eleanor Lansing Dulles does check all the major Christian nationalist boxes, which include religion (Protestant), race (white), nativity (US-born), and citizenship (US). In addition, Christian nationalists are noted for quoting scripture to buttress their nationalist argument; Eleanor announced that her first building in Berlin was a “City Upon a Hill”, and scripture was etched into the cornerstone. Yet, her Christianity was not limited to religion, but rather to ideas and moral requirements, with a more liberal theological approach (Edwards 2019a). She was not promoting America as a chosen nation, but anointing her building a “House of free speech”. Indeed, Eleanor falls well outside the US conservative tradition: she admitted having sympathy for the Bolshevik Revolution, and as an interwar New Dealer, she believed in and developed government programs for social support (Dulles 1980a; Whitehead and Perry 2020). She did not understand the United States as “divine”, but rather deeply flawed in many ways. She never wavered from these ideals, even when it cost her politically or financially.

While Christian nationalists show an intolerance for difference, certainly exemplified by Foster’s policies in the Cold War and his well-documented racism, Eleanor welcomed difference in both her personal and professional lives (Dulles 1956; Jones 2005; Dudziak 2001; Blaschke 2016; Kinzer 2013). She married a divorced Orthodox Jewish man shortly after her Protestant minister father’s death; during the Cold War, her long-term partner was a Russian-born, Jewish socialist, Polish intellectual. While stationed in Berlin, her pro-refugee policies alienated the State Department, and even some West Germans themselves, and cost her a coveted position in Berlin in 1959. In addition, although definitions of Christian nationalism do not generally include cultural taste, they assume a cultural conservatism that would privilege Normal Rockwell over Jackson Pollock and would shun tenets of modernism and the avant-garde. Dulles embraced modernism in the arts and architecture, and deliberately built American tenets of freedom into the ground with modern architecture while rebuilding postwar Berlin.

Eleanor’s multi-pronged, weblike relationship to Christianity deeply infused her US diplomatic projects, but cannot be tagged to Christian nationalism or a singular Americanism as nationalism. She demonstrates that studies in biography and the influence of individuals on the fate of nations is a complex push-me/pull-you dynamic of biography and biology, teaching and learning, and fate. This article folds Eleanor into the history of the Dulles family influence on US foreign relations in the Cold War, and her relationship with Christianity, nationalism, and internationalism, with the multiple dualisms alive in the siblings evolving over time. Diplomacy is revealed as her form of Christian missionary work in the secular sphere. Eleanor Lansing Dulles became a missionary not for a religion, but for a nation.

Eleanor Lansing Dulles demands a rethinking of “Christian nationalism as a mindset, with its religio-political underpinnings, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, Christianity as a practice of good neighborliness, kindness, tolerance, modesty, and charity”.³ Her brothers embraced a nationalism that allowed for exercises in racism, betrayal, covert imperialist violence, and threats of “limited nuclear” attacks to fight the communist “evil” (Gaddis and Gordon 1999; Wells 1981; Sewell 2011; Talbot 2015; Woods 2020; Frumkin 2018). Perhaps they found Christian underpinnings in a twist on righteousness that allowed them to adopt moral indignation and a stance of justice. Cold War parlance and the “Crusades for freedom” might seem to justify actions as led by divine or moral law, even though they bent national laws and deployed covert operations. Eleanor was a nationalist, which brought some trouble in Berlin in the 1960s, yet she followed Christian righteousness as a

theological practice. She wrote, “I found it easy to understand my father’s teaching and went to him when I felt I had ‘strayed from the path of righteousness’” (Kinzer 2013). She contextualized her conflict at the age of ten: “I turned to him as I felt a beginning of the tension I was to feel most of my life; the conflict between the desire for full enjoyment and the will to contribute to my fellowmen. The motive in any case included the determination to be someone. This urge to be significant, proud, and creative began to propel me toward hard work and a high standard of behavior”. She followed her father’s direction (Dulles 1980a, p. 10). As an adult, she reflected, “I concluded it was high time that I accept the mystery of my father’s religion, even though I would never fully understand its meaning” (Dulles 1980a, p. 41). Regarding her grandmother and mother, Eleanor noted the deep influence of their sense of “righteousness and duty” on her own pursuits (Dulles 1980a, p. 8). Dr. Dulles was a Christian who believed in freedom and thus democracy, and thus she worked for her nation, the United States. She was not a Christian nationalist in the Cold War or post-Cold War sense; Dulles was a Christian and a nationalist.

2. “Universalisms”: From Religion to Politics

Biography and biology encourage a comparative examination of the influence of Christianity and nationalism on the siblings. The Dulles’ father, Allen Macy, was a preacher and theologian who grew up in a missionary family; their grandfather, John Welsh Dulles, had graduated from Union Theological Seminary in 1848, become a leader in US missionary work, and published several memoirs (Dulles 1855, 1867, 1881; Wilsey 2021; Kinzer 2013). Like the brothers Foster and Allen, who had sisters, the men who came before them had wives and daughters. Allen Macy’s mother had been of missionary stock; her mother, Harriet Winslow, had written a well-regarded memoir about her missionary work, published posthumously in 1835 (Winslow and Winslow 1835; Hutchison 1987; Robert 1997; Ruble 2012; Kane 1982; Thomas [1995] 2003; Bowie 1993; Adams 2011). The children listened to the published family missionary stories, written by both men and women, read to them by their mother Edith, Allen Macy’s wife.⁴ As the daughter of a diplomat and internationally powerful broker, she grew up with a strong ethos of service to the nation. Yet, she had a religious conversion as a young woman. Thus, the children absorbed Luke 12:35–48: to whom much is given, much is required (Wilsey 2021, p. 10).

Allen Macy Dulles, the father, was a liberal theologian initially trained at Princeton Theological Seminary. After graduating in 1879, he studied in Germany at Leipzig University and Gottinge, and in 1881 carried out archaeological research in the Sinaitic Peninsula of Egypt. He became pastor of the Trumbull Avenue Presbyterian Church of Detroit Michigan in 1887, and then received a doctoral degree from Hamilton College in 1901. After serving as pastor of the First Presbyterian Church of Watertown, New York, he became professor of theology at the Auburn Theological Seminary in 1904. Founded by Presbyterians in 1818, the faculty was known for promoting anti-slavery, women’s suffrage, temperance, and supported reforms that “uplifted” the poor. Auburn was one of the first theological schools in the US to educate African Americans (1877), Asian Americans (1882), and women (1917, which was also the year that Eleanor left for France to provide medical aid during World War I) (Adams 1918).

In 1904, when Dulles joined the faculty, Auburn had become a prominent seminary that practiced inclusion and liberalism, rejecting Calvinism in the Auburn Declaration of 1837, which was reinforced during Allen’s time there with the Auburn Affirmation in 1924. It upheld principles of theological freedom and prevented a fundamentalist turn in the Presbyterian church (Quirk 1975). Historians note that “in the battles over the authority of the Bible, Auburn’s name became attached to a famous defense of freedom. The Auburn Affirmation opposed efforts of fundamentalists to impose a single interpretation of scripture on others. (Saliba and Cameron 1818–2001). With the Auburn Affirmation, Samuel G. Craig “contended that the main line of cleavage ran between those who were Christians and those who applied that name to themselves (Quirk 1975)”. Eleanor felt admiration for her father who was “twice nearly expelled from the Presbyterian Church,” including when

he “questioned the Virgin birth” (Dulles 1980b). Like her father, Eleanor was morally and ethically infused with Christian values, but did not necessarily follow the church as an organization.

Allen preached dualism: the “catholic” church was authoritarian, coercive, dogmatic; the “evangelic” theology of the church was individual, ethical, and free (Wilsey 2021, pp. 40–41). Allen followed the family tradition and emphasized the power of the “evangelic” (Wilsey 2021, pp. 240–41). His grandmother Harriet had founded a school in Ceylon with the enduring motto, “The truth shall set you free” (Crisis at Uduvil Girl’s College 2016). The children sat in church each Sunday listening to their father: they took notes and were then required to expand on what they had learned at Sunday dinner. While Foster absorbed the lessons in a particular way, with theories that would influence the Cold War, Eleanor became infused with the missionary drive to enact change on the ground. Their mother, Edith, took Allen’s ideas and made them practical in their community, having grown up as the daughter of a diplomat and businessman who dealt in tangible results. She built community centers and worked with people in need.⁵ Thus, embedded in the children was another dualism: the religious and the pragmatic. Eleanor took to the pragmatic.

The attachment to freedom as both a religious and political ethos infused all the children. As noted by John Wilsey, the siblings’ father preached the concept of free thought, with an emphasis on the importance of “intellectual freedom to fulfil one’s duty to Christ’s ethical command” (Wilsey 2021, p. 66). Here, liberty and free thought became paramount, and mirrored the political side of the family, which represented the power of the United States and its freedoms abroad. Eisenhower noted that Foster was “a champion of freedom” (Wilsey 2021, p. 24). Eleanor relished the personal freedom she felt as a woman during the interwar; her projects for the State Department followed her great-grandmother’s school in Ceylon and were “symbols of freedom”, from the Freedom Bell to the Free University Student Village and Congress Hall, a home for intellectual freedom and free thought (Dulles 1980a, vi, 1). She celebrated World War I “freedom fighters”, and while in Austria in 1945, she “would sit for hours drinking [her] army liquor ration and speculating as to how we should gain freedom for Austria” (Dulles 1980a, p. 208). She went to Germany because “Berlin as a whole was frequently referred to as an island of freedom in a red sea” (Dulles 1980a, p. 246). During the uprisings in East Germany, Hungary, Poland, and Czechoslovakia, she was “stirred by the gallantry of those thirsting for freedom” (Dulles 1980a, p. 254). For both Congress Hall and the Student Village, she oversaw architects who built open spaces for gathering into the architecture of Berlin, thereby offering “an atmosphere of freedom” (Dulles 1980a, p. 260). By the time of her departure in 1959, she called West Berlin a “symbol of freedom on the continent”. In 1960, ten years after the installation of the Freedom Bell, she flew over Eastern Europe, again with a transmitter. News of the Freedom Bell was sent across the Iron Curtain in Russian, Hungarian, Romanian, Czech, and other languages: “There we were flown in twelve or fourteen helicopters along the border between the Federal Republic of Germany, Czechoslovakia, and East Germany. It was a strange sensation as the flock of army birds flew low over the blockhouses stationed every few miles along the barbed wire and ‘dead strip’ that cordoned off the Soviet-dominated area” (Dulles 1980a, p. 295). She became the subject of a potential international incident as she contemplated crossing into East Germany.

Yet, Eleanor also took the idea of redemption seriously, and this also became a driving force for her government work that mirrored the missionary drive. She wrote of her childhood, “When my father wanted to tell me that I had done something wrong, he would sit in the study and explain to me what was good and bad. He would tell me why something was wrong, and sometimes he would pray. I realized he cared a good deal about my understanding. Naturally, when my father tried to explain to me, I tried to explain to him. We’d have a little Bible reading” (Dulles 1980a, p. 17). During her youth, she contemplated suicide. As a woman, she was perceived as manly, with thick glasses, large features, and difficult hair that all contrasted with her lovely, blonde, elder sister and mother. Her belief in God was not absolute. However, she found a will to live, and a

sympathy for those who felt like outsiders. “Many children have climbed this path, only to return to face what life brings”, she concluded (Dulles 1980a, p. 18). Although she did not speak of the idea directly, in her consistent belief in psychology as a force for bringing health and welfare, her consistent work for refugees who would return to a new life, and her work for the postwar reunification of Germany, Dulles did not believe in prayer, but did understand sin within herself, and she took action to bring redemption from evil, particularly in postwar Germany.

As a child, Eleanor had wanted to become a medical missionary, following in the footsteps of her great-great-grandmother, Harriet. Eleanor wrote of her childhood: “I thought it important to read the Bible and when I had finished considered one stage of my growing up had been accomplished. I skipped nothing—not even the begats. I took it seriously and enjoyed some of it”. Yet, following in the practical “Lansing”, or diplomatic family footsteps, as well as her Dulles father’s questioning of the Virgin birth, she concluded, “I did not think it told the literal truth” (Dulles 1980a, p. 41). As a teenager, she “had vague and changing ambitions”, as she recalled, and “[r]eligion played a part and the urge to help someone predominated” (Dulles 1980a, p. 31). She did not feel that she was sufficiently pious to pursue church work except as a medical missionary (Dulles 1980a, p. 40).

In college, with poor eyesight that hindered her marks in chemistry, she studied social sciences and psychology. Of this difficult period, she wrote, “I found it hard to reconcile my early beliefs and convictions with the realities that tested my faith”. As she struggled to understand her relationship to religion, she studied under James H. Leuba, who authored *A Psychological Study of Religion: Its Origin, Function, and Future* (Leuba 1912). He asserted, “Religion needs in particular the insight into the dynamics of conscious life which can be contributed, not by studies in comparative religion nor by criticism of sacred texts, but only by psychology”. He concluded, “The gods of religion are inductions from experience, and are therefore proper objects of science” (Leuba 1912). His approach would mold her relationship to religiosity in her work.

Upon graduation in 1917, Eleanor secretly planned to make her way to France to help refugees, and then formally announced her intention to leave immediately: recognizing the drive in their daughter, her parents encouraged her, even offering her USD 1000 for the journey and expenses related to humanitarian service. After experiencing the war first-hand, “Conflict between early expectations and later troubles brought turmoil and uncertainty not easy to resolve” (Dulles 1980a, p. 41). She had been “chased by a submarine, arrested as a spy by the French, and shelled by the Germans” (Dulles 1980a, p. 50). She saw shell-shocked people commit suicide (Dulles 1980a, p. 50). The war experience further shook her belief in the Christian church and she recalled choosing not to attend services on Sundays, taking up smoking, and joining Quaker prayer services. In 1919, watching the Treaty of Versailles unfold in Paris with her brothers and uncle, Woodrow Wilson’s Secretary of State, she boldly critiqued the use of statistical analysis to solve postwar economic problems. Eleanor listened to discussions with Keynes and “found his statistics lacking”, too divorced from the experience on the ground. She concluded, “The mistakes made in the Paris conference in 1919 were to affect my entire life and the lives of my children and grandchildren” (Dulles 1980a, pp. 68, 69).

The Dulles and Foster families belonged to merging networks: Harry Fosdick and Allen Dulles, Eleanor’s father, were kindred religious intellectual spirits; Fosdick’s brother, Raymond, worked with the Foster–Lansing side of the family. Regarding the network of these East Coast intellectuals that included religious as well as political men and women, Allen Dulles had sided with Harry Emerson Fosdick, a Baptist who delivered the sermon, “Shall the Fundamentalists Win?” in 1922. Fosdick repudiated the effort to suppress those who differed with the fundamentalists and “appealed for a spirit of tolerance and of Christian liberty” (Quirk 1975). Eleanor’s maternal uncle, Secretary of State, and Raymond, Harry’s brother, worked together to bring world peace under Woodrow Wilson after World War I (Priscilla 1883–1972). If Eleanor had not met Raymond while they were both

providing medical relief in France, she would have met Fosdick at the Paris Peace Accords. They shared like political ideals including support for refugees; although they worked for peace, they were not anti-war. Raymond Fosdick wrote of the moment and hearing Wilson speak of a League of Nations, Raymond using terms borrowed from his brother's religious rhetoric, "It seemed as if our generation by some divine providence had been specially chosen for great and determining events" (Fosdick 1958). He continued, "it is difficult to recapture the mood of dedication and crusade which his words inspired". Raymond would run the Rockefeller Foundation and work with Foster, Eleanor's brother. This idea of American "crusades" would endure through the early Cold War and become a foundational part of psychological warfare campaigns and not-for-profit foundations that funded the "Crusade for Freedom" that sent the Freedom Bell to Berlin, that would be rung by Eleanor during uprisings and celebrated in ceremonies (Kádár-Lynn 2013; Cummings 2010).

After World War I, Eleanor returned to Bryn Mawr to the Graduate Department of Social Economy and Social Research for the training of social researchers. In 1921, she joined the Summer School for Women Workers in Industry as a tutor. Like the female religious missionaries of the British and United States "empires", Dulles as a woman brought specific attributes and gendered messages. She worked close to local communities, and had a moral or ideological agenda that was organized, implemented, and "negotiated in conditions of rapid social change" (Hunt and Lutkehaus 1999; Gilchrist 1994; Hill 1985; Jolly 1993; Pratt 1992; Williams 2003). She would have worked with Helen Hill, who would marry Francis Miller, who also found "early commitments to Christian imperialism through a [missionary] upbringing" (Dulles 1980a, pp. 28, 115).⁶ Like the Millers' coupled legacy, which "would embody the Protestant nature of the social scientific secularism that pervaded foreign policy discussions", that saw the American state as "a crystalizing, just force . . . on a religiously neutral foundation", Eleanor held both these impulses in herself. As a single woman, she embodied the dualism of the Hill's as a couple, as well as that of her mother and father, who had established in her both theologically driven and practical aspirations (Dulles 1980a, p. 31).

In these years, from a religious standpoint, she "reached toward an understanding of the universe" (Dulles 1980a, p. 41). Her understanding of theology encompasses a strong sense of the "evangelical" that her father had preached and included a belief in "universal" values, yet she was far from an evangelical Christian, and began dating a Jewish man whom she would marry.

Universalism, as Eleanor understood it, was not opposed to a respect for differences. In her autobiography, she wrote, "No sex, race, or type of person should be burdened with the stigma of incapacity. The difference that many scientists attribute to the brains of men and women does not spell inferiority, but rather diversity and opportunity. In the demanding times we face, all people must be used, all must be given opportunity so there will be universal hope and cooperation" (Dulles 1980a, p. 356). In this, her relationship to Christianity engendered a liberalism not shared by her brothers.

3. The Secular Missionary

The differences in Eleanor's "theology" from her father, and her development of the ethical foundations of that that theology into "ideology" began during childhood and shifted during adulthood; however, the fundamental precepts of her Christian beliefs did not waver. Her father was "an ardent Christian who mixed theological liberalism with austere devotion. He stressed the ethical teachings of Jesus in his preaching, teaching, and writing" (Toulouse 1985; Leonard 1908; Mucz 1930). In Eleanor's autobiography, the words "Jesus", "Christ", and even "God" do not appear. Perhaps she considered the Unitarian and Jewish conception of Christ. Her father believed in the "ethical" applications of religion, which is where they would have come together with a shared, liberal, non-conservative approach to belief (Toulouse 1985; Leonard 1908). Instead of evoking god-figures, she used descriptive religious terms to describe her political work, aspirations, and life including the terms "righteousness", "moral", and "freedom", invoking the Christian "will to contribute",

and an attachment to “mankind” and a “universal”. This Christian-based approach to foreign policy is demonstrated by her belief that, in the long run, “right would triumph and that morality would be victorious” (Dulles 1980a, p. 313).

During the 1920s in order to buttress her knowledge of economics, Dulles studied for a year at the London School of Economics, and in 1926, she earned her Ph.D. at Harvard in economics and international monetary policy; her interest in Europe remained. In 1930, she received a General Electric grant to study reparation payments in Germany. While there, she came face-to-face with the Nazi movement both on the ground and at the highest levels of government: “We had met many young German men on the rivers . . . They were anti-everything. They said, ‘The German soul must be re-created, German imperialism must be strengthened, we must have our place in the sun . . . ’ and so on. This was Nazism in its beginning, when it spread from Hitler’s small group to the younger generations, and then gradually crept up through the older generations”. While on the research trip, she met with Joseph Goebbels, and became deeply concerned by Nazi ideology (Dulles 1980a, p. 108). Astonished by the cultural, political, and economic implications of what she saw, she argued with her brothers to intervene, but isolationism prevailed (Dulles 1980a, p. 131). She believed in intervention as a leftist internationalist; her brothers did not. In this, she does not fit the definition of Christian nationalism, while her brothers ticked the box.

President Franklin D. Roosevelt’s administration tapped her to assist in the establishment of the Social Security Board, firmly planting her on the left. She noted in her autobiography that Roosevelt was considered by many in her family circles to be a socialist. She moved to the State Department and attended Bretton Woods as Economic Attaché to Vienna, and later administered relief in Austria that would lay the foundations for the Marshall Plan. In 1947, she worked with Foster and George C. Marshall. Dulles deemed Austria “ripe for reconstruction” given the “total devastation” she saw, and she used government funding to get housing, food, and fuel for the population (Dulles 1980a, p. 1833). She recalled of the Soviet side: “The occupation was so chaotic that if one really wanted to do something, maneuvering was necessary. You can trade cabbages for horses, especially if you’re a woman” (Dulles 1980a, p. 193). While in Vienna, she watched the Berlin Blockade with horror. She feared for Austria and grew to abhor Moscow’s tactics. Again, Eleanor’s anti-communism was borne of pragmatism: while she believed in some underlying policies that could be labelled socialistic, she followed her father’s disdain for authoritarian, coercive, dogmatic institutions, which he labelled “catholic” (Wilsey 2021, pp. 40–41). Eleanor Lansing Dulles was intolerant of the “catholic” side of communist totalitarianism.

Yet, these concepts of Christian-learned morality and ethics infused her work in economics. In 1950, she began a “private project”: “I was much interested in the growing economic strength of the Soviet Union and devoted many evenings a week to a manuscript on the future of communism competing with capitalism”. She outlined comparative advantages of capitalist and communist approaches to what she called, “the universal needs and economic capacities of mankind” (Dulles 1980a, p. 235). She read books on political philosophy and met with Leo Pasvolosky, who would become known as the “foremost author of the United Nations Charter”, a lover she did not identify, and a CIA strategist whom she called “Bill” (Holbrooke 2003; Connally and Steinberg 1954). She wrote, “They came to [my home] on different evenings and spent considerable time criticizing, arguing, and analyzing the present and future world problems. I talked to them at length about East-West policy. This led to a judgment of what would happen in ten, twenty, or thirty years”. (Dulles 1980a, p. 235). In an unpublished draft of her book she wrote, “I was trying to analyze the viability of some type of Christian communism in a capitalist world.” For Eleanor, the term “Christian,” with its civilizing, missionary undertones, demanded ethical and moral solutions to the problems of capitalism that engaged the social sciences including economics. Its roots derived from her religious training that had been doused with the trauma of facts during two world wars. The concept of a civilizing mission that offered solutions to a human condition that was universal had not been burnt to the ground during war, particularly for Eleanor.

Despite her belief in a morality that could be found in a communistic approach, in the short term regarding the Soviet Union and the Cold War she was resolute and noted, "It was important to keep our powder dry" (Dulles 1980a, p. 313). She despised what she called the tyranny of "The Kremlin." She coordinated "individual insights" into economic policies that would protect the population yet retain a capitalistic base and formulated them "into what was to become Cold War policy" (Dulles 1980a, p. 235). In 1950, she participated in events that would seem to fit the Christian nationalist definition, attaching herself to both Ronald Reagan and Eisenhower in the "Crusade for Freedom" campaign, which drew on religious rhetoric to raise money for radio programming and other cultural events to thwart the spread of communism.⁷ Reagan made television ads asking Americans to donate "Truth Dollars": one dollar would buy one hundred minutes of "Truth" broadcasts for bloc citizens, a penny a minute. Under "Crusade" funding, the Freedom Bell travelled to Berlin, cast with the words, "Proclaim Liberty Throughout all the Land unto all the Inhabitants Thereof", a biblical reference from the Book of Leviticus. As an iconic symbol of American independence from tyranny and religious righteousness, the mock Liberty Bell was used in Cold War campaigns on savings bonds and stamps to make the country "so strong that no one can impose ruthless, godless ideologies on us".⁸ In Berlin, Dulles proclaimed, "This had been the gift of thousands of American schoolchildren contributing pennies" (Dulles 1980a, p. 295). Indeed, unbeknownst to many at the time, the CIA provided most of the funding for the "Crusade for Freedom" activities. In Berlin, as Dulles looked on, East German and bloc defectors came forward to tap the bell, an American photographer standing by, as a "symbol of hope and encouragement to their compatriots" (Paige and Kimball n.d.).

4. All's Fair in Missions and War: Feeding Unrest

In 1952, shortly before Foster became Secretary of State, Eleanor Dulles joined the Office of German Affairs in the State Department. With a created position as head of the "Berlin Desk", she travelled back and forth between Washington and Berlin, and successfully resisted Foster's attempts to remove her from her position. She stayed planted in Berlin, believing that the situation of the city was "a unique barometer indicating the state of the Cold War and a significant demonstration of the will [of the West] to oppose the westward progress of communism". She asked, "How can freedom and democracy develop in areas controlled by communism?" (Dulles 1970) She concluded, "Berlin was a symbol of freedom on the continent" (Dulles 1980a, p. 261). Like her great grandmother Harriet, a "Velvet Missionary" and "Ambassadress for God", Eleanor preached freedom. Indeed, she often intercepted "Eyes only, Dulles" classified and top-secret cables meant for either or both brothers. She wondered whether her brothers ever saw the memos when she concluded: "All the work on the political, military, cultural, and economic aspects of Berlin were coordinated and to some extent synthesized at my desk" (Dulles 1980a, p. 243).

When she arrived, she was encouraged by American operatives to "put an American kitchen in the center of Berlin". Thanking them for the suggestions, she said she would "add it to [her] list" (Dulles 1980a, p. 284). She did not. Dulles went to work "fighting the Kremlin" with food offerings and buildings including Congress Hall, the Benjamin Franklin Medical Center, and the Student Village for the Free University. Healthcare offerings and schools had been traditional sites for female missionaries to exercise organizational power, and Dulles followed the colonial, nationalist impulse in the postwar reconstruction efforts, particularly in institution building (Cooper and Stoler 1989; Stoler 1995; Dirks 1992).⁹ For these projects, however, she needed money. Just as Harriet had written home to raise funds for her school, Eleanor solicited funds for the periphery from the metropole. Arranging an "invisible position", Eleanor said that since she was "never formally posted in Berlin" she made the requests in cables from Berlin and "often wrote responses from Washington . . . and engineered the responses". She explained,

"I would write cables to Washington [from Berlin], making suggestions and proposals. All this would take a week or ten days, then I would fly back to the US. Before the cables [from Berlin] were decoded and acted upon in Washington,

I would be back at my desk [in Washington] where I was responsible for drafting the answers. I would prepare a favorable answer to my own cable and write a brief, defending the request. I secured approximately a billion dollars for Berlin." A billion dollars, even in 1959 dollars when she left, would be almost \$8.7 billion in 2019." (Dulles 1980a, p. 249)

Like Harriet and the other female missionaries in the family who had used women's church organizations to raise private funds for their projects as "Velvet steel" missionaries, Eleanor also created a private foundation to augment government funding for her projects, the Benjamin Franklin Foundation (BFF). Foster worked with Rockefeller, and Eleanor's BFF would work with the Ford Foundation, which also often worked alongside the CIA, led by her other brother.

In the early 1950s, Eleanor Dulles had watched as the communists planned the Stalin-Allee area of East Berlin, the zone occupied by the Soviets under the Four Power Agreement at the end of World War II. Centered around a broad avenue named in honor of the Soviet Union's leader, architects designed eight-story apartment buildings in adherence to the Stalinist architectural style, or "socialist classicism" (Czepczyński 2008). Despite the grand arches, this elaborate complex was trumpeted as housing for "the common man". As the project proceeded, the East Berlin government mounted posters of the intimidatingly impressive buildings under construction alongside photographs of the charred parks and still-skeletal buildings of West Berlin. Indeed, the Western zone remained a barren, debris-strewn landscape. The once lavish Tiergarten was barren. The world-renowned zoo had only one elephant left, and the trees had been used as firewood. As an outpost of the West, Berlin had become a propaganda nightmare (Grünbacher 2004). Stalin-Allee became the flagship of Soviet power and East German reconstruction with its advertised "luxurious" apartments for "plain workers", as well as shops, restaurants, cafés, a tourist hotel, and a cinema.

However, the complex was not without controversy, which Dulles well understood. East Germany (the German Democratic Republic, or GDR) had borne the brunt of Stalinization exerted upon Soviet bloc countries. In East Berlin, the "common man" suffered from a shortage of consumer goods and a ban on electricity in the evenings, and farmers had their land seized by the government. Emigration from the East to the West reached a peak in early 1953, and Berlin became central to the East–West crossing. In response to the crisis, the East German Communist Central Committee mandated increasingly systematic changes for workers building Stalin-Allee, including a ten percent increase in work quotas with no corresponding rise in salary. On 16 June 1953, with Dulles's arrival, the workers rioted. Within days, troops in the GDR, employing tanks mounted with large-caliber cannons and rotating guns, quashed the uprising with a violent show of force.

Nevertheless, in defiance, protests rippled through East Berlin and the East German countryside the next day. Using food stockpiles obtained through funds commandeered from her brothers in Washington, Dulles offered free food packages to anyone with an East German identity card. The East German government ordered its people not to take the handouts. Harriet had offered food to those who came to her home in Ceylon; Edith had fed the hungry. Dulles understood that the propaganda worked either way: giving free food won hearts, minds, and stomachs; troops stationed to prevent people from obtaining much-needed sustenance could be photographed for American propaganda purposes (Dulles 1980a, pp. 255–56). "The Communists faced a dilemma", Dulles remarked. It was a win–win. According to the Communists, Dulles herself had abetted these protests with her brother and the CIA, "stirring up new gangster acts of sabotage" (Ostermann and Byrne 2003; Smale 2013; Wasserstein 2007).¹⁰ She denied the charges, citing her dedication to culture, the reunification of Germany, and the people of Berlin.

5. Into the Fold: Refugees or Defectors?

In contrast to a Christian nationalism that shuns refugees, from 1917 Dulles had been dedicated to European refugees (Dulles 1980a, p. 50). Like some but not all Christian

nationalists, she believed in international interventionism because of her missionary roots. While in France, she had worked closely with women in the church offering canned goods, medical care, and money (Dulles 1980a, p. 56). By the end of the war, the horror of displaced people had been seared into her, forging a lifelong support for refugees. Her brothers had not experienced this on the ground. She wrote,

We drove north to see if we could return refugees to their former homes . . . Thousands of fine young men were buried in their blood, covered with rubble and mud. A few spikes of trees here and there stood in once fertile fields. Empty trenches zigzagged across the barren waste. The silence was more horrifying than the earlier sound of battle which I had heard when I went to visit my two aunts at the front. I felt sick and lost among the ghosts and broken bones, the shards of warfare and its desolation . . . Our thoughts were on our main purpose—to resettle as many refugees as possible. (Dulles 1980a, p. 73)

As she worked on post-WWII planning, these experiences affected her, and she joined “a small group that met in the evenings to plan the new agency to care for the destitute and the refugees”. Representatives from various government agencies and branches “sketched the outline of a cooperative international agency that would pool resources and coordinate assistance where it was most urgently needed” (Dulles 1980a, p. 169). On the ground in Austria, she saw the first-hand results of war again with refugees released from concentration camps.

In Berlin, by 1953 she celebrated and encouraged the refugees who crossed from East to West: “The refugees came west by the hundreds . . . [At] the parties for refugees where we sang and danced to cheer those who in desperation had sadly left their homes in East Germany” (Dulles 1980a, p. 247). They were received at Marienfelde, and Eleanor visited the center determined to build a modern village for them. Although the project failed, she wrote about the inspirational power of the experience: “I can still remember the woman doctor in charge of the refugees there, a tall, square, determined woman. She was gruff and outspoken, but kind. The suggestion that we build a hospital—eventually the splendid Klinikum—was hers. Because she was so blunt and politically inept, I did not feel it wise to bring her into planning that hospital, and she has never got the credit she deserved for the idea” (Dulles 1980a, p. 250). Ever practical, and not one to be dismayed by failure, Dulles, through BFF, used an array of private and public international funding sources first to build a hall for intellectuals and then the hospital that had been inspired by Marienfelde. Yet, over time, the Christian nationalist ethos that remained suspicious of refugees impacted her career. She remained vocal in her dogged and unrelenting support for refugees, which put her at loggerheads with the late months of Foster’s State Department. She lamented, “I was increasingly overruled”. Her support for refugees led to the demise of her government career in Berlin (Dulles 1980a, p. 276).

6. Building Beacons for Freedom

In the examination of ELD’s relationship to Christianity, the basic questions for theories of religion can be used. First, the “specificity” of her religious upbringing; second the “function” of religious thought; and third, the “structure” of its manifestation, particularly through visual and experiential manifestations in Berlin’s architectural rebuilding (Strausberg 2009; Tillich 1959). Her building projects engaged with Christianity’s emphasis on the culture of visual practice, or what historians have called “the sacred gaze (Morgan 2005)”. The act of “seeing” in a cultural or historical setting inspires knowledge of spiritual significance in the viewer. Vision is a cultural act, yet also becomes political; as the body moves through the space it constructs “habits” (Morgan 2005, pp. 2–6). In this way, architecture is a vital tool of cultural dissemination because it is first experienced and “seen”, and then experienced. Gender is also attached to the spiritual gaze, and in the United States from the nineteenth century, when “Protestants came to believe that a way of seeing could be instrumentalized [through gender]” (Morgan 2005, p. 101). The “sacred gaze” fostered and perpetuated “republican motherhood” with the figurehead

who “was encouraged to influence world affairs from the parlor to the hearth” (Morgan 2005, p. 105). As a soft-power expression of American ideology, Eleanor as “Mother of Berlin” and her “Hat” was a direct antidote for the ills of “muscular and hyper-muscular Christianity”, particularly associated with hard power warfare, economic Americanization, and de-Nazification programs (Morgan 2005, pp. 210–11).

Having gained experience from the failure of the refugee project, in 1956, before building the hospital, Dulles went to work planning the modernist Congress Hall. Again, her deep belief in the power of modern art and architecture would put her firmly outside the Christian nationalist camp. She found land in the Tiergarten just on the border between West and East, and in direct sight of the German Reichstag in the East, the symbol of Nazi power and oppression. With modernist architecture and an illuminated white curved roof, the building was her “City Upon a Hill” and a “shining beacon of freedom from the West”. In 1630, John Winthrop had declared that the English Puritans would make a “City upon a hill” in America with religious freedom and freedom from tyranny and added, “the eyes of the world are upon us” (Krieger 2019; Rodgers 2018). As the building evoked the early Puritan settlers of the United States, Dulles had etched into the cornerstone: “God Grant not only the love of liberty but a thorough knowledge of the rights of man”, echoing the Bible, “so that [he] may set his foot anywhere [on the earth’s] surface and say, ‘This is my country’”.

The modernist architecture used glass to demonstrate the transparency of democracy, a reflecting pool, and large meeting spaces to encourage “democratic conversation”. Congress Hall opened with great fanfare, with the architect’s daughter cracking a champagne bottle against the Congress Hall cornerstone, christening the edifice the “house of free speech”. Reporters called it “the first time in history” that a building was christened as if it were a new ship (Dulles 1980a, p. 46).¹¹ A newspaper headline announced, “Berlin—A Symbol of the West”.¹² The building became known as “Eleanor’s Hat” because its rounded shape resembled her signature pill-box hat.

Although the next building that would be opened in Berlin would be the Benjamin Franklin Medical Center, during the planning of Congress Hall Dulles began to work on educational architectural projects: a Student Village for the Free University and Siegmundshof, a skyscraper student housing project for men at the Technical University in the British sector of Berlin.

From inception, the Free University had received a good deal of celebratory Cold War press, with the mayor of West Berlin stating, “The creation of the Free University is perhaps the most noble achievement of free Berlin”. When the Western sector was divided, the capitol city’s famous prewar university, Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität, came under Soviet control. The Free University was established concurrently with the unfolding Berlin Blockade in 1948. The university had been funded by a consortium later paralleled by Dulles’ Benjamin Franklin Foundation: US government funds, German funds and land donations, private not-for-profit foundations, and surely the CIA.¹³ Shepard Stone, who had assisted Dulles with the Hall, promoted the idea of the university to the Ford Foundation, which donated USD 1.3 million and underwrote a new library, also in the modernist style. In the 1950s chroniclers gushed, “Like the Berlin blockade and the air-lift, the Free University has become the symbol of resistance against Communist tyranny” (Anthon 1954–1955). Just as Harriet Winslow had founded her school in Ceylon with the motto, “The truth Shall Set You Free”, Dulles built her student complex to welcome both West and East German youth at the “Free” university.

Unlike the Congress Hall, which used an American architect, the student project used a German architect. “At the same time”, Dulles recalled, “we injected some of our ideas”. She obtained the land in exchange for the gift of the buildings, concluding, “I enjoyed the maneuver” (Dulles 1980a, p. 266). Although the US ambassador, David Bruce, suspected that the Germans would dislike the idea of a campus project, and that Congress would not approve funds, Dulles assured him that she had both angles covered, surely a reference to the BFF and Ford. The student complex would house over 700 students, and

the architectural design would encourage exchange with a small auditorium, a library, and “pleasant grounds surrounding the group of buildings” (Dulles 1980a, pp. 266–67).

Yet, the village also became a recruiting ground for the CIA. As soon as the suburban village opened, “it was common knowledge” that numerous Western and East German students had been approached by “the spooks”, including Army intelligence. After being “tossed” a Berlin newspaper, if the student could read a few paragraphs, they were “invited to a first-class restaurant”. During dinner, if “they showed interest in ‘doing a few things for their country,’” part-time, the students were told to report to a private villa in the American sector. “Typically they were asked to write reports on certain students and student organizations at the Free University and Technical University in West Berlin”, both of which had been built under Dulles’ watch (Colitt 1967).

With the construction of Benjamin Franklin hospital, immediate medical relief associated with Harriet’s missionary work and Eleanor’s work in World War I combined with modern science as propaganda. For the missionaries, “healing rightfully belonged at the center of Christianity” (Klassen 2011). Harriet had offered preventative medicine for the outbreaks of cholera, and it worked. According to local memory, “They offered new kinds of medicine, which helped them recover quickly, without any conditions. Raman [a village boy in Ceylon] who had fallen two days ago, had broken his leg and with the guidance of Harriet, had gone to Pandeterruppu to see the doctors there. His limbs were healing well—she had heard his wife telling her mother—whereas Parvathy’s father who had fallen while walking plucking coconuts from his compound last year, could hardly walk and has never been able to go out to work in the fields as before” (Mills n.d.). Medicalization and modernity textured with the soft power of spirituality and religion as a healing practice.

The Soviet-encased Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität hosted the best medical teaching hospital in Berlin alongside its university. Mirroring the establishment of the Free University, West Berlin needed a teaching hospital. While bringing expertise to the West, the Dulles facility would also purposefully drain the East of its German medical experts, creating refugees, and would cause the disruption of health services; the population on the opposing side would have to cross over the border for care just as they had crossed over for food in 1953, and for erudite culture with the opening of Congress Hall. Understanding the power of elite scientific exchange, Dulles knew that medical professionals could be wooed with the latest in technology and modern facilities for research, surgery, and care. Their first oath of medical doctors was to serve humanity. In the Soviet zone, they had been instructed to serve the system. Her father Allen’s understanding of religious dualism infused her understanding of allegiance to principles over organizations that would drive people. As they were German *physicians and scientists* first, their allegiance and citizenship could easily be shifted from East to West.

7. From Mother to Minister among Women

Despite the success and promise of the building projects, Eleanor Dulles became increasingly at odds with “Washington”, regardless of the administration. Under Eisenhower, she believed the new Secretary of State made “too many concessions to the Kremlin”, because he did not buttress radio and other propagandistic cultural efforts in Berlin, and would not support new immigrants, refugees, or defectors (Dulles 1980a, p. 276). After being named a Minister by Eisenhower, Dulles transferred from the Berlin desk to the Bureau of Intelligence and Research. When John F. Kennedy was elected, Dulles decried the young president’s lack of “quick response and clear-cut decisions” (Dulles 1980a, p. 273). Although Eisenhower had planned the invasion of Cuba with Allen’s CIA, Kennedy altered plans and limited air support at the Bay of Pigs in 1961. According to Dulles, Kennedy’s show of weakness with the Soviets during the Bay of Pigs invasion and at the Vienna Summit empowered “the Kremlin” to encourage the erection of the Berlin Wall in August. She denounced Kennedy: “If I had been in Berlin, I doubt the Wall would have gone up. I would have had the trucks drive back and forth in the city” (Dulles 1980a, p. 272). Although Dulles used cultural diplomacy, she believed in hard power. Kennedy’s weak re-

sponse to Soviet actions allowed the “defiance of the American government with impunity” (Dulles 1980a, p. 222).

Eleanor was not a singular case among women. With rampant sexism in Washington DC, the liberal preacher Harry Fosdick’s daughter, Dorothy, and Eleanor were both “invisible” powerhouses in the State Department, joining during World War II and then continuing to work in foreign affairs during the Cold War (War and Braukman 2004). Both the Dulles and Fosdick families had promoted the power of women for generations. John and Harry preached to support women, and actively engaged with their education to enable them to begin to join church leadership. Fosdick relative J. William was a painter and one of his most famous murals celebrated the religious and politically motivated St. Joan of Arc. He made *Adoration of St. Joan of Arc* (1896) to appeal to the wealthy for support because, “At the turn of the twentieth century, Joan of Arc was a popular symbol in American culture . . . and could be a figure from the romantic past and an emblem of the ‘New Woman’ in the modern world”. Mark Twain wrote about her, and George Bernard Shaw wrote a Broadway play (Fosdick 1896). Like Eleanor, “The Forgotten Dulles”, one Washington observer noted, “Dorothy Fosdick was the mystery woman here”.

By the early 1960s, sharing invisibility, Eleanor and Dorothy were on opposite sides of the Vietnam question, but they had become foreign policy interventionists with their liberal Christian upbringing: “Dorothy was a tough girl who believed in a tough foreign policy”, and thus supported intervention in Vietnam (Hughes 1999). Eleanor decried both Vietnam and Kennedy’s weakness in Berlin. The weekend the Berlin Wall went up, Kennedy was vacationing and unavailable when sailing at Hyannis Port. Eleanor immediately “leaped to Berlin’s defence” and went to her office. Finding the head of the Berlin Task Force in the halls, she berated Marty Hillenbrand and became “harsh in her criticism of the new president for his absence and inaction”. Hillenbrand attempted to evade Eleanor by ducking into the men’s room, but, undeterred, Eleanor followed him in to finish her diatribe on how to protect the divided city.¹⁴ Although he quietly agreed that “the Kennedy administration was staffed with academic amateurs”, who had “frolics of their own”, he felt he could do nothing.¹⁵

After Allen “resigned”, Secretary of State Dean Rusk asked Eleanor to resign, saying, “The Kennedys say I have to get you out” (Dulles 1980a, p. 276). Just a month after the overnight erection of the Berlin Wall, she and her German colleagues believed that for the US “Mother of West Berlin” a “resignation could not be quietly accomplished”. They believed the US had to show support for Berlin as they had with Eleanor’s efforts from the food program in 1953 through the construction of the medical facility. Yet, her phone was disconnected twice, people avoided her in the halls, and murmurs of “That woman is poison” rippled through the Executive Dining Room of the State Department (Dulles 1980a, p. 308). “However, a queer episode determined the date of my resignation”, she recalled. The *Washington Post* announced that she was resigning. “The article gave no reason. My first instinct was to deny it. Then, I thought it would be foolish to make a fuss” (Dulles 1980a, p. 306), Dulles said of reading about her own “resignation” in January 1962. In spite of these endings, Dr. Dulles taught; worked for think tanks and as a representative for the US government in Eastern Europe, Asia, the Middle East; and spent a year in Africa working with women, building schools, and supporting economic programs (Dulles 1980a, pp. 235–420).

8. Complicating Religious and Political Binaries: Women and Biography in History

At first blush, Eleanor Dulles’s political biography seems to exemplify the typical Cold War right-wing evolution from interwar socialist to anti-communist Christian cold warrior and would seem to fit her into the political–religious biography of her family (Wiltgen and Mackay 2017). Dulles moved from working for Roosevelt to establish New Deal programs, to West Berlin under Eisenhower in 1952 to “fight the Kremlin”. Indeed, while at the State Department, she was the subject of her brother’s McCarthyite investigations because she had implemented “socialist-type” programs with Roosevelt. An Army report

finally cleared her because she was a good mother.¹⁶ The nuanced story of Eleanor Dulles demonstrates that the issues are shaded, complex, and deeply individual. One historian of the Right writes, “I alternatively refer to [female] activists on the right as ‘conservative,’ ‘anti-communist,’ and ‘right wing,’ and include the Christian right, to underscore the ideological contribution their work made to the ascendance of the American right”.¹⁷ The author continues, “By no means audacious, the decision mimics the practice of women’s historians who describe women as feminists” who either lived before the movement began or, like Eleanor Dulles, disavowed the term (Dulles 1980a).¹⁸ These terms, particularly in the context of Christian nationalism, must be untangled to make them descriptive rather than sticky phrases siloed in container-like meanings. The sticky quality of the adjective “Christian” when glued to “conservative”, “right wing”, or “anti-communist”, clearly interferes with a useful analytic frame to understand its role in the history of foreign relations, as exemplified by the case of Eleanor Dulles, a Christian anti-communist who was not conservative or right-wing.

In the question of the Dulles legacy, the import of the female missionary experience along with male liberal Protestantism becomes vital. Female missionaries acted as a conduit of interaction between the colony and the metropole; Dulles worked between Berlin and Washington, encouraged the reimagining of gender roles that validated the importance of women’s institution building power in the international field (Hunt and Lutkehaus 1999).¹⁹ Missionaries had ready access to economic and institutional spheres, and carried the gendered bias of a “caring” figure—particularly when it came to food and shelter, schools for the youth, healthcare, and cultural offerings. The missionary women “opened new vistas for reform” because of the gendered ruptures in the expectations for women at work in the field versus at home in the metropole, and Dulles relied on this legacy (Hunt and Lutkehaus 1999). Missionaries who came after Harriet tried to correct the “lost allegiance of the [human] race” and believed that “all that is distinctively, particularly feminine, may be brought into this consummation” (Diggett 1883).²⁰ Gendered tactics brought results, wrote one observer in the late nineteenth century: “Are there any crooked or narrow places where only her feet can travel—any rough spots that only her touch may smooth—any low levels which only her hands can raise—any recesses of sorrow where only her voice can be heard”. This continues: “and in response thereto a new voice is heard—a still small voice—yet none the less its whispers may reach where the thunder tones may fail— the women’s missionary movement appears”. In the nineteenth century, “The fields were just right for this sowing” and “Womanhood is everywhere, under all conditions, in all civilizations, the fountain of life and influence”.²¹ The history and legacy of nineteenth-century colonial Christian missions exposes the dynamics of gender and religion during the Cold War, and provided Eleanor with a roadmap for psychological interventions that also brought Christian values to East Europe.

Dulles demonstrates that some anti-communists, who were deeply religious and behaved like missionaries for the American cause in the international Cold War, certainly were not all elitists in their approach to refugees; at the same time, she believed in the power of the elite and “trickle-down diplomacy”. As a powerful independent woman, she first sympathized with communism, was investigated for alleged socialist ties, and then could be framed as a conservative as she embraced anti-communist, anti-Kennedy, and fiscally responsible ideals. She cannot be defined by congealed and comingled terms. She believed in the power of government to do good works, first as a New Dealer, then repairing the devastation of Europe after World War II in cities divided East from West, fighting the Kremlin in Moscow with food and architecture as diplomacy, as well as a few projects with Allen; meanwhile, like the conservative Phyllis Schlafly and her housewives, Dulles disavowed feminism, while believing in the power of women. She wrote, “Women already make a large share of the decisions in business and home life, and they can *learn*, be *taught*, the power issues”. Of her State Department work, she said, “I decided that if I were not promoted I would act as if I had been”. Yet, she added, “I am not a feminist” (Dulles 1980a, pp. 238, 239).

Building on the work of Marilyn Young, “Cold Wars”, and Suzy Kim—who argues that “the Cold War’s binary frame served to reinforce the gendered binary, so that neither the Cold War nor feminism can be divorced from one another in their historical unfolding”—Dulles must be understood in the context of “feminisms” in whose meanings change over time and location (Young 1991; Kim 2020). Myra Marx Ferree and Aili Mari Tripp note, “[I]t can seem problematic to apply the label ‘feminist’ to activist women, [when] they refuse to use this term for themselves” (Ferree and Tripp 2006). Here, Dulles’s non-allegiance to the feminist movement post-1960 by women born in the late nineteenth or early-twentieth centuries is not unique. As a historical phenomenon, the rejection of the label “feminist” by liberal, progressive female leaders during the Cold War deserves further study. Indeed, numerous powerful women with varied political positions made similar statements, from modern dancer Martha Graham to artist Georgia O’Keeffe and Ambassador Clare Boothe-Luce, to name a few. The generational turns in the definition of “feminism” are put into play. For these women who came into political consciousness before the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment, “feminism” harkened back to the suffrage or “liberationist” movement. Although successful in achieving its end—the vote for women—the women’s movement fractured, and numbers declined along with visible, front-page legislative results (Gottlieb 2015; Anderson 1996). While women leaders addressed social and humanitarian issues, religious reform, and workplace protections, Dulles and others valued their independence and strove to remain free from group rallies, particularly when they were characterized as “bra-burning” in the 1960s, and included issues of sexuality and sexual persuasion. Ferree and Tripp explain, “Organizing women explicitly as women to make social change is what makes a ‘women’s movement’ and not necessarily a feminist” (Ferree and Tripp 2006, p. 7).

In this, Dulles was not a member of women’s movements either. She pursued international humanitarianism that sometimes began with women, as in her work during World War I in France, or joined with women, exemplified by her graduate work at Bryn Mawr, yet she did not rally women publicly to change gender relations. Ferree and Tripp write, “This definition of ‘women’s movement’ explicitly recognizes that many mobilizations of women as women start out with a non-gender-directed goal, such as peace, antiracism, or social justice, and only later develop an interest in changing gender relations” (Ferree and Tripp 2006, p. 6). Indeed, at times, Dulles utilized her gender and its accompanying Cold War social norms because it allowed her to “hide in plain sight” to achieve her political and diplomatic goals. Despite her words, in the twenty-first century, Dulles can be seen as a feminist because she was “embedded in organizations and institutions with multiple goals” and “challenged all of gender relations . . . norms and processes of gender construction and oppression” in “informal face-to-face associations” (Ferree and Tripp 2006, p. 7). Yet, this was not Dulles’s definition of feminism: like others who grew up immersed in a bloody World War, the Spanish Civil War, the Nazi threat, global Depression, followed by a second, unimaginable World War, women gathering with women only to promote women’s issues must have seemed morally impossible. Dulles challenged Cold War US norms, and became incensed by oppression based on race, nationality, and gender, yet her goals were politically inclusive to address issues that affected both men and women.

Eleanor Lansing Dulles can be linked to Reagan and his Right in cultural diplomacy efforts in the early Cold War, and she believed in strong anti-communist actions, yet she abhorred what would come to be known as Reaganomics. She was no fan of government debt, yet she did not believe in cutting social programs. She wrote, “When critics promulgate doubts in the mind of the present or potential beneficiaries [of Roosevelt’s programs] they are causing irreparable damage”. She continued, “The fear generated [by cuts] is a destructive force, upsetting those who do not fully understand the protection they have been granted” (Dulles 1980a, pp. 149–50). In essence, she believed in government measures for unemployed, homeless, hungry, sick, and elderly because it binds citizens to the nation. Of the social budget cuts, she concluded, “I hear many complaints [about social programs], but I am rarely given time to explain the intricacies of little-understood provisions” (Dulles

1980a, pp. 149–50). On the Right, Dulles was a staunch anti-communist, nationalist, and internationalist, religious in her fervor, and she did not believe in government debt; she was pro-individualist, and not a feminist. On the Left, Dulles considered the positive power of socialist economics; believed in government emergency coverage, the power of women, government intervention internationally, peace, cultural diplomacy, and cross-cultural marriages; and was pro-immigration.

Despite the fact that Eleanor's practical approach to problems during the Cold War could blur the historian's identification of Eleanor's moral and ethical concerns that had been infused into her through her Christian upbringing, there can be no doubt about her spiritual center that rested in the Christian faith. She carried a poem with her by Matthew Arnold, "Dover Beach", that was printed on the last page of her memorial service booklet, all arranged according to her wishes. Each church reading referenced the sea or nature, and she adored swimming and hiking. Each reading referenced destruction, followed by hope. Arnold uses the sea as a metaphor for religious faith and when the sea retreats, so does faith, but it is a part of the natural order just as tides again roll in. It also spoke to her political life and closed, "Additionally, here we are on a darkling plain/Swept with confused alarms of struggle and flight/Where ignorant armies clash by night" (Arnold 2012).

The memorial service began with organ music, and following the procession of the clergy, she asked that the attendees sing the Opening Hymn, 680, *St. Anne*.²² She asked that her brother Allen's son, a renowned Catholic thinker, say the blessings at her grave. She had a deep respect for his sermons.²³ The readings opened with particular brief passages from The Lamentations of Jeremiah, concluding, "For the Lord will not cast off for ever. For though he cause grief, yet will he have compassion according to the multitude of his loving kindnesses".²⁴ The second reading, Psalm 46, reads, "He maketh wars to cease unto the end of the earth; he breaketh the bow, and cutteth the spear in sunder; he burneth the chariot in the fire", and concludes, "The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge". As though speaking of her hopes for displaced peoples across the globe, the concluding reading ended, "They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun strike upon them, nor any heat: for the Lamb that is in the midst of the throne shall be their shepherd, and shall guide them unto fountains of waters of life: and God shall wipe away every tear from their eyes".²⁵

Left in the middle, by the end of the twentieth century, Eleanor Lansing Dulles was ignored by both the left and the right as a member of America's elite in the political, religious, economic, cultural, and clandestine realms. Yet, she always had the individual in the streets in mind with her work; she believed in the power of what she called "moral economics". She was consistently committed to supporting people and refugees devastated and displaced by war, and believed in the power of postwar planning, and enacted it on the ground. In this, her Christian roots, her belief in redemption, righteousness, universal humanity, and duty, became the core tenets of her life's work, rather than a commitment to a government, a nation, or a system. Much like her father, "evangelic" but not "evangelical" Christianity infused her work.

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Notes

- 1 Author interview with Joan Dulles by phone, 2021.
- 2 Allen Dulles, *The Boer War: A History* (1902); To: Mr. Dulles, From: JM Keynes, 18 Sept. 1929, Dulles, Eleanor Lansing, ‘The French Franc 1914–1928’ (1929)—correspondence April, September–October 1929 (former reference CO/6), Reference Code GBR/0272/JMK/CO/1, The Papers of John Maynard Keynes, GBR/0272/JMK, Archive Centre, King’s College, Cambridge, UK.
- 3 Thanks to the anonymous reader.
- 4 Edith Foster Dulles, unpublished memoir, emailed to author 25 Aug. 2020, 108. See also Box 937, John Foster Dulles Papers, 1860–1988, Special Collections, Princeton University, Princeton, NJ.
- 5 Edith Foster Dulles, “The Story of My Life”, unpublished memoir, Box 937, John Foster Dulles Papers, 1860–1988, Special Collections, Princeton University, Princeton, NJ.
- 6 Available online: <https://hollisarchives.lib.harvard.edu/repositories/8/resources/5520> (accessed on 15 April 2022).
- 7 Ronald Reagan 1950s Crusade for Freedom, YouTube. Available online: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SVy1K_xX5pg (accessed on 15 April 2022).
- 8 City Hears Peals of Freedom Bell: The Freedom Bell Welcomed at City Hall. 1950. *New York Times*, September 9, p. 32; Cummings, *Radio Free Europe’s “Crusade for Freedom”*, 16, 17; The Berlin Freedom Bell 1950, British Pathé. Available online: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=29z6TLEhFRo> (accessed on 2 December 2020).
- 9 Note also, and Nicholas Dirks argument that culture was essential to the colonial process.
- 10 “Official Correspondence and Reports, 1931–1968”, “Clippings”, box 11, folder 1953, Eleanor Lansing Dulles, Dwight D. Eisenhower Library, Abilene, KS.
- 11 Dance Panel/International Exchange Panel Minutes, May 1957, box 101, folder 13, (CU) Cultural Collection, University of Arkansas; Fairy Tale Magic. *Nachtdepesche*, September 20, 1957, p. 57; USIS translations for ELD, Congress Hall Scrapbook, Sept. 1957 (2), box 13, ELD Collection, Eisenhower Presidential Library, Abilene, KS.
- 12 Scrapbook 1, 36, Series H/Printed Works, Ephemera and Miscellaneous, 1956–1957, Hugh Stubbins Archive: The Early Years Collection, Frances Loeb Library, Harvard University Special Collections, Boston, MA. In the collection, see also, Dulles, Eleanor Lansing, 1895—Articles, des00013c00650, H003 and Typescripts, des00013c00649, H002.
- 13 How the Henry Ford Building Got Its Name: The History Behind a Major Donation from the USA 66 Years Ago for the Burgeoning Freie Universität Berlin, 3 March 2021. Available online: <https://www.fu-berlin.de/en/featured-stories/campus/2021/henry-ford-building/index.html> (accessed on 1 June 2021).
- 14 Hughes, Foreign Affairs Oral History Project, 69.
- 15 Hughes, Foreign Affairs Oral History Project, 69.
- 16 Eleanor Dulles, FOIA request, Victoria Phillips Collection, Library of Congress, box 1.
- 17 Nickerson, *Mothers of Conservatism*.
- 18 Nickerson, *Mothers of Conservatism*.
- 19 (24, citing Stoler and Cooper 1997, 1).
- 20 Mary Webb, “The Women’s Missionary Movement [excerpt, 1883]”, 71–72.
- 21 Webb, “The Women’s Missionary Movement [excerpt, 1883]”, 72.
- 22 “Memorial Service”, Eleanor Lansing Dulles, MC908, Box 1, folder 6, “Dulles Family 1954–1996”, Clover Todd Dulles Papers, Schlesinger Library on the History of Women in America, Harvard Radcliffe Institute, Boston, MA.
- 23 Eleanor Lansing Dulles, “Living Self-Portrait: Eleanor Dulles”, Smithsonian National Portrait Gallery, video and transcript, 28 Nov. 1988, Digitization: 26 July 2013 Part 8 of 8 AV1988EDU1_4a.d (Access copy of AV1988EDU1_1a), access and transcript provided by Dominique Lopes DelGiudice, *Exhibitions Program Specialist*.
- 24 *The Lamentations of Jeremiah*, 3: 22–26, 31–33.
- 25 *The Revelation of St. John*, 7: 9–17.

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