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Cecelia Lynch

Christian ethics, actors, and diplomacy

Mediating universalist pretensions

While the theme of this issue of *International Journal* is the future of diplomacy, indicating new trends and the instantiation of new forms, actors, and issues, the relationship between Christianity and diplomacy is anything but new. Peeling back the secularist assumptions of international politics demonstrates the degree to which religious and in particular Christian actors, ignored for much of the 20th century, have always been and continue to be part and parcel of diplomatic practice.¹ Nevertheless, it is still extremely

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¹ José Casanova, *Public Religions in the Modern World* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994); Talal Asad, *Formations of the Secular* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003); Scott M. Thomas, “Taking religious and cultural pluralism seriously: The global resurgence of religion and the transformation of international society,” *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 29, no. 3 (2000): 815-41; Cecelia Lynch, “Dogma, praxis, and religious perspectives on multiculturalism,” *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 29, no. 3 (2000): 741-59; Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007).

important to ask what types of religious diplomatic practices are occurring currently as opposed to the past.

Christianity's legacy forms a prominent, though relatively unexamined, component of the history of western diplomacy. It also has a historically complicated relationship with state sovereignty, the foundational international institution that makes modern diplomacy possible. Christian guidelines have long helped to construct the foundation for western understandings of the goals to be achieved in diplomatic practice, including the legitimate use of violence and forms of international intervention. Augustinian formulations shaped modern definitions of *jus ad bellum* and *jus in bello*, the laws of war and laws in war, respectively. Christian ethical debates, divisions, and actions shaped the creation of the nation-state system and the ideas of the United States's "founding fathers," as well as supranational and international forms of governance.² In other words, Christian debates about the nature of sovereignty versus universalist projects address the essence of traditional diplomacy: the question of how "estrangement"—or the inside-outside problem of world politics—is mediated.³

Many features of this complicated relationship between Christianity and diplomacy are important to analyze, but in this article I examine the role of Christian actors in diplomatic struggles over the meaning of territoriality, representation, and governance during two periods: the 1930s and 1940s (from the end of the interwar years to just after World War II) and the post-Cold War era—the 1990s to the present. In each case, I focus on James Der Derian's understanding of diplomacy as "mediating estrangement" to ask what types of estrangement are mediated by Christian ethics and actors.⁴ I

2 On religious ethics and just war theory, see Terry Nardin, ed., *The Ethics of War and Peace: Religious and Secular Perspective* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996); on Christianity vis-à-vis the creation of the nation-state, see Christian Reus-Smit, *The Moral Purpose of the State: Culture, Identity, and Institutional Rationality in International Relations* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), and Daniel Nexon, *The Struggle for Power in Early Modern Europe: Religious Conflict, Dynastic Empires, and International Change* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009); on the relationship between Protestantism and the foundations of the US, see Daniel Philpott, *Revolutions in Sovereignty: How Ideas Shaped Modern International Relations*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001).

3 James Der Derian, *On Diplomacy: A Genealogy of Western Estrangement* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1987); R. B. J. Walker, *Inside/Outside: International Relations as Political Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

4 Der Derian, *On Diplomacy*.

argue, first, that universalist pretensions are a recurring feature of Christian diplomatic interventions, and second, that these pretensions produce ethical tensions over the specifically Christian and global character of representation and governance.

I first look at the way in which Christian attempts to navigate the temporal and the spiritual played out in interwar ethics and promoted a secularized form of universalism, even while they justified the use of force by sovereign states. This form of universalism justified the consolidation of global governance from the League of Nations to the United Nations, but it also privileged the United States's role in the UN's leadership. As articulated by John Foster Dulles in the US, post-World War II great power universalism also owed much to, although it also differed from, the "dual morality" justification for states' use of force legitimized by Reinhold Niebuhr.

These universalist pretensions regarding territoriality and governance, along with statist justifications for the use of force, shaped diplomatic practice in "the west" throughout the Cold War. They also continue to exist, still frequently in tension, in the post-Cold War era. Examining "humanitarian diplomacy" in the post-Cold War era (see also Ole Jacob Sending's article in this issue) offers an opportunity to assess the content of Christian ethical struggles over representation within the universalist pretensions of global international organization. More specifically, some Christian humanitarians today argue that universal rights to religious freedom allow and even require proselytizing. This type of faith-based participation in tasks of "mediating estrangement" also is not new, as it has important antecedents in successive periods of Christian missionizing. Contemporary Christian humanitarian groups, however, function in a context of contradictory diplomatic norms regarding proselytism and religious freedom. The US congress has put forth specific diplomatic guidelines for promoting "religious freedom" that in part legitimate proselytizing on the part of Christian (and other) humanitarian organizations. The embodiment of this universalist pretension to religious freedom, the international religious freedom act of 1998, intersects with the code of conduct for humanitarian relief in promoting conflicting norms of mediating estrangement and addressing issues of territoriality, representation, and governance. While the religious freedom act and the code of conduct do not reflect all of the norms and policies promoted by Christian ethics and actors—others, for example, range from Christian nonviolent pacifism to more extremist forms of Christian nationalism—they inform significant tensions over representation and governance in contemporary diplomatic practice.

The second section proceeds by examining religious actors and diplomatic practice during the interwar period, focusing on the universalist aspirations of Christian diplomats such as John Foster Dulles against the backdrop of differential moral obligations for individuals and states put forward by theologian Reinhold Niebuhr. Christian justifications for US-led universalist practices through global forms of governance have helped shape the structure for state and multilateral diplomacy ever since, as discussed in Vincent Pouliot's article in this issue. However, the end of the Cold War also brought to the fore questions of national, ethnic, and religious identity that influenced debates about representation. In the US, these debates in the 1990s centred on the free expression of religious identity, including the right to proselytize. The third part of the article, therefore, moves to the post-Cold War era in which an exponential increase in Christian humanitarianism in areas of the global south—as well as the global north—works out questions of proselytism, religious freedom, and representation on the ground. Christian humanitarians disagree about what religious freedom means and whether it should be universalized. But how they work through these debates influences the issues that diplomacy has to contend with; it also influences ideas about who has the right to represent religious populations. In the conclusion, I bring together the implications of the universalist pretensions of Christian religious actors for diplomatic practices that reinforce and/or challenge territoriality, representation, and governance.

THE INTERWAR PERIOD: MORAL PESSIMISM AND LIBERAL UNIVERSALISM

International relations theorists are now returning to “classical realism” to discuss the Christian roots of the founders and precursors of the contemporary English school in international relations, such as Herbert Butterfield, Martin Wight, Alfred Zimmern, David Davies, Norman Angel, and Arnold Toynbee.⁵ Scholars are also re-examining the foundational role of prominent Christian Democrats such as Jean Monnet and Konrad Adenauer in the creation of the European Union.⁶

⁵ Studies of the Christian roots of these authors and diplomats are complemented by studies of the Jewish influences on Hans Morgenthau's classical realism. Murielle Cozette, “What lies ahead: Classical realism on the future of international relations,” *International Studies Review* 10, no. 4 (2008): 667-79.

⁶ Iver Neumann, “Euro-centrism in diplomacy: Challenging but manageable,” *European Journal of International Relations* (forthcoming); Timothy A. Byrnes and Peter J. Katzenstein, eds., *Religion in an Expanding Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

Asking how Christian ethics informed the worldviews of these writers and diplomats brings into focus one of the major questions about governance in the contemporary world: whether it should reside at the level of the state, or whether it should be invested in multilateral or global organization or some other sort of supranational order. Christian influences and ethics have informed the way diplomats, theologians, and international relations theorists answered these questions on the American as well as European side of the Atlantic. Conversely, the temporal and geographic experiences of interwar writers and diplomats have also influenced their interpretations of Christian ethics. As a result, this is a story of mutual constitution and of popular casuistry rather than one of fixed Christian influences on diplomacy and global order.⁷ Yet, while much attention has been given to the Christian bases of influential English school diplomats and scholars, less has been paid to the religious worldviews of important US diplomats of the same period. A prominent exception is the Christian realism of theologian Reinhold Niebuhr, which arguably had the greatest recognized impact on diplomacy in the interwar period. The universalist worldviews of John Foster Dulles and the Federal Council of Churches' commission for a just and durable peace also had theoretical and policy repercussions far beyond US boundaries. I examine the "international theology" of Niebuhr and Dulles here, focusing on their deployment of particular Christian ethics to found their conceptualizations of territoriality and governance in diplomatic practice.

Reinhold Niebuhr embraced a pessimistic stance informed by liberal-left insights. Formerly a Social Gospel pacifist, Niebuhr in the 1930s became increasingly disillusioned by the liberal optimism of League of Nations diplomacy and its Christian internationalist supporters. As a result, in a famous debate with his equally famous theologian brother, H. Richard Niebuhr, Reinhold articulated the beginnings of a new political theology.⁸ The brothers' debate over what, if anything, should be done after Japan's invasion of Manchuria in September 1931, provides significant insight into

7 On the concept of popular casuistry as a way of analyzing the ethics and actions of religious actors, see Cecelia Lynch, "A neo-Weberian approach to religion in international politics," *International Theory* 1, no.3 (November 2009): 381-408.

8 The debate took place in 1932 in the pages of *The Christian Century*. The immediate motivation was the question of what, if anything, western powers could and should do in response to the Japanese invasion of Manchuria and the creation of the Japanese puppet-state, Manchukuo.

the early 1930s mindsets and limitations of one influential type of religious pacifism as well as into the foundations of incipient Christian realism.

This is not the place to explicate in full H. Richard's pacifist position, which was only one of several prominent (Christian and secular) justifications of pacifism during the period. What is important for the present is Reinhold's response and the political theology that developed from it. The brothers both agreed that "sin" was a social as well as individual construct; they also agreed that the west was culpable in fostering aggression, which made intervention by the west problematic. "It is true that we have helped to create the Japan which expresses itself in terms of materialistic imperialism." Moreover, Reinhold asserts, "The insult we offered her in our immigration laws was a sin of spiritual aggression." Yet his brother's argument in favour of "doing nothing" to counteract Japanese aggression, Reinhold charged, gave in to the worst excesses of modern religion. Modern Christianity lacked "appreciation of the tragic character of life," and accorded with the naïve, progressivist "assumption that the world will be saved by a little more adequate educational technique." The technique in question is what Reinhold calls a "pure love ethic," which he countered by questioning the idea that God intervenes in history. Reinhold then outlined the basis of his Christian realism, which portrayed human nature as a mixture of the ability to reason and selfishness: "I find it impossible to envisage a society of pure love as long as man remains man." Regarding the relationship between faith and theology, Reinhold admitted, "I realize quite well that my brother's position both in its ethical perfectionism and in its apocalyptic note is closer to the gospel than mine." But he argued that such ethical perfectionism was in the end irresponsible: while he could not completely "abandon the pure love ideal...I cannot use it fully if I want to assume a responsible attitude towards the problems of society."

As a result, Reinhold articulated his temporal and ethical distinction between governance in "this world" versus that of "the absolute." "Perhaps that is why it is inevitable that religious imagination should set goals beyond history.... Man cannot live without a sense of the absolute, but neither can he achieve the absolute. He may resolve the tragic character of that fact by religious faith, by the experience of grace in which the unattainable is experienced in anticipatory terms, but he can never resolve in purely ethical terms the conflict between what is and what ought to be." Using the language of mediating estrangement, "man's" estrangement from the eternal could not be mediated by humans at all. Humans' estrangement

from each other, however, through “sin” or evil, required the use of multiple forms of mediation, including, at times, the use of force.

Reinhold Niebuhr’s concurrent treatise, *Moral Man and Immoral Society* (1932), explored many of his arguments against his brother in more detail.⁹ In the book, Niebuhr appealed to both Augustine and Freud, incorporating modern thought into his interpretation of Christian tradition. He developed his understanding of human nature as a combination of God-given reason and pre-human impulses. Humans must use their reason to transcend natural selfishness and the will to power. This is because, for Niebuhr, the will to power was a primary manifestation of sin on both individual and group levels. Yet selfishness and the consequent motives of self-interest were natural for nation-states, and for Reinhold, they neither could nor should be overcome. International relations is formed from, and thus cannot escape, its inherent sinfulness, in the form of struggles over power and self-interest.

Given this foundation, Reinhold Niebuhr then took up the problem of absolute versus relative, and individual versus group, moral possibility, arguing that Christian morality could not be reconciled with the imperfections of the world. Augustine’s “city of God” and “city of man” were two different spheres of moral action and ethical possibility that could not be fused into one.

For students of international relations theory, these ideas are well known: Reinhold has long been heralded as one of the “founding fathers” of international relations theory. But his ethical construct also remained foundational for subsequent US diplomats. “A whole generation of distinguished American politicians, including such people as Adlai Stevenson, Arthur Schlesinger Jr., McGeorge Bundy and Hubert Humphrey acknowledged him not only as a prime influence on their own lives but on the whole American approach to politics. ‘Niebuhr is the father of us all’ said George Kennan.”¹⁰ Niebuhr’s political theology legitimated the use of force when diplomacy “failed.” Yet what is perhaps most interesting is that his doctrine of dual moralities was constructed vis-à-vis a related diplomatic ethic that was also articulated in the west by Christian politicians: the universalist worldview that promoted global international organization as the primary forum for diplomatic practice, and hence the primary site for mediating estrangement.

⁹ Niebuhr’s later works continued to develop these themes. See, for example, Reinhold Niebuhr, *Christian Realism and Political Problems* (New York: Scribner, 1953).

¹⁰ Richard Harries, ed., *Reinhold Niebuhr and the Issues of our Time* (London: Mowbray, 1986), 1.

This universalist worldview merged Christian language regarding equality with ideas about international cooperation in a new world order. Alfred Zimmern and John Foster Dulles were each strong Christian proponents of universalism, although with different beliefs regarding the degree to which interstate conflicts could be not only mediated, but also transcended. Zimmern in the 1920s wanted to transcend national interests by strengthening global governance through the League of Nations, while others, like Dulles, wanted to inscribe US national interests into global moral purpose in a reconstituted United Nations.

Dulles, in particular, was one of the primary designers of post-World War II international order and ethical legitimacy. As a sympathetic observer noted about him, "It is not difficult to identify the structure of Christian conviction that determined his own attitude towards public affairs, which though Christian in origin he felt to be of universal authority, which he believed to be of the essence of the American tradition, and which he sought to have laid as the foundation principles of world order."¹¹ Like Niebuhr's appeal to Augustine's two cities, Dulles' Christian universalism was not new, going back at least to the Christian universalism of the medieval era. Both types of mediating constructs, however, represented intersecting models for diplomatic practice, each embodying tensions for representation and governance.

Dulles articulated many of his views about the role of Christian ethics in world order after his participation in the Oxford conference of 1937.¹² These included the conviction that "the churches are peculiarly qualified to promote a solution of the kind of problems which today vex mankind." The churches could promote universalism, truth, and equality: "In the eyes of God, all men are equal and their welfare is of equal moment. This is distinctively the Christian approach, and it is only through an approach of such universality that there is any promise of a solution." In other words, "problems which otherwise seem unsolvable become susceptible of solution if approached from the standpoint of the universal brotherhood of man." Nevertheless, in a prescient statement, Dulles insisted that he was not trying to universalize Christianity. "I do not mean to suggest that organized Christianity is the only

¹¹ Henry P. Van Dusen, ed., *The Spiritual Legacy of John Foster Dulles: Selections from his articles and addresses*, (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960): xviii.

¹² This conference brought together 400 delegates from around the world and represented a broad range of Christianity, with the exception of the Roman Catholic church. Dulles, "The faith of a statesman," in Van Dusen, *The Spiritual Legacy*, 15.

instrument through which our problems may be solved, or, as a corollary, that it is futile to seek to eliminate wars and social unrest and injustice until the whole world has become Christianized.” Dulles, in other words, wanted to put a particular version of Christian ethics in the service of cosmopolitan forms of mediation. His understanding of Christian responsibility was to instil in individuals the proper spiritual qualities, which they would use to foster a world order of universal goodwill. Germany provided a negative lesson: “The German churches had failed to make the people Christian in the sense that, as citizens, they would reject leadership which exemplified qualities which Christ most strongly condemned.”

Dulles also contrasted “secular” diplomacy with “Christian” debate, reflecting on his own role in the diplomatic history of the interwar period, from the Paris peace conference to the Ruhr crisis, German debt negotiations and the rise of Hitler, negotiations at the League of Nations, and the worsening situation in east Asia in the late 1930s. “What was the explanation of the amazing contrast between discussions which occurred in a Christian atmosphere and those which occurred in the conventional atmosphere of diplomacy?” Dulles found the difference in secular diplomacy’s “idolatry”: personifying the state as a “quasi-god” while subordinating “the true welfare of the human beings who composed the nation,” as well as “hypocrisy,” “blindness,” and “evil emotion,” in the form of unjustified allegiance to one’s own state, and one’s own short-term interest, over others.¹³ Here he attempted to reclassify and even transcend estrangement. States were false constructions and false gods; moving to liberal individualism could transcend estrangement and simplify mediation if not make it unnecessary.

Despite this critique of the state, however, Dulles did not forsake the US national interest in the interest of universalism. Instead, much of his diplomatic work resided in trying to reconcile the latter in favour of the former. This became evident in his leadership of the US Federal Council of Churches in postwar planning (and later in his role as US secretary of state in the 1950s). Writing in 1942, he stated his faith in US-led universalism: “As our national faith is made manifest by works, and grows under that stimulus, its influence will be contagious throughout the world. As the evil faiths that combat us collapse, leaving death and ruin as their fruit, the faith that makes us strong will encompass the earth.”¹⁴ Dulles did not condemn

¹³ Van Dusen, ed., *The Spiritual Legacy of John Foster Dulles*, 15, 18-20, 26, 28.

¹⁴ Dulles, “The American heritage,” *Life* magazine, (December 28, 1942), in Van Dusen, *The Spiritual Legacy*, 55.

the use of force by the state, but he believed that such use would become less prevalent with US leadership in global international governance. In turn, he assumed that US moral leadership was founded on particular interpretations of Christian values.

In the post-World War II era, Christian universalism and Niebuhrian pessimism merged in Cold War diplomatic ethics. Cold War Christian universalism could never transcend estrangement, however, because it predicated global governance on the superiority of the west over the eastern bloc and the third world. On a more regional level, Christian, and more specifically Catholic, universalist aspirations also led Christian Democrats such as Konrad Adenauer and Jean Monnet to form the European Coal and Steel Community that would eventually lead to the construction of the European Union. Here again universalism could not transcend estrangement, since European unity was fostered as a cushion against the communist “other.” Nevertheless, the Coal and Steel Community and the EU became prominent examples of Christian diplomatic overtures in favour of universalist aspirations.¹⁵

Carl Schmitt, writing in the interwar period, famously argued that all political concepts come from secularized theology. The argument here is different: it is that Christian actors and ethics cannot be separated from the trajectory of western diplomatic goals and practices. In the early 20th century, ideas about the ethics of governance and the use of force intersected with universalist projects, which both reaffirmed and called into question traditional territorial boundaries, settling on instantiations of US dominance (diplomatic and material) in schemes of global governance. These projects, in turn, form the backdrop for contemporary trends and tensions in Christian humanitarian diplomacy.

POST-COLD WAR RECONSTITUTIONS OF CHRISTIAN UNIVERSALISM

One of the major developments in Christian “religious diplomacy” is the increased influence of Christian organizations, both transnational and locally based, on the content and practice of governance. (On the question of whether governance functions are increasingly taken over by humanitarian NGOs, see Sending’s article in this issue). Christian nongovernmental organizations form a significant section of the broader constellation of faith-

¹⁵ J. Bryan Hehir, “The old church and the new Europe: Charting the changes,” in Byrnes and Katzenstein, eds., *Religion in an Expanding Europe*: 93-116; Iver Neumann, *Uses of the Other: “The East” in European Identity Formation* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998).

based organizations that operate in virtually all parts of the world, providing emergency relief as well as longer-term aid in education, health, and other issues. For the purposes of this article, Christian humanitarianism includes emergency relief as well as health, education, and development assistance.¹⁶ It also includes advocacy at multilateral forums such as the UN refugee agency as well as daily activities in localities on the ground. While some denominations clearly distinguish between their humanitarian work and their “mission” functions (tending to religious adherents and/or increasing the numbers of religious adherents), others tend to blend these tasks.

The multiple functions and levels on which Christian humanitarians work throughout the world has significant implications for the relationships between sovereign rights and universalist pretensions. More specifically, the actions of Christian humanitarians frequently require diplomatic interventions. Their actions also raise important questions about representation. Who do Christian humanitarians represent in their projects for a better world—theirself, their denomination, the recipients of their assistance, the governments that sponsor them, transnational Christianity, or God? And how do these forms of representation map onto state and global forms of governance?

In the midst of their on-the-ground work on everything from emergency relief and humanitarian intervention to healthcare and education, some Christian activists also engage in advocacy campaigns to pressure governments to govern in specific ways on issues from sexuality to economic justice. Post-Cold War examples range from the bill stipulating the death penalty for homosexuality introduced and then dropped in the Ugandan parliament, to the ABC (abstinence, be faithful, use condoms only if necessary) policy of the Bush administration on international HIV/AIDS prevention policy, to the Jubilee campaign for international financial institutions and governments in the global north to forgive third-world countries’ debt. Christian groups’ pressure on governments on each of these issues requires diplomatic actions.

Christians have also pressured the US and other governments to promote “religious freedom”—opening borders and identities to Christian proselytizers and missionaries. This trend, of course, is also not new, as it recalls and frequently replicates the missionary activity of the 15th to 19th centuries, when mainline Christian denominations worked in tandem

¹⁶ Michael Barnett and Thomas Weiss, *Humanitarianism in Question: Power, Politics, Ethics* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2008).

with European officials to shape diplomatic interactions and governance to facilitate the conversion of colonial subjects. The line between Christian missionizing and imperial functions then was often thin, as is the line between Christian humanitarianism, missionizing, and state and UN diplomatic functions today.

Today, however, Christian humanitarians operate within several additional intersecting contexts that differ from the past. Two of the most pertinent for this article are, first, that of the ever-growing “humanitarian international” that comprises transnational as well as local, and faith-based as well as secular, NGOs, donors, foundations, and multilateral agencies, and that expands diplomatic practice to include all of these actors, and second, that of the spread of new forms of Christianity, including evangelicalism and Pentecostalism as well as new forms of religious syncretism, locally as well as transnationally. The first is a reflection of Dullesian universalist pretensions; it also reflects the fact that after the end of the Cold War, foreign aid in most countries in the west has been increasingly channelled through the nongovernmental sector, including faith-based NGOs. The second produces conflicting diplomatic initiatives on proselytism.

Christian humanitarians, therefore, mediate at least two major types of estrangement: that between the “sufferer” and the aid-giver, and that between the Christian and the (potential) religious other. The Christian humanitarian diplomat provides assistance out of a desire to mediate both of these types of estrangement, although in different ways. A third type of estrangement may or may not obtain: that between the (Christian) aid-giver of one nationality and the recipient of another. When USAID, the UK department for international development, or other foreign aid offices provide development and emergency assistance through NGOs, including Christian aid organizations, they become unofficial extensions of official diplomatic channels. However, local and transnational Christian subjectivities, including the socially conservative nexus between Vatican and African Catholicism, or between American, Asian, and African Evangelicalism, add another layer to the mix.

Ideas about mediating religious difference are concretized in two documents that have conflicting implications for on-the-ground Christian diplomacy: the code of conduct for humanitarian relief, and the international religious freedom act. The first was designed in the mid-1990s by a network of transnational NGOs, most prominently by the international Red Cross and several Christian groups. The second was passed by the US congress in 1998, and represents, at least in theory, an extension of human rights to

include the murky area of “religious freedom.”

The “Code of conduct for NGOs in disaster relief” was developed in part to demonstrate and promote NGOs’ sensitivity to and respect for other peoples and cultures.¹⁷ The code was sponsored by Caritas Internationalis, Catholic Relief Services, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, the international Save the Children Alliance, the Lutheran World Federation, Oxfam, and the World Council of Churches in Geneva. Many of these organizations had worked together on the steering committee on humanitarian response, a Geneva-based network of many of the most influential NGOs in humanitarian relief.¹⁸ The code discourages proselytizing and calls for respect for “the culture, structures, and customs” of the communities and countries assisted. Since its articulation and publication, the code has been signed by numerous secular and faith-based NGOs, including Doctors without Borders, World Vision, and many others.

However, the code is also an elastic and nonbinding document, and some Christian organizations interpret its provisions against proselytizing loosely. Many Christian organizations based in the US are signatories of the code but also supported the US international religious freedom act and the permanent commission to monitor international religious freedom that was created by its passage. The freedom act and the resulting commission instantiate “religious freedom” as a “core objective” of US foreign policy. “One of the most sweeping human rights statutes on the books, it created new institutions and processes that insure a permanent presence for the cause of religious liberty in America’s foreign policy architecture.”¹⁹ According to observers, those who promoted the act included Evangelical, Episcopal, Catholic, Jewish, Tibetan Buddhist, and Bahai faith groups, although the impetus and articulation of subsequent lists of cases needing attention concern primarily Christians.

The freedom act and its commission articulate a very different idea of mediating estrangement than that put forth by the code of conduct. In arguing in favour of a “fair religious competition,” Brian Grim of the Pew Foundation reformulates estrangement in market terminology: “Established

17 The Sphere Project, 1998, www.ifrc.org. See also Cecelia Lynch, “Acting on belief: Christian perspectives on suffering and violence,” *Ethics & International Affairs* 14, no.1 (2000): 83-97.

18 These include Caritas Internationalis, Catholic Relief Services, the Lutheran World Federation, and the World Council of Churches.

19 Allen D. Hertzke, “International religious freedom policy: Taking stock,” *The Review of Faith and International Affairs* (summer 2008): 17.

religions...often act to curtail competition from new religious groups by preventing proselytism, restricting conversion, and putting up barriers that make it difficult for new religions to gain a foothold.... Our research on 143 countries finds that when governments and religious groups in society do not erect barriers to religious competition but respect and protect such activities as conversion and proselytism, religious violence is less.”²⁰

Such an articulation has not gone unchallenged by either scholars or Christian activists on the ground. As José Casanova warns, “the fact that religious freedom is becoming a universal aspiration doesn’t mean that religious freedom means necessarily everywhere the same thing. It may mean different things in different countries, and these different meanings may be in conflict with one another. Policies intended to implement international religious freedom may conflict with other cultures’ understandings of religious freedom, and will be resisted accordingly.” Specifically, echoing documents from the World Council of Churches, he argues that cultures “have a right to protect themselves from imperialist, or overly aggressive, attempts to change them.”²¹ Some Christian humanitarians, especially those from mainline and Anabaptist traditions, agree, arguing that proselytism hinders and even endangers their humanitarian efforts to relieve suffering and redress conditions breeding poverty and inequality.

Thus, Christian humanitarians disagree on how to mediate the estrangement between the Christian aid-giver and the non-Christian other. For Christians who advocate proselytizing, including Evangelicals and many Pentecostals, successful mediation of estrangement results in the assimilation of otherness.²² For those who do not—ironically, these generally include the mainline Christians who were the proselytizers of centuries past—successful mediation of estrangement results in overcoming suffering while respecting cultural difference. This can result in either affirming difference or even in developing syncretic cultural and religious practices. Assimilation, in this view, represents violence rather than diplomatic mediation.²³

20 Brian J. Grim, “Religious freedom: Good for what ails us?” *The Review of Faith and International Affairs* (summer 2008): 5.

21 José Casanova, “Balancing religious freedom and cultural preservation,” *The Review of Faith and International Affairs* (summer 2008): 13.

22 See Naeem Inayatullah and David L. Blaney, *International Relations and the Problem of Difference* (London: Routledge, 2004).

23 Emmanuel Martey, *African Theology: Inculturation and Liberation* (Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2009).

In recent years, however, evangelical, Pentecostal and charismatic Christian groups have become more “indigenous,” with local founders and leaders, similar to the “inculturation” processes that took place among Catholic, Methodist, Presbyterian, Anglican, and Baptist groups in the global south over the past century.²⁴ An increasing number of Pentecostal churches in the global south are not tied to transnational supporters at all, while charismatic Catholic and Anglican churches borrow both from transnational sources and localized forms of Pentecostalism. Christian subjectivities and the mediation that results from them have become somewhat less dependent, therefore, on transnational Christian diplomacy from the US and elsewhere in the global north and more on appeals from within shared cultural practices.

On-the-ground humanitarian diplomacy reflects these trends and incorporates tensions over how to mediate religious differences. For example, local as well as transnational evangelical Christians called for external intervention to protect the Christian population in South Sudan. Local and transnational evangelicals and Catholics supported the Bush administration’s ABC policy for HIV/AIDS prevention, and opposed measures to decriminalize homosexuality. (It is important to add that other Christians opposed the ABC policy and supported decriminalization.) On economic issues, local and transnational mainline denominations also frequently support initiatives challenging entrenched state and corporate economic power, from labour challenges to the Jubilee program for debt relief.

These actions can challenge statist notions of representation, appealing to religious ethics and identities over national ones. They also appeal to religious rather than global and interstate notions of universalism. Yet they still require diplomatic action and support on the national, multilateral, and global levels, in part because they frequently target both national laws and international conventions. State funding supports many of their actions; and in the US, government policy supports their attempts to spread particular versions of Christianity around the world. The concepts of representation and governance, therefore, remain important when we consider what types

24 Donald Miller and Tetsuano Yamamori, *Global Pentecostalism: The New Face of Christian Social Engagement* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007); Paul Gifford, *Christianity, Politics and Public Life in Kenya* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009). In fact, in the Roman Catholic Church today there is much debate about the phenomenon of “reverse missionizing,” in which the shortage of priests in North America and Europe has led to importing increasing numbers of clergy from Africa and Asia to tend to the faithful.

of estrangement are constructed and mediated by contemporary Christian humanitarians.

CONCLUSION

Articulations of Christian ethics are an essential component of the diplomatic history of the west, and increasingly the global south. As a result, we need to drop the assumption that Christianity no longer figures in western diplomatic practice. During the interwar period, the ethical and territorial bases of diplomacy were informed by Christian arguments about politics and theology, legitimating in very powerful ways the normative bases of post-World War II world order. In the post-Cold War era, some figures, such as Benedict XVI, go further by insisting on the explicit recognition of the Christian bases of European supranational order in the constitutional documents of the EU.

Contemporary Christian humanitarians conduct their activities against a background in which diplomacy is practiced by representatives of states as well as multilateral and global organizations. Moreover, universalist pretensions are prevalent in the cosmopolitan nature of contemporary Christian humanitarianism. While Christian theologians and policymakers during the interwar period did not originate either statist or universalist conceptions of ethics, they did legitimate ideas about diplomacy and the role of Christian ethics that remain significant today.

Likewise, Christian humanitarians today take up forms of governance that were also practiced by missionaries of the past, who worked more or less in tandem with official diplomatic representatives to serve the interests of colonizing missions. Today, Christian humanitarians channel foreign aid for emergency, educational, and health purposes. Their local and transnational loyalties, however, do not map neatly onto statist ideas of representation. They work with and on behalf of governments while trying to maintain their independence; they also engage in projects that sometimes require diplomatic interventions by more traditional state and international actors. Christian humanitarians also include individuals and groups from the global south as well as the global north. Cross-cutting alliances mediate not only interstate forms of estrangement, but also intrastate, inter-religious and inter-Christian ones. Tensions in these forms of mediation remain unresolved, resulting in new local and transnational commitments that continue to challenge and affirm statist conceptions of territoriality. They also continue to shape Christian participation in the diplomatic tasks of both representation and governance.