

The peace movement that slipped out of Great Britain's control

by Denise M. Henderson

The Advocates of Peace in Antebellum America

by Valarie H. Ziegler

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There is no doubt that war is terrible; yet one must ask the question that the peace advocate George Whipple ultimately asked, as quoted in Valarie Ziegler's book: "Is Peace the *one* thing needful when it leaves one party established as tyrant and the other as slave?" That was the issue for the sovereign United States in 1860. There was a point at which British treachery could no longer be tolerated; no peace conference was going to stop the Civil War, because the British puppets running the Confederacy had no intention of allowing it.

From 1776 down to the present, one leading world power, Great Britain, has sought to make itself economically, culturally, and politically hegemonic over the rest of the world, often resorting to war to do so. In the last century, Britain fomented the Crimean War to break up the Holy Alliance, which was seeking to control Europe by political means, and fought two Opium Wars with China over the issue of its right to "freely trade" in opium in that country.

The British also hoped to use the classic imperial "divide and conquer" techniques against its former colonies, the United States of America. Through active agents such as August Belmont, who started out as the Rothschilds' man in America, and Caleb Cushing of Boston, the British created their own imperial party in America.

As a professor of religious studies at Rhodes College, Valarie Ziegler sets her study in the period of 1776 to 1860, choosing the framework of a "history of ethics" abstracted from political history. Such academic blinders lead her to ignore some of the most important causes of the very phenomena she describes. She divides the advocates of peace into those who adhered to the "ethic of love," as first outlined by David Low Dodge (1774-1852), and those like Noah Worcester (1758-1837) who tempered that ethic with a de-

fense of the "policing power" of the state; there were also the non-resistants, led by William Lloyd Garrison (1805-79). Ziegler's documentation leaves no doubt that whatever they thought they were doing, these advocates of "peace" were defending the position of the pro-slavery British Empire against the republican basis on which America was founded. Yet, her book also proves that such operations can be outflanked by determined patriots.

New England peace advocates

Not surprisingly, a political weakness correlated with theological backwardness. Ziegler reports that the first premise of all the U.S.-based peace societies was a "fundamentalist" or "hermeneutic" reinterpretation of the Bible, the "democratization of the Bible": "Revivalists also claimed that the Bible was a book that ordinary people could interpret for themselves without the help or stricture of creeds." One proponent of this democracy movement was Noah Worcester, a Congregational minister who "became disenchanting with the orthodox doctrine of the Trinity," i.e., with the teaching that Christ was both man and God, representing a bridge between man and his Creator: the very doctrine which had guided western civilization, and its commitment to the ideal that all men are created equal, since the era of Charlemagne.

Once this was denied, man's interpretation of Christ's words and deeds overshadowed Christ's words and deeds. All that mattered was how one interpreted Christ the man—who could no longer be considered God's Son on Earth. Ziegler describes how the two ethics reinterpreted the Bible: Dodge thought that the "dispensation" of the New Testament as he defined it meant that all wars were unjust: "In Dodge's view, obedience to the Sermon on the Mount entailed rejecting both offensive and defensive warfare. . . . The spirit of returning evil for evil, of seeking to harm one's neighbors rather than humbly enduring persecution and suffering at their hands, was a mockery of the gospel." On the same grounds, Dodge also rejected personal self-defense.

Noah Worcester, while agreeing with Dodge in the main, introduced the right of the state to punish wrongdoers as expressed in Romans 13. Worcester also asserted that "the custom of war *depends entirely on popular opinion*; and it

will of course cease when it ceases to be popular.” (This assertion anticipates the anti-war slogan of the 1960s, “What if they held a war and nobody came?”) Worcester advocated the formation of a Congress of Nations. It would substitute for the sovereignty of nation-states, much as the United Nations does today, and would “adjudicate international disputes.” “With no reason to go to war,” the peace advocates reasoned, “nations would no longer do so.” (The record of the U.N. has shown how illusory that is.)

In 1838, William Lloyd Garrison, a leading abolitionist and peace movement sympathizer, formed a more extreme branch of the peace movement, pulling his supporters out of the American Peace Society to form the short-lived Non-Resistance Society. Garrison advocated the dis-union of the United States so that the nation would no longer be tainted with the sin of Southern slavery, and non-resistance—i.e., refusal to engage in politics as a voter, a candidate, or by any means. Ziegler points out that the roster of peace advocates—who never numbered more than 2,000 throughout the United States—significantly overlaps with American anti-slavery activists.

Britain’s unwitting tools

As Anton Chaitkin has documented in *Treason in America*, (New York: New Benjamin Franklin House) these groupings of disunionists, peace advocates, and abolitionists were often unwitting tools of Great Britain’s determined efforts to “balkanize” America into sectional pieces which could be easily manipulated. Ziegler’s focus leads her to ignore the branch of the abolitionist movement represented by such figures as Thaddeus Stevens and Benjamin Wade who, unlike Garrison and the non-resistants, based their opposition to slavery and their emancipation policy on a commitment to American System economic development, which had been shaped as the alternative to British “free trade” colonialist looting. She also reduces America’s greatest abolitionist, John Quincy Adams, whose outlook was akin to Stevens and Wade’s, to a one-line mention.

The peace movement was founded around the time of the War of 1812, which was really the second American war of independence against Britain. Ziegler admits that “the War of 1812 was extremely unpopular in New England, at least in part because of the havoc it wrought in the Yankee shipping industry,” but concludes that “peace advocate” Noah Worcester “condemned the war on religious grounds.” Later, “the American Peace Society reacted to native rebellions in India by stressing ever more strongly the necessity for the police function of the state to overrule the gospel of love.” In other words, the American Peace Society *defended* the slaughter of Indians by the British *on the grounds that the British were enforcing the law*—in a country which was not theirs except by military force, which the peace societies presumably abhorred!

These “deeply concerned Christians” also seem not to

have taken notice of the wars fought by the U.S. Army under the leadership of Gen. Andrew Jackson against the Seminole Indians (1817 and 1835)—brutal wars which included the use of bloodhounds against humans and which were opposed almost singlehandedly in the Congress by John Quincy Adams, as sheer imperial wars of expansion.

Just how *British* the peace advocates could be is shown by the case of the Grimké of South Carolina. The plantation owner Thomas Grimké and his sisters Sarah and Angelina, are said to have been so outraged by slavery that they left home and went North to become abolitionists. One of them married into the Weld family, junior partners with the British in the Chinese opium trade. Grimké, a Yale graduate, came to New Haven, Connecticut on May 6, 1832, to address the Connecticut Peace Society. From the podium, he condemned “the American Revolution not only as unchristian, but also as unnecessary, since determined nonviolent resistance could have achieved political independence without the loss of life.”

Grimké, like Elihu Burritt, who finally moved to England to protest the outbreak of the Civil War, also proposed as a measure to guarantee universal peace the extension of free trade throughout the world. But the great champion of free trade was the London Peace Society. “Free trade,” then as now, meant nothing more than the extension of a cheap labor, cheap goods policy on the part of City of London financial interests.

The anomaly of the Mexican War

Ironically, the peace movement found itself at odds with U.S. and British expansionists in the 1845-48 Mexican War, a war brazenly run by the Polk administration for sheer territorial gains. Although Ziegler does not mention it, because of the statesmanship of Abraham Lincoln—at the time a young congressman from Illinois—this national tragedy made it possible to gradually shape an alliance between peace advocates and patriots, which later worked to save the Union from the next British assault: the Confederate secession.

Many notables joined with the peace movement in denouncing the Mexican War. Articles in the peace movement’s leading journal, the *Advocate*, “characterized the war as an act of ‘unprincipled depravity’ and ‘unmitigated sin,’ described atrocities committed by American troops in gruesome detail, and endlessly urged Americans to petition Congress and the President to stop the war.”

The concern of the Whig Party, to which Abraham Lincoln belonged, was to win the war as quickly as possible, conclude peace, and permanently withdraw U.S. forces. This sheds light on why Lincoln, who voted for an appropriations bill for the war, was not really a supporter of Polk’s expansionism. Lincoln was only elected to the Congress in 1847, after the war had already begun. He raised a stink about the Mexican War within the Congress on behalf of the Whig Party. His Jan. 12, 1848 speech demonstrating the internal inconsistencies of Polk’s assertions about the cause of the war, pro-

vided ammunition for the peace societies' ongoing resistance to the war and to the questionable annexation of Texas.

In fact, the troops were being led by a Whig, Gen. Zachary Taylor. Had Lincoln opposed appropriations, and U.S. troops been forced to withdraw, there were waiting in the wings a large numbers of "volunteers," some of whom were already fighting in Mexico, from several southern states ready to go on "defending U.S. interests" in Texas and Mexico. These "locofocos," the Ollie Norths of the day, were outside the control of the regular army.

Lincoln explained this viewpoint in a March 22 letter to Usher Lindner, one of his Whig associates: "You ask three questions, the first of which is 'Would it not have been just as easy to have elected Genl. [Zachary] Taylor [the hero of the Mexican War], without opposing the war as by opposing it?' I answer, I suppose it would, if we could do *neither*—could be *silent* on the question; but the Locofocos here will not let the Whigs be *silent*. Their very first act in Congress was to present a Preamble declaring that war existed by the act of Mexico and the Whigs were obliged to vote on it—and this policy is followed up by them; so that they are compelled to *speak* and their only option is whether they will, when they do speak, tell the *truth* or tell a foul, villainous, and bloody falsehood. . . ."

By helping to expose the "foul, villainous, and bloody falsehood" behind the war, Lincoln, along with other Whigs, acted as the conscience of the nation, and helped to coalesce forces opposed to the war including the peace activists. This coalition grew in strength, and by 1860 it viewed Lincoln as the only man who could save the nation.

Anti-war sentiment kept growing, Ziegler explains: "Presbyterian synods, Congregational associations, and Methodist conferences passed resolutions . . . and the Unitarians petitioned both houses of Congress to end the fighting. . . . The cumulative effect of all the protests was anything but negligible. Historian Charles DeBenedetti has argued that the anti-war fervor reached such a pitch by the end of 1847 that President Polk was forced to accept a limited conquest of Mexico and end the war sooner than he wished."

Usher Lindner was voicing the nervousness of many Whigs about this coalition, which included Garrison's abolitionists, when he asked Lincoln: "And have we as a party, ever gained any thing, by falling in company with abolitionists?" Lincoln replied, "Yes. We gained our only national victory by falling in company with them in the election of Genl. Harrison. Not that we fell into abolition doctrines; but that we took up a man whose position induced them to join us in his election."

Or, as Lincoln wrote to his law partner, referring to the Polk expansionists, "The war is now to them, the gallows of Haman, which they built for us, and on which they are doomed to be hanged themselves." Lincoln was right: The immediate result of the war was the election of a Whig, Zachary Taylor, to the U.S. presidency.

During the 1850s, the American Peace Society was taken over for a short period of time by Elihu Burritt (1810-79), a consummate Anglophile. "In 1846 he traveled to England and began the League of Universal Brotherhood. . . . When the dispute over the Oregon territory strained relations between the U.S. and Great Britain, Burritt organized the 'Friendly Address' movement, in which he paired cities from each country. . . . He arranged for Olive Leaves to be published in French, German, Spanish, Danish, and Russian newspapers and founded over 150 Olive Leaf Circles—discussion groups for women—in the British Isles. And if that were not enough, he became a leader in organizing International Peace Congresses in Europe in 1848 (Brussels), 1849 (Frankfurt), and 1851 (London)."

Burritt was also an advocate of free trade. He was trying to convince Americans, who were waking up to "perfidious Albion's" manipulations in Oregon and Mexico, that Britain was America's "friend."

Burritt became one of the leading critics of George Beckwith, a moderate who seems to have been an American patriot within the American Peace Society. Burritt's faction included another British agent of influence, Joshua Blanchard, who insisted that "The only answer. . . was to let the South go—let the Southerners have their independence and then wait for slavery to collapse under its own weight." Blanchard said nothing about the fact that Britain and France were waiting in the wings, ready to send their fleets and troops into the war on the side of the South, thus perhaps establishing a permanent military presence on the balkanized continent.

Beckwith did regain control of the American Peace Society, however. And at the outbreak of the Civil War, the U.S. peace societies in the main supported the Union. "At the same time that the society remained fervently opposed to international warfare," writes Ziegler, "it continued to insist that the state was obliged, according to the mandates of Scripture, to subdue and punish the Southern rebels who had shattered the domestic tranquility." The work that Lincoln and the Whig Party, and later the Republican Party, had begun as early as the 1830s, with the Mexican War becoming a crucial turning point, had borne fruit. The peace societies and the Garrisonian non-resistants joined the war effort to preserve the Union.

London Peace Society: checkmated

Of course, this drove the London Peace Society crazy. They had failed in their goal of creating a movement inside the United States which would do nothing as the Union was attacked and dissolved. Instead, the peace advocates thought they had no choice but to defend their country. The civil war was defined as a "criminal rebellion" against the government. One article in the American Peace Society publication stated, "If laws were made to be used, and rulers appointed to see them executed, the efforts of our government, however gigantic, to crush our slaveholders' rebellion, are only a legiti-

mate enforcement of law.”

William Lloyd Garrison and his followers were gratified that “the day of judgment” had come for the South, and supported the war effort to the hilt. The London Peace Society attempted to goad him: “We do not believe, the society stated, that the American Civil War is a war of freedom [i.e., against slavery]; we believe its object is to conquer the South. And even if it were a war of freedom, we would not support it. How, the London pacifists asked, can you stand quietly by and let brute force decide complex questions of moral right? The only evil you can see, the society complained, is the evil of slavery, but we believe that war is an even worse sin, and we will oppose it in every instance.”

Garrison’s associate Charles Whipple replied on behalf of the non-resistants. “Whipple insisted that agitating for peace would only give aid and comfort to the South,” writes Ziegler. Whipple wrote, “Every word now uttered in advocacy of peace is prejudicial to liberty, chiming with the party cry now raised by those who wish only the success of the rebels, and have no sympathy with what we recognize as ‘peace principles.’ ”

One could say that the limits of peace advocacy had been reached, and that the Civil War had driven out the hard-core British element at least from the peace societies. As horrible as war was, many U.S. citizens understood (as the handbook given to every Union soldier explained), that they were fighting for the same principles which their forebears had fought: the Declaration of Independence and the U.S. Constitution—the ultimate preservation of their nation.

The King papers: a mixed review

by Marianna Wertz

The Papers of Martin Luther King, Jr. Volume I: Called to Serve January 1929- June 1951

Clayborne Carson, Senior Editor
University of California Press, Berkeley, 1991
484 pages, hardbound, \$35

This beautifully published first volume of the collected papers of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., at first glance, appears

to be a great resource for King scholars and those seeking to continue “the dream” of the great civil rights leader today. It is handsomely bound, almost embarrassingly rich in pictures and facsimiles, and wonderfully well-documented, including a 15-page chronology of his life and works, and a calendar of documents. From the standpoint of the beauty of the book per se, it certainly merits its designation as a “Centennial Book”: one of 100 books published between 1990 and 1995 which bear this special imprint of the University of California Press.

Dr. King, for all he gave the world, certainly deserves to be remembered by such a collection of his works. And the fact that his widow, Coretta Scott King, headed the Advisory Board of the research project which produced the collection, speaks well for the intentions of the project.

The resultant content, however, is quite something else. It reads almost as though the editors *intended* to denigrate and slander Dr. King as an illiterate plagiarist. The reader is repeatedly hit over the head with documentation of King’s plagiarism as a student and with his very poor grammar, spelling, and general mastery of the English language.

One must ask why the editors chose not to edit the writings of an obviously poorly instructed student, but one whose life’s work contributed so much to humanity, whether or not he could spell correctly. Why did they choose to document *ad nauseam* every instance of plagiarism? Could this not be understood as the problem of an overanxious youth trying to please academic authority? Surely, given King’s proven character later in life, this problem could not have emanated from an evil intent.

The answer to these questions can only be found by looking at who stands behind the publication of the volume, and what their interest is. Simply stated, the volume is the product of the remnants of a civil rights movement which has been taken over by academic and foundation money, and has been polluted by it to the point of impotence.

The leading sponsors of the project—those who funded the Martin Luther King, Jr. Center for Nonviolent Social Change to carry it out—include the Ford Foundation, the Rockefeller Foundation, IBM Corp., Intel Corp., the Times Mirror Foundation, The Ahmanson Foundation, the Bank-America Foundation, and the AT&T Foundation. Stanford University is the leading academic funder; Editor-in-Chief Carson is a professor of history at Stanford.

One is reminded of Christ’s admonition to let the dead bury the dead. Where were these foundations when Dr. King was leading a nonviolent resistance movement to brutal racism? Where was Stanford when the black children of America’s South were excluded from a decent education? Now, after King is dead and gone, they lavishly finance a compendium of his works so academic as nearly to kill his thoughts. And such Advisory Board members as Coretta Scott King,