The World Will Little Note?
The Philadelphia Press and 
the Gettysburg Address

Writing on the topic of modern parliamentary eloquence, Lord Curzon, British statesman and author, concluded in 1913 that three speeches fit the category of supreme masterpieces of modern persuasiveness: William Pitt's toast following the victory at Trafalgar, and Abraham Lincoln's Second Inaugural and Gettysburg Addresses. Like his Second Inaugural Address, Lincoln's words at Gettysburg, according to Curzon, were "the purest gold of human eloquence." They could have been delivered "before any audience, at any time of the modern world's history, without a suggestion of artifice or incongruity."1

At least two writers closely connected with the creation and delivery of the Gettysburg Address, and several historians thereafter, have led many Americans to believe that Lincoln's remarks at Gettysburg were not so recognized and praised at the time of their delivery. Clark E. Carr of Illinois, a member of the Committee of Arrangements for the Gettysburg cemetery, claimed that the committee had not intended for Lincoln to speak at all, for the committee doubted the humor-loving president's ability to make a speech appropriate to that somber occasion—the dedication of the Soldiers' National Cemetery at Gettysburg, on November 19, 1863, for the remains of those slain during the battle that took place there in July. According to Carr, Lincoln, like other distinguished personages, had been invited to be present, but not to speak. The committee's request to Lincoln to speak at Gettysburg was "an afterthought." Indeed, it was six weeks after Edward Everett had been selected to deliver the principal address, and less than three weeks before the day set aside for the dedication, that the commissioners, in the name of the northern governors, finally

1 George N. Curzon, Modern Parliamentary Eloquence: The Rede Lecture Delivered Before the University of Cambridge, November 6, 1913 (London, 1913), 72-75.

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asked Lincoln to utter “a few appropriate remarks,” following Everett’s address.²

In a brief volume, entitled, “A Few Appropriate Remarks,” F. Lauriston Bullard, in 1944, accepted Carr’s account, but, citing an 1874 publication of the Gettysburg Cemetery Board of Commissioners, noted that the board’s first meeting was held in December 1863, several weeks after the dedication of the cemetery. Bullard suggested that Carr had been confused and that the question of Lincoln’s suitability as a speaker must have been argued by mail, a not especially convincing explanation.³ Writing some twenty years later, Louis A. Warren included in his study of the address some statements made by Carr to the Chicago press. If we could believe these comments, we would conclude, as did the Chicago Journal, that Carr “was directly responsible” for Lincoln’s Gettysburg Address, that the other commissioners had finally “yielded to the demands” of cemetery commissioner Carr and reluctantly invited the president to speak. Citing Bullard’s finding that the commission first met a month after the Gettysburg ceremonies, Warren was properly suspicious of Carr’s claims.⁴

Had Bullard and Warren consulted an earlier published work, they would have become even more skeptical of Carr as a knowledgeable and reliable source. A select committee of the Pennsylvania House of Representatives printed a report in 1864 concerning the Gettysburg cemetery. Among other things this volume contains the minutes of that first meeting of the commission, held December 17, 1863. Clark E. Carr was not even present at that session.⁵

² Clark E. Carr, Lincoln at Gettysburg: An Address (Chicago, 1906), iii, 20-25. In his formal invitation to the president to attend the dedicatory ceremony, David Wills asked Lincoln to “set apart these grounds to their sacred use by a few appropriate remarks.” Wills to Lincoln, Nov. 2, 1863, Abraham Lincoln Papers (Library of Congress).
⁵ Report of the Select Committee Relative to the Soldiers’ National Cemetery, Together with the Accompanying Documents, As Reported to the House of Representatives of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, March 31, 1864 (Harrisburg, 1864), 12.
An examination of Philadelphia newspapers for 1863 demonstrates the unreliability of Carr's memory. The *Philadelphia Inquirer*, an invaluable source for Civil War history, provides proof that Carr's account was faulty. The paper reported that Lincoln had been invited to participate in the Gettysburg ceremonies long before November 2, as claimed by Carr. Moreover, the paper made it clear that Lincoln was expected to play a significant role in the dedication.

On October 11, the *Inquirer's* Baltimore correspondent had "a long conversation" with David Wills, the Gettysburg attorney who had "projected the idea of establishing a National Soldiers' Cemetery" at Gettysburg. Wills informed the reporter that the event would be held on Thursday, November 19. With the exception of an ode to be written for the occasion, Wills's description of the program, as told to the *Inquirer* correspondent, was exactly as it appeared on November 19. Wills still expected, on October 11, that Henry Wadsworth Longfellow would submit the poem requested for the occasion. Longfellow declined, however, and the ode used at Gettysburg was written by B.B. French. But everything else was in place, according to Wills's description recorded in October. The Marine Band of Washington had been engaged to be present, as well as "numerous other bands." All the governors of the loyal states had expressed their intention of being present. Cabinet members and the foreign embassies had been invited. The marshal of the District of Columbia would be in "charge of the civic procession," and Major-General George Cadwalader would lead the military, "infantry, cavalry, and artillery." President Lincoln was "expected to perform the consecrational service," an important part of the dedication. Surely, this was not a belated and reluctant invitation to make a "few appropriate remarks."


7 *Philadelphia Inquirer*, Oct. 13, 1863, p. 1. Most likely, Wills and Governor A.G. Curtin of Pennsylvania handled the arrangements for the dedication ceremony after consulting by mail with fellow governors. In a letter to Curtin, written a month before the event, Wills said "I have been in communication with the Governors of the States interested in the Soldiers' Cemetery . . . , about the arrangements for the consecration of these grounds." He added that the governors unanimously agreed to the selection of Everett to deliver the oration. Ibid., Oct. 16, 1863, p. 2. In later life Wills wrote that "I had charge of all the arrangements for the dedication of the Cemetery, and it was on my official invitation that President Lincoln came to Gettysburg on that occasion." David Wills, signed but undated typescript (photostat), Society Collection—A. Lincoln (Historical Society of Pennsylvania).

Two writers have theorized, with some justification, that Curtin invited Lincoln to attend in August 1863, while the governor was in Washington. Possibly, the president agreed,
A second myth surrounding the address holds that Lincoln’s speech was not well received by its listeners. Ward Hill Lamon—Lincoln’s friend, marshal of the District of Columbia, and grand marshal of the parade leading to the cemetery—seems to have been the principal author of that belief. Lamon insisted that the Gettysburg Address “fell on the vast audience like a wet blanket!” According to Lamon, Americans came to admire Lincoln’s speech only after Europeans reminded them of its admirable qualities. Lamon first made these remarks in an 1887 article in the *Philadelphia Weekly Times*. Later, they appeared in revised form in a chapter in his *Recollections of Abraham Lincoln*. Lamon, who was on the platform when Lincoln delivered his address, reported that the president was disappointed with its reception. “Lamon,” the president reportedly remarked to his friend, “that speech won’t scour! It is a flat failure and the people are disappointed.” Lamon maintained that Lincoln’s disappointment with the address continued up to the time of his death. “I ought to have prepared it with more care,” the president once supposedly complained to Lamon. Lamon then added that Lincoln’s estimate was shared by his contemporaries on this side of the Atlantic.

In taking issue with Lamon’s claims, Louis Warren listed a number of publications that, in the weeks and months after the Gettysburg ceremony, saluted the meritorious qualities of Lincoln’s address. But in Philadelphia favorable reaction was immediate. As soon as it had been decided to establish a national cemetery at Gettysburg for the Union dead, Philadelphians responded gratefully and enthusiastically.

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8 Barton, *Lincoln at Gettysburg*, 90. To Illinois farmers, a plow scoured when it went cleanly through the soil, without any of the soil sticking to it.


Their newspapers reported in detail the activities leading both to the establishment of the cemetery and the dedication of the national shrine. And they liked Lincoln's speech.\footnote{Philadelphia Inquirer, June 29, 1863, p. 4.}

The \textit{Inquirer} recorded the president's journey, beginning with his leaving Washington at noon on Wednesday, November 18, and ending with his departure from Gettysburg, "after dark" the next day. Its careful report of the president's itinerary provides us with the one speech of Lincoln's that did not scour. This brief talk, not included in Lincoln's collected works, took place on Wednesday. En route to Gettysburg, the president was delayed at Hanover, Pennsylvania, where a train travelling east compelled the presidential special to halt until the track had been cleared. The townspeople gathered around the president's car. Lincoln stepped out on the platform and, we are told, "the whole body of people uncovered in his presence." He was greeted by cheers and responded by delivering "one of the brief, quaint speeches for which he is celebrated."\footnote{Ibid., Nov. 21, 1863, p. 2.}

"Well," said the president, "you have seen me, and, according to general experience, you have seen less than you expected to see." This remark was attended by a "genuine hearty round of merriment." The president continued: "You had the Rebels here last summer, hadn't you?" "Yes," was the universal response. "Well, did you fight them any?" asked Lincoln, "jocosely." The townspeople looked at one another with a half-amused, half-puzzled expression, while the "long, tall form of the president leaned from the car as he waited the reply." No reply came. The people of that central Pennsylvania town did not consider amusing the references to the rebels in their midst just a few months earlier. After a pause, several women came forward and presented bouquets of flowers to Lincoln. Then "the whistle screamed, the brakes loosened, the assemblage gave one long, hearty cheer, and the car rattled up the Gettysburg road."\footnote{Ibid. A less detailed account of Lincoln's stop at Hanover, from a source written later, appears in Warren, \textit{Lincoln's Gettysburg Declaration}, 60. A partial account of the \textit{Inquirer}'s report of this Hanover stop appears in Kunhardt, \textit{A New Birth of Freedom}, 101. Only Lincoln's brief remarks to the Gettysburg citizens on the evening of Nov. 18, 1863, and the various drafts and copies of the Gettysburg Address, including the final text delivered the following morning, are included in Roy P. Basler, et al., eds., \textit{The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln} (9 vols., New Brunswick, 1953-1955), 7:16-23 (hereafter, \textit{Collected Works}).}
One other speech delivered on the eve of the Gettysburg dedication deserves notice. When the presidential train arrived in Gettysburg, Lincoln and secretary of state William H. Seward were serenaded by friendly crowds after the special guests had been placed in their respective lodgings for the night. The president responded briefly, thanking the serenaders for their compliment but stating that he did not propose to make a speech at that time. Seward was more amenable.

"This night," Seward began his response to the serenaders, "is the first time that . . . anybody in . . . Maryland was ever willing to listen to my voice." "This is Pennsylvania," a voice in the crowd corrected him. "Or in Pennsylvania, so near to the border of Maryland," continued the diplomat, seemingly without any loss of composure.14 He then reminded his listeners that the Union was a reality and that "with equal sincerity," Americans should mourn over the grave of "the misguided insurgent," also consigned to his resting place at Gettysburg. He asked the crowd to pity the dead Confederate with "the same sincerity, the same heartfelt grief that we mourn over the brother by whose hand, raised in defense of the Government to which we all owe allegiance that misjudged brother fell."15 Those were impressive, broad-minded sentiments coming from a high federal official in 1863.

As to the president’s remarks at Gettysburg, it can be noted that, at least in Philadelphia, there was much greater appreciation of his ability as orator and writer than Carr and Lamon have recorded. Philadelphia patrician and author Sidney George Fisher read about the Gettysburg ceremonies in the next day’s newspaper and made some interesting comments in his diary. Seward, he noted, had "made a good speech." Everett’s oration was "long but commonplace, tho well written & appropriate." Lincoln’s speech was what would be expected of him. It was "a very short one, but to the point and marked by his pithy sense, quaintness, & good feeling."16

14 The Press, Nov. 20, 1863, p. 2.
15 Philadelphia Inquirer, Nov. 20, 1863, p. 1. In the official report of Wills’s committee, Seward’s gaffe was corrected to read: “this is the first time that . . . any people . . . so near to the border of Maryland, was found willing to listen to my voice.” Report of the Select Committee, 72.
Philadelphia's newspapers agreed with Fisher. Of the six dailies for which copies are available, five supported the Republicans. The other one was the opposition's Philadelphia organ. Of the Republican sheets, only the *North American and United States Gazette* had little to report concerning the preparations for the ceremony or the affair itself. The *North American* sent no special correspondent to Gettysburg, but merely used reports distributed by the Associated Press. The paper explained that a "want of space" prevented it from referring "in fitting terms" to the "august ceremonial." Yet, it reminded its readers that the dedication "should not be passed over unnoticed." It predicted that the affair was "destined long to be remembered in our annals."

The other Republican dailies were more comprehensive in their treatment of the ceremony. The *Evening Bulletin*, which had published many stories dealing with the preparation of the ceremony, continued its detailed coverage describing the dedication itself. On the day after the celebration, it devoted much of its first page to the events that occurred before, during, and after the dedication. On its editorial page it published its often-cited evaluation of Lincoln's remarks, describing them as "warm, earnest, unaffected and touching." Thousands, the *Bulletin* estimated, who would not read Everett's long address, would read the President's "few words," and not many would "do it without a moistening of the eye and a swelling of the heart."

What the *Public Ledger* had to say about Gettysburg was significant because, even though it supported the Lincoln administration, the paper proudly maintained its independence of political parties. Also, as conceded by the other dailies, it then enjoyed the largest circulation in the city, probably because it had managed to keep its price at a penny a copy long after its competitors had found it necessary to raise their prices. The *Ledger*'s November 20 report of the previous day's events was a routine description of the procession to and from the cemetery as well as publication of the texts of the speeches delivered. But three days later the paper suggested editorially that it had been impressed by the president's words.

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The editorial began by reminding its readers that their state, which contained the city where the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution were written, now also contained Gettysburg, which “for all coming time,” will also be held “sacred,” the ground in which lie buried the “remains of those brave men who fought... at this second Marathon.” The Ledger next reported that the arrangements were excellent, the weather beautiful, and the military display “adequate,” but not overdone. “It was a citizens’ display,” in which the “instincts of the people preserved order.” Most important, “there was no drunkenness, no excess.” Indeed, the “perfect order and silent attention” of so large an audience “for about three hours,” while the ceremony took place, “was something we never saw equalled.” Everett’s oration and “the short, modest, fitting address of the President... produced tears at times, and at times every other emotion as only the highest eloquence can.” Then, moved by the sentiments contained in them, the editorial writer referred directly to Lincoln’s remarks:

He [Lincoln] declared that we could not dedicate or consecrate this ground, the brave men who fell there had done that above the power of words to add or detract. Words would soon be forgotten, but what they did, never. It was for us to be dedicated by such a scene to finish the work they so nobly carried forward, in defending a government founded eighty-four [sic] years ago, on the principle then announced that—all men were born equal.

That editorial writer, despite some deficiency in arithmetic, fully appreciated the literary talents of his president.19

If the Public Ledger liked to boast of its political independence, The Press was known at the time as “Lincoln’s Philadelphia Organ.”20 Its owner during the Civil War was John W. Forney, who rose in the newspaper world first by supporting James Buchanan, then shifting in the late fifties to Stephen A. Douglas, and finally, in 1860, to Lincoln and the Republicans. During the war, Forney spent most of his time in Washington, where he had been appointed secretary of the Senate in 1861. In that same year he started the Sunday Morning

19 Public Ledger, Nov. 23, 1863, p. 2.
20 Elwyn Burns Robinson, “The Public Press of Philadelphia during the Civil War” (Ph.D. diss., Western Reserve University, 1936), 141.
Chronicle, and in November 1862, he began publishing a daily edition of the Chronicle, reportedly at Lincoln's suggestion. Forney retained control of The Press, and from time to time contributed letters to his Philadelphia daily under the pen name of "Occasional." Forney's political connections made The Press an important paper—so much so that a Washington correspondent of the New York Tribune once advised his managing editor to add The Press to his daily reading, or at least the letters sent from Washington and signed "Occasional."

In one of these letters, published two days before the Gettysburg ceremonies, Forney wrote that Lincoln's attendance at Gettysburg would be his first visit to the free states since becoming president. Obviously based on information supplied by the White House, Forney added that it was impossible for the president to extend his tour. Preparation of his annual message to Congress would compel his immediate return to Washington. Nevertheless, the president's solicitude for the families of the dead heroes of Gettysburg and "his deep interest" in the cemetery induced him to take part in the Gettysburg consecration.

The Press's Gettysburg correspondent provided some interesting details concerning Lincoln's ride from the Wills house, where he spent the night, to the cemetery. "At about noon," this account read, "the President stepped out of the house to tremendous cheering, half blushing amid the intense ardor of the acclamation." Once he mounted his horse, he became the "tallest and grandest rider in the procession." He bowed from side to side in acknowledging the oft-repeated cheers—"Hurray for Old Abe," "We're coming, Father Abraham," and one solitary greeting, "God save the President." The article also added the item that many in the crowd at the cemetery, unable to hear the speakers, "wandered in every direction over the battle ground" while the ceremony was taking place.

In describing the speeches of Everett and Lincoln, that same account quoted Everett's sentence: "The whole earth was the sepulchre

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23 The Press, Nov. 17, 1863, p. 2.
24 Ibid., Nov. 21, 1863, p. 2.
of the brave, and all time the millennium of their glory.” The writer
of the article then explained that the president had expressed the same
thought just as well “in his brief, but immortal speech.” He then
quoted the ending of Lincoln’s address, beginning with the words,
“we cannot hallow this ground.” This account, published two days
after the speech was delivered, was likely the earliest use of the adjecti-
ve “immortal” to describe what Lincoln said there.

A few days later, The Press published an editorial entitled, “Words
for History,” which called Gettysburg “perhaps the highest point in
our history.” Upon Cemetery Hill “our history was crowned in a two-
fold sense.” The cause was won there, and its coronation took place
there. The dedication, on November 19, brought forth an immortal
spirit which came from the hill of the dead and “passed out among
the people,” and “into history.” The occasion had been “sublime.”
The president had “never stood higher and grander, and more pro-
phetic.” It was proper that “on that historic height” he should “utter
words such as these.” Then followed the last part of the Gettysburg
Address, beginning with the erroneous prediction that “the world will
little note nor long remember.”25 Lincoln’s words had left a strong
impression on the editors of The Press.

The other Republican paper in the city, the Inquirer, has been called
the “leading newspaper published in Philadelphia during the Civil
War.”26 Its many special correspondents covered the military zones
and the nation’s capital. It, too, proudly claimed that it was independ-
ent, although it consistently favored Lincoln’s party.27

Although the Inquirer did not comment directly on Lincoln’s Get-
tsburg Address, it is perhaps the best source available for information
dealing with the preparation leading up to the day of the celebration,
as well as the events held on that day. As early as August 11, the
paper carried a dispatch from its Baltimore correspondent telling of
the efforts of David Wills of Gettysburg to establish a cemetery for
the fallen soldiers of Meade’s army. By October 12, the Baltimore
correspondent was able to report back to Philadelphia that arrange-

25 Ibid., Nov. 25, 1863, p. 2.
27 Ibid., 197-206; Philadelphia Inquirer, July 9, 1863, p. 4.
ments for the dedication had been completed, under Wills's direction.\textsuperscript{28}

Rather than using the accurate Associated Press version of what Lincoln said at Gettysburg, the \textit{Inquirer} published a version recorded by its own reporter. The result was an inaccurate rendition of the president's remarks. The first three sentences conformed to what Lincoln said, but then came the following:

\begin{quote}
We are met to dedicate it, on a portion of the field set apart as the final resting place of those who gave their lives for the nation's life; but the nation must live, and it is altogether fitting and proper that we should do this.

In a larger sense we cannot dedicate, we cannot consecrate, we cannot hallow this ground in reality. The number of men, living and dead, who struggled here have consecrated it far above our poor attempts to add to its consecration. The world will little know and nothing remember of what we see here, but we cannot forget what these brave men did here. We owe this offering to our dead. We imbibe increased devotion to that cause for which they here gave the last full measure of devotion; we here might resolve that they shall not have died in vain; that the nation shall, under God, have a new birth of freedom, and that the Government of the people, for the people, and for all people, shall not perish from earth.\textsuperscript{29}
\end{quote}

This version of the text probably explains why the \textit{Inquirer} editors refrained from commenting on the literary merits of Lincoln's Gettysburg Address.

By the time of the Gettysburg dedication ceremonies, Philadelphia had but one daily calling itself a Democratic paper. In its first issue, March 25, 1863, \textit{The Age} declared itself "a national Democratic journal, conducted on national Democratic principles." The repetition of the word national can be read to mean that, like so many other Democrats, this paper's proprietors still clung to the hope that the Union could be restored without facing the slavery issue, or, as the paper explained, "in spite of the pernicious legislation of . . . Congress, and the fatal errors of the Administration.\textsuperscript{30}"

\textsuperscript{28} Ibid., Aug. 11, 1863, p. 4; Oct. 13, 1863, p. 1.
\textsuperscript{29} Ibid., Nov. 20, 1863, p. 1.
\textsuperscript{30} \textit{The Age}, March 25, 1863, p. 2.
The Age had little appreciation for Lincoln's literary talents. For example, in 1864, it referred to Lincoln's letter to Mrs. Bixby scornfully. The letter was a beautiful brief note offering condolences to a widow on what the president believed to be the loss of her five sons in the war. The paper singled out the words in that letter: "the solemn pride that must be hers, at having laid so costly a sacrifice upon the altar of freedom." It described this as "cheap sympathy," "easily manufactured." It accused Lincoln of "ostentatiously shedding his tears over the remains of Mrs. Bixby's five sons," while his two sons, who, The Age mistakenly believed, were both old enough to be fighting in the war, were avoiding combat. Then, when it came time to print Lincoln's famous Second Inaugural Address in 1865, The Age did so, describing it as "mere trash" and "unworthy of comment." One can understand why it became necessary for the mayor of Philadelphia to call out the police to protect the office of The Age from an irate mob on the day Lincoln died.

The Age gave the Gettysburg event a good going-over. It was suspicious at the outset of this gathering of Republican politicians. The brief speeches given by Lincoln, Seward, and Forney, on the eve of the celebration, in response to serenaders, could only be read, complained The Age, with a "blush of shame." The president "made a joke or two." Seward claimed that he had anticipated the struggle at Gettysburg forty years before. Forney's speech was a political harangue. These three Republican politicians had "met to laugh and joke and electioneer" on that sacred spot. In fairness to The Age, in the case of Forney, at least, John Hay's diary makes it clear that a drunken Forney had delivered a harangue that was partisan in nature.

When it came to report the events on the day of the dedication, The Age began by asserting that the proceedings left "little to commend"

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31 Ibid., Nov. 28, 1864, p. 4. The text of the Bixby letter (dated Nov. 21, 1864) is in Collected Works, 8:116-17. Robert Todd Lincoln was twenty-one years old at the time and entered the army on Feb. 11, 1865, as a captain on General U.S. Grant's staff. Thomas (Tad) Lincoln was eleven years old in 1864. Ruth Painter Randall, Lincoln's Sons (Boston, 1955), 154, 200.
32 The Age, March 6, 1865, p. 2.
34 The Age, Nov. 20, 1863, p. 2.
them. But then the paper acknowledged that "the speech of the President is the best he has ever made." Coming from a Democratic paper, those words represented high praise. True, the paper considered "quite unnecessary" Lincoln's assertion that the nation was "dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal." That expression made "hypocrites and liars" of the framers of the Declaration of Independence because one of the reasons assigned by them for their revolt was the "interference of the Government with their slaves." This sentiment comes close to making Jefferson Davis the hero of the war and Lincoln the disrupter of the Union. But then The Age again praised the president's speech. "These words, though, were well said." And it quoted here the following sentence from the address:

> It is rather for us here to be dedicated to the great task remaining before us, that from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they here gave the last full measure of devotion—that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain.

But then the editors could not resist the temptation to show that they had no confidence in the president who had spoken these lines: "Would that he who uttered them would act up to them!"36

Not only the dedication ceremonies but Lincoln's address as well had caught the attention of Philadelphia's papers. They had found something special in the president's remarks. It was not long before other Americans came to honor the Gettysburg Address as a remarkable contribution to American literature.

Other contemporaries, besides Philadelphia editors, appreciated the significance of the Gettysburg Address. Edward Everett sent Lincoln a note on the day after the speech was delivered in which he told the president: "I should be glad, if I could flatter myself that I came as near to the central idea of the occasion, in two hours, as you did in two minutes."37 In the following weeks, Harper's Weekly, Harper's Monthly, MacMillan's Magazine, and several daily newspapers throughout the North lauded Lincoln's remarks.38

Only three months after the Gettysburg exercises, America's most prominent historian of that age, George Bancroft, asked Lincoln for a

36 The Age, Nov. 21, 1863, p. 2.
37 Collected Works, 7:24-25.
copy of the address. Bancroft requested the document on behalf of an editor who wished to include a copy of the manuscript in an album containing facsimiles of famous writings of prominent Americans. The Gettysburg Address was to be placed at the beginning of the book, next to a facsimile of the “Star Spangled Banner,” Key’s poem first, and Lincoln’s “excellent address,” which “may be said to be in support of it, next.” Following would be copies of writings of Longfellow, Lowell, Poe, Irving, Holmes, and others. Proceeds from the sale of the book were to go to the Baltimore Sanitary Fair for the benefit of Union soldiers and sailors.

The public throughout the country was invited to purchase copies of the book even before the Baltimore Fair was held. The prospectus for the volume advised that copies could be ordered from “principal Booksellers in the large Cities,” at six dollars a copy. The book featured “The Manuscript of the Address of the President at Gettysburg,” as well as selections “from 90 distinguished American authors.” Thus did Lincoln’s appropriate remarks enter the mainstream of American eloquence, long before acknowledged as such by Europeans.

Villanova University

JOSEPH GEORGE, JR.

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39 Five copies of the address, in Lincoln’s handwriting, are known to exist. The two that were written before the address was delivered are now in the Library of Congress. The other three were written out by Lincoln with the intent of being auctioned at fairs held throughout the country to raise funds to assist wounded soldiers and sailors. One of these is now in the White House, another is in the possession of the Illinois State Historical Library, and the third is in the Cornell University Library. On the copies, see ibid., 150-70.

40 Collected Works, 7:22n., 212; J.P. Kennedy to Lincoln, March 4, 1864; and J.P. Kennedy to W.H. Seward, March 4, 1864, both in Abraham Lincoln Papers; J.P. Kennedy, comp., Autograph Leaves of Our Country’s Authors (Baltimore, 1864), v-ix.

41 A Rare and Curious Novelty In Literature [broadsid] (n.p., 1864), in Box 14, “Autograph Leaves of Our Country’s Authors,” Bancroft-Bliss Family Papers (Library of Congress). The collection also contains an unidentified newspaper clipping which is an almost identical prospectus.
John Nevin Sayre and the American Fellowship of Reconciliation

RECENTLY, HISTORIANS HAVE WRITTEN valuable portraits of twentieth-century American peace heroes. The lives of Jane Addams, Dorothy Day, Martin Luther King, A.J. Muste, and Norman Thomas, to name a few, have been the subject of lively and interesting biographies. In terms of popular influence and public impact, they made their mark on American peace history. But the focus on the few dominant personalities has obscured the roles played by other influential figures in the modern American peace movement. Such is the case of John Nevin Sayre, who has not received much scholarly attention.

Sayre, as one historian wrote, was one “of the nation’s foremost religious pacifists.” Others agreed. John M. Swomley, Sayre’s protégé in the Fellowship of Reconciliation (FOR), a peace organization, noted that Sayre possessed “the gift of seeing excellence in others and the humility to bring others in positions of leadership.” Roger Baldwin, leader of the American Civil Liberties Union, commented that Sayre’s “was a fulfilled life in the spirit of brotherhood of all mankind and in the hope of a world without violence.” French pacifist Henri Roser observed that Sayre was “exceptional at generating goodwill” and “knew better than anyone how to create the kind of confidence that in itself persuaded people to contribute.”

A liberal pacifist, strongly influenced by Christ’s teachings, Sayre invested his life and fortune in the cause of world peace. Persuading

The author wishes to thank Professors Justus Doenecke and Ernest Best as well as the anonymous referees for their constructive comments.

1 Information on some notable peace figures is found in Charles DeBenedetti, ed., Peace Heroes in Twentieth-Century America (Bloomington, 1986).
2 Robert Moats Miller, Harry Emerson Fosdick: Preacher, Pastor, Prophet (New York, 1983), 496.
people to contribute to the cause of peace was Sayre's enduring legacy. For fifty-two years, until he experienced an incapacitating stroke in December 1967, Sayre remained one of the Fellowship's most consistent and durable leaders. Although Sayre devoted most of his efforts after World War II to overseeing FOR branches in other parts of the world, his leadership sustained the American FOR during the crucial interwar years, when he served as the FOR's chairman, executive secretary, and editor of its journal, *The World Tomorrow* (later renamed *Fellowship*). The quiet example of his lifelong, behind-the-scenes service, as well as his organizing and managerial skills, enabled the FOR to emerge as one of America's most important peace groups of the century.  

John Nevin Sayre was born on February 4, 1884, in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, the son of Robert Heysham Sayre, chief engineer of the construction of the Lehigh Valley Railroad and, later, its vice president. The elder Sayre was also the founder of the Sayre Mining and Manufacturing Company in Alabama and vice president of the Bethlehem Iron Company. The cultivated, conservative Robert Sayre in many ways resembled a typical gentleman of the time. He was a trustee of Bethlehem's Episcopal Church of the Nativity, a staunch Republican from the days of Lincoln, and a fervent patriot. Respected for his entrepreneurial acumen and community involvement, the elder Sayre stood as an influential figure. The town of Sayre, in northern Pennsylvania, was named in his honor.

John's mother, Martha Sayre, was the daughter of Dr. John Williamson Nevin, a famous nineteenth-century German Reformed minister, who, along with the German church historian Philip Shaff, was the principal founder of the "Mercersburg theology." In 1841 Nevin published *The History and Genius of the Heidelberg Catechism,* and from 1849 to 1853 he edited the *Mercersburg Review,* one of "the great theological journals of pre-Civil War America." Just prior to his death in 1886, he was president of Franklin and Marshall College. Nevin's stature had a powerful effect on his daughter. Martha's upbringing

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was tinged with religious conviction and intellectual curiosity, virtues she instilled in John Nevin.5

John Nevin Sayre, who preferred to be addressed as Nevin, had a very happy childhood. His boyhood diaries reveal a boy enjoying the rolling hills surrounding Bethlehem, the swiftly moving Lehigh River, the city’s reputation as a music center, frequent trips to Philadelphia and New York, reading Lorna Doone, and the seriousness of religious study. Most of all, Nevin’s early years enjoyed the company and confidence of his younger brother, Francis. Nevin referred to Francis—who would marry President Woodrow Wilson’s daughter and later become a noted diplomat—as his “closest friend throughout life.”6

5 For a brief account of John Williamson Nevin’s career, see Sydney E. Ahlstrom, A Religious History of the American People (New Haven, 1972), 617-21.
6 From 1893 to the 1940s, Sayre kept a yearly diary. Most of his diaries are in his papers at Swarthmore College. The earlier diaries are more helpful concerning his feelings and habits.
Nevin received a sound education. He first attended the nearby Moravian School. Little is mentioned about this in his diary, except for its religious cultivation. When he was ready for high school, his parents enrolled him at Lawrenceville Preparatory, an affluent boarding school in New Jersey. In the early 1900s, Nevin attended Princeton University, where he studied philosophy under the expert tutorship of Professor Lucius Miller. A champion club dancer and superb horseback rider, Sayre graduated with honors in 1907.7

Graduation from Princeton marked Sayre’s full departure from Pennsylvania life, though his Pennsylvania upbringing continued to function as both a template and foil for his pacifism. He could have entered his father’s lucrative business at home, but chose not to do so. Instead, Sayre decided to pursue scholarly studies in theology with an intended vocation in the ministry. From 1908 to 1910, he studied at Union Theological Seminary in New York City. It proved an exciting intellectual challenge. Union Theological’s faculty stressed the value of a social conscience balanced with piety and learning. For the first time Sayre was “introduced to a critical and historical study of the Bible which freed him from all dogmatic conclusions about the verbal inspiration of the Bible.”8 In 1911 Sayre attended the Episcopal Seminary in Cambridge, Massachusetts, where he was ordained a priest.

Thinking that missionary work might be his true calling, Sayre accepted a position as instructor of New Testament Theology at Boone University, Wuchung, China. It was a short stay. As he recalled the experience, “I became clearly convinced after a few months that I was not cut out for missionary life.”9 He returned to his alma mater shortly after the outbreak of world war in Europe. While teaching courses on

7 “Great Grandson of the Revolution,” 220. Sayre’s grandfather, John Williamson Nevin, had studied theology at Princeton. Sayre’s deep attachment to Princeton was also shown in 1912. That year, he and nine other alumni organized a Christian fellowship known as the Crusaders. Its members “would not live for financial success, for outward advancement, or for selfish fame or happiness, but for His Kingdom; and we still choose that life work in which we feel we can do the most for the advancement of the Kingdom.” The link between his religion and ethical nonviolence was already being forged. “Constitution,” Crusaders Club, Sayre Papers, DG 117.


the literature and history of the Old Testament, Sayre shifted his attention away from the Books of Genesis and Deuteronomy to American popular opinion on the war. His growing interest in pacifism had been aroused earlier by Union Theological professors Henry Sloane Coffin, George William Knox, and George Coe, and by Norman Angell's book *Great Illusion* (1910) and Charles Rean Kennedy's play *The Terrible Meek* (1912). The turning point came when he attended a lecture presented by Talcott Williams of Columbia University's School of Journalism. Williams, an outspoken supporter of the Allies, insisted that it was acceptable for a Christian to fight in combat. Sayre's interpretation of the synoptic Gospels led to an opposite conclusion:

I [searched] . . . through all four gospels to ascertain for myself what the real teachings of Jesus had been with regard to war and peace. On one worksheet I listed all the passages which might be interpreted as giving sanction to Christians taking part in war, and on another worksheet I noted all those passages which seemed to forbid participation by Christians in war. . . . When I compared the two worksheets, it was crystal clear to me that Jesus had been an unequivocal pacifist, that for himself, his disciples, and his nation, he had totally repudiated war. From that moment on, and throughout the rest of my life, I felt sure of this conclusion and have never doubted it.

Nevin's analysis of Jesus's teachings reveals a contemplative person. In spite of his elite status and independent income, Sayre walked with humility in Christ's image. He believed it was a Christian's duty to forsake war. In his mind "non-violence in international relations was an obligation, not a promise." He maintained an unflinching belief that "war is the organized use of physical force to kill wholesale and indiscriminately for national self-interest." Williams's comments did not assuage Nevin's own conviction that the state was actually under God's judgment. As one of Christ's followers, it was his duty to Christianize the state.

Sayre proclaimed himself an "all-out pacifist" after the resignation of Secretary of State William Jennings Bryan during World War I,

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12 Quoted in Miller, *Harry Emerson Fosdick*, 491.
13 Ibid., 493.
when Bryan protested Wilson's "unnecessary" policies in 1915. "I held," Sayre reflected, "that the church is called to mediate the worship of Christ and to be a minister of his compassion." He asked how the church of Jesus Christ could condone or take part in war and concluded it should not.

Irrespective of the cause for which a war is fought, which may be just or unjust, or in defense of one's country, the method of all wars is essentially the same, namely indiscriminate killing of human beings, both soldiers and civilians, and arousing hatred against them by a propaganda of lies accusing them of awful atrocities but covering up or being silent about any evil deeds or cruelties of one's own nation as it fights the war. These are the methods of Satan and diametrically opposed to Christ's method of loving enemies and praying for those who persecute us.

The essential unity of humankind regardless of nationality, class, and race, formed the center of Sayre's religious pacifism.

Interestingly, Sayre's acceptance of pacifism coincided with the 1915 creation of the American Fellowship of Reconciliation. Sayre's sensitive conscience, which led him to disapprove of the social order from which he was born, now moved him to perceive the social order he was raised in to be "unsocial and un-Christian." He found the FOR attractive because of its emphasis on religious pacifism and social change. Holding first to the ethic of love, the Fellowship encouraged basic institutional changes and called for the nonviolent transformation of the social order. The FOR sustained the Social Gospel conviction that the redemption of all men and the regeneration of society constituted the ultimate goal of religion and religious people. The basic affirmation of the FOR was thus spelled out in its general statement of principles: "Our loyalty to our country, to humanity, to the Church Universal and to Jesus Christ calls us to a life-service for the enthronement of love in personal, social, commercial and national life."

16 "Great Grandson of the Revolution," 221.
After Versailles, peace activists clung to a liberal pacifism that was world-affirming, social and not individualistic. The conversion of whole societies, not simply personal salvation, became a primary consideration. A “commitment to world peace” was connected to “a devotion to domestic reform.” Such liberal pacifists were active in pursuing a program of educational, social, and political action. Thus, peace was no longer just the absence of war but also a process of change toward greater social justice.  

Most significantly, unlike the historic peace sects (Quakers, Mennonites, and Church of the Brethren), the FOR clearly made distinctions between nonresistance and nonviolent resistance. The FOR designated social change as part of the peace process. Such a philosophy drew Sayre to the FOR. At a time when Anglican clergy were disproportionately few in the peace movement compared to Methodists, Presbyterians, Unitarians, and others, Sayre found his true vocation. The Fellowship, rather than an Episcopal parish, provided the spiritual nourishment he craved. His witness rested on the premise that “the forces that make for war must be resisted and overcome by a nonviolent way of life, program of political change, and technique of social action.”

After World War I Sayre’s peace activism blossomed. The FOR had become fully operational. Its constituency “was essentially religious and liberal in the sense of being ecumenical, theologically modern, and socially concerned. Well over half of the members were ministers.” The FOR sought “to bring Christian bodies to social action and to infuse reform groups with the ethic of Christian pacifism.” That Christian pacifism consumed Sayre. He boasted that the Fellowship “has had the best years of my life.” Through the FOR Sayre grew in his pacifist convictions and self-confidence. He was “grateful to the Fellowship . . . for what it has done for me.” It had enabled Nevin to put his organizing skills to work.

18 Miller, Harry Emerson Fosdick, 495-96.
19 Ibid., 496.
20 Charles Chatfield, For Peace and Justice: Pacifism in America, 1914-1941 (Knoxville, 1971), 110.
"Bookish he may look," one writer commented, "but he is essentially a motor type of person. He must be on the move." During the interwar years he kept on the move. He was involved in so many peace activities they tend in retrospect to blur together. Yet, there were several instances where Sayre left a deep imprint on peace policy. One of those was teaching military subjects in colleges and schools.

Sayre opposed the 1920 Defense Act establishing the Reserve Officers Training Corps. In 1925 he accepted the chairmanship of the Committee on Militarism in Education, an organization created that year to work for the abolition of military training in colleges and schools. He feared the powerful arm of the state invading the sacred trust delegated to the nation's colleges and schools to teach the importance of human understanding and tolerance. Compulsory military training would chip away at this trust: "Obviously the government had to have military schools if it was to train officers for the Army and Navy. But it was a different matter to put military training units into civilian educational institutions."

Sayre was extremely sensitive to the "surveillance of faculty members, students and Y [YMCA] secretaries by local R.O.T.C. officers at many colleges and universities." In a telling article, entitled "The Altars of Freedom," Sayre called attention to the problem in his opening lines. "The altars of free thought, inquiry and discussion," he bristled, "should be cherished above all institutions of learning. The public educational system of America ought to be the holy place of our democracy. And democracy cannot flourish unless it makes safe the right of controversy." Pointing out the numerous attempts to stifle free opinion, he finished with the following warning: "War hysteria..."

22 "Great Grandson of the Revolution," 222.
23 The most thorough work on the Committee on Militarism in Education is Daniel William Barthell, "The Committee on Militarism in Education, 1925-1940" (Ph.D. diss., University of Illinois, 1972). See also Arthur A. Ekirch, Jr., The Civilian and the Military: A Study of Anti-Militarist Thought (New York, 1956), chap. 14; and Chatfield, For Peace and Justice, 153-56. Reflecting on his chairmanship of the CME, Sayre related to Allen R. Brick in 1961 that "The Committee on Militarism in Education did not confine itself to issuing pamphlets but got Bills introduced in Congress to abolish compulsory ROTC, worked up Hearings before Congressional Committees, endeavored to influence Church and educational groups and was active on campuses where students raised the issue." Sayre to Brick, April 21, 1961, Sayre Papers, DG 117.
and armament appropriations have opened wide the doors of the Treasury to our military men. Military bureaucracy allied with millions of tax money is one of the most dangerous combinations the world has ever seen. Are we willing to let it throttle freedom and adventurous thinking in our universities and schools?" On June 15, 1926, he testified before the House Committee on Military Affairs in favor of the Walsh Bill that proposed to strike out "or compulsory" from the 1920 Defense Act. As he stated: "This is not pacifism but Americanism—a rally to our Constitutional liberties and to our Anglo-Saxon tradition that each man should be free to think his thoughts, get his education and do his work without interference by a military machine."25

Not everyone shared his opinions. Donald Grant Herring, one of his Princeton classmates and a Rhodes Scholar, felt compelled to respond. Herring strongly defended the R.O.T.C. program. Although "war is stupid," asserted the combat veteran and former Army officer, it has been "the framework of history." Herring saw military training in peacetime as the best way to give America's "sons a better chance for their lives when the time for real fighting should come." He defended the military program at Princeton for practical not idealistic reasons, urging Sayre and pacifists to "Think of the next war in terms of your own sons," and ignore the "propaganda of pacifism, which is essentially that, if only you will blindfold yourself, you will see little or nothing of that which is going to hurt you."26

Sayre had his own rejoinder to Herring. In a published debate on the issue of military training in the Princeton curriculum, he shot back: "The greatest need of the world today is not for more soldiers but for better thinkers and statesmen who will help us solve conflict by less destructive ways than war." Pacifists "face the future while R.O.T.C. apologists largely face the past." For Sayre, it was crucial that the pacifist position get a fair hearing on college campuses. Whether it be articles, radio broadcasts, or campus speeches, Sayre pounded home

the point that "democracy and militarism cannot coexist." The antithesis was clear:

It is unavoidable that there should be a conflict between character-training for democratic citizenship and character-training for an army. Government "of the people, by the people, for the people" requires that the educational emphasis be put on the development of individual personality, initiative and ability to handle people and get results by persuasion. The requirements of any army, on the other hand, call for mass action by large aggregations of men in unreflective responses to commands issued by authority at the top.27

The question of authority entangled Sayre in disputes among pacifists themselves regarding class warfare. Perhaps no other crisis facing the Fellowship was greater than that of the ideological battle over class warfare. Since the late twenties, many FOR activists were joining the picket line in industrial disputes and acting as labor organizers where worker leadership was still weak. Since peace was considered as a process in human social relations, the main dynamic of the FOR's thinking came to be directed at exploring the relationship between violence and an unjust domestic order. On which side, if presented in politics, must a Christian choose between justice and love?

Under the impact of the misery and despair of the Great Depression, a growing number of FOR figures began to qualify their pacifist beliefs. One of these choosing militancy in the workers' cause was Joseph B. Matthews, a Protestant minister and the FOR's executive secretary. Matthews had accused the "pure pacifists" within the FOR of selling out to the owning class. He argued that capitalism used the educational system to prevent the spread of radical ideas. In such circumstances, pacifists, while refusing all participation in international wars, had to accept "varying degrees of coercion and regrettable necessities" in the class struggle for capitalism. Practically all of the FOR leaders shared Matthews's strong anticapitalist view, but they were uneasy over his belief that coercive rather than persuasive techniques were necessary to bring about social reconstruction. Sayre, especially, was dismayed by Matthews's aggressiveness. Sayre spearheaded a drive

in 1933 to resolve the FOR's position by polling the membership. To the key question—"Should the FOR hold on to non-violence in the class war as well as in international war?"—877 respondents answered yes, 97 no. Although less than half of the FOR membership responded to the questionnaire, the results clearly favored the "pure pacifists." The Fellowship remained in favor of nonviolence in class as well as in international war. Matthews left the FOR after the expiration of his term on February 1, 1934.  

Sayre had been Matthews's principal adversary. The conflict had severely tested Sayre's pacifist convictions. Although his view that the FOR should concentrate on noncoercive "practical methods" of persuasion ultimately prevailed, the Executive Council vote was extremely close. The Council "finally accepted Matthews' resignation by a vote of 18:13, but it retained Sayre by 16:11 (1 formally abstaining and apparently 2 not voting)."  

Not all Council members were happy at this outcome. Reinhold Niebuhr, resigning from the Council, liked Sayre personally, but did not share his position of Christian pacifism as against class war. "I share, roughly speaking," Niebuhr wrote shortly after the vote, "the political position of Mr. Matthews as a Marxian and as a Christian." Neutrality in class conflict was unrealistic, he argued, for violence was endemic in capitalism and there was no way of escaping its grip: "There is no choice except between more or less violence. One cannot distinguish between violent and nonviolent coercion in our social system."  

Sayre, however, was able to take solace knowing that other leading FOR lights agreed with his decision to force Matthews's resignation. In letters to members of the Executive Council, Sayre had implored them to hold hard and fast to the organization's religious pacifist basis. Other FOR members also respected Sayre's stand. In one important letter from Richard B. Gregg, author of *The Power of Non-Violence*, Sayre was buoyed by Gregg's opinion that "I am convinced by my

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28 Excellent descriptions of this conflict are found in the following works: John K. Nelson, *Peace Prophets: American Pacifist Thought, 1919-1941* (Chapel Hill, 1967), 76-78; Peter Brock, *Twentieth-Century Pacifism* (New York, 1970); and Chatfield, *For Peace and Justice*, 191-97.

29 Chatfield, *For Peace and Justice*, 195-96.

30 Quoted in Brock, *Twentieth-Century Pacifism*, 147.
own observation and thinking and by the reading of history, that violence will not improve the lot of workers nor of the world." Advocating the techniques of Gandhian nonviolence was essential, Gregg added, because the "encouragement of constant thinking, discussion and action in the direction of non-violence will give us steadily more power and more understanding of how to solve social problems in the direction of increasing social justice." No less heartening was the lengthy response of Sayre's liberal ministerial colleague, A.J. Muste:

I am grateful now that in spite of very profound differences between us I never committed the sin of harboring in my mind or heart any thoughts except those of confidence and love toward you. . . . I think I was wrong in never having stated to the Fellowship what at the time I felt—and what was responsible for keeping me in the background—viz. that though I agreed with JB's [Matthews] social views, I felt that there was a profounder personal and spiritual sense in which he was wrong and you in the right. . . . Whatever else you may or may not have done, with which I may not agree, this concept [religious experience] you above all have held on to. You symbolize the Fellowship . . . in a profound way. You will have your reward.\textsuperscript{31}

The ideological divisiveness and controversy affecting the Fellowship was resolved in favor of the principle of nonviolence, but Sayre had little occasion to rejoice over this victory. During the 1930s much of his time was absorbed in debating the important issues of disarmament and increased military dictatorships. The 1930s proved to be a period of intense administrative activity, as Sayre poured all of his energies into attempts to prevent another world war. He wrote a number of articles questioning "the impact of the Washington and London disarmament conferences of 1922 and 1930, pointing out in 1932 that armaments had increased since the end of World War I."\textsuperscript{32} An "increase of expenditure for armament," he insisted, "does not in the modern world purchase increase of security."\textsuperscript{33} Sayre objected to armaments on two counts: the mounting cost of weapons taking money

\textsuperscript{31} Richard Gregg to John N. Sayre, Feb. 23, 1933; and A.J. Muste to Sayre, Sept. 17, 1936, Sayre Papers, DG 117.
\textsuperscript{32} Quoted in Doenecke, "John Nevin Sayre," 840-41.
away from creating a just social order, and the diminishing effectiveness for defense. He also criticized efforts to boycott Japan after her military invasion of Manchuria and later attack on China. Such economic pressure, he warned, would cause severe unemployment at home and result in a bitter war with Japan.\textsuperscript{34}

In 1935 Sayre accepted the presidency of the National Peace Conference (NPC), a coalition of forty nongovernmental groups organized to popularize the goal of internationalism. The NPC favored international disarmament, public control of the munitions industry, revision of immigration policy, civilian formulation of defense policy, and the abandonment of traditional neutral rights to trade on the seas. The coalition, however, was too disparate in interest. It split over the issue of a mandatory arms embargo. Sayre, himself, questioned the feasibility of sanctions. Any form of coercion, he always maintained, compromised his religious pacifism. He thus reiterated his longstanding proposition that \textquote{\textquote{Peace has to be built on foundations of social health; and sanctions are mainly an attempt to repress from without the irruption \textit{[sic]} of disease from within.}}\textsuperscript{35}

A year later, Sayre helped establish the Emergency Peace Campaign (EPC), like NPC, also a loose coalition of peace groups. Its primary contribution to the peace movement was the No-Foreign War Crusade based on strict neutrality, lower tariffs, and international organization contingent on justice. Sayre’s leadership role in the EPC was challenged, however, when he publicly opposed the appointment of Admiral Richard E. Byrd as honorary chairman of the No-Foreign War Crusade. He also criticized minor changes in the crusade’s statement of purpose that were intended to broaden its appeal. Again, Sayre’s refusal to compromise his strict pacifist principles ended in controversy. Sayre, whose personality was more suited to reconciliation, disliked controversy, but he refused to tolerate any hint of impropriety concerning pacifist ideals. Thus, to Sayre’s mind, the selection of a non-pacifist and admiral as figurehead of the EPC’s most important meetings, as

\textsuperscript{34} The best account of Sayre’s views on a boycott against Japan is Justus Doenecke, \textit{When the Wicked Rise: American Opinion-Makers and the Manchurian Crisis of 1931-1933} (Lewisburg, 1984), 86-87.

well as the weakening of its stated objectives, was virtually to "haul down the pacifist flag." The particulars of this incident need not be reiterated. They have been thoroughly discussed in Charles Chatfield's *For Peace and Justice*. Sayre's opinion that middle-of-the-road peace groups could use the help of pacifist personnel and money prevailed, and the internal disagreement did not persist because pacifism held a central place in the campaign.

By the end of the decade, Sayre, on at least two occasions, had visited the White House in an effort to convince President Franklin D. Roosevelt to call for a peace conference of nations. But FDR rejected his requests. A disappointed Sayre came away from these meetings with the following impression: "The President was getting America ready to fight—alone, if necessary."36

As disappointed as he was at this turn of events, Sayre also recognized that the peace movement itself would not be a united effort. As Lawrence Wittner's *Rebels Against War* shows, the peace movement began splitting by 1935. The obvious collapse of the League of Nations and heightened European militarism created fears of another great war. The National Council for the Prevention of War, the FOR, and the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, as well as other pacifist groups, realized their inability to prevent war in Europe and directed their attention to isolating America from that war. They began to stand for a pacifism "that now judged more and more by standards other than political realism." Internationalist elements—including the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, the Church Peace Union, World Alliance for International Friendship through the Churches, and the League of Nations Association—gradually shifted to doctrines of collective security. In the heated neutrality debates of the late thirties, "the former groups supported the maintenance of mandatory neutrality, while the latter worked for the modification of the neutrality provisions and, eventually, for their repeal."37 Many American pacifists could not resolve the dilemma of whether to keep America out of war by trying to

prevent the onset of war in Europe and Asia or to work to preserve American neutrality in a war that seemed almost inevitable.

The choice was easy for Sayre. Not even the horrors of Nazi atrocities in Europe and Japanese military aggression in the Far East swayed him from his Christian pacifist convictions: "religious pacifism lays its command upon the individual conscience as a call of personal duty toward God and not a matter of expediency. Tempted by the State to cooperate in war, the pacifist replies ... how then can I do this great wickedness and sin against God." Sayre's religious beliefs fortified his pacifism. Following Christ's example, Sayre considered pacifism more than a renunciation from war. It signified something more active, more concrete. It represented an affirmation of personal service to the "attainment of goodness by reason, persuasion, and love."38

By reasserting the religious quality of pacifism, Sayre and the Fellowship renewed their deepest roots in liberal Protestantism. When the United States entered World War II, Sayre and the Fellowship set about establishing a program that would aid fellow pacifists and conscientious objectors, as well as address the problem of war itself. "True pacifism," Sayre pointed out, "is not passivism or any leaving of injustice alone, its aim is not peace as an end, but the using of peace as a method."39

During the war Sayre was active on many fronts. Corresponding with overseas pacifists, sending aid to the war victims in Europe, and assisting Japanese Americans forced to live in relocation camps are just some examples. But two particular illustrations of Sayre's contribution to the wartime peace movement deserve analysis: his role as editor of Fellowship, and safeguarding the rights of conscientious objectors.40

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40 Sayre, on behalf of the FOR, was also involved in numerous other activities. His organization endorsed the highly publicized food plan for occupied Europe put forth by Herbert Hoover; worked with the International Fellowship in establishing a War Victims Fund; created both the Gift Parcels Program and the European Food Parcels Program; and created the FOR Loan Plan that aided displaced Japanese Americans. See: John N. Sayre, "Peace is Not Built on Hunger," Fellowship 6 (Oct. 1940), 124; "Gift Parcels Program, 1945-1946," Sayre Papers, DG 117; John N. Sayre, "A War Time Programme for the International FOR," Fellowship 7 (Nov. 1941), 116-17; and John N. Sayre, "The Fellowship of Reconciliation and Japanese-Americans in World War II" (memorandum, 1945) and
As the editor of *Fellowship*, Sayre guided his editorials on the premise that "in time of war prepare for peace." It was crucial for pacifists to develop a program that bore "witness to a way of life" as a means of "combatting evil utterly different from the violence their nation uses." It was also essential that the readership be informed of all acts of violence, including those committed by the Allies. In that regard, one of Sayre's biggest editorial coups, and one which focused increased attention on Fellowship activities, occurred when he published an eye-opening account of "obliteration" bombing. The piece was written by British pacifist Vera Brittain. Sayre took special care in editing it and entitled it, quite dramatically, "Massacre by Bombing." The attention-getting article left little doubt that Allied war tactics were barbaric. Sayre wrote a preface that drew upon Brittain's findings and his own view of the situation. He castigated Roosevelt's and Churchill's bombing strategies and referred to them as "two surgeons determined to operate although it may kill the peace and cripple Europe and Asia for generations. . . . Surely a rational offer of honorable peace should be made immediately to the afflicted peoples of the lands we are bombing."

Not everyone agreed with Sayre's decision to print the article. William L. Shirer, a prominent CBS radio commentator whose *Berlin Diary* was already a best seller, responded: "Fundamentally, I am interested in saving our civilization, such as it is, and I feel that you and Miss Brittain, without perhaps fully realizing it, are undermining our chances of saving this civilization and improving Hitler's chances.

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"Fellowship Aid in Resettlement American Born Japanese" (memorandum, Nov. 25, 1942), Sayre Papers, DG 117.


42 John N. Sayre, "Peace by Total Bombing," *Fellowship* 10 (March 1944), located in Sayre Papers, DG 117; Vera Brittain, "Massacre by Bombing," *Fellowship* 10 (March 1944), 20-24; Wittner, *Rebels Against War*, 59. During the war years Sayre and Brittain exchanged numerous letters. Both felt "that there is a large inarticulate body of opinion waiting for a spiritual lead." Yet, neither was prepared for what happened in August 1945. They thought they had seen it all with the horrors of obliteration bombing. As Brittain noted: "The bomb is, of course, simply the next logical development after the obliteration bombing. . . . The bomb went down on Japan just when the War Crimes Commission had decided that 'mass extermination' was a War Crime!" Brittain to Sayre, Aug. 14, 1941; Jan. 26, 1942; Sayre to Brittain, May 31, 1944; Brittain to Sayre, Aug. 30, 1945, Sayre Papers, DG 117.
of wrecking it." The New York Times, in an editorial, supported Shirer’s contention:

The question raised by Miss Brittain and the others is not whether we shall continue to wage war against that system but in what manner. The most merciful manner is obviously that which will win the war with least human suffering. If the kind of bombing the British and American fliers are doing over Germany will shorten the war and diminish the cost of life, we believe it is justifiable.

Others were less generous. “Damn your dirty black hearts,” one person wrote Sayre. “Call yourselves Christian! May God damn your souls to hell.” Another writer, Gerald L. Evarts, demanded: “Where were you and your organization when: (1) China was raped and plundered by Japan; (2) innocent Ethiopians were bombed into eternity by ‘civilized’ Italians; (3) Polish citizens were murdered and their cities leveled by the Germans; (4) thousands of English persons were killed and their Churches and cities blasted to bits.” Little sympathy for a negotiated peace came from these quarters.

Coinciding with Sayre’s editorial duties was his determination to protect the rights of conscientious objectors. The increase in FOR membership from 6,700 in 1940 to 15,000 in 1945 “resulted from young people being forced to make up their minds about taking the pacifist position.” Those opposed to killing on religious and moral grounds sought out their pacifist brethren for encouragement in maintaining an otherwise exceptionally lonely stance. Sayre welcomed them into the pacifist fold. Since World War I he had been extremely sensitive to the plight of conscientious objectors, arguing that the government had “no right to take men from their lawful work which they regard as tribute due to God, and then to attempt by fear and imprisonment to coerce and make them violate their souls.” Sayre always insisted that “no state has any right to persecute conscience, which is in fact men’s souls.”

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45 Flora May Patrick to John N. Sayre, March 7, 1944, Sayre Papers, DG 117.
46 Gerald L. Evarts to John N. Sayre, March 6, 1944, ibid.
47 Wittner, Rebels Against War, 55.
Conscientious objectors during World War II were offered a more reasonable, though less than satisfactory, alternative to military service than they had received in World War I. Rather than imprisonment for refusal to serve, the government established Civilian Public Service (CPS) camps—a convenient way to avoid martyrdom and keep conscientious objectors out of the public's eye. Instead of satisfaction at the government's new policy and basic agreement among pacifists regarding the CPS program, the Fellowship became embroiled in controversy. Sayre and Muste, the Fellowship's leading lights, now found themselves opposing one another.

In 1940 the FOR executive board decided to appoint both men as co-secretaries. Muste had previously abandoned his Trotskyite position on proletarian revolution after visiting a Parisian church in 1936. Prior to this occurrence, he had been active in the labor movement, having served as head of Brookwood Labor College in New York and later helping establish the American Workers Party. His return to pacifism in 1936 was filled with emotion and joy. In 1939 *Time* called him "America's Number One Pacifist." The sharing of FOR duties proved amicable when developing philosophy and policy or raising funds and carrying out speaking engagements. What led to differences was the Fellowship's complicated relationship to the National Service Board for Religious Objectors (NSBRO). The NSBRO had been organized in October 1940 to provide conscientious objectors with a united front of opposition. It oversaw the administration of CPS camps that had been established by the historical peace churches and the United States government.

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49 For a damning account of one of these camps, consult Gordon Zahn, *Another Part of the War: The Camp Simon Story* (Amherst, 1979), passim.

50 Jo Ann O. Robinson's *Abraham Went Out: A Biography of A.J. Muste* (Philadelphia, 1981), 76, points out that "Sayre and Muste . . . indicated the depth of their commitment to the FOR and admiration for one another. The two men were strikingly different; Muste's penchant for activism and radical experimentation contrasted sharply with the circumspect Sayre's piety and moderation. But while profound disagreement would arise over matters of policy, they would keep their 1940 pledge to 'work as equal partners on the FOR staff, each having full faith in the other' for the duration of the war, and their friendship endured to the end of their lives."

51 *Time* 16 (July 10, 1939), 37; Glen Zeitzer, "The Fellowship of Reconciliation on the Eve of the Second World War: A Peace Organization Prepares," *Peace and Change* 3 (1975), 46-51. According to Zeitzer, a joint memorandum was issued explaining the relationship. As executive secretary, Muste assumed the general direction of FOR affairs and would thus "plan the strategy of Christian pacifism, make budget proposals, run the national office and supervise field work. Nevin Sayre would share with Muste in developing philosophy and policy, raising funds, and making speaking trips." On the dynamics of Fellowship activities
Initially, the major pacifist groups, including the Fellowship, cooperated in the establishment of the alternative service program for objectors; they were convinced that it was the best that could be salvaged under the circumstances and that CPS camps would render a humanitarian service in a world at war. Yet, increasingly, military control, inconsequential work projects, and a sense of futility led many in the camps to the belief that they had betrayed their basic principles. A number of objectors began to undertake overt acts of civil disobedience to voice their displeasure.52

Although the co-secretaries had polite disagreements on issues such as unilateral disarmament and tax resistance, it was Muste's opposition to FOR support for NSBRO that created the greatest strain. In Muste's opinion, such support represented cooperation with the government in both conscription and war. In contrast, Sayre thought that the alliance was necessary in order to keep assisting the objectors. Not erased from his memory was the torture and mistreatment of conscientious objectors during World War I: "Men were forcibly clad in uniform, beaten, pricked or stabbed with bayonets, jerked about with ropes around their necks, threatened with summary execution. . . . In at least two cases, men were immersed in the filth of latrines." Perhaps, somewhat naively, he also believed that the CPS camps could "become havens where pacifists could work out the moral equivalents of war." As time passed, it was clear that these camps were far less than Sayre had envisioned and not as harmful as Muste imagined. The two leaders reached a compromise whereby the Fellowship withdrew from the Board, but maintained a consultative relationship.53

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This difference of opinion should not be minimized. It underscores the subtle and significant changes in strategy emerging among FOR members. Over the long term, Muste's position proved more persuasive, for his views signaled the advent of a more radicalized version of liberal pacifism that would gain popularity during the Cold War period. Muste argued that the Fellowship should now be the instrument of pacifist, or nonresistance revolution. This required a central staff with effective leadership at the top and a general party line. Muste sought a centralized program rooted in political action and uncolored by religious appearance to achieve nonviolent change. He was able to blend political radicalism and religion into a personal style. His definition of nonviolent force became relative to the demands of time and place, and his ethical decisions tended to reflect political judgments. Increasingly, as the Cold War grew hotter, he supported political acts of civil disobedience as a means to address social conflict and human injustice. Suffering and sacrifice cut the way toward human betterment. Leading civil rights marches, encouraging the nonpayment of taxes, refusing to cooperate in civil defense exercises, picketing military bases, protesting the arms race, and supporting individual acts of burning draft cards were Muste's ways of showing that nonviolent Christian revolutionism was relevant to the political order.

Sayre was not comfortable trying to shape his religious pacifism into an instrument of political force. He regarded militant forms of peace and justice, couched in acts of civil disobedience and disrespect for established law, as distractions from the pious and religious purpose of the Fellowship. An earlier scenario had been played out during the Matthews crisis. Sayre found it difficult to distinguish between support for violence in the class struggle and overt acts of civil disobedience. He considered both unlawful and contrary to the teachings and actions of Jesus Christ. Any act that was not in keeping with the quietist approach to protest compromised the religious basis of pacifist beliefs. Sayre believed that peace "is high powered activity for change and yet also conservative of order." These very words reflect Sayre's political views. In his opinion, the best pattern for the Fellowship to follow was that of a dedicated family devoted to religious pacifism. An element of

Quaker thought and action characterized his principles. He believed, for example, that holding meetings like family reunions would preserve the organization’s purity. Sayre was troubled by the growing tendency to secularize the Fellowship’s role by emphasizing political acts of civil disobedience. He wondered in what way such acts were consistent with the basic religious principles of the FOR. Sayre maintained that the chief emphasis should be on the mission of building pacifism and working within churches and other religious organizations.55

Obedient forms of nonresistance were consistent with Sayre’s religious pacifism. When questioned about tax resistance, for example, Sayre wrote Mrs. Joseph Evans of Chicago that “My good colleague, A.J. Muste, agitated for tax refusal very strongly,” but he and the FOR’s Executive Council “did not accept what he urged us to do, i.e. break the law by refusing to withhold tax payments from the salaries of employed FOR staff.” When Evans asked why not, Sayre replied: “Refusal to pay taxes to Rome was a burning issue for Jewish patriotism. But Jesus told Peter to pay the tax imposed by Rome, the Occupying Military Power.”56 Sayre was convinced that it was not ethically or morally justifiable for one to break the law no matter how unjust the law might be.

Sayre’s personal brand of religious pacifism, with its acceptance of institutional control, lost out to nonviolent resistance. As he told Roger Baldwin: “I expect the difference between us is that you lay more emphasis on the political side . . . and I put more emphasis on encouraging person to person contacts across the barriers of ideology, nationalism, etc.”57 Realizing that he was now outside the mainstream of the American peace movement, Sayre resigned as FOR co-secretary in 1946.

Relying mainly upon his own independent income, Sayre then concentrated his energies on behalf of the International Fellowship of

56 John N. Sayre to Mrs. Joseph Evans, June 3, 1964, Sayre Papers, DG 117. The Muste-Sayre correspondence does not address the split. Official FOR documents contain references to their philosophical differences. Both always seemed to put the Fellowship ahead of their own personal views.
Reconciliation. "I don’t think the IFOR . . . ," Ernest Best recollected, "would have been organizationally possible without the wholehearted support of the Sayres [Nevin and his wife Kathleen] both materially and spiritually."\(^{58}\) From 1946 to 1967, Sayre was the spiritual and inspirational leader of the IFOR which he sought to forge into an instrument for world peace. Because of the "financial resources" he "had at his disposal," a Pennsylvania legacy of sorts, Sayre was "able to travel internationally whenever that became necessary."\(^{59}\) Taking spiritual truth across the frontier became his calling card. As IFOR leader, he coordinated and directed the sending of "apostles of reconciliation" into as many lands as possible. "Embassies of Reconciliation," he always maintained, "may be an impetus in the personal and spiritual realm that can set long-range currents in motion."\(^{60}\) On numerous occasions he set himself in motion. His own paths led to many trips to Europe, Latin America, Japan, the Philippines, and even South Africa.\(^{61}\)

John Nevin Sayre remains one of the unsung leaders of the twentieth-century American peace movement. Growing up in Pennsylvania amid comfortable surroundings and guided by strong religious convictions, Sayre cultivated a social outlook marked by compassion and understanding. He later would disavow his elite class status in the name of Christianity and world peace. He did so not out of disrespect for his family but because Christ had led a life free from material greed. In the words of Ernest Best, Sayre "belonged to that East Coast establishment of enlightened Christian liberals in the first half of this century who had some wealth and who wanted to put it to work to change the world in the direction of greater justice." Best added that although Sayre was an Episcopalian, "Nevin was in my judgment a Quaker in spirit."\(^{62}\) Sayre's real parish was the Fellowship of Reconciliation, which became Sayre's nonviolent means for addressing society's ills. Guided by Sayre's example, the Fellowship sought to bring Christian bodies to social action and to infuse reform groups with the

\(^{58}\) Ernest Best to author, May 17, 1989 (in author's possession).
\(^{59}\) Ibid.
\(^{60}\) Sayre to Baldwin, Oct. 17, 1958, Sayre Papers, DG 117.
His stress on persuasion, liberalism, and individual commitment assisted the Fellowship in its struggle for peace and justice, and its efforts to make power accountable and redirect it to achieve societal improvement and elevate human values. Sayre was, one observer noted, “an irenic person” who was “happier with persuasion and education than with participation in non-violent direct action.” Such qualities helped the FOR hold together, even as its leaders disagreed over philosophy and strategy. As a religious pacifist, Sayre led the revolt “not only against the cruelty and barbarity of war, but even more against the reversal of human relationships which war implied.” Sayre’s purpose recalled William Penn’s vision of a “Holy Experiment.” Like Penn, Sayre had “faith in the creative and conquering power of love as a method of life.” But Sayre left Pennsylvania to make his mission one of global reformation through Christian pacifism.

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63 Chatfield, For Peace and Justice, 110.
64 Ernest Best to author, May 17, 1989.